

Raymond L. Telles Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 10/14/70
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Mayor, El Paso, TX (1958-1960); Ambassador to Costa Rica (1961-1967). In this interview, Telles discusses his personal experiences with John F. Kennedy [JFK], how JFK handled international relations, and his visit to Costa Rica, among other issues.

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Raymond L. Telles, Jr.
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Raymond L. Telles – JFK#1

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Oral History Interview

with

RAYMOND L. TELLES

October 14, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: All right Ambassador Telles, let me ask you, first of all, when you first met John F. Kennedy?

TELLES: Well, first of all, let me say Mr. Moss, that I feel quite honored to have been asked to participate in this interview for the John F. Kennedy Library. I think this program of interviews is certainly very interesting and hope will be of some value to history. Now, to answer your question, I first met and became acquainted with President John F. Kennedy in 1956 during the presidential campaign between President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and Mr. Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson].

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And I might say that in my life I have had the good fortune and the privilege of know....

MOSS: May I interrupt you for a moment and ask you what the circumstances were under which you met John Kennedy in that campaign?

TELLES: At that time I was an elected county public official in El Paso, Texas, and I suppose they felt that I had some influence with voters of the area. So, I was

invited to become involved in the campaign, and this is how I happened to meet President Kennedy. I also met his two brothers, Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] and Ted [Edward M. Kennedy].

MOSS: They came out to El Paso did they?

TELLES: Yes, they visited in El Paso and I became involved in some aspects of the campaign.

MOSS: Do you recall what they were doing in El Paso? Were they campaigning...

TELLES: They were campaigning for Mr. Stevenson.

MOSS: Making speeches and that kind of thing?

TELLES: That's right.

MOSS: And what were your impressions of the three of them at that time?

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TELLES: Well, naturally, I was quite impressed by President Kennedy. Of course, the other two young men were certainly people that you couldn't help but become interested in and also become impressed with. Ted Kennedy was very young at the time, and he was quite energetic, you know. I would say that, probably, of the three brothers, Ted Kennedy is the politician; Bob Kennedy was the organizer; President Kennedy had all of the qualities necessary to be not just a politician, but a statesman, a leader and a human being. This is what really impressed me, the fact that the man was a humanitarian with sincere compassion for people and the fact that he was not too big or too important to listen to people.

MOSS: Was this evident as early as '56?

TELLES: Yes, it was very much so.

MOSS: Do you recall specifically in what ways? What things made you notice this?

TELLES: Well, I think that probably the two or three conversations that I had with him personally at that time. He talked not only about the political campaign itself, but he talked about his personal concern for the future of our country, for the

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welfare of our nation's people and the problems that we were facing worldwide at the time. His human approach to the solution of these problems and his compassion for those less fortunate people in our country had quite a bit to do with not only admiring him, but wanting to join him in whatever he was doing in my own small way, which wasn't very much I have to agree. But this is how I became involved with him and this is how I came to admire the man.

MOSS: All right, thank you. Would you like to continue your original statement?

TELLES: Yes, as I started to say, in my life I have had the good fortune and the privilege of knowing and being around a number of our United States presidents, and of course, many presidents of the Latin American countries. And I'm sure that all were excellent presidents. However in my humble opinion, President John F. Kennedy was a great man. He was a great president, and excellent statesman, but above all, I think, he was a humanitarian. He cared about people. He had a sincere concern for the welfare of the people of our country and of the world. He had compassion for people. He believed in people, not

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just in the people of our country, but in the people of the world particularly, he believed in, and had great faith in, the young people of our country. I believe that history will record it accordingly. And most important, people believed in him, and he had the confidence of the people in general. He was never one to look down at anyone. And besides compassion for people, he was a humble man, in my opinion. He had understanding and a great desire to materially contribute the peace of the world and welfare of the people of the world and to alleviate the suffering and hunger of people. I believe that he was sincere in his desires and efforts in his goals and in his objectives.

One of his great qualities was his natural ability to generate confidence, trust, friendship and loyalty. I believe that he felt that if complete world peace and understanding were to be attained between countries of the world, that this could only be accomplished through the mutual and better understanding between the people of all the countries, and particularly between the young people. He wanted to bring peace to the world and wanted to bring our

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young people to a better understanding of their country. He wanted to help the poor, the underprivileged. He wanted to help people regardless of their color, religion, race or political affiliation. He had so much to give our country, and to the world, that it was certainly one of the most tragic moments in the history of our country when he was assassinated. I'm confident that if he had been permitted to serve out his whole fruitful life, that possibly under his leadership today, we would have a more tranquil America, a better understanding between our young people and people of other generations, also a better understanding between countries of the world, and a more peaceful atmosphere throughout the world.

His concern for people, and particularly for the young people, was reflected in his many national and international programs: for example his world Peace Corps, the poverty program, the Alliance for Progress, the civil rights program, and many others. Not only the American people in general, but the people of the world saw in him the hope for a better and peaceful world. He was admired, respected, and

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loved by the people of Latin America, and by the people of many of the other countries of the world. Latin America believed in him and felt that they had a friend in President Kennedy who cared and represented a hope for a better life. He was a man who understood their problems and was willing to help them not just in words, but in deeds. With his death, the lives of many changed. In fact, I feel that my own life was changed. He provided me with the opportunity to serve my country, and I am certain that even a greater opportunity and challenge would've been presented to me by President Kennedy to serve my country.

MOSS: That's a very moving statement. I'm constantly amazed -- perhaps I was too young myself to come under the spell, although I thought I did at the time -- to find that the spell of the Kennedy charisma still lingers amongst people who knew him very well. How do you look at this? Do you see it as something very real, or as something that you cling to as a gone hope?

TELLES: No, I think that it is truly very real. I still believe that the people have that same hope that they

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had at the time that President Kennedy was in office. I don't believe that anyone has ever forgotten President Kennedy, and I don't believe that anyone will ever forget President Kennedy, not just as a person, but for what he stood for, what he believed in, his sincerity in trying to do something for the people of our country, for our nation, for the world. I don't believe that we will ever, not only I, but the people of the country in general, will ever forget President Kennedy.

MOSS: You've talked very eloquently about his virtues. Do you see any drawbacks to the man, anything that you would feel that he did not deliver on?

TELLES: I had the opportunity to be around him on several occasions; in fact, I felt that he was not just my president, but there was a certain amount of friendship involved in our relationship that made me feel close to him, probably closer than I was to other people in the political field, or political life, with whom I had been associated with for maybe ten or fifteen years prior to that. And therefore, I had the same faith in him that everybody else had, and I was willing to join with him in any way that I could to try to help him. And as I've said, I

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had several opportunities to be around him, close to him, and I saw him as the person that he was, not just as the President, which was already evident. But I admired him as a person for many reasons, but primarily because he was a fine, considerate and humble man. It didn't make any difference to him what your state of life was, that is, whether you were important or just a common ordinary citizen, he was always willing to listen to you. I think one of his great virtues was his ability and sincere desire and willingness to listen to the people, individually or as a group, and made you feel that your problem or proposal was most important. It wasn't above him to change his decision or opinion if he felt that what you presented to him justified his change in an opinion or decision. I know that from personal experience with him. I know that from his visit in Costa Rica.

Ever since I was appointed as U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, I felt that people in Latin America cared for and respected President Kennedy, and therefore, that a visit to Central America and to South America, was quite important for our country's

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friendly relations with Latin America. So I immediately started on a little campaign to try to induce President Kennedy to come to Central America. I naturally wanted him to visit Costa Rica, but if he felt that other countries were probably more in need of his visit, I was certainly agreeable to it. So it didn't make any difference where he visited, as long as he did. Then, of course, I was also trying to promote an invitation to President Francisco José Orlich Bolmaricich, the president of Costa Rica at the time, for a visit to the United States because I felt that this was also important. I felt that Costa Rica was a friend of the United States which was very evident by their actions in the past.

For example, right after Pearl Harbor, if you recall, it took our government two or three days to declare war on Germany and Japan. Well, Costa Rica declared war on Japan and Germany the next day after Pearl Harbor to show their friendship towards the United States. But the interesting part about it wasn't so much the fact that they declared war, but the fact that they didn't have any military. They didn't

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have a navy. They didn't have an air force. They didn't have an army. They simply had a police force, but they wanted to stand up and be counted. They were willing to come out, openly on the side of their friend the United States so they declared war on Germany and Japan simply because they had hurt their friend, and Costa Ricans wouldn't stand for that. As a consequence, one of their banana freighters was sunk by the Germans and several Costa Ricans died. To this day they are very proud of their participation and contribution to the war effort and evidence of their friendship to the United States. This was just one demonstration of the friendship that Latin America had not just for our country, but certainly for President Kennedy.

So, in any event, President Kennedy agreed to visit in Central America. However, in my talk with him about it, it was decided by him, of course, that it would be more practical and most productive if we could get all of the presidents of Central America, including Panama, to join in a visit with him in Costa Rica. This was very interesting. The acceptance of the Central American presidents to

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join and meet with President Kennedy again showed the admiration and the respect and love that Latin America had for President Kennedy because never in the history of Central America had the presidents of the different countries agreed to willingly get together. I mean, they were always having their little problems, their little animosities, and nationalism and as a consequence, you never could get all five or six presidents together, but in this case, because of President Kennedy, they did agree to meet in Costa Rica. So I think that this was a great turning point not only in the friendship of Latin America towards the United States, but also, I think, in the friendship between the countries themselves primarily in Central America because it was truly a successful visit not only involving President Kennedy, but I felt involving all of the presidents of Central America, including Panama. And of course, it was of considerable benefit in the efforts to promote the Alliance for Progress.

