

**Henry Hall Wilson Oral History Interview –JFK #1, 11/27/1968**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Henry Hall Wilson  
**Interviewer:** Larry J. Hackman  
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**Biographical Note**

Wilson, Henry Hall; Administrative Assistant to the President (1961-1967); Member, Democratic National Committee (1953-1961). Wilson discusses his involvement in the gubernatorial and presidential campaigns of 1960 in the state of North Carolina. He also touches upon the delegation of staff positions within the Kennedy Administration, among other issues.

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Gift of Papers and Other Historical Materials  
of  
Henry Hall Wilson  
to the  
John F. Kennedy Library

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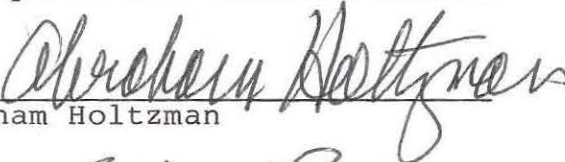
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Abraham Holtzman

  
Date

Pursuant to the authority of chapter 21 of title 44, United States Code, the foregoing gift of the papers and other historical materials of the Donor is accepted on behalf of the United States of America, subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions heretofore set forth.

  
Archivist of the United States

  
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APPENDIX A

(Attached to and forming part of instrument of gift of  
papers and other historical materials, executed by:

Abraham Holtzman Donor  
*Abraham Holtzman*

on 8 May 88

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## APPENDIX B

The following additional papers and other historical materials are donated to and accepted by the United States of America pursuant to paragraph 10 of the instrument of gift of papers and other historical materials, executed by Henry Hall Wilson, Donor, on May 8, 1988; and accepted by the Archivist of the United States on June 14, 1988.

Two (2) Oral History Interviews (November 27, 1968 and April 20, 1979) created by Henry Hall Wilson, interviewed by Larry Hackman and Sheldon Stern, respectively. 16pp. and 52pp.

Henry Hall Wilson – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

With

HENRY H. WILSON, JR.

November 27, 1968  
Chicago, Illinois

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Why don't you just take off by going back as far as you can on any connection you had with either John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] or his aides. '56 is maybe a good place to start. I don't know if there's anything before that or not, the '56 Convention.

WILSON: Yes. I opposed him for vice president.

HACKMAN: Did he make any personal efforts in the delegation at that time?

WILSON: No. Well, I'm sure he talked to Hodges [Luther H. Hodges] who was the governor and the leader of the delegation and who supported him in that election.

HACKMAN: Anybody working on his behalf in the delegation?

WILSON: Oh, I think Hodges had promised him a unanimous delegation, I'm confident he did, and discovered to his shock he couldn't deliver even a majority, which is a difference in the whole vice presidential effort.

HACKMAN: Why had Hodges calculated that he could deliver? What did he run into that prevented him?

WILSON: Me and Scott [William Kerr Scott].

HACKMAN: Who was he?

WILSON: Scott was a senator.

HACKMAN: Right.

WILSON: And Hodges had become governor, that is lieutenant governor upon the death of Umstead [William B. Umstead] two years earlier. As the incumbent governor, he was also the newly nominated governor. It had been a unanimous delegation for Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] simply because our wing of the party was for Stevenson anyway. You know, just philosophic.

HACKMAN: Yes.

WILSON: When I got Kennedy into North Carolina in October of '56, I was at that time also president of the state Young Democrats organization. We had a picture at home of him and me at the convention. I had Scott introduce him that night. He taking wry cognizance of the fact that Scott had opposed him for the vice presidential nomination. He prefaced his remarks, or couched his acknowledgement of the fact by telling what became a very well known story of the man found in the desert with the arrows in his back. I don't know how much of that you want to get into. What the hell, what are you after? You know, we can start anywhere or talk about anything. I could just say we went to the convention and start talking.

HACKMAN: Yes, can you recall efforts from anybody from out of the state on behalf....

WILSON: I don't think as far as I know, there were no contacts made with the delegation other than what I presume were efforts directly with Hodges. It was an overnight preposition, you recall. You running this thing here?

HACKMAN: Yes, yes.

WILSON: Well, let me back up a little bit. The delegation to the 1956 Convention went unanimous with Stevenson's first ballot, the only ballot. He was opposed, to the degree he was opposed, by Governor Harriman [W. Averill Harriman] at that point. Sanford [Terry Sanford] and I were roommates here in Chicago during the convention. And when overnight Stevenson threw open the convention for vice presidential purposes, Governor Hodges announced to the delegation that his choice was JFK. I didn't know him, had no contact with him. A lot of our people were somewhat mystified as to why large number of Deep South states were going for JFK, and didn't much like it. I can't cite at the moment just the vote of the delegation, but I do recall that somewhat less than half of the delegation went with JFK.

HACKMAN: On the first ballot for vice president, Hodges took all the votes as a "favorite son" vice presidential candidate.

WILSON: May have been, I didn't remember how many.

HACKMAN: The second time, I think was--I've got that somewhere, let me see--seventeen and a half for Kennedy, seven and a half for Gore [Albert Gore], nine and a half for Kefauver [Estes Kefauver]. So it was just a little less than half.

WILSON: Just a touch less than half the vote. And as I recall it, if the delegate had gone unanimously for Kennedy, it would have been enough to nominate him. And he probably never would have been President.

Now, I was President of the state Young Democrats that year. The YDC [Young Democratic Committee] in North Carolina has, through all the years, including the present, I suppose, been the effective and widely represented YDC in the country. The YDC began in North Carolina. The first national president in 1933 was from North Carolina. We had that year.... We built up the membership to about forty thousand paid members, and we had a newspaper. And we had meetings, statewide meetings, about every two months, and regional meetings more frequently than that. We had during that year for example, Sam Rayburn [Samuel T. Rayburn], John Sparkman [James E. Sparkman], and Kissing Jim Folsom [James E. Folsom], but the candidates for president, like Stevenson, Kefauver, and Harriman, were there. And for our state convention, which was at the beginning of October 1956, I contacted and procured JFK. He came to Winston-Salem, made a hell of a speech and fired an impact on our people. No contact with him thereafter.

Alright, skip over, 1960, Sanford running for governor. I was assistant campaign manager and in charge of the state headquarters and just stayed full time with it from the beginning of the year forwards. Our first primary was the last Saturday in May. We were involved in the second primary in a mean racial fight, which we won very well by about seventy thousand votes. And that primary was the last Saturday in June which was two weeks before the Democratic National Convention. To that point, I'd no conversation with Sam about the presidency. And I'd had no contact with anyone in Washington, or anybody in any camp, though Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] had come down during June and he conferred one night with Terry Sanford and Burt Bennett [Bertram W. Bennett]. Burt was a campaign manager. I wasn't there; I was making a speech, and I just went ahead and made the speech.

So a great celebration on the night of the victory, the second primary, considered tantamount to election. And the next day, I had to remind rather forcibly the victorious candidate that he had made a commitment to go to a ball game in Durham the next afternoon. And we went over there despite the rain. Just the two of us spent the day together from noon through the early evening driving over, sitting around, sitting in this miserable ball park, talking about shaping up the state administration. We never once referred to the presidential thing, never thought of it.

The next morning was the convening of delegates to the Democratic National Convention in Raleigh. We met, selected, oh, the members of the various committees and so on. Noontime, we were about to break company, Sanford to go on a vacation, me to get back

and try to put together a law practice. So we sat down, a few minutes before I left, around the side of a swimming pool at a Howard Johnson Motel outside Raleigh in the blazing sun. And I said, "Well, before I say goodbye, just one thing. Where do you come out on the presidential conventions?" And he said, "We're committed." "We're committed? May I ask to whom we're committed?" "Committed to Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson.]" And I said, "To whom did you make the commitment?" "Everett Jordan [Everett B. Jordan]," who had upon the death of Kerr Scott in 1958 been appointed to the Senate to fill the unexpired term by Hodges and who had, in the first primary been renominated for the Senate in '60.

So, without asking why we were committed, or whether there was money or support in the campaign or whatever, and not much caring, I intimated that I was not committed. And after some cogitation, Sanford gets up, goes into his cabin, comes back in a few minutes, and says, "I'm clear." And I said, "What'd it cost you?" He said, "I'm committed now not to run against Jordan for the Senate in 1966." That's quite a pact, especially since the strong traditions in the state are such that one Senate seat is eastern, one is western. Jordan was regarded as an easterner and so is Sanford. And the governor may not succeed himself constitutionally. So we then went back in the cabin and called Bob Kennedy and told him that we were going to JFK, but that we didn't mean the full delegation nor did it mean remotely a majority. And so far as timing is concerned, it was up to the Kennedys. However, we would say that giving full cognizance to the fact that they had to call the shots on that score, that if they were interested in numbers of delegates the more quickly it was announced, the more delegates you'd get. And they'd be picked off. So, his response was that he wanted to talk to the candidate who of course was on the road and that he'd be back with us.