MOSS: Let me ask you this, from your vantage point as ambassador in Costa Rica, how much of the Latin

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American Common Market and the Alianza were promise, and how much was really delivering? How much good did these things really do?

TELLES: Well, first of all: when I first arrived in Costa Rica in 1961, the Central American Common Market had not been accepted by Costa Rica. They were having a few economic internal problems; and misconceptions and some distrust of the whole concept of the common market. Naturally, this was a new program. This was a program that was not understood too well at the time by the people that were supposed to be involved. A previous administration in Costa Rica had refused to join because they didn't quite understand what it was all about. So when I arrived there, one of my first objectives was to try to convince Costa Rica that it would be productive, economically for their country and certainly a benefit to the whole Central American group, to join in as a member of the common market.

MOSS: What kind of advantages would they have?

TELLES: There were many advantages in the economic field, and in a cultural sense. For example, a small

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country like Costa Rica cannot support production of major articles because the population is small in comparison. They had a population of about a million and three-quarters in the whole country. So naturally, for their very important and necessary economic expansion, it was necessary that they should include other populated areas, and, of course, the logical ones, the practical ones, were the other Central American countries. I think this proved to be true and correct; once they joined, Costa Rica was one of the strongest and most enthusiastic supporters of the common market in Central America.

MOSS: How about the Alianza? What was the...

TELLES: The Alianza, again, that was another program that at times it was difficult for people to understand or failed to recognize its objectives and responsibilities to the participants. Some people felt that it was just a giveaway program, but it wasn't true. This was a joint program in which the United States and the countries of Latin America participated jointly, but primarily it was their own effort that was to be involved in this economic and social development. And so, at first, as I said, it was

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a little difficult to understand, but I honestly believe that the Alliance for Progress was certainly doing an excellent and much needed job. And I do believe that if it had not been for the contributions of the Alliance for Progress, young as it was, that it would have been much more difficult to improve the economic and social conditions and circumstances of the Latin American countries in general, but most important, I believe that failure to improve on the economic status might have been an eventual political and economic disaster and tragedy for many of the countries in Latin America.

MOSS: What specific difficulties did you have in implementing provisions of the Alliance in Costa Rica?

TELLES: Like in any other country, the most difficult facet of the Alliance for Progress was to get them interested enough to involve themselves and to participate, and to make the necessary sacrifices, in other words, to make them realize that this was not just a giveaway program, that it was their program, that they had to put in their material efforts towards the success of the program, and that they had to involve

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financial inputs from the country, that possibly a tax reform was necessary. While many suggestions were made and recommended, for their participation we never, as long as I was ambassador in Costa Rica, forced any of these programs on the country. We simply

suggested, and recommended and we were prepared, of course, to provide the technical assistance and provided a number of loans and grants as we saw the need for them.

MOSS: How about the other end of the pipeline in difficulties? Did you have any feeling that people like Moscoso [Teodoro Moscoso] and Ed Martin [Edwin M. Martin] and the rest of them did or did not understand what Costa Rica needed?

TELLES: I think that this was in some ways a problem too because at that time Ed Martin and, of course, Ted Moscoso were very much interested and involved in the economic development of Latin America as a whole, and therefore possibly they did not quite understand that each country was different and it was necessary to deal and help each one individually because their problems in most cases were different.

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At times I suppose in their great enthusiasm to obtain acceptance of the program and the participation of the different countries, maybe they were a little bit too forceful in their demands without attempting to recognize the difference in the attitude and moods of the people and governments of each country and their ability to participate economically. One of the problems was getting the people to understand the program. But it's just like any new program. It was new. It was difficult to understand. I am sure that even our own U.S. government officials were confronted with many problems and differences of opinion in the implementation and in defining the objectives of the Alliance for Progress. It was taking time, and much effort and many frustrating moments but I do believe that the program was taking hold, that the people of the Latin American countries had become quite interested in the program, and they were making efforts. I wouldn't say that that's true in every country, but I honestly believe that in Costa Rica this was true.

MOSS: When you had a problem, where you felt that the Washington end was not responding promptly or correctly

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to do the things you felt were needed, what were your alternative courses of action? Who could you go to to get action when you weren't getting it from Martin or Moscoso?

TELLES: Well, certainly your first contacts would be with Assistant Secretary Martin and then Moscoso. If you failed there, then you had to take advantage of your personal contacts with the President, to brief him on the problems of the country you were assigned to. It was his program, and naturally he was very much interested in what was going on and in the results. And every time our ambassadors came to Washington on consultation we had the opportunity to visit with President Kennedy if only

for a few minutes. And in every case, he would naturally inquire as to the progress that was being made in the Alliance for Progress. He was very much interested in the people of Latin America and had great compassion for them. He was not only interested in the people of our country, but he was also interested in the people of Latin American and of the world and tried to provide some means or ways to help them in their economic development.

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MOSS: Do you recall any instance, any specific instances, and the circumstances in which you felt you had to go around the bureaucracy to the President to get what you wanted?

TELLES: Well, I don't recall a specific incident. I think it was just a general thing that was done by all ambassadors in their visits with President Kennedy and in requesting the additional help and understanding of our own government towards the Latin American countries. Of course, many times, as I said, I guess we were a little bit too ambitious and felt that these countries should move a little faster than they were in their contributions, in their participation. And so it was up to us, the ambassadors, to try to slow down our people in Washington a little, in other words, to be practical in our efforts and goals in implementing the program. I'm sure that all of the ambassadors, including myself, discussed this facet of the program with President Kennedy. The President, as I said, was always very understanding, and he did everything to help the ambassadors and certainly help the countries down there.

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MOSS: Let me shift ground a little bit and ask you what the impact of the Bay of Pigs was on Costa Rica and on your job, what you had to do?

TELLES: First of all, the Bay of Pigs incident came about, prior to my being appointed as U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica. I was still the mayor of El Paso.

MOSS: Still.

TELLES: Yes, and so the only reactions that I could gather were the ones after I arrived there which were probably several months after the Bay of Pigs incident. But I do honestly believe that in general, and it was more evident as the time went by, for the Latin American people favored more U.S. participation in the Bay of Pigs' venture and felt that we should have come up with a more effective solution to that particular problem at the time.

MOSS: All right, a solution in terms of follow-up and carrying it through?

TELLES: Yes, I believe that they would have favored, if not openly but within their own

circles, a more active and effective participation by the United States. They were very interested, and stated quite frankly that the problem should've been solved right there

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and then because, as time went by, they were experiencing problems from Castro which could be, according to their thinking, laid at the door of the fact that we did not follow through on this particular incident.

MOSS: I've heard it said that, in effect, by not following up, we gave the Castroite revolutionary sentiment a sanctuary from which it could operate in all of Latin America. Was this generally felt?

TELLES: This was a general feeling of the people and governments that were interested in a democratic type of government and opposed to communism.

MOSS: Is there a real distinction now between the actual governments in the Latin American countries and the broad mass of people? The common conventional wisdom says that there's a great deal of difference between the two and that the common mass of people have somewhat more sympathy for the Castroite revolutionary situation. What is the truth of this in your eyes?

TELLES: I don't agree with it. I think if there's any sympathy whatsoever for the Castro [Fidel Castro] regime or for what he's doing, it would be probably at the

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government level in some countries, but not necessarily among the people. Of course, you will always find a certain percentage or a minority in every country that would be very much in favor of Castro's activities. Just like in our country, you know, we find that a small minority are not entirely in favor with our system of government. But I would say that in general the people felt that Castro was a cancer in Latin America and that something should be done to eliminate it. In fact, I'm almost sure that the feeling still exists in Latin America today, maybe not as rabid or as strong as it did because the years have gone by and people tend to forget, but I think that if you were to confront people with the issue, if it really became an issue that had to be resolved at this point, that they would favor a solution to the problem.

MOSS: And by solution, you are again implying a surgical removal of the Castro regime?

TELLES: Yes.

MOSS: All right, now there was talk at the time of the missile crisis that something of this sort should have been done. Do you present any advice to this effect or any...

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TELLES: At the time I was serving as the U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica and, in fact, when the news or the information came to us from the White House, I was travelling in the hills of Costa Rica visiting a small village which I made a habit of doing, of going out and visiting people because, as I recall, President Kennedy's statement was that: "Fine, we want to make friends with the governments of these different countries. We want to influence them in their decisions as far as the UN [United Nations] and the OAS [Organization of American States], etc. is concerned, but we want to make friends with the people of these countries because I believe strongly in the people and I believe that if there's going to be a tranquil and peaceful world, it's going to have to be done through the people. And so I would urge you strongly that you should make friends for the United States with the people of Costa Rica." So with that in mind, of course, and my natural love for people, I employed the majority of my time in visiting every nook and corner of the country in visiting the people of Costa Rica.

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So anyhow, as I said, I was visiting in one of these villages up in the mountains when the word came from the embassy that there was a very important message at the embassy. So I immediately had to return. It took several hours to get there, but when I got there, there were the instructions from the White House to the effect that this was happening in connection with the Russian missiles in Cuba and I was informed of the action that President Kennedy proposed to take. First of all, that on such a day and such an hour that the President was going to be on television to advise the people of our country and not only explain to them what this whole thing was about, but also to try to get them to understand what it was all about and to request their support for President Kennedy in the action that he proposed to take. And at a certain hour, on a specific date, of course, we did exactly that. All ambassadors visited with the governments. I was very fortunate in that President Francisco Orlich, who was the president at that time, was very understanding. As I said, down deep in his heart, he felt that that was a problem not only for Cuba,

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but certainly for Latin America, and therefore, he was certainly most willing to join with us in any effort to eliminate that cancer that existed so close to Latin America and to the United States. In fact, President Orlich asked me to advise President Kennedy at the time that not only was he supporting his stand and his decision and what he proposed to do in connection with the missiles, but that he was volunteering the use by our government of the air bases, and seaports in Costa Rica that would be required by the United States in the event that we

had to go into any kind of a military action to remove the missiles out of Cuba. So this was a very interesting, and certainly quite a moment of suspense not only for the ambassadors, I'm sure, but also for these Latin American countries.