Well, Sanford was going to a hide-away. He was going to the beach to recuperate from the campaign. So it was agreed that I would be called. And so Lou Harris [Louis Harris], a couple of days later, called me in my law office in Monroe and said the judgment was Saturday morning prior to the convention. And I said, "Well, you're going to get almost no votes." "It's alright." But the plan was, the impact would be Sanford: Saturday prior to the convention, on Sunday Pennsylvania, and hopefully on Monday, California. Well, it worked that way except the California thing got pretty messy. So we flew out Friday before the convention and on Saturday morning Sanford had a press conference. The state of course, I take it, though I wasn't there, was in chaos as a result, surprised as a result of his announcement for Kennedy. And we got twelve delegates which meant six votes, and it was tough and it was brutal, very brutal indeed, to hold the twelve. And Sanford made a seconding speech for JFK.

I had figured in my personal and financial planning for 1960 that I would devote the spring to Sanford's campaign for governor. And then we were thrown into having to carry the state for JFK in a rough situation. As a matter of fact, because of Sanford's declaration for Kennedy, it hurt Sanford which meant there had to be an almost unrelenting effort right on through November. So, in addition to other duties, I took on the business of the back and forth with the national party. I made several trips to Washington, usually a one day shot, three or four trips to worry with things like television film, materials, speakers, and all the impediments of a campaign. We ran a good campaign, took over the party headquarters. JFK came in for one day. I went to Washington and flew down with him and he appeared in four spots in North Carolina. And it gave the campaign a real shot in the arm, but we were

rolling pretty well anyway. Well, we carried the state by I think was fifty-seven thousand votes, which was fifty-two percent. Of course, in that tight election, that was quite a material victory, I think. There were fourteen electoral votes in North Carolina that year.

One matter of some interest as part of that campaign, talking to JFK in the Senate Office Building, it must have been in latter July, I observed that we could score some points with the North Carolina press cheaply and without much consumption of time upon this basis, which was done. And realized that this was in the period when he was pegged down in Washington as a result of that rump session of Congress, chafing to get out. What we did was that we sent invitations, I expect to about two hundred newspapers, television and radio stations, saying you can send a man at your expense to Washington on this date for lunch with the presidential and vice presidential candidates in the Old Senate Chamber to be followed by a press conference. Well, they loved it. And they came up, probably a hundred and fifty came. So all he was involved with was a couple of hours and picking up the tab for lunch. And it was an extremely fruitful session which I urged to be done elsewhere, but of course, he ran out of time for that kind of thing.

HACKMAN: Which of the newspapers down there were problems? Can you recall that it really helped on anyone that presented particular problems?

WILSON: It's difficult to say, it's difficult to say. Some of the papers came out for Nixon [Richard M. Nixon]. But it wasn't really so much the way they came.... It wasn't really so much the editorial postures that were important, it was the fashion of the treatment of the candidates and the reaction of the people to them, and the way it was planned.

HACKMAN: When you went to Washington during the campaign, who on that end did you usually deal with?

WILSON: Bob Kennedy.

HACKMAN: How did you find him to deal with, any particular problems?

WILSON: No Problems.

HACKMAN: Was he responsive?

WILSON: Had a very major problem in terms of materials which wasn't Bob's problem. It wasn't Bob's immediate responsibility. We weren't trying to get materials, we were trying to buy them. I'd take a check up and put the check down and never see the materials. Finally in desperation, we went ahead and bought them directly. We figured it was the appropriate thing to do. And probably the cheaper thing to do than to buy through the committee. But aside from that problem, the cooperation was excellent. As far as speakers were concerned, I got too many speakers. We were running ourselves to death trying to keep up with the speakers around the state.

We ran that Houston film until we wore it out. Of course, North Carolina has more Baptists per capita than any state in the union, indeed, quite effectively a problem in many states such as Tennessee, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and there was a problem in North Carolina. Nevertheless, we surmounted it very successfully, I thought. We'd carried the state for Stevenson against Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] in '56 by only fifteen thousand votes. No, I'd say the cooperation was excellent with the National Committee. Now, of course, there was a setup in that campaign, as I guess there was this year, assigning to most states representatives from the DNC [Democratic National Committee] from other states. And our representative was Matt Reese [Matthew A. Reese, Jr.] of West Virginia, quite able.

HACKMAN: Did he have any problems in getting along with any of the state people? In a lot of cases, I know there was some friction.

WILSON: Oh, there was the normally expected friction. I'd say basically no.

HACKMAN: On the religious side, did you make any efforts with any of the religious leaders in North Carolina to calm them down or bring them around at all? Or was there....

WILSON: I can't say that there was any overt effort by identifiable religious leaders to insert, to inject politics into the thing. It was made apparent, but without quite saying so, that Billy Graham [William F. Graham], who was a native and a resident of North Carolina, was personally very close to Nixon. This constitutes something of a problem. But, essentially, your problem there, so far as that kind of leadership is concerned, was on the grass roots level. And there certainly were strenuous efforts on the part of Democratic leaders all around the state to counter this directly and indirectly.

HACKMAN: Anything other than that Houston speech that helped you out in the state from the candidate's end?

WILSON: Just his one day appearance in the state and of course, he did not address himself in any major way specifically to the religious problem in that respect.

HACKMAN: Senator Ervin [Sam J. Ervin, Jr.] made that little piggy-back TV film clip, I believe, on the religious issue. Any problems in getting him to do that that you can recall?

WILSON: No, I'd say Senator Ervin had the tradition of being very much a regular party man and quite outspoken even though he was certainly a strong Johnson man at the convention. I can't recall any reluctance.

HACKMAN: What about Cooley [Harold D. Cooley] on the agriculture thing?

WILSON: My recollection is that the entire congressional delegation, Democratic congressional delegation supported the ticket in varying degrees of vociferousness. I'm sure Cooley supported it too.

HACKMAN: Going back to the pre-convention period, you said that the going was pretty tough at the convention. What kinds of things could Hodges and the other people who were for Johnson put on the people you were trying to break off?

WILSON: Oh, all the pressures that could be brought to bear from the grass roots on the people who were delegates, and most of whom, of course, were in varying degrees political figures with political ties and political ambitions. I'm not able to specify what specific pressures were brought on specific people, but there was an intensive pressure on every member of that delegation.

HACKMAN: You talked about the arrangement with Senator Jordan. Were there efforts after this by him to keep Sanford from throwing these votes to Kennedy, or did he more or less let it slide after that?

WILSON: Nothing more to do.

HACKMAN: I'd heard that when Sanford went to Los Angeles that Jordan's administrative assistant...

WILSON: Bill Cochrane [Willard W. Cochrane].

HACKMAN: ...went with Sanford to Bill Brawley [Hiram W. Brawley], I guess at that point, from the Democratic National Committee, and they were trying to keep Sanford from announcing the next morning. Do you remember anything about that?

WILSON: No.

HACKMAN: Did you work in any other Southern delegations to try to break votes for....

WILSON: Oh, I talked around and got acquainted with some people on some of these delegations, but essentially your problem was that most of the Southern delegations were under the unit rule.

HACKMAN: I'd wondered particularly about Hollings [Ernest F. Hollings] and South Carolina.

WILSON: Hollings was quite eager to go with Kennedy but he had a heavy unit rule problem there in South Carolina that just could not be broken. I guess he was in school at the University of Virginia Law School with Bob Kennedy. I

think it was Friday night that Sanford and I spent some time with Hollings in his room. It was either Friday or Saturday, I think. In that delegation, the lineup for what it's worth, the elected officials in the delegation were: Hodges was chairman, Sanford vice chairman, and I was secretary.

HACKMAN: Anything else you recall from the convention?

WILSON: No, nothing of interest.

HACKMAN: Who else at the North Carolina end during the campaign was involved in the Washington contact? I heard Chuck Riddle [H.L. Riddle, Jr.]

WILSON: He made a trip or two I guess and we'd met up there.

HACKMAN: Did Johnson come into North Carolina at all?

WILSON: Yes. You recall there was a much celebrated Dixie Special, I forget, I think it was the label of the train ride through the South and several stops in North Carolina during one day. I believe that's the only time he came in.

HACKMAN: Was he any help, particularly?

WILSON: Well, I think yes. I think that the fact that he was meeting with various officials along the way, it did indeed help hold some people in line who might have been out.

HACKMAN: Did you get any help fund wise from out of the state? You remember the Drew Pearson story, I'm sure, a Robert Kennedy-Sanford deal?