MOSS: Was there any regret expressed afterwards that we did not take stronger action?

TELLES: No. I believe that they were convinced that President Kennedy had been firm enough not only in his convictions, and actions but that Russia understood that President Kennedy was not joking or kidding about what he intended to do.

Based on the different

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actions that he took militarily, that is, bringing the necessary military units into the area and the many political moves that he had made in his firm and resolute approach to the solution of the problem, they knew then that President Kennedy was serious about it. And I think that they were satisfied with the action taken by Russia to remove the missiles after President Kennedy demanded it. I think that this, in effect, brought even additional admiration and respect for the President from the Latin American countries because they knew then that he was a man of his word, a man that believed in what was right and was willing to sacrifice and make the necessary decisions and take the appropriate actions to remedy any situation or problem.

MOSS: Let me come around to your embassy operation in San Jose. Early in the Administration President Kennedy went out with the so-called Bowles [Chester Bowles] letter that instructed all ambassadors, in effect, to be chief of mission and to have authority over other U.S. government organizations in countries, such as the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and AID [Agency for International Development] and so on. Did this

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ever give you a problem, this grouping of people with several different bosses under you?

TELLES: Well, first of all, let me say that that was certainly one of the most practical, reasonable and effective directives I think that we, as ambassadors, ever received because it was only natural to understand that a body with too many heads would never achieve the objectives of our country. It was evident that you needed one boss, to have one individual at the head of the entire operation. One person responsible directly to the President for everything that happened. And I, for one, was quite pleased with this directive because in many instances you look back in history, especially a few years before that, and you find that the ambassador was just a figurehead really. There were two or three, or even four different other U.S. representatives in the country that were, well, in a

way, doing as they pleased and without too much consideration, concern, or coordination in reference to the problems and the objectives of the ambassador who had directives from the President and Department of State, so my reaction was that this was certainly a

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step in the right direction to resolve many of our problems.

I personally didn't have too many problems. I had some problems when I first arrived in Costa Rica for several reasons. First of all, I was the first U.S. ambassador of Latin descent ever appointed in the history of the United States as ambassador, and consequently I had a few problems with my own staff. I took a different approach to my responsibility than possibly had been taken in previous years by professional diplomats or career diplomats. In addition to dealing with the government, I used the people's approach more than anyone else had ever done in the past. I did it, not only because President Kennedy had instructed me to do so, but because I felt that this was the way to make friends with these people for our country, by direct contact. It was necessary not only in securing their friendship but also in influencing the Costa Rican government in their decisions and obtaining their support in the major problems and questions that were coming up in the UN and at the OAS. Let me see now.

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MOSS: Did you ever see any sign of, say, the CIA meddling in internal security or anything of this sort?

TELLES: I guess I was very fortunate. Well, first, let me back up a little bit. as I said, I had a few problems when I first came there as an ambassador because of the fact that I was a presidential political appointee, and I was from a different party that had been in power just prior to that, and the fact that I was using the close contact approach with the people. This I was told by several of my top, key people wasn't done; this wasn't the way that the Department of State or career diplomats operated. It seemed that they wanted the ambassador to remain in his ivory tower, you know, and never be seen, but just respected because he was the U.S. ambassador. Well, I felt entirely different. In fact, about six or seven months after my arrival, I found it necessary to return my deputy to the United States because he just did not seem to understand or wouldn't go along with my ideas and new politics in which I knew I had the instructions and support of the President.

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Now in many of the countries I heard complaints from our ambassadors that they were having trouble with their CIA crew, especially with the chief of the group. I guess I was, indeed, very fortunate. I had three CIA directors during my six years in Costa Rica and we had a very, I think, a very basic and comprehensive understanding and fine and close working relationship. I never really had any problems with the CIA. I had knowledge of their

operation and made recommendations and inputs into their operation and made recommendations and inputs into their operation. I didn't want to interfere with their operation, but I wanted them to keep me informed not after things had happened, but before, because many times any activities that they might undertake could very well destroy the political and friendly atmosphere that I was trying to build with the government and with the people. So that I can truthfully say that I was very fortunate in the three people that I had, that is the heads of the CIA. As far as I know, and I have reasons to believe that they did cooperate fully, they kept me well informed. As far as the directors of the other activities, you know, like commerce and

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labor, and so forth, why I never really had much problem. We had, of course, a military group there. We had a military attache. We had a training military group and they all seemed to cooperate well enough with me.

MOSS: Very good. You mentioned other ambassadors that had problems with the CIA people. Do you recall any of the problems in specific detail?

TELLES: Well, not in specific detail, but... there were problems related to projects and actions taken by CIA without notifying the ambassador, and the ambassador finding out later on that certain things were happening. This was particularly true when in some cases, actions by CIA were detrimental to the objectives of the entire mission. At least that was the feeling of the ambassadors, but I do not recall a specific incident.

MOSS: Let me take you back in time for the next few minutes to your experience in Texas. You were a county official first and then became mayor of El Paso. Is that correct?

TELLES: Yes, that's right.

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MOSS: Now what was your situation in the 1960 pre-convention period? It's been called to my attention that in about February 1960, Senator Yarborough was going around Texas trying to put together a coalition of liberal Catholics to shoot down Lyndon Johnson as a favorite son and to try and get some support spread across Kennedy, Stevenson, Symington [Stuart Symington] and so on to block Johnson. Do you recall this?

TELLES: Well, I've known Senator Yarborough for a good number of years just as long as I have known President Lyndon Johnson. I've known President Lyndon

Johnson, since 1947. Forty-eight was the year that he was first elected U.S. Senator, and was also the first time that I was elected as county clerk of El Paso County. So that we were both very much involved in politics that year and most of the people who supported me in El Paso County also supported President Johnson for Senator. While busy with my own campaign, I also helped as much as possible in his campaign. Of course, I don't think that there's any secret about the fact that there was no love lost between Senator Yarborough and President Johnson. There was always a certain

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political animosity that goes back many years. It would be difficult for me to state from what source or at what point this animosity started, but it was very evident. It was a public matter. I don't think anybody is talking out of school when you say that there was this animosity.

There's no question in my mind that Senator Ralph Yarborough was very much in favor of President Kennedy's nomination. He had been a good friend of President Kennedy. They had worked very closely in the Senate, and of course, he was very active in attempting to promote support for then John F. Kennedy as a nominee for the party. Of course, Johnson never did particularly care for this either, and this just added oil to the fire. This political feud between them had been going on for years. Neither one would pass up the opportunity to hurt each others political aspirations and ambitions, the same thing is true, of course, as between Senator Yarborough and former Governor John Connally. As you know, there has always been a certain amount of political animosity between the two of them. This has always created a problem in Texas where the

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Democratic party has been somewhat divided between the liberals and the conservative group. At one time Texas used to be, throughout, a Democratic party state; there was no such thing as a Republican party. But in the last few years the Republican party has developed into a group that the Democrats must be concerned with. It isn't so much the dyed-in-the-wool Republicans, as it is, possibly, the conservative Democrats that vote as their conscience dictate or in accordance with their personal interests. For instance in the case of Senator John Tower from Texas who was elected against democrats on two occasions, I'm sure that a large number of democrats voted for John Tower, not as their preferred candidate but more so against their own democrat candidate because they were not satisfied with him. Many democrats didn't vote at all and this hurt the democrat candidate. So that there has been this split up in the political Democratic party in Texas for a number of years now.

MOSS: I understand it very well. I come from Virginia. We have the same problem.
[Interruption] We were talking about the 1960 campaign and the split in

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the Democratic party in Texas. I don't believe that you responded directly to my initial question and that was, do you recall an effort in February of 1960 by Senator Yarborough to line up an opposition coalition to the Johnson candidacy?

TELLES: Well, I don't know that I could give a direct and specific answer to your question, but it would not have been surprising.

MOSS: Did he contact you specifically, for instance?

TELLES: Yes, certainly Senator Yarborough talked to me about it, but at least he didn't express himself as being involved in a movement to defeat Lyndon Johnson. I felt that Senator Yarborough's first interest was the nomination of John F. Kennedy because he felt not only that he was a close friend of his, but also he believed in John Kennedy. He thought that John Kennedy was a great man, that he was destined to be a greater man.

MOSS: You felt Yarborough was a Kennedy man rather than a Stevenson one at this point?

TELLES: Well, Stevenson really didn't come into the picture at that point because this was after Stevenson had been defeated twice. In the 1960's it was a question

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of who would be the standard bearer for the party at the time, and of course, President Johnson had indicated in some ways that he was interested. I don't think that at that particular moment back in February, it was clearly defined, although it was evident in many ways that he was interested. In fact, I think that one of the moves that President or Senator Johnson made at the time was his encouraging the Texas state legislature to change the date of the primary so that he could run both as a U.S. Senator and as a vice presidential candidate. But in any event, I believe that Senator Yarborough's main interest was John F. Kennedy. I'm not sure that he was all out doing it just to fight Johnson. In fact, I'm sure that he wasn't. As I said, he had worked very closely with Senator Kennedy, and he believe in Kennedy, and he felt that Kennedy was destined to be a great man in our country, and he certainly was all for it, and he was going to work for him. Now I would guess that undoubtedly there might have been a certain amount of animosity already, political animosity, between the two of them because, if you recall, Senator Yarborough had been involved in

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several state campaigns in which he had not been successful and he probably felt that Senator Johnson had not been too helpful in these campaigns, you know. But I think that basically and primarily he believed in John F. Kennedy and he felt that, as I said before, he was

destined to be a great man in our country. And so he did talk to me about it, and this is the impression I got.

MOSS: Do you know anything of a collusion between the Johnson forces in Texas and the Cardinal Spellman Catholic crowd in New York in an attempt to block Kennedy in Texas?

TELLES: No, I really don't. I'll be honest with you, I don't have any idea or...

MOSS: Okay. Let me ask you now what things are you doing between the spring of 1960 and the convention? You did not go to the convention.

TELLES: I didn't go to the state convention. I was very much involved in running a city at the time. I was mayor of El Paso and while I did participate in the local activities of the political party, I did not go to the convention. First of all, I felt that enough people were going already and that I had no reason to be there other than just to show my interest

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in the party. I felt that there were enough capable individuals that were going to the convention and that I had a job to do in El Paso. I was running a city and I felt that that was my primary mission at that point.

MOSS: I was wondering because just looking at this superficial evidence, here you are a Democrat, mayor of a large Texas city, you wind up being an ambassador. It looks like perhaps the Johnson people had frozen you out of the convention.

TELLES: No, as a matter of fact, as I said, President Johnson and I were certainly good friends. I never had any real problems with him. I understood what he was trying to do; and frankly, I had no objection to Lyndon Johnson being the candidate. After all, he was a Texan and I had known him since back in 1947, and naturally being a proud Texan, why, I would've been very happy to have had Lyndon Johnson as the Democratic Candidate.

MOSS: So you weren't grinding axes for anybody.

TELLES: No, I wasn't really. I was interested primarily in my city, and of course I was also interested in my state and country.

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MOSS: In the campaign, President Kennedy, then Senator Kennedy, the candidate, did come to El Paso at one point, didn't he? September 11th, I believe.

TELLES: Yes.

MOSS: The next morning a speech at the Cortez Hotel?

TELLES: Yes.

MOSS: Do you recall the circumstances of this at all?

TELLES: Yes, that was quite an event in El Paso, to have John F. Kennedy come there, although there's not much I can say about that particular event other than that he was well received and made a very good impression on the people of El Paso, which I think carried through to the election.

MOSS: Let me ask you this. If you are pretty much neutral in the campaign and so on, to what do you attribute your appointment as ambassador?

TELLES: Well, no I wasn't. While I did not participate in the convention I was certainly not neutral in the campaign. As I said, I would've been happy if Lyndon Johnson would've been nominated, and I was just as happy when John F. Kennedy was nominated. It would've been certainly very significant to have

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had a Texas nominated, you know. And I would have campaigned for Lyndon Johnson if he had been the candidate. But I was not involved in the state convention. I was not involved in the national convention. As I said, I felt very strongly about the fact that I had a job to do, and I didn't have too much time to spare as far as running around to conventions. If I had felt that I could contribute substantially in some ways to the process and that my services were needed, well, I might have given some consideration to going to the state and national conventions, but I didn't feel that it was necessary. I felt that my primary duty at that moment was much more important. Now, when the actual presidential campaign went on, I was contacted by John F. Kennedy and Bob Kennedy at one point to help in the campaign and I agreed to participate in every way that I could. And so I put myself at their service, and agreed to engage in whatever activity they felt that I could best contribute to the campaign.

MOSS: And what did they ask you to do?

TELLES: They asked me to campaign. I did some campaigning in Texas, but primarily they felt that they needed more

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help in California. So I moved out of Texas campaign-wise and worked for them in California. I worked the entire state from San Diego all the way to San Francisco, so that my political activity for the Kennedy campaign was primarily in California. In fact, I joined with Senator Dennis Chavez of New Mexico and we went on to campaign in Texas, together, in some areas. I was active in the political areas and functions where they thought I could be of help, but primarily, as I said, I campaigned in California.

MOSS: Who was calling the shots in the California campaign?

TELLES: I am certain that Bob Kennedy was.

MOSS: How did this whole business of the Kennedy crowd coming in, the Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh] crowd, the California Democratic Coalition people, you know, all sort of at loggerheads, how did you view this?

TELLES: Well, this was, of course, a little difficult for anyone coming in there. I was familiar with the state, and I would like to believe that I had some friends in California. The involvement of so many people, and all going in different directions was rather difficult. Pat Brown [Edmund G. Brown], at that time, you know was governor. He was also very much involved. I happened

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to be on the same political platform that he was, on several occasions in my efforts for John F. Kennedy. I think that at the initial stages of the campaign, California was very much in a confused state as far as the political factions that were involved, but I do believe that as the campaign went on that the Democrats improved in their joint efforts. I think it was very evident by the results. Yes, we lost California, but it was lost by a very small margin, and at one time there we thought we had won. But I think it would've been much worse if it hadn't been for the efforts made during the campaign by John F. Kennedy himself and his supporters.

MOSS: What kind of things did they have you doing?

TELLES: Speaking in public to groups.

MOSS: Any particular groups?

TELLES: Well, I spoke to any group that was available, but particularly I directed my efforts towards the Latin vote, the so-called Mexican-American, or Latin-American vote. However, I spoke at all of the functions in the area that were involved in the campaign at the time.

MOSS: And you believe it was this activity that brought you to the attention of

President Kennedy and resulted in your appointment as ambassador?

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TELLES: As I said, I had first become acquainted with him back in 1956, but certainly his own presidential campaign is the one that focused his attention on me. I think that one of the people that was most influential in my appointment as U.S. Ambassador by President Kennedy, was my good friend United States Senator Dennis Chavez of New Mexico; although Senator Chavez never did tell me, but I am certain that he talked to the President about it. Senator Dennis Chavez was very close to Senator Kennedy and then President Kennedy, and I honestly believe that he had quite a bit to do with my being appointed as ambassador. I don't think there's any doubt that Vice President Johnson also had something to do with it because, after all, I doubt seriously that I would've been appointed if he had been totally opposed to me, you know, being from my own state. And then of course, I think that Bob Kennedy also had something to do with it because I was in contact with him, and through him, I was asked to go to California. I am certain that there were a number of people who were involved in my appointment. I wasn't looking for an appointment at the time. I went on the campaign

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because I believed in John F. Kennedy. I believe, like other people believed, that he was destined to be a great man and we certainly needed great men to lead our country. So I accepted the challenge and the assignment simply because I believed in him, and I felt that our country needed him. I had no ambition at that point to become U.S. Ambassador and was not looking or asking for any kind of an appointment. In fact, I can truthfully say that I never requested any kind of an assignment or appointment from President Kennedy. In fact, when I was first contacted about the appointment -- I think it was in early February 1961 -- I had already announced my candidacy for a third term as a mayor of El Paso, and the fact that I was running without opposition. That's the best way for a man in politics to run, without opposition. So when I was called up from Washington to advise me that President Kennedy wanted me to go to Costa Rica as ambassador, I was surprised and felt greatly honored.

MOSS: Who called you, do you recall?

TELLES: Well, the first call came from one of his aides in the White House. I can't recall who it was. It was one of his aides. Then, later on, I got another call from

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the under secretary, Chester Bowles. He called me on the phone and went into more details. I rejected the idea or the proposed appointment, because, as I said before, I was not looking for an appointment or any assignment. I was interested in my community or any assignment. I

was interested in my community and I had already announced -- it had been made public already -- that I was running for a third term as mayor. And I had no opposition. So I had no idea that I was going to be approached with an assignment of this type, and I wasn't looking for one. So I rejected the proposed appointment at the time. However, a couple of weeks later, I got another call from Bowles and he said that the President wanted me to come to Washington. He wanted to talk to me. It so happened that at that time I was getting ready to come to Washington on city business, so I agreed to come on up. And I did. And I talked to the President, to Senator Chavez, and also to Vice President Johnson, at the time. All of them urged me to take on this job.

I think that my appointment -- other than the fact that these people were interested in my being appointed -- was a sort of an experiment on the part of President Kennedy in many ways. First of all he stated that he felt that I could assume the responsibility and do a good job

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because of my previous service with people and countries of Latin America and my service in the military, and experience as mayor plus my ability to speak Spanish and understand those people. But I believe that he was conducting an experiment in many ways because I was the first person of Latin descent that was ever appointed as a U.S. ambassador. He believed that ambassadors of a particular descent or extraction, related to the country of assignment, could serve well and would be well accepted in the country. Also he wanted to appoint ambassadors who would be able to speak the language of the country and understand those people much better than someone that was totally a stranger to the particular country and not able to communicate or understand the people of the country. I think that President Kennedy felt that this was a good approach to better understanding and relations with other countries. I think that he proved that in many ways for he appointed several other ambassadors of a particular heritage to serve in a particular country, you know. Gronouski [John A. Gronouski], for example, was one of them. So anyway, this is how it happened.

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They brought me to Washington, and they did a little bit of arm twisting, you know. I told the President that I would accept on certain conditions: first of all, I mentioned that my second term as mayor of El Paso, Texas, would not expire until about the middle of April and this was February, and that I would not resign as mayor and I wanted to complete my term. I let him know that I was not a wealthy man by any means, that I lived entirely and completely off my salary, and therefore, that if such an appointment was going to require personal expenditures, spending of money which I didn't have then I couldn't accept. There were two or three other things that I was concerned about which I mentioned to him. I went back home not really knowing what would be the President's reaction to my conditions. I frankly thought that they would reject one of my proposals, however, less than a week later, I received another call from Secretary Bowles. He advised me that "The President accepted all your conditions." So I said, "Well, I guess I'm committed."