WILSON: No. There was also a Drew Pearson retraction.

HACKMAN: Oh, was there? I guess I didn't catch that.

WILSON: I'm not sure the retraction was published in the nationwide columns, but it was certainly published in all the North Carolina papers that carry Drew Pearson.

HACKMAN: Did you get involved in any voter registration efforts in North Carolina?

WILSON: Oh, yeah.

HACKMAN: Was this done from the state point of view or were Robert Kennedy, Thompson [Frank Thompson, Jr.] from New Jersey, and several other people involved?



WILSON: It was done from the state point of view. And the one judgment we made and had to enforce in our opinion, and in our judgment it was a very correct opinion, was that we were not going to get involved with citizen groups in North Carolina. We were one of the few states who said no. And the National Citizens group was constantly urging that we do this. It's their job. I can appreciate it. But we felt that, unlike the situation in many states where at that time you had a lot of people who regarded themselves as independents or ticket-splitters or whatever, you had to lure them in with a citizens type device. This was not the case in North Carolina in 1960, that you very much needed to stress the party. And if you could hold the people you should hold, as a party matter, you'd win, which we did.

HACKMAN: How was the Hodges-Stanford relationship during that campaign? Any real problems?

WILSON: No it was not a problem. I went to see, I guess the same visit I referred to in July, to talk with JFK. He raised to me the question of Hodges for chairman of the National Kennedy-Johnson Business Committee. And my reaction to that was, I think it's excellent both from a national point of view and from a state point of view, and that though he had broadly supported Johnson at the convention, he was very much behind Kennedy and that he'd be helpful. And I urged that it be done. Though Hodges was continuing to serve as governor and though he did indeed, I'm sure he put a lot of time elsewhere, outside the state in that National Businessman's effort he was certainly available throughout the campaign in the state and appeared and was, indeed helpful. Of course, he wound up in the Cabinet.

HACKMAN: I wanted to go back to just one question on that '56 convention when Rayburn recognized.... Gore switched his votes, and then Rayburn recognized Oklahoma, Minnesota, Tennessee, and Missouri. Right in a row. There's always been a controversy as to what Rayburn and McCormack [John W. McCormack] were trying to do.

WILSON: I can't shed any light on that.

HACKMAN: Oh, you didn't hear at all....

WILSON: I was involved with talking with people in the North Carolina delegation.

HACKMAN: I'd wondered if you'd heard comments later by the Kennedy people, and whether they'd had a definite opinion on what Rayburn and McCormack were trying to do.

WILSON: A curious thing about that, a little sidelight on this Kefauver thing. When we walked into that convention hall, there was probably one half vote, I'm sure there was only one-half vote for Kefauver. Nobody was much enchanted

with him in our delegation, nor was I. And just out of the blue comes this big flock of votes. I never had any contact with Kefauver or any of his people before or after, no conversation whatsoever.

One day, I forget the year, '63 or '64, anyway, two or three months before Kefauver died, I happened to be sitting beside him in the presidential area at one of the opening ballgames. Sitting there wasting time, it occurred to me and I said, "Senator, I recall back to the '56 convention, just tell me as a matter of interest, do you ever have any curiosity about where all those votes from North Carolina came from, background-wise?" And he said, "I guess I did wonder about that." So I said, "Would you be interested in my kind of going through the story with you?" And he wasn't really interested. He couldn't care less. So I dropped it.

HACKMAN: Why didn't you tell it?

WILSON: Well, no, there's no point to it. There's not much to it. I had pretty well had it.

HACKMAN: When Sanford worked out the arrangement with Jordan, what was his feeling and your feeling of why go to Kennedy, why try to make the effort? Your feelings, both of your feelings about Johnson are....

WILSON: Two points. First place, I cannot say fairly that we were particularly hostile to Johnson. Second point, we really both were so much out of touch with the national picture that I can't say we had any particular impression of who was going to win that convention. Obviously not much involvement in our lives with it because we hadn't even discussed it throughout the whole prior day after the primary.

Now, I was concerned that these things be achieved that we had made a breakthrough, in effect a new generation taking over in North Carolina. And it was a pretty attractive crowd of people who had run that Sanford campaign that it was appropriate in the whole tradition that we continue on the national level in the same fashion, and this was an appropriate time. Second, regardless of who the nominee was, we're going to carry the state for him. And Johnson, there's been no problem to carry the state for Johnson, it would be a hell of a problem to carry it for Kennedy that we'd have a better running jump at carrying the state if we'd had some significant involvement during the convention with Kennedy. And quite frankly, I felt, and still feel that in 1960 Kennedy had a great deal better chance of winning the presidency than Johnson did.

HACKMAN: At the '60 convention then, after Sanford made the announcement of the six votes, were the Kennedys sending people into the North Carolina delegation to try to break people further, or did they stay out and leave it alone at that point?

WILSON: They left it to us. They had to.

HACKMAN: What was Reese spending most of his time doing during the campaign?

WILSON: O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] had set up a very comprehensive set of questions to the state coordinators, by that I mean to the Reese's memo, addressed to the various pieces of action in the party headquarters: advertising the materials, the speakers, everything that's done--the registration, the voting day activities, on and on. And the function of the state coordinators was one to report realistically back to the DNC how well the state headquarters was operating in the various fields; to attempt to improve whatever needed improving, but also to serve in the other direction, which is to be the agent for the state in digging out of national headquarters what could be helpful. And he worked hard on this.

HACKMAN: On the voter registration side, can you recall what the approach was to the Negro vote? Was this focused upon, or was it ignored as it was in some Southern states?

WILSON: It was focused upon.

HACKMAN: Who was in charge of that in the state?

WILSON: Oh, I can't say that there was someone wearing in the state headquarters a single voter registration hat. This is something.... See we had in addition to the traditional, official state party organizational setup throughout the various countries, we had a very effective and well developed primary campaign organization. These people knew what they were about in all these respects. You didn't have to draw pictures for them. More than that, they'd been all spring through the same drill. So you just pick up where you left off.

HACKMAN: Get any resistance on this?

WILSON: Yes.... On the score of the Negro vote, realize that Sanford had just come through a bitter racial campaign with a man who was taking a hard racial line, Beverly Lake [Isaac Beverly Lake]. So, you know, these lines were clear.

HACKMAN: What were you doing in the period after the election, before you came on to the Washington end?

WILSON: Practicing law.

HACKMAN: Any feelers at all on other jobs?

WILSON: Oh, no. Well, Sanford had one thing we discussed on the Sunday following the second primary. Sanford was asking me, first conversation we'd had, whether I would take any kind of state position, cabinet level or whatever,

Judgeship, anything of this sort. My answer was a flat and total no. I had no interest whatsoever in doing it. Certainly that applied to everything else. I, as a matter of fact, had built a new home in Monroe two years before and so had no interest in it.

HACKMAN: How did the contact from the Washington end come? How did this develop?

WILSON: My wife and I went to the Inauguration. Either the day of or the day before, two days before the Inauguration, I got a call from O'Brien. He asked me to come over to the Mayflower and talk with him.

HACKMAN: Did you know who had talked to him about you?

WILSON: No. No.

HACKMAN: Never found out?

WILSON: Never even asked.

HACKMAN: Can you recall any of the arrangements or problems during this period between Sanford, Hodges, Jordan, Ervin on people they were supporting for jobs?

WILSON: Oh, there were conflicts. Kennedy, of course, checked out Hodges for the Secretary of Commerce job. And our answer was very much yes, we were in favor. There developed an interest in the agricultural area, North Carolina so much an agricultural state. Though none of this had anything to do with partisan politics in North Carolina, it developed that there were three names, let's see....

HACKMAN: John Baker [John A. Baker]?

WILSON: No. John Baker's South Carolina. There were three names of North Carolinians considered for high positions in the Department of Agriculture who were put there. And they were Charlie Murphy [Charles S. Murphy] for Under Secretary of Agriculture. Charlie Murphy was born and raised in North Carolina, went to college at Duke, but he hadn't been in North Carolina at that point for over twenty years. I wasn't acquainted with him. Harry Caldwell [Harry B Caldwell], who was the long time head of the Grange in North Carolina, is chairman of the advisory committee, and Horace Godfrey, who had been ASCS [Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service] head in North Carolina for many years, happened to be from my own county. I'm not acquainted with him though. He'd been in Raleigh for twenty years. So they all were put in those positions. And we all supported them very much. Obviously, there were conflicts, as there are in any state, respective to the judicial positions. That's about the sum of it. Mrs. Gladys Tillett [Gladys A. Tillett] was appointed to one of the spots in the UN.

HACKMAN: Did she come directly out of the Sanford group?

WILSON: Yes.

HACKMAN: Anybody else?

WILSON: Can't think of any.