MOSS: All right. Now take it from there. What sort of briefings were you getting from the State Department and so on before you went out? [Interruption]

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[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

TELLES: Well, of course, I was called into Washington, and I spent, I would guess, about two or three weeks before I proceeded to my new assignment in San Jose, Costa Rica. We got the usual routine briefings, and I also had the opportunity to meet people who were working out of the State Department with Costa Rica, such as the desk officer and some of the officers of the State Department, and of course, I met Secretary Dean Rusk. They gave me briefings on the political situation of the country, on the economic and cultural development of the country and what the objectives of our government were and what they hoped that we would accomplish in our attempts to influence the different governments in so far as their political decisions. President Kennedy was very much interested in all the help that we could give not just to the government of the country, but also to the people who he felt were very much in need of economic help and development.

MOSS: How useful was all this? Did it square with the facts once you got there?

TELLES: Yes, it did. Once I arrived there I realized that the challenge was probably even greater than I had anticipated not that I didn't understand that it was going to be a

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challenge, but I think that once you get down there and see the realistic side of the picture, then you begin to understand what the President was talking about and his concerns and desires. As I said I also met with Secretary Dean Rusk. He was an extremely busy man at that point, and I did not actually get to discuss my assignment in depth with him before I left. I was anxious to get down into the country and to go to work, since President Kennedy had expressed his desire for the ambassadors to be in place immediately, or as soon as possible. I was anxious to tackle this challenge. So I left without talking to Secretary Rusk again for it seemed that it would be another couple of weeks before I could get to see him because of his busy schedule. And I thought that I had obtained as much information as I needed to start out with and anyway I had my own ideas as to how to approach the responsibility.

MOSS: Did you get the feeling that the State Department felt that you were their representative instead of the President's representative?

TELLES: Well, I think that this is always true, particularly when you deal with the old

career foreign service people in the Department. They like to believe that you are

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representing them, and they like to believe that you are their, well, their man, you know, to do what they consider their own, I guess, own program or policies. They forget many times that you are a direct representative of the President and of the people of the United States, you know. And I think that you run into some personality problems because of the feeling of career members of the State Department that you as a political presidential appointee do not belong to the tight circle of career diplomats who feel that they are running the show, and they forget at times that there's a president.

MOSS: I note from the President's calendar that in December of '61 you were back in Washington and attended the ceremony when Bowles was sworn in as a special representative for the underdeveloped world. What do you recall of that incident? Did the Bowles function really bear through as far as you were concerned, or what's your reaction to that?

TELLES: This was a change of assignment for under secretary Bowles, and possibly a little difficult for a good number of our ambassadors to understand. They felt, of course, that his assignment as under secretary was certainly very important, a job that required experience and required knowledge which I thought he had. It was

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difficult for me to understand why Bowles was being moved out. I'm not saying that he was or wasn't doing an outstanding job. That wasn't the point. My point was, if the man was doing the job, why do we change him at this point, you know? But there wasn't much more than that, other than the ceremony. And then everybody accepted it. I mean we might've questioned it in our own minds at the time and not necessarily related to his ability but just simply as to why the change.

MOSS: What sort of things did he do subsequent to that appointment that resulted in your contacts with him, for instance?

TELLES: Well, I think I saw Bowles maybe once or twice after that over the years, for no particular reason, other than I just happened to meet him.

MOSS: Is it your impression that he was actually put on the shelf, that he wasn't really given a function?

TELLES: Well, this is only an impression that I got from reading newspapers. It seems that there were a number of people that were after him for many reasons, and

again, I was not in a position to judge as to whether or not the change was justified. But there again, it was the President's decision. We accepted it and went right along.

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MOSS: Okay, in 1962 February, there's an election in Costa Rica. What do you recall of that, of the situation?

TELLES: Well, that was a very, very interesting period in the history of that country. In fact, I was in Costa Rica for two presidential elections, in 1962 and 1966.

There was a certain amount of fear of a number of internal, political problems during both campaigns. And certainly, being there as the U.S. ambassador, I was very much aware not only of the political problems, but what it meant to our country to do what I could in order that the country would be encouraged to have a democratic type of election. Costa Rica had been known as a truly democratic country, and it would've been tragic if it had proven otherwise, especially in the eyes of the rest of Latin America because the rest of Latin America has a great deal of respect and admiration for that country as being certainly a very democratic type of country and people. So as U.S. ambassador, a representative of my government down there, of course, I was very much concerned with the political situation at that time, hoping and praying and doing something about it to try to keep it at a peaceful and even keel.

MOSS: What is the significance of the election of Orlich in 1962 after Echandi [Mario Echandi Jimenez]?

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TELLES: Well, I honestly believe that President Orlich was much friendlier towards the United States, a better friend, a closer friend than Echandi. Echandi was a little bit unhappy with us. In fact, when I arrived in Costa Rica, I had a few problems to begin with. I had a problem in presenting my credentials in that it took me a couple of weeks before I was able to present my credentials. It was very evident to me that President Echandi was not being very receptive, not to me personally, but to my government. He was unhappy with the fact that President Kennedy mentioned Jose Figueres [Jose Pepe Figueres Ferrer] a deadly political enemy, in his initial Alliance for Progress speech, you know, when he initiated the program. In fact, it worked both ways, both were deadly political enemies; I'm speaking of Echandi and Figueres. President Kennedy, on the advice that he had gotten from his people and the Department of State, mentioned Figueres' name in his speech and this upset President Echandi quite a bit. And it reflected in his attitude towards me when I arrived there, you know. In fact an ambassador from another country arrived there after I did, and he was allowed to present his credentials before I was, which was...

MOSS: A snub.

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TELLES: A complete snub. And if I'd been rather touchy or sensitive about it, and if I had not been so thoroughly impressed with President Kennedy's sincerity in his objectives and what he wanted me to do, I probably would've gone back to Texas because this was a snub, a slap in the face not only to me personally, but to my government, you know, to have some other country's representatives come in later on and be accepted before I was. So I had to go to the foreign minister, and I put my cards on the table. I frankly told him that I was there on the personal instructions of President Kennedy to make friends with the government and the people of Costa Rica, that my future actions and activities in the country would certainly reflect that President Kennedy was a friend of Costa Rica. I also stated that I wanted the opportunity to talk to President Echandi and tell him that I was there to make friends. I told him that I was there to help in any way that I could, and that I realized that his attitude was not a personal affront to me because Raymond Telles was just another ambassador, and that, therefore, I would appreciate it very much if he would give me the opportunity to indicate to him through actions exactly what my government stood for,

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what President Kennedy's attitude was toward Costa Rica -- which I felt was certainly a friendly one and that we wanted to become friends -- and therefore, I was asking for the opportunity to do so. So two or three days later I presented my credentials, and soon after that, President Echandi and I became very good friends. We used to attend the football games together, you know. I had a very enjoyable year with President Echandi.

Then, of course, President Orlich came into office after the 1962 elections, and he was the one that I was finally able to encourage to have Costa Rica join the Central American Common Market. And as I said, President Orlich was always very friendly towards the United States, not that he didn't have a mind of his own because he did, and his country came first. But everything being equal, as long as we showed that we meant to be friends and that we were sincere in our approach and interest toward Costa Rica, why, he certainly indicated the same kind of attitude and feeling. I worked with him very closely, which was very instrumental in many of the decisions and votes of Costa Rica in the U. N. and OAS. All during the time that I was there, the six years that I was there, Costa Rica never cast a vote in opposition to the

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United States in any of the proposals that came up before the U.N. and the OAS.

MOSS: How significant in the economy of Costa Rica is the dominance of Yankee money? I think of the position of banks like Chase Manhattan and the First National City of New York and the United Fruit situations, and so on.

TELLES: First of all, you see, they have a nationalized banking system. The six years that I was there the banks were controlled by the Costa Rican government. There were no private banks, certainly no U.S. banks. And even now, they're still nationalized. I think they are allowing banks, like maybe the Bank of America to come in, but only to make loans, not to accept deposits. So that you can say that the banking system is still nationalized, and I think that as long as Pepe Figueres is president, this situation will remain because it was his baby. He's the one that initiated this nationalistic type of banking system for Costa Rica.

MOSS: What about the role of the United Fruit Company?

TELLES: Well, all during the time that I was there, I felt that the United Fruit Company was doing a good job. When I say a good job, I don't mean just strictly in raising bananas, cultivating bananas, but I mean in cultivating the friendship of the people and the government of Costa Rica. Unfortunately the United Fruit Company

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enjoyed a very negative popularity with Costa Ricans because of what they had done in past history. And my understanding was, of course, that United Fruit wasn't exactly a good friend at the time.

MOSS: Refresh my memory a bit. Was it United Fruit that brought in the Jamaicans and they raised bananas in the low country originally?

TELLES: Yes, that's right. It was the indifferent attitude of the company that generated animosity from the people. I understand they weren't exactly concerned with the welfare of the people, the way that people were treated, you know. But this has changed considerably. It has changed, I would say, 100 percent now. They were providing homes for the workers, schools for their children, hospitals and commissaries. The working conditions were much better. The salaries had been raised to where they were certainly fair and reasonable, but unfortunately, the past reputation and image of the company carried through the years even after the many improvements. It was very difficult for the company to erase the reputation and image that they had created for themselves from previous years activities. For example, to give you an idea of what I'm talking about, Standard Fruit came into Costa

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Rica much later, but they were certainly intelligent in that they took advantage of United Fruit Company's past history and tried to avoid the mistakes that the United Fruit Company had committed, and so consequently, their public relations were much better not only because they were doing a good job and were treating people with consideration, but because they

had avoided the mistakes that United Fruit had made over the years. They were enjoying good public relations with Costa Rica with the people and government.

MOSS: You mentioned earlier that you had finally convinced President Kennedy to come to Latin America and to make it an occasion for the six presidents to meet.

TELLES: The meeting of the six presidents was President Kennedy's idea. I had recommended a visit by the President to Latin America and of course to Central America whether it be to Costa Rica or any one of the other countries. Naturally I was partial to Costa Rica because I felt that it was a democratic country and I knew the people there. I knew that they liked him, that they admired him, and I knew that there wouldn't be any problems as far as he personally was concerned if he came to Costa Rica. But then he

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suggested, or rather he felt, that a meeting with all the presidents would be productive and certainly was very much needed at that point. And so this is how it happened. He decided to meet with the presidents of the Central American countries and Panama in Costa Rica. This was certainly a turning point in the history of the Central American countries as far as their own country relationship and friendship. Never in the history had these countries been able to get together. There were always certain economic and political animosities between them. And then to have President Kennedy bring them together, it was not only historical but beneficial and productive as far as the individual personal friendship between the Central American countries and the presidents. President Kennedy's visit was also significant in that it helped in furthering the progress and success of Alliance for Progress and the Central American Common Market. Also, the visit not only brought them together for the first time, but helped them to have a better understanding of each other and of the problems of the countries once they got together. After that, of course, these meetings were continued among the Central American countries. They met on their own

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initiative in different countries, which I thought was great. And this was all because of President Kennedy's initiative and visit. Yes, this was the first time in history that it had ever been done.

MOSS: I note from the schedule that he not only met together with them in a group, but he also met each one separately. How was that scheduled? How did you decide who was to go first?

TELLES: Well, this was a very, very difficult decision to make, you know, because at that time you had a couple of presidents that were very, very sensitive about

their status in life. And I think that if I recall, we finally ended up doing it alphabetically, so that there wouldn't be any feelings hurt on the part of anybody. They met with President Kennedy individually at the ambassador's residence -- that is, my residence. Everything went well. I forgot to mention that all of our U.S. ambassadors to Central America were there also so that each accompanied the president from each Central American country to the meeting with President Kennedy there at the residence.

MOSS: How do you recall your fellow ambassadors? Could you run down the list and tell me what you remember of them, what you thought of them at the time?

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TELLES: Well, I think that we had some very fine ambassadors. We had very capable men serving. Let me see if I can find them here. Let me see. While I'm looking for this list I might relate to you a very interesting incident involving Senator Fulbright [J. William Fulbright]. He accompanied President Kennedy to Costa Rica.

MOSS: So did Senator Morse [Wayne Morse] I remember.

TELLES: Yes. The reception given President Kennedy by the people of Costa Rica was so wonderful, so great. It was incredible. Thousands and thousands of people surrounded President Kennedy in an atmosphere of true friendship and admiration. And I thought many times after President Kennedy had been assassinated that anybody could've done bodily harm to him there in Costa Rica if they'd wanted to because they were that close to him, you know. There were thousands of people surrounding him and walkin along beside his car. It was very apparent that President Kenendy was moved by such friendly reception that I am certain that his desire at the moment was to get out of his car and meet the people and shake their hands. After we left the airport -- the airport was located at the edge of town, the convoy started out and Senator Fulbright's

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car was separated from the convoy because of the tremendous wave of people. So Senator Fulbright lost his place in the convoy and his car couldn't get through. He had to get out and walk. And he walked about, it must have been at least three miles from this centrally located airport to the presidential house. I was very much concerned, you know, by the fact that he had been cut off from the convoy, and I made every effort, of course, to get to him after that, and hope that he was safe and he wasn't too unhappy, but no, he took it quite well. Senator Fulbright was a very good friend of President Kennedy and I am certain that he was pleased with the opportunity to accompany the President to Costa Rica and particularly pleased with the tremendous friendly reception that Costa Rica had given President Kennedy, our President.

MOSS: I believe the list is towards the end. The last page but one, Wednesday, March

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TELLES: Yes, here it is, of course, Murat Williams who was our ambassador in El Salvador, and then John Bell, our ambassador in Guatemala. Charles Burrows was ambassador in Honduras, and Aaron Brown who was ambassador to Nicaragua. Let's see, of course, I was the ambassador

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to Costa Rica.

MOSS: You missed Joe Farland [Joseph S. Farland] from Panama.

TELLES: I didn't mention the name of my very good friend Joe Farland because I wanted to make one special comment about him. As you know Panama is not considered part of Central America. For a long time Panama didn't know whether they wanted to be considered a part of Central America or whether they wanted to be a part of South America, but South America didn't really want them as part of their group. And Panama was not entirely satisfied being considered as a member of the Central American group of countries and so they were more or less independent in that respect. All the ambassadors in the Central American countries were career officers, every one of them. I was the only presidential political appointee at the time, besides Joe Farland. I was very fortunate in that I had a good relationship with all of our ambassadors. We worked very well together. In fact, we did the same thing that the presidents of these different countries did after the visit by President Kennedy. After that, every six months, all of our ambassadors would meet in the different countries to talk about our problems and talk about solutions that we had implemented and

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how they worked and where they failed. I felt that these meeting quite productive in that it brought us closer to each other, closer to the problems of each other, and certainly to methods of solution to the problems. Our many common problems. It worked out very nicely. Now Joe Farland, he's a very interesting individual. He did a tremendous job in Panama. He was also a political appointee, a political appointee by President Eisenhower, and President Kennedy retained him for, I guess, over a year after he came into office. And I think that the did because Joe Farland was doing a terrific job. He was a type of fellow that did what I believed in, and that is, he got close to the people. And people even today in Panama -- I've had a chance to visit there -- still remember Joe Farland. So as I said, I was very fortunate in having that calibre of ambassadors to work with, even though they were career ambassadors, and I was not. They were all very friendly. They were very capable, helpful, understanding, and we got along real fine. And I think they all did a very good job for the President.

MOSS: No professional jealousy at all?

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TELLES: No, there was no professional jealousy whatsoever. And this was amazing to me being an outsider, in effect, and yet I was well received. I was taken into the group. Undoubtedly President Kennedy's visit to Costa Rica did a lot towards their attitude in my assignment and so forth. I enjoyed it very much, my association with these people.

MOSS: Do you recall the things that were uppermost in people's minds during this meeting, this San Jose meeting?

TELLES: I think that undoubtedly the economic development of the countries and the Central American Common Market and the Alliance for Progress program were the most important subjects on their minds which they discussed at the meeting of the presidents. Plus the desire of the Central American presidents for closer relationship and solution to their common problems.

MOSS: How well do you think President Kennedy and his entourage grasped what was being told to them?

TELLES: I think that President Kennedy personally, undoubtedly grasped exactly what these people were talking about. I think that he left Costa Rica with that in mind, and what he did in his future actions, indicated to

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me that he was quite aware of what was bothering the Central American countries. We had some very interesting moments during the presidential visit, of course. As I recall, prior to the President's visit we had several weeks of considerable amount of preparation that had to be done by everybody in Washington, in the State Department, particularly by the assistant secretary at that time who was Ed Martin, and of course, Ted Moscoso, who headed the AID program. And they asked me, of course, for a number of suggestions as to what the President should do while in the country and so forth. Two or three of the suggestions that I submitted were not accepted by Martin and by the President's advisors. For example, he was there the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth of March. The nineteenth of March is a national religious holiday in Costa Rica. It's Saint Joseph's Day in San Jose, and after all, the capital was named after Saint Joseph. One of my recommendations, of course, was that he should attend Mass that day and let it be known that he was aware of the fact that this was their Saint's day particularly since he was a Catholic. The other one was the visit to the university.

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I was quite emphatic and forceful in my recommendation that he should visit the university. There were thousands of students in the university, and I had been doing everything I could to generate this friendly feeling towards the United States and to the President on the part of the students because I was well aware of the fact that again, President Kennedy was very much interested in the young people, not only young people in our country, but young people in the other countries. Besides, the young people were the future leaders of these countries and peace and friendship with our country in years to come would be in their hands. And so, as I said, I made several recommendations. I think it was three of them. I can't recall right now what the third one was, but in any event, three which I considered most important and which were rejected by Martin and also by the presidential advisors. Prior to the presidential visit we had a meeting of ambassadors from the different countries, U.S. ambassadors to discuss the visit. And I guess I was a little bit too blunt and forceful about my recommendations. I was very unhappy about the fact that they had rejected these particular recommendations, and I let it be known in no uncertain terms. Of course,

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this didn't exactly bring me into the friendly fold of Martin and some of the advisors, but I could care less because I felt that it was that important. In any event, the program went on as was scheduled without these certain recommendations which I had made among others.

When the President finally arrived in Costa Rica, I was still concerned about my recommendations which had been rejected so I went to the President himself, and I said, "Mr. President, I made the recommendation that on the nineteenth of March that you should attend Mass at the Cathedral." He said, "Raymond, I've been advised not only by the State Department, but by my aides and security that I should not attend Mass." I said, "Mr. President, let me just mention three reasons why I think you should. First of all, it is Saint Joseph's Day, it's a Catholic national holiday. Secondly, they know that you are a Catholic. And third, they know that you attended Mass in Mexico during your visit in that country for no other reason except that it was a Sunday. And I honestly believe that, first of all, it might generate a question in the minds of the people of Costa Rica as to your reluctance, being

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a Catholic, to attend Mass. And on the other hand, if you do attend I believe that these people will love you for it." Well, he said, "I don't know. The security people are against it," and he went over the same thing again. I said, "Well, again I'd like to very strongly recommend this, Mr. President." And then he turned around and smiled and said, "All right, I'll do it." And this is why I said before that President Kennedy was the type of man that made changes in his own decisions if he felt that there was justification enough to warrant his change of mind or decision. And so he did.