HACKMAN: Anybody that he gave support for that they didn't see their way to appoint?

WILSON: Oh, names were coming forward, people with ambitions all over the place for various spots all over government. And, of course, helpful people, if they appeared qualified, you gave them an endorsement, but I can't think of any major pushes for major jobs, no.

HACKMAN: Whatever happened to this fellow, Riddle? Was he interested at all or any....

WILSON: Yes, he was very much interested, but he was not appointed. Sanford appointed him state judge, four year term and he served.

HACKMAN: What can you remember, in your first contacts with O'Brien, did he say he was looking for? Describe the job.

WILSON: Well, he began by saying that the President had made campaign commitments which he fully meant to fulfill of cutting back the size of the White House staff and that this would apply to congressional relations also. What he envisioned was that he would ask me to take the position in relations with the House of Representatives, and he would find someone else for the Senate side. Period. That's the way it was the first year. He had spent two years in Washington in '49 and '50 as assistant to Foster Furcolo and left disenchanted. I had spent no time in Washington. Alright, so we restart from scratch. What do you do? I don't know. We start, we try to find out, talk with the Eisenhower people. We meet the Congress and feel our way. But we have a major set of commitments on our hands, a tough situation. We'd lost twenty seats in the House in that election. And figure out how we do it. It's about that loose.

HACKMAN: What can you recall about talking to Bryce Harlow or Jerry Persons or any of these people?

WILSON: I did not talk to Persons and he had not been in congressional relations for a couple of years. I guess he had replaced Sherman Adams. I talked to Harlow at some length repeatedly. The Eisenhower people were just as helpful as they could be, but they couldn't be enormously helpful because their problems were completely different from ours. They were involved more with stopping legislation than they were with passing it. And in the nature of things, I don't know that it would have been different if there had been a Republican Congress, but from the nature of things, there were no significant major programs to be pressed. They had to fight off, I'm sure, the constant

efforts of the various members of Congress to secure various favors out of the executive, with a touch of blackmail involved. We had the same problem but at least it was our party. We did some very significant in-depth tightening up of the operation, changing procedures, establishing.... We figured that we'd triple the amount of contact with the Congress measured by the way of numbers of personal conversations over any given period, correspondence, and telephone calls.

HACKMAN: Was this government wide or strictly at the White House end?

WILSON: White House end. Government-wide we tied in very closely in deed, with the various congressional relations sections in the departments and agencies. We held mostly meetings in the Fish Room with them. The President would occasionally attend, paid very close attention to what they were about, how they ran their show, how we supervised them, who was chosen from time to time in those spots. And we just felt that there was a messy thing to do administratively that in a way, they were part of our operations and in a way, they were also the agents of their respective Cabinet heads. Nevertheless, we were all in the same game, all had the same objectives and it was up to us to supervise it and run it. I think we did pretty well. There were some very good people in it. I'll have a time problem shortly.

HACKMAN: Can you remember on that first go around where most of the people picked in the departments, or did the White House operation pick Kennedy men to go into the department?

WILSON: Combination of it. As far as picking Kennedy men was concerned, when you start trying to staff a government you run out of people pretty quickly. The difficulty was finding good people. So I would say certainly most of the spots were filled not from names we came up with, but that we did look over the people who the departments were coming up with and made some judgements about how good are they.

HACKMAN: Did you always try to tag a person and put him specifically in a congressional relations slot in the department, or did it matter really where he was in the department? Would sometimes....

WILSON: It would totally matter, it's totally matter. If you've got a man in the department for whatever purpose, it makes a great deal of difference where he sits, what kind of beverage he has. This was the political end of the department.

HACKMAN: Think of a guy like Semer [Milton P. Semer] over at HHFA [Housing and Home Finance Agency] at that point, and then a fellow named Hugh Miels who was in some kind of congressional slot. But apparently Semer was the fellow who handled most of the....

WILSON: Well, it would vary from department to department about what level was involved in congressional relations. Semer was, I'm pretty sure from the outset of the Administration at the HHFA, the deputy. I guess he'd been head of the staff on the subcommittee in the Senate on housing. And he's just congressionally oriented and he took this on. Other departments, say of the same size, you might have a fellow in as deputy who's just not attracted to this kind of thing. Semer happened to be. And, of course, if the second man in the department reached into this and lives with, constantly staying with it, he's going to override the people in the somewhat lesser level that were specifically assigned to it.

Wilbur Cohen began as Assistant Secretary of HEW [Department of Health, Education and Welfare]. I don't know whether that specific assistant secretaryship was assigned to legislation. I'm inclined to think it was for congressional relations. Well Wilbur, in very many respects and just given the nature of the way, particularly education legislation evolved. It was more or less a question of head counting on the floor than of a maneuver of compromises on subject matter or feeling out subcommittees and this kind of thing. He was superb at it. Of course, he later became Under Secretary which is what he was when I left. I guess he was appointed Secretary this past spring. AS Under Secretary, he continued to have constant fulltime interest in the congressional fate of HEW bills. And of course, they were massively important.

HACKMAN: Other people over there like, I don't know what her name was then, later Barbara Bolling, Bolling's [Richard W. Bolling] wife.

WILSON: Akin. Not Barbara. Jim was the first one.

HACKMAN: Akin, that's right. And then, I think a Quigley [James M. Quigley], a fellow named Jim Quigley was....

WILSON: Jim Quigley's now with Interior. He was involved.... Jim's a former congressman from Pennsylvania. And he was involved with the water pollution type things and followed the water pollution over to the Interior when it was switched.

HACKMAN: No problems on working out something within the department on who had what? Cohen still maintained a general direction?

WILSON: Yes. That was no source of conflict.

HACKMAN: You talked about you having the House more or less to yourself for a while. What role did Donahue [Richard K. Donahue]....

WILSON: It wasn't more or less, it was entirely.

HACKMAN: Okay. What was your relationship with Donahue the first....

WILSON: Dick Donahue, extremely able guy. One of the most enjoyable people to be around I know. O'Brien was assigned and given the title Special Assistant to the President for Congressional Relations and Personnel. And what "and personnel" meant was patronage. And so Donahue was assigned that piece of the O'Brien action. And he was on the second floor of the West Wing with us, but he was not really at all into the congressional thing, except for an occasional friend he had in Congress during '61. Now, at the beginning of '62, we decided that it was absolutely killing us that we weren't able to cover enough ground. We wanted to add some people. We added two people- Donahue and Chuck Daly [Charles U. Daly]. Donahue's work on placing people around in government had been gotten largely behind him anyway at that point. So he was assigned fulltime congressional relations in the House. So I had Donahue and Daly working with me '62 forward. Donahue remained until about October '63, went back to Lowell, Massachusetts to practice law. Daly remained until something like September of '64. He went out with Pierre Salinger for purpose of fighting that Senate campaign, but with the understanding that win or lose, he's going to leave him election day and take a job he now holds as vice president of the University of Chicago.

HACKMAN: How did your job change when those two came on in '62?

WILSON: Well, I was able to delegate certain responsibilities by way of answering members' telephone calls and making certain contacts, checking out various things which would vary depending upon the problems of the time. A given bill, you have more problems with one part of the county than the other, and you have more problems with people of one philosophy than another. For example, one lobby maybe on one bill wanted to be with us, and on another bill would be against us. And you might be fighting both bills at the same time. You would have to suffer the consequent effect on members who might be sensitive to that lobby. For example, labor. So for that reason, you have to deploy your forces and the people most effective depending on the circumstances.

HACKMAN: You've got a time problem. Rather than to go into that rules fight, maybe we ought....



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## THE PRINCE

". . . . when he shall die  
take him and cut him out in little stars  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will love the night and  
pay no worship to the garish sun."

- Romeo and Juliet, Act III, Scene II.  
quoted by Robert F. Kennedy at the  
1964 Democratic National Convention.

John F. Kennedy in his brief career had one calling and one calling only - the conduct of public business. He became a polished political professional in the best sense of that much maligned term. He was a prince in several senses, including the Machiavellian - and I don't mean that as criticism. When he was elected President he was no neophyte to the ways of Washington. He had served eight years in the Senate - only four less than Johnson had - and six years in the House. It's not easy to assess why JFK succeeded so spectacularly. Surely one reason was his personal charisma. He had a star quality that was immeasurably useful to his political goals. The central ingredient of this was his self-assurance. His good looks and his family wealth were helpful to his confidence, but only in minor ways. There are a number of extremely handsome and wealthy men about, but none of them is a JFK. The difference is that the heart of JFK's assurance was his confidence in his own abilities, and his abilities were formidable.

Kennedy was forty-three years old when he was elected President. He was at the peak of his physical and intellectual powers, and he could electrify an audience simply by walking into a room.