He went to Mass the next day on the nineteenth, and it was certainly the greatest thing that he could've ever done. I don't mind telling you I was quite concerned because I was very well aware of the recommendations of Martin and his aides and security people and what their concerns were, too, but the archbishop met him there at the church and even though it

was the night before, the decision was made at nine o'clock at night on the eighteenth and he went to church at eight o'clock the next morning. Even though the decision was made at that time of the

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night, and certainly there was no publicity given, somehow the people knew that he was going to be there, you know. I guess they expected it. This was what I was concerned about. Sure enough, the cathedral was jammed packed. The street several blocks from the church were completely jammed with people. And of course, the archbishop was quite happy, you know, about it. So anyhow, I think the President was very pleased in the fact that I insisted so much.

Then of course, the other was the visit to the university. And again Martin and his security people and aides had been very much opposed to it. And I talked to them first. I never wanted to go around them unless I had to. So I talked to him aides and to his advisors and I told them, I said, "Look, I realize what you're concerned about. However, never in the history has a President of the United States visited on the campus of a university in Latin America. I know that you're concerned with violence and what could happen." I said, "But I know these people well enough. I've been at the university any number of times. I've made it a point to make friends of those people.

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And I feel that it would be productive for the President and our country to visit at the university. These are young people. These are the future leaders of these countries." I said, "I think you should." So, no, they wouldn't even listen. So once more, I went to the President and I said, "Mr. President, I think you should visit the university." And I gave him my reasons. And he agreed which made me feel quite wonderful, but at the same time, all of a sudden, I realized the responsibility involved. Here are all these other people that were fighting the idea, and they had good reasons, well, justifiable reasons. And for a president to decide in my favor as against the advice of all these other people, why, this was something that concerned me quite a bit. In other words, at that moment I kind of wished that I had not recommended it, you know. But anyhow he accepted it and many little incidents happened during this visit that made it quite interesting.

For example, prior to our flight by helicopter from my residence to the university, we had gotten word that there was a little bit of a problem and we were not certain what it was so the flight was delayed. There were thousands of people at the university. They were packed in the campus like cigarettes in a package,

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you know, and there were thousands of students. There seemed to be a little bit of a problem there, a kind of an incident that they couldn't quite determine what it was at that point involving possibly a communist move. But the fact was that the police, as such, were not

permitted to go into the campus, however, I had made other arrangements prior to the visit. I made arrangements with the university themselves to organize their own security force among the students. In other words, gave them the responsibility. The actual flight to the university was delayed about oh, I don't know, thirty minutes, and all the time the security people were going crazy. So finally the word came back that everything was quiet and no problem. So we flew into the university. I was with him in the helicopter. We flew in there and sure enough that place was jammed packed with thousands of people. It was really something. And he got a tremendous ovation, a wonderful reception by all of them. Of course, we knew that there were Red elements, communist elements in the crowd, and we had hoped that the student security forces would keep them under control.

Well, during his speech the loud speaker system gave us trouble. It would go off, not completely, but the

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tone, the strength of the speakers would almost reduce to nothing. I could just see in my imagination and worry the Commies cutting the wires and all that, which made it a little difficult for the President to deliver his speech. Fortunately, we got through that without a major incident. I found out later on that it wasn't that the Communists had tampered with the loudspeaker system. It was just simply that the system was not powerful enough to take the number of speakers around the campus. The electrical system was not adequate enough to take care of the system. So naturally the fuses were blowing out and the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] people, or security people, were going crazy putting in new fuses, but we got over that all right, and President Kennedy made a wonderful speech to the young people, primarily directed to them. It was well received. When it was over, we had a difficult time keeping people away from him. This was our biggest problem in Costa Rica, I mean trying to keep people from getting too close to him. However, he was the type of a man that wanted to be close to the people. I remember when he inaugurated a housing project for

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the poor as part of his visit in a small town right outside of San Jose. He went in one door and out the other evading all of the security people and walked right into the middle of thousands of people to shake their hands. And you should've seen the security people who were going crazy and there was no way that they could provide adequate protection against physical harm if anyone had intended to harm the President.

MOSS: I imagine.

TELLES: The security people were concerned and I can understand it too, but this is exactly what he did. He went in one door and out the other and right into this big mob. But he was treated very nicely. I mean, of course, it's always difficult when you have that many people and getting close to you. But anyhow we finally were able to get on the helicopter after much effort on the part of all the people concerned

and security people. People just wanted to touch him. They wanted to be close to him. So we finally got on the helicopter. He sat in his chair. He had a big reclining chair in the helicopter, and I was sitting across from it. I was in some ways relaxing and thanking the good Lord that everything

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had gone all right down there realizing the responsibility involved in my having recommended, in fact insisted on his visit to the university in opposition to his advisors. And I was sort of looking down at the floor, you know, like a man that said, "Well, I have been reprimanded." I knew that anything could have gone wrong down there, and it would've been well, a problem for me to say the least, or the understatement of the century. So all of a sudden I kind of looked up and the President was looking at me, and he was smiling. And he said it was a -- well, he used the word damn -- he said, "It's a damn good thing that everything went off all right down there." He looked at me and I said, "Mr. President, don't you think I know it?" That's what I'll never forget, I'll never forget the expression on his face, you know, when he said, "It's a damn good thing that everything went off all right down there." His expression of satisfaction with the results of his visit but also his understanding of my personal concern were most significant to me.

So anyhow, I thought that of all the things that he did in Costa Rica, I think that one of the most productive and effective was that visit to the university because it was a visit with the young people

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of the country, the future leaders of the country, and also the fact that it was the first time in history that one of our presidents had even dared walk into a university campus in Latin America. I'm not sure that anybody has done it since. But it was the first time at that point. So I think that the whole visit was a tremendous success not only for President Kennedy as an individual, the President of the United States, but certainly for our country and for the Central American presidents too because as I said before, it brought them together. In reference to President Kennedy's assassination, it was terrible. Those were days that I'll never forget. [Interruption]

MOSS: Okay. Now, I think that my questions are pretty well exhausted. Are there things that you still have on your list that you want to talk about.

TELLES: Well, I think that the news of the death of President Kennedy was taken as a personal or national tragedy in Costa Rica. You would walk the streets that day and you would see people crying openly. And Costa Ricans were not ashamed to show their emotions and feelings and they were just, well, it was a terrible blow to them because they loved the man. They had

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seen him just a few months back. Some of them had gotten as close as to be able to touch him, you know. And it was a personal tragedy as far as they were concerned. To indicate to you how they felt about it, just a couple of small incidents, or small happenings there. There was a little old Costa Rican lady that came to the embassy. I knew that she was poor. I mean I doubt seriously that she even had enough to eat on. But she came to me and handed me a ten colon bill. Colon is their dollar over there, but what it amounted to was a dollar and a half in U.S. currency. She brought it to me knowing that she could use it much more than anybody else, but she said, "I want you to send this to Mrs. Kennedy. Now that President Kennedy is dead, I'm sure that she is going to have many expenses. So please send this money to her." It was a lot of money to that little old lady. It was just amazing. I had another fellow that came, a fairly young man. He says, "Look, Mr. Ambassador, all I want you to do is let me go into the country, and I'll guarantee you that I will kill the man that murdered President Kennedy, with tears in his eyes.

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And I could tell that he was serious, you know, he was very emotional about it. It was just many, many such happenings that made you feel proud not only to be an American, but the fact that you were associated with a person like President Kennedy that would generate this friendly feeling and admiration towards him and towards our country from people of other countries. They loved their own country just as much as they loved their own president, but it seemed that they had lost their own president when President Kennedy was killed. I mean that's the way they felt about it, you know, very strongly. And then, of course, there were many, many religious services throughout the whole country and I had a difficult time the following month trying to keep up with them because naturally I tried to attend all these services. And it was quite a job, because there were so many in all different communities and cities and towns and villages who were having these religious services for him that it was quite difficult to attend all of them.

MOSS: I can imagine.

TELLES: Now President Kennedy certainly generated a lot of friendship, sincerity, and love, not only from him to them, but from them to him. And he had quite a

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bit of concern for the youth. I remember when he was there too, he asked to visit a new hospital, a children's hospital that they were building in Costa Rica. He requested to visit the hospital. He went to the hospital and visited the facilities and had a grand time visiting the sick children already there. After he left, he made a very substantial personal contribution, to be applied to the purchase of instruments and different types of equipment for the hospital.

Also, soon after his visit, Costa Rica was hit hard by the eruption of the volcano Irazù which erupted continually for two years. This was quite a tragedy in the country, not only the constant danger and fear of this volcano for two years -- which was right outside of San Jose -- but the damage and destruction to homes, crops and cattle. Also, everyday the entire city and the entire area would be covered with about 1½ to 2 inches of ashes. The Costa Rican people, brave people, they just fought it. I mean, anybody else would've just left, but everyday the Costa Ricans would be up early fighting this thing. And of course President Kennedy was very much aware of

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this too. Well, anyhow, he was very helpful to those people like he was to everybody that needed assistance. I made several trips with President Kennedy outside of my assignment as ambassador. He would bring me back from Costa Rica to travel with him. I went with him two or three times. This is why I felt so close to him. I looked at him not only as my President, but also as a friend.

MOSS: On what occasions did he have you come back?

TELLES: Well, for example, when he met with President Adolfo Lopez Mateos, of Mexico, he asked me to come to Washington and fly with him to meet with President Lopez Mateos on the Chamizal question. Another indication of President Kennedy's interest and friendship towards Latin America was when he took the necessary initial steps to resolve the problem of the Chamizal between the United States and Mexico. A disturbing problem which had been in existence for one-hundred years between the two countries. Also when he travelled in the Southwest part of the country, he would ask me to come up from Costa Rica and go with him and I travelled with him to New Mexico, Texas, and California. And

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in fact, the last time I saw him alive was in July of 1963 after I had been with him on one of these trips and he dropped me off in El Paso. He dropped me off in El Paso because at that time the Chamizal negotiations were going through a difficult period because of the opposition of some of the U.S. residents in the Chamizal area. There were about twenty-five hundred people on the El Paso side that would have to be relocated in order to return this section of the land to Mexico. And of course, the President had gotten word that the opposition was serious and a problem, that people were worried about turning their homes over to the government and not receiving just compensation. As I said, his concern for people was certainly wonderful. He knew that I'd been mayor of El Paso and that I knew the people and he said, "Raymond," he said, "I want you to look into this problem. I'm going to drop you in El Paso. I want you to spend whatever time you need. I want you to see the people, talk to them, find out what the problems are, find out if they understand what is going on in connection with the Chamizal negotiations.

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Then you assure them that under any circumstances, they will not be hurt, that we are going to do everything we can to take care of them.” As I said the relocation involved approximately twenty-five hundred people. These people knew me, of course, having been Mayor of El Paso for four years. I talked to them and checked on what was going on and what was troubling them. And I found out that the residents’ concern was certainly legitimate, that the people were quite unhappy primarily about moving away from a location where they had lived for years, where many of them had been born. Secondly, the fact that, at that point, our good old government was not willing to pay them what it would take to replace their little homes in some other location. These homes were owned by them. They were very proud of them, you know.

I reported all this to the President. I told him that as far as the understanding of the program itself, the project itself, there was no problem. People understood what he was trying to do. He was trying to remove an obstacle or a problem that had existed between two countries, and they were accepting it as such. But this wasn’t the big problem with them.

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The big problem was their concern of having to move away from the area and the fact that they wouldn’t be able to own their little home somewhere else because they could not replace their homes with the offer made in payment of the same. So then, with that in mind, of course, the President gave instructions that they would be paid for the actual cost of replacement, which was much more than they had been previously offered by our government. So that was taken care of. So again this showed President Kennedy’s concern for people. And also this particular project, the Chamizal, showed his concern and his desire to generate friendship towards our country by other countries, and to live in peace, which certainly was a wonderful gesture because the land involved wasn’t very much. It was about four hundred acres, and it wasn’t that important, but it was a problem as far as Mexico was concerned. It was the principle of the thing more than anything else. So he wanted to resolve that problem. He’s the one that initiated it. I had gone into it before when I was mayor, but we had to drop it simply because the solution was way above our level, the mayor’s level.

MOSS: Yeah. It’s an international boundary question.

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TELLES: Yes. But I was very happy that he got me involved because it was a very interesting project. So as I said, I did travel with him, and the last time was in July of 1963. And the interesting part about it, before he went to Dallas, he had asked me to come and join him there. But unfortunately, at that moment, there were certain official matters that came up in Costa Rica that had to be taken care of, and I didn’t believe that it was the thing to do, for me to leave at that point. So I called the WHite House

and advised one of his aides to please tell the President the situation, that I would like to suggest that I remain there, but if he said, "Come," well, I'd go. So they did. I got word back from the President. He said, "Well, if in your judgment, you think you better stay there, go ahead." So I did. And then I got a letter from him on that Friday when he was killed. I received it the same day. He had written it before he left Washington. He was telling me, of course, that he was sorry that I couldn't meet him in Dallas, but he wanted me to be sure and see him the next time I was in Washington. He wanted to talk to me. Well, you can imagine how I felt, getting the letter the day that he died. But as I said, I was quite deeply and sincerely grateful to him because of the opportunity that he gave

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me to serve my country, and the opportunity to associate with people of other countries which I thought was great. And I know that he had other assignments in mind for me. In fact, I know that he wanted to talk to me about a new assignment. He had already mentioned it before. I was going to go as ambassador to another country, to a larger country. In fact, it was to Mexico.

MOSS: Ah ha.

TELLES: Yes. He told me the last time I saw him in July 1963 that our present U.S. Ambassador to Mexico was retiring in December. He said he had confidence in me and believed I could do a good job for him. Also, he felt that this was certainly an experiment because there were people in Washington who doubted that a U.S. Ambassador of Mexican heritage would not be acceptable to Mexico.

The President felt that this assignment could prove quite successful and possibly setting a precedent for future ambassadors assignments. When he was in Costa Rica, he talked to President Orlich about me. He said, "What do you think about sending ambassadors of Latin decent to these countries?" And of course,

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Orlich was quite generous and loud in his praise for it, you know. So at that time Tom Mann [Thomas C. Mann] was the ambassador in Mexico, and he was retiring in November of '63. And so the President had already talked to me about going to Mexico. And of course, I was very happy about it because I thought it was an excellent challenge. And I know that that's what he wanted to talk to me about when he wrote to me. He said, "Be sure and see me the next time you are in Washington." Well, in any event, I'm sure that not only my life changed, but the lives of many people all over the world changed when he died.

Probably another great honor that he presented me with.... And this is unbelievable; I couldn't believe it myself, and I guess, I would say that the majority of people wouldn't believe it either. In August of '63, if you recall, we were without a postmaster general. And I was advised out of a clear blue sky that I was one of a few people who were being considered by Bob Kennedy and President Kennedy for that job. I never could figure out why he would

even consider me for such an important job, but the fact is that I did get the call to Costa Rica. I was due to meet Bobby Kennedy in Chicago in August. One of the national civil groups -- I believe it was the LULACS [League of United Latin American Citizens]

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or the American GI Forum, one of those groups were having their national convention, and I was supposed to speak at one of their functions. Also, Bob Kennedy was scheduled to speak. I received this phone call from one of the President's aides who said, "Look, we understand that you're supposed to go to Chicago. The President doesn't want you to go. Stay there." And I said, "Well, but I'm supposed to speak." "Well," he says, "Bobby Kennedy is aware of it, and he'll take care of that for you. But you stay there." I said, "What goes on?" He said, "Well," he says, "Do not repeat it, but you're one of the -- oh, I don't know how many there are -- several men that he's considering for the job as postmaster general." I said, "You must be kidding. You must be talking to the wrong man. He wouldn't consider me for that kind of a job." He says, "Well, all I'm telling you is what the President asked me to tell you, to just stay put." So another week went by and I got another call from the White House. I was told that, "Well, just to let you know that you're one of three that are now remaining in this race and not to move because the President may want you to come up any time."

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Well, I don't know, a few days passed and I got another call, and this time it was to let me know that Gronouski had been selected, you know. Just the fact that the President thought enough of me to consider me for such an important job, which I still don't understand why, but he did, I thought it was very kind of him and it was indeed an honor for me. And I don't know just why he did, but he did.

MOSS: Did you get involved at all in the 1968 campaigning and politics and so on?

TELLES: With President Johnson?

MOSS: Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] and Robert Kennedy, you know, in '68. That skips one.

TELLES: Oh, I'm sorry. I was thinking about the Johnson campaign in '64. Sixty-eight, no not really. Oh, I could not become involved in the 1968 political campaign because I was in government. I was then the Chairman of the U.S.-Mexico Border Commission and I felt that it might detract from our work with Mexico. I also felt that that was much more important at that point than my becoming active in the campaign. I was willing, of course, to do what I could to help. And I was invited to several

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gatherings in Texas, where Vice President Humphrey was present but that was it.

MOSS: How did you view the candidacy of Robert Kennedy?

TELLES: Well, I felt that it was going to be an uphill climb all the way, that it was going to be quite difficult for Bobby Kennedy for the simple reason that, well, as I mentioned to you before, I felt that Ted Kennedy was the politician of the family, that Bobby was the organizer. The President, of course, combined all the qualities necessary to be president, that is personality, statesmanship, charisma and image, maybe not to the extent that Bobby Kennedy had for organization and Ted as a politician, but he had a combination of all the qualities that made him an ideal candidate and an extraordinary person of great leadership. I felt that while I was certainly for Bobby Kennedy, and that he was strong in the field of organization, however because of what had happened over the years, in fact, during President Kennedy's campaign, that he had made a few enemies, that I thought might work against him because they were still angry or unhappy with him. And of course, I know that President Johnson was never, or entirely happy with Bobby and vice versa. I think everybody knew that

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there were some personal feelings between them and so I felt that this would work against him and over all it was going to be very difficult, very difficult. However, there still was a possibility that he could make it.

MOSS: Do you have anything else that you think we should cover?

TELLES: No, I think we have covered the subject well, however, if later on you wish to ask me further questions, I will be glad to cooperate.

MOSS: Well, let me simply say at the end, Mr. Ambassador, this has been a very fruitful couple of hours, and we certainly thank you for making this contribution to the library.

TELLES: Well, I hope that my small and insignificant contribution will be acceptable. In any event, I want you to know that I was certainly willing and I want to cooperate with you because of my admiration and respect for President John F. Kennedy. And even though my contribution may not be substantial, still my desire and willingness to help, again, is due to my personal feeling for the President.

MOSS: Well, fine. Thank you very much. It's much appreciated.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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