He had an insatiable curiosity about any subject that engaged his interest. In his political campaigns he devoured the detail of every

cog and flywheel of the electoral machinery. If a subject bored him he would ignore it entirely. When he was President he knew both instinctively and intellectually which subject must engage his full attention and which should be delegated. He avidly studied the various forces within the national and international economies and the means that were at his command to set them aright, and he acted on his findings forcefully. His savage attack on the steel price increase of 1962 and his espousal of the Trade Expansion bill and the big Tax Cut bill all were successfully executed as were many other changes he advocated. The results amply justified this Presidential attention. The performance of the economy during the Kennedy Administration is a model of achievement that has not since been emulated.

The formulation of agricultural policy was a subject he chose to delegate. He had compassion for the problems of farmers and he was aware of their importance to the economy and to this country's balance of payments. But he was not deeply familiar with the subject and he decided that he could not afford the time necessary to master it, and so he left the details to Orville Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture.

But the two subjects that he determined from the outset must command the bulk of his attention were, on the one hand, diplomatic and military policy and, on the other, his relations with the Congress. He succeeded with both superbly - not perfectly, but superbly.

JFK's success with the Congress has been little understood even by many top officials of his own Administration. The public doesn't know how much he accomplished because the public hasn't been told. The public hasn't been told because of one of those quirks that develop now and then in the Washington press. The press, as a whole, at that time at least, did not understand the House of Representatives. Reporters tended, therefore,

timidly to judge a President's success only by the bills that had been formally presented by the Congress to the President for signature. That is not the way to report Congressional achievement. Most important bills go through some of the mill in the first year of a Congress and are enacted into law only in the second year. Nineteen Sixty-three was the first year of the 88th Congress.

The two big issues in that Congress were the Tax Cut bill and the Civil Rights bill. Upon their fate depended the respect of the Congress and the country for the effectiveness of Presidential leadership. Thus much other legislation hung in the balance. At the time JFK was murdered in November both bills had substantially surmounted their worst troubles. The principal hurdle for the Tax Cut bill was acceptance on the floor of the House. In September we had defeated the Republican motion to recommit by a narrow margin and cleared the bill through the House on final passage by a satisfactory margin. Senate prospects portended an easy victory, and this proved to be the case. The Civil Rights bill was not yet through the House but the critical battle there also had been won, and by one vote. This was the decision of the full House Judiciary Committee concerning the size and shape of the bill to be reported. There was much yet to be done. A path around the House Rules Committee had to be hacked out. Lengthy and passionate debate on the House floor had to be suffered through. A Senate filibuster had to be worn down. But a massive tide of public indignation was rising across the country and non-southern Republicans as well as northern and western Democrats were compelled to ride its crest. The passage of the Civil Rights bill had become inevitable. The only way for us to have lost the bill was to have failed to get that one necessary vote in the House

Judiciary Committee. Both the Tax Cut bill and the Civil Rights bill, each in beautiful shape, were signed into law in 1964, and Medicare probably would have been also had it not been for the assassination of the President. If Medicare had passed it would have meant that Kennedy during his first term would have gotten through the Congress every one of his major proposals except Federal Aid to Education, and this remarkable record would have been chalked up despite the fact that a heavy majority of the House of Representatives was opposed philosophically to his program. His would have been a remarkable feat even had Medicare not been passed. In addition, he had developed concepts of dealing with the Congress and had constructed and encouraged a White House Congressional Relations staff that later was to be invaluable in implementing the Congressional initiatives of LBJ. Also Kennedy's aggressiveness forced Republican members of the Congress into foolish and intransigent postures that made the 1964 Democratic Congressional landslide inevitable. A Congressional landslide does not necessarily accompany a Presidential landslide.

It became a fad among the Washington press during 1963 to describe JFK as being ineffectual with the Congress. Worse yet, this canard bore the connotation that Kennedy was at best a charming lightweight who in the long pull would be adjudged to have made only a ripple on the waters of the broad American seascape. This was odd-numbered year talk. By odd-numbered year I mean the first year of a Congress. Also reporters and columnists in part were reacting, however subliminally, to criticism that the press until then had subjectively joined in the fun of the New Frontier. But by the time the House had passed the Tax Cut bill intact on September 25th the more thoughtful reporters, columnists and editorial writers were, as reflected in their writing, beginning to have doubts about the accuracy of their forecasts. However, it was a difficult turnaround for them to

make, and essentially, rather than face up to confessing errors of judgment in such basic matters, they settled back to see how things worked out.

From their points of view things worked out well. Dallas permitted them to portray Kennedy's Congressional prowess unfairly and to attribute successes that Kennedy would have scored anyway to that legislative miracle-worker, Lyndon B. Johnson. This theory had the merit of getting everybody off the hook - except the memory of John F. Kennedy. I raise the issue now only because this spurious myth has gained such universal acceptance I fear it may be recorded in the permanent and accepted histories of the period. It is high time that myth is exploded, along with several other lesser myths that fed it. This is no put-down of LBJ. His contributions were so major that his admirers, among whom I count myself, have no need to assert for Johnson credit for achievements appropriately attributable to Kennedy. LBJ would not have had it otherwise. But if Johnson had been elected President in 1960 he would have done far less well with the Congress than Kennedy in fact did.

In my opinion, if JFK had lived to serve two full terms he would have won the 1964 election as decisively as Johnson did, and he would have racked up a legislative record fully as impressive as Johnson's was. After Larry O'Brien and I both were out of government we were having lunch one day, and I asked him what he thought of this hypothesis. His response was interesting, as usual. He said he agreed, with one exception. Kennedy would not have put forth the effort necessary to pass the Federal Employees' Pay Increase Act of 1964. Johnson knew how much the enactment of this bill meant to the quality of government service. He himself had served as a Congressional staff member. Kennedy, because of his more sheltered upbringing, couldn't quite imagine

what a few more dollars per week meant to the average person.

By 1952, while Kennedy was serving his third term in the House, he had become so bored with the seamy low level assignments which were all his minor level of seniority afforded him, that he decided not to offer for re-election to the House but to file for the Senate. This meant that if he lost the Senate race he would be out of the Congress. That same year Henry Cabot Lodge, the famous Massachusetts Republican, was running for re-election to the Senate seat he three times had won. Nineteen fifty-two clearly was to be a Republican year because of the public reaction against the Democrats' having held power for twenty years, and because of the presence of General Eisenhower at the head of the Republican ticket. Lodge was heavily involved with the candidacy of Eisenhower, and he ran Eisenhower's successful pre-convention maneuvers to secure the Republican Presidential nomination.

Kennedy, despite the intensity of the Eisenhower sweep that unhorsed veteran Democrats all across the country, defeated Lodge impressively, and Tip O'Neill took the Kennedy House seat.

President Eisenhower in 1953 named Lodge to be his Ambassador to the United Nations and Richard Nixon in 1960 chose him to be his Vice Presidential nominee.

In 1963, JFK was casting about for a prominent Republican to name as Ambassador in Saigon so as to shift some of the onus for Southeastern Asia troubles to the other Party. One day in high glee he told Larry O'Brien he had conned Lodge into doing it. Larry said, "Well, if he's that dumb we didn't do as well in 1952 as we thought we did."

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I am told that during JFK's eight years in the Senate he was somewhat less than diligent to the run of the mill institutional responsibilities that all new Senators are expected to discharge. Now and then, however, an issue would attract his attention or stir his ire, and he would spring forth like an unleashed tiger. He would mobilize his staff and they would work with him day and night to make him an instant expert on the issue at hand. Then he would blaze forth with logic, wit and information so brilliantly assembled and so eloquently presented as to overwhelm any opponent who dared confront him.

Johnson also could be overwhelming, but in a different way from Kennedy.

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There were important differences between the spirit in which the Congress received Kennedy as President and later Johnson. At the time each man became President he personally knew all, or nearly all, of the one hundred Senators and their spouses. But neither of them was acquainted with even a majority of the four hundred thirty-five members of the House of Representatives, however, Kennedy knew more Representatives than Johnson. Kennedy had been a member of the House four years more recently than Johnson, and so he knew more of the members who remained in office. Four years may seem to be a very short time. But a lot happens in the House during a four-year period.

In those years the post-War generation of young veterans was beginning to take control of national politics and of the House of Representatives particularly. Kennedy was a younger member of this generation; Johnson was nine years older. Since in the House there's a high rate of turnover even in election years when there's no general sweep by either political party, many Representatives who had served with Johnson as recently as his last year in the House (1948) were, by 1961, dead or retired or defeated.

In Kennedy's case many of the younger members who had entered the House with him following the 1946 election, or who had been first elected in 1948 or 1950, while he still was in the House, had by 1961 become powerful members. Kennedy knew them and liked them and they liked him.

Johnson, to most of these younger members, was a remote figure. He had no claim on them. They knew about him only through the newspapers and television news programs. In Johnson's life as Senate Majority Leader he was able to save precious time by discussing House matters not with dozens of committee and subcommittee chairmen, but alone with his political godfather, Speaker Sam Rayburn, who in turn talked with the House spokesmen in charge of the subject at hand. This procedure served Johnson's immediate purposes, but the eventual effect was to insulate the House grandees not only from Johnson but, to a lesser degree, even from their Senate counterparts, who in turn were taking their cues, however reluctantly, from Johnson. Each House of the Congress is extremely touchy about aggressions by the other House upon its prerogatives. Johnson's role was resented by Representatives because they feared that Johnson was exploiting his relationship with Rayburn to promote the dominance of the Senate over the House and that Rayburn, given his advanced age and his obvious affection for Johnson, was permitting it to happen.

Kennedy, lacking a Rayburn, travelled the more traditional avenues of communication, and the relationships he built that way served those of us on his staff well when he became President. Johnson's lack of such relationships were handicaps that we had to help him overcome. Here's an example of the kind of rapport Kennedy had established with many Representatives:

John Fogarty of Rhode Island was a tough, rough-spoken senior member of the full House Appropriations Committee, and he was Chairman of the

Appropriations Subcommittee that controlled the budgets of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and of the Department of Labor. He drew a lot of water on the Hill.

In early 1961, as JFK's first formal White House reception for the Congress neared, Fogarty's friends, led by Frank Thompson of New Jersey, became apprehensive that Fogarty wasn't sufficiently house-broken for the occasion, and so they spent some time at coaching him.

"Now, John, you can't call him Jack. He's 'Mr. President.'"

"I know. I know."

Came the reception. All went well, and there was a sigh of relief when Fogarty respectfully intoned:

"Good evening, Mr. President."

Then, "You been getting much lately?"

Kennedy loved it.

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Another myth was that the Kennedy program was becoming throttled because many of the House Committees were chaired by conservative southern Democrats who crippled those White House bills that fell within the jurisdiction of their committees. This was not generally true. It was true that these chairmen were opposed to most of our domestic legislation, but this did not warrant the assumption that most of them opposed those portions of our program considered by their Committees. There were only two chairmen who gave us problems regularly in this respect. They were Clarence Cannon of Missouri, who had been Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations forever, and Howard Smith of Virginia, Chairman of the Committee on Rules. It was fortunate for us that the other chairmen did not follow their examples. These two gave us as many problems as we could say grace over.

On the contrary, Tom Murray of Tennessee, Chairman of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, and Olin Teague of Texas, Chairman of the Veterans Committee, were against practically all our domestic proposals. But the committees they chaired were admittedly not major committees. Our principal concerns with those committees were to hold down authorizations for expenditures on veterans matters and increases in federal employees' pay. Only by these means could we avoid the breaking of the budget and increasing inflation. The lobbyists representing such interests had to be resisted. These chairmen agreed with our objectives, and they cooperated effectively.

The major legislative disappointment for Kennedy during his entire term of office was the failure of the House to enact the Medicare bill and the Federal Aid to Education bill. The Medicare bill had to emerge from the Ways and Means Committee that was chaired by Wilbur Mills of Arkansas. Mills, despite his public announcements that he would not press for the consideration of Medicare by his Committee, did not personally oppose the concept of Medicare. He just didn't have the votes either to roll it out of his Committee or to get it through the House.

The Federal Aid to Education bill was the responsibility of the Committee on Education and Labor. The Chairman of the Committee, Adam Clayton Powell, who represented the Harlem district in New York City, and a respectable majority of his Committee were strongly for the bill. It was torpedoed in the Rules Committee not by a Southerner but by James J. Delaney, a crusty old Democrat from the Borough of Queens in New York City. Delaney was abetted in this mayhem by John ~~Mac~~Cormack of Massachusetts, then the Democratic Majority Leader. Both Delaney and ~~Mac~~Cormack were responding to pressure from the Catholic hierarchy, that opposed any bill which did not provide grants for parochial schools.

Delaney was a pretty conservative fellow, anyway. A few years later I sought his support for one of our more free-swinging bills, and he exploded with anger and frustration.

"Damn you people. Just look at what you've made me do."

He dramatically shoved his voting record in front of me, which revealed that he had voted with us on nearly every issue. He roared on: "I'll tell you one thing. If I were one of my constituents I'd never support a Congressman with a voting record like mine!"

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Another myth held that Johnson, because of his southern background, got along better than Kennedy with southern Congressmen. Legends of this nature were perpetrated by reporters not cognizant of southern ways. One of the sources of this impression was the geographical split in the votes cast for the Presidential nomination in the 1960 Democratic National Convention. Within the Democratic Party, Johnson seemed clearly to be the leader of the southern states and some of the border states while Kennedy led the rest of the country. That probably was an accurate snapshot of opinion at the beginning of 1961 - both within the Congress and without - but public impressions rapidly changed.

The major proposals, which had been in the process of development for a quarter of a century, came to be regarded as moderate and necessary to the progress of the country. Examples were Federal Aid to Education, Medicare, Civil Rights and expansion of the coverage of the Minimum Wage. In 1964, however, Johnson hastily devised proposals that were new and startling to many conservative voters. Examples of the latter were the Anti-Poverty bill, the Model Cities bill, and the Rent Supplements bill. Public perceptions of both Kennedy and Johnson altered, and so Congressional perceptions shifted, too. In the 1964 election Johnson carried more northern states and fewer southern

than Kennedy in 1960.

Senior southeastern Congressmen were uncomfortable with Johnson. He was just too raw for their tastes. Kennedy, on the other hand, obviously was not. His Harvard accent, his good looks, and his patrician manners made southern aristocrats feel at home with him.

Kennedy knew instinctively how to ingratiate himself with southerners. Consider this scene with Carl Vinson of Milledgeville, Georgia. (Milledgeville had been the capitol of Georgia when Atlanta was only a backwoods village.) Vinson was Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. He had been first elected to the House of Representatives in 1914, three years before Kennedy was born, and he had been Chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs when Johnson joined the Committee as a freshman member in 1937. Vinson is a refreshing and delightful gentleman, but when occasion demands he can be tough as a black jack pine knot.

Once, at Vinson's request, I took him to see President Kennedy to discuss some piece of business Vinson had in mind. When the conversation ended, Kennedy personally escorted Vinson from the Oval Office, through the Press Room and out to the driveway north of the West Wing. There the President opened the door of the waiting limousine for Vinson and then closed it behind him.

It was an instinctively graceful gesture. It was a gesture appropriate to one of Vinson's age and eminence, but a gesture seldom extended to anyone by a busy President. I heard much favorable comment about it on Capitol Hill in the days that followed.

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Once I tried to illustrate to Larry O'Brien - I fear not very successfully - the nuances of speech that have so much bearing upon personal

relationships among southerners. When I was a member of the North Carolina General Assembly during the 'fifties, we could determine from a person's accent just where he had been raised within the state - give or take about seventy-five miles. Aside from such regional nuances there were also clear distinctions of class and education. Twenty years ago during the crass adolescence of movie-making, southern audiences would express great merriment while watching a Hollywood film with a southern setting. Gales of derisive laughter would roll across the audience when an actor cast in the role of a banker or a doctor or a corporate lawyer would speak in the accents of a field hand, and the laughter would be even more derisive when the field hand spoke in the accents of the aristocrats.

In practical national political terms Kennedy came across to the southern leaders of the Congress as a fellow aristocrat. Johnson came across as a field hand. An example is in order.

Wilbur Mills of Arkansas was Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means and he was probably the most powerful figure in either House of the Congress. The Committee he chaired had jurisdiction in enormous areas of legislation. Moreover, the Democrats on his Committee constituted the Democratic Committee on Committees. This meant they had the authority to determine which Democrats would be assigned or reassigned to all Committees other than Ways and Means. The implications of this authority were so breathtaking in scope that it takes the mind a while to absorb them. Mills, of course, was the dominant figure in the determination of these assignments, and it was not in his nature to shirk from the exercise of thorny responsibilities. Mills also dominated the Ways and Means Committee in substantive matters by the full application of his formidable intellectual and political talents to the subject at hand. When he arose upon the floor of the House

to advocate the positions of his Committee he commanded respectful attention from all members of both parties. He knew what he was talking about, and no member dared challenge him except after having equipped himself with extensive preparation.

*Bolling  
summon?*

Mills was born and raised in Kensett, Arkansas, and he is a graduate of Harvard Law School. When I first came to Washington I was warned from all sides that Mills was the quintessential conservative and that he was a Republican in Democratic clothing. I soon learned that nothing could have been further from the truth. Mills was entranced with JFK, and his support and advice were of critical importance to the President in the broad areas through which Mills swept. His affection and admiration for the President extended to the entire Kennedy family. In early 1972 for instance Mills announced that he was a candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination. (This was a repeat of the mistake Johnson had made in 1960 when he equated his wallop in Washington with his standing across the countryside.) In the Spring of 1972 a reporter asked Mills whether he would accept the Vice Presidential nomination.

"No, I would consider that a demotion from my present status."

"What about the Presidency?"

"I would consider that a lateral move."

But as 1972 wore on, it became apparent that Mills had no chance to become the Democratic Presidential nominee. He called me in Chicago one Thursday.

"I've got to be on one of these question and answer television shows on Sunday," he said, "and I know I'll be asked whether I will accept the Vice Presidential nomination. I intend to answer that I will do so only if Ted Kennedy is the Presidential nominee. Now, my question to you is



whether, as a matter of protocol, I should feel compelled to advise Ted in advance of my intentions?"

I said, "No. My response is based not on ceremonial grounds because I know of no book of protocol that controls this kind of thing. But I say no on practical grounds. If you tell Ted what you intend to do he will diplomatically virtually order you not to do it, and if he does that with reference to the use of his name, you will be forced to respect it. However, if you make your statement without prior consultation with him, I am sure that he will deeply appreciate the gesture." Mills did as I suggested. The Kennedys had impressed him mightily.

Many senior southern Democrats regarded John F. Kennedy, and, to a lesser extent, his brothers, with the same kind of affection.

But Mills just did not like Johnson. Perhaps the two of them were too much alike. During my years with LBJ, one of the principal demands on my time was to keep the two of them from each other's throats. I had the uncanny feeling that Johnson always regarded Mills as a threat - a threat not to his position but to his authority. I personally handled all of Mills' needs for help from the Government, and I saw to it that no Ways and Means bill was ever defeated on the floor of the House so long as I was in Washington, although there were some uncomfortably close votes. But tough court cases tend to make bad law, legislation that is tough to pass tends to make good law.

In any event, there was no need for Mills and LBJ to see each other except on ceremonial and social occasions, and the relationship I had established with Mills was extremely fruitful. But all of the machinery we had built came to a screeching halt within two weeks after my departure

for Chicago at the end of May, 1967. A Mills-sponsored bill to increase the debt limit at the request of the Administration was lost on the floor of the House, and I cringed from afar in anticipation of the long range consequences of this loss. To make things worse, we had passed an earlier debt limit bill in February that proved it was possible to pass one of these troublesome creatures in the 90th Congress.

The relationship between Mills and the White House became sulphurous, and there was nothing I could do about it from Chicago. The resulting venom began to focus on the President's belatedly submitted tax increase proposal, which wasn't enacted until a year and a half after he had sent it to the Hill. This bill was the legislation that finally confronted the Congress with the guns and butter issue. Mills insisted that the budget be sharply cut as the price of increasing taxes. The struggle involved LBJ so much emotionally that he devoted to it an entire chapter of his autobiography, The Vantage Point. Mills, of course, was portrayed by LBJ as having been the villain. I think I could have avoided this. I have gone through the relationship of Mills with LBJ only to contrast it with the relationship of Mills with JFK. I hope this contributes to proving a point.

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Among the great documents of American history are the film clips of the JFK press conferences. They were the first Presidential press conferences ever televised live and without benefit of White House editing. They come across now almost as freshly as they did when they took place.

But valuable and interesting as these film clips are, a person who never personally attended one of these conferences and who was not then immersed in the issues of the time can't appreciate their electricity. With extraordinary grace and force and wit Kennedy seized all the nettles and dominated the scene. He appeared to everybody who observed him to be a leader fully in command of the problems of the nation, and, indeed, of the world.

Presidential press conferences are the American equivalent of the British Prime Minister's question time in the House of Commons, and far more faithfully than prepared speeches, they reveal the depth of the President's personal comprehension of national and international issues. They also reveal the quality of his mind and of his reflexive reactions, because he is certain to be confronted with questions he has no way of anticipating. Reflexive reactions tell much about how a President makes decisions.

On the day before each press conference Pierre Salinger, then Press Secretary, would ask the staff to submit questions the President might be asked so that he could have a little time to mull over a response, and so he wouldn't be blindsided by the press. Nothing was to be gained from our raising the obvious issues of the day, and so we'd concoct the meanest trickiest questions our admittedly perverted imaginations could fabricate.

Quite often these would infuriate the President. An example is one I sent: "Why have you been unable, after all this time, to persuade Jackie to return from the Onassis yacht in the Mediterranean and perform her duties as First Lady of the land?"

His private responses to such questions are, unfortunately, unprintable. Suffice it to say that his command of the pungent, earthy lower reaches of Anglo-Saxon English were at least the equal of his loftier flights of phrase. But regardless of his instant ire, these practice questions stood him in good stead, and he knew it, which is why he kept coming back at us for more. Some reporters had minds as evil and devious as ours were, and preparation for their irreverence was essential to the impact of Kennedy's responses.

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JFK made no more than a perfunctory pass at identifying himself as a connoisseur of the visual arts, nor of music, nor of the ballet. He only knew that such matters were of enduring importance and that continuous interest expressed publicly by the President would be helpful to their growth.

But literature was a different matter, for he took the language seriously. Among the Presidents, his handling of English ranked him behind only Lincoln, Jefferson and Wilson. And no one who studies the White House releases of that time can question which of them were fashioned by speech writers, and which were written by the President himself.

His spelling, however, was a different matter. There is a story that is possibly apochryphal, regarding the introduction of the phrase "O.K." into American usage. When Andrew Jackson first became President in 1829, he would indicate approval of a memorandum from a cabinet member by writing upon it, "All correct." In Jackson's curious personal orthography, this came out as "Oll Korreck." As the years went by and the memoranda came along thicker and faster, Jackson is alleged to have reduced the comment to its initials.

Be that as it may, and it has the ring of truth, in July 1960, shortly after the Los Angeles convention, I went to Washington to talk with JFK about his campaign in North Carolina. I wanted only one day of his time in the state but I wanted it to be a very full day. I told him we wouldn't insist that it be late in the campaign because we assumed he would wish to use that more effective period in the more populous states. We decided on September 13th and planned five stops across the 600-mile length of this beautiful state.

I went to Washington the night before the trip, and we left at dawn

for Greenville, N. C., on the Caroline, a family-owned turbo-jet aircraft with plenty of seats for the candidate, his staff, the press and local political figures such as me.

Shortly after takeoff, JFK motioned me over to sit beside him, and he asked who had been scheduled to introduce him at the various events we had prepared for his appearances. I told him that at each of the five stops we had a different person whose strength in his own region, we felt, would bring new adherents to the ticket.

JFK said, "That's sensible. Let each of them say anything about me he thinks will do us good, but I will ask that each of them also incorporate in his remarks three points, which I will give you."

For a few minutes he scribbled on a yellow legal pad, then he ripped off the sheet and handed it to me. It read:

"1- Fourteen years experience in the House and the Senate.

"2- Combat veteran of World War II.

"3- Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for the book Profiles in Courage."

This quotation is exact with one exception. He spelled Pulitzer with two l's.

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Kennedy brought a new generation to power. Franklin Roosevelt had been born in 1882, Truman in 1884 and Eisenhower in 1890. Kennedy was born twenty-seven years after Eisenhower - 1917. He was the first of the Presidents to grow up almost entirely after World War One.

His outlook and his style captured the imagination of this country and of the world. His thought was fraught with an authoritative intellectual sweep that befitted the President of the United States.

Larry O'Brien and I could bring him a problem and a solution and

listen with amazement as he reflected aloud upon their implications for the national economy and for the international role of the United States as he viewed them.

He had, for good reason, supreme confidence in his political instincts. Adlai Stevenson had aspired to be Kennedy's Secretary of State, but Kennedy decided that anyone with so little common sense as to have refused to endorse Kennedy in the 1960 Democratic National Convention after Stevenson had fallen hopelessly out of the running, wasn't equipped to be Kennedy's Secretary of State. Of course, after the convention Stevenson campaigned valiantly and effectively for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, and he had only contempt for Nixon. He had an impressive national following, great talent, much international experience, and an interest in serving in the Administration in a capacity commensurate with his standing. And so he was tendered, and he accepted, the nomination as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations.

But Stevenson chafed under the restraints of the assignment, and he continued to feel that he would be a more distinguished and effective Secretary of State than Dean Rusk. In an effort to bring pressure on the President with a subtle threat to leave the Administration, and - by implication - to take his supporters with him, he told Kennedy in 1962 that he was considering resigning his position to return to Illinois and to run against Everett Dirksen for the Dirksen seat in the United States Senate.

JFK saw right through him. "Adlai, resign or not as you see fit, and I can't make that decision for you. But if you're asking my political judgment, I'll tell you, Everett Dirksen will frazzle your ass."

Stevenson didn't resign.

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The first session of the Eightieth Congress in 1963 seemed almost

endless. There was a lot of partisan bickering, but the Congress, nevertheless, was continuing to make real progress on the President's proposals, especially the big Civil Rights bill and the Tax Cut bill. We saw nothing to be gained by our cooperating to afford members the luxury of an early recess, especially since 1963 was an odd-numbered year rather than an election year. The session droned on long past its usual time for recess, and the ill-tempered grumbling rose in volume each day. The troops were nearing outright revolt, and it was uncertain how long we would be able to hold them in town.

Two big items in the President's original program seemed impossible of enactment until the election of much larger Democratic majorities, which we hoped would happen in 1964. One of these items was Federal Aid to Education. But this bill was tied down by the quadruple anchors of increased expenditures, the shift of authority from State to Federal governments that it portended, racial prejudice in the south among those who feared integration of the schools, and religious prejudice of Protestants who opposed the rescue of Catholic parochial schools. These problems made early action unfeasible.

Medicare, the most cherished of Kennedy's objectives, seemed almost equally hopeless. It is hard to imagine now that until a mere thirteen years ago Americans were not permitted to ensure by taxes on their payrolls that they could receive medical assistance in the years when their incomes declined and their physical illnesses multiplied. But Medicare was fought to the bitter end by doctors, by employers, who were resisting paying their portion of the payroll tax, and even by lobbies that were not on the surface directly concerned with the issue.

An example of an unrelated lobby that was active against Medicare was the American Farm Bureau (despite the obvious benefits the act would furnish

its members) because the Bureau was building alliances to secure support from the likes of the American Medical Association on agricultural legislation.

But the spearhead of the opposition was the American Medical Association. The AMA fervently mobilized nearly every doctor in the country into political action and levied upon them heavy assessments to finance the national effort. The AMA's opposition stemmed from its fear that Medicare was the forerunner of the system of socialized medicine that recently had been installed in Great Britain.

Because doctors of the various communities seriously addressed themselves to a single political issue upon which they were regarded to be experts; and because they lectured each patient against Medicare and handed him AMA literature graphically depicting the socialist tendencies of Medicare and told him to express himself to his Congressman and Senators, large things happened. The Congress panicked.

This was not a new effort by the AMA. Opposition to National Health Insurance had been started early in the Administration of Harry Truman, and so a large majority of the members of the House of Representatives had regularly pledged themselves to the defeat of Medicare for as long as fifteen years before 1963. Today probably as large a majority of doctors favor Medicare as then were opposed to it. But at that time there were only about 160 votes for it in the House, and there was only a bare, shaky majority for it in the Senate. This meant we had to get 58 more votes in the House to win by one vote - a dubious prospect at best.

But there yet was a faint glimmer of hope. People across the country, under the prodding of the President, finally were beginning to become restive about the inaction of the Congress on Medicare. If we could get the bill through the House Ways and Means Committee in the waning days of 1963



there might build up in the public sector sufficient pressure to enable us to squeak the bill through the House in 1964. According to our plan this pressure would be applied to the various Congressmen as they sped to the swift completion of their appointed politicking amongst their constituents during the holiday period.

However, this was a big "if." Ways and Means members were, on balance, no more sympathetic to the legislation than were Representatives generally, and they had been much more heavily lobbied than had other members. Moreover, they could count the House as well as could we, and they had no intention of bringing forth a bill that would be defeated. A defeat on a matter of this importance would seriously erode the regal aura in which the Committee long had prided itself.

For many months we had pecked away at the twenty-five Committee members with such pickaxes as we could devise. They were rather an impervious lot, and each knew what the other was going through. There was no point in my going to Mills about it until I was satisfied that we had on the Committee a one vote majority consisting of a combination of enough votes solidly with us and enough votes that, though not committed to us, had been softened sufficiently to be responsive to a hard push from Mills. Mills also had to be satisfied that we had done our homework across the House membership as a whole thoroughly enough so that our efforts, when coupled with the game plan envisioned, and with the prestige of Mills and his committee, would give us at least a reasonable chance for success on the House floor. Mills needed this assurance not only for purposes of being convinced that he could by winning retain and enhance his own authority as a major leader of the House of Representatives, but also that he could be able honestly to persuade his Committee members that he was not leading them down the path to defeat. It was evident to us, since we had by then become fairly well experienced in such matters, that if

Mills agreed to present the bill to his Committee the bill would emerge as we wished, because he would have made no such commitment to us if he were not confident he could deliver the Committee vote. He was never wrong about where every member of his Committee stood on every issue.

The timing was delicate. We needed every day we could get in which to do our homework as thoroughly as possible, but we couldn't hold off too long lest a recess suddenly make shambles of our plan. On the afternoon of November 21st I decided we had to make our move, and I secured an appointment with Mills for the next morning at nine o'clock.

Friday, November 22, 1963, began as a warm, dark day. Most leaves had deserted the deciduous trees, and I suppose it would have been regarded to be a foreboding day if one were inclined to meditate on such matters. I had other concerns.

I arrived timely in Mills' unpretentious office in the Longworth House Office Building, and we immediately launched into a detailed review of the position of each of the 435 members of the House on the issue of Medicare. This review had to take into account all of the nuances that ought properly to be appraised in preparation for an historic legislative battle. Mills had some new facts I didn't know about, and I had some new facts he didn't know about, but, interestingly, as always, the new facts each of us produced were not in conflict with each other.

We then reviewed in much greater detail the postures of the members of the Ways and Means Committee. His knowledge and judgments about the Committee members were understandably more detailed and valuable than mine were. However, our people had worked so hard on the Committee members that I was able here and there to throw in data which illuminated for Mills why a given member had said what or done what. The whole exercise was

thoroughly enjoyable for me, and I'm sure it was for Mills, too. This was constructive government at its best. Genuine creativity is a gruelling process but its reward justifies the effort that renders it possible.

I said, "Why don't we, in the interest of time, work out a bare bones paper, rather than a full-fledged bill, that will contain all the elements of a bill, and that may be regarded as a 'Declaration of Purpose'? This, then could be ratified by a majority of the Committee, and we could move on from there."

"All right."

This approach was unusual but not unprecedented, and it would serve our immediate purposes as well as a formal bill would. I then sketched out in pencil on a yellow pad the elements the President would consider to be essential to an acceptable bill. Mills scribbled several items on the paper - adding here, subtracting there. We discussed the points of difference, resolved them, and I wrote a new two pages in the interest of legibility. We both then did some interlineation on that paper.

Mills then said, "Get that staffed out, get it back to me this afternoon, and I will put it to the Committee on Monday, but you'll have to get it back today because the Congress is more nearly ready to recess than may you may think, and I'll have to give the Committee at least some semblance of notice about what we're going to do."

I was, of course, completely elated. This was the objective we had sought.

I ripped from the pad the two hand-scribbled, frequently amended, unsigned yellow pages and walked downhill a few blocks westward on Constitution Avenue to the new Health, Education and Welfare building and into the office of Wilbur Cohen, then Assistant Secretary of HEW for Congressional Relations,

and later Secretary of HEW. Cohen had a hand in drafting the original Social Security Act of 1935. He was at least as much delighted as I was with the dramatic new development. We agreed that he would have a paper ready by late afternoon and that I then would pick it up and return it to Mills.

I went back to my office, secure in the knowledge that we had pulled off an event of compelling importance. I had held my other formal appointments for the day down to a meeting in mid-afternoon with Adam Clayton Powell, Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor and the late afternoon round with Mills.

I thought the President should know about the developments of the morning, and that he might even want to telephone Mills to express his appreciation. The President, however, was on a tour of Texas. Ken O'Donnell and Dave Powers almost always accompanied him on his trips. Larry O'Brien because of the press of Congressional duties, seldom did. However, it is an indication of the political significance of this trip that Larry went also.

I said to my secretary, Maura Hurley, "See if you can get Larry for me." She reported back, "The switchboard says that the Presidential party has left for Dallas. They'll have Larry call you as soon as he can get to a telephone." I went downstairs for lunch in the White House Mess.

The White House Mess then consisted of one medium sized room cluttered with a number of small tables and a larger round table in the corner that could seat about a dozen people. Staff members sat at the larger table when they did not have guests. Thus those who happened to be at the round table changed from day to day. Telephones with long extension cords were scattered about the room. When a call came in for a staff member a messboy would place a telephone beside him on the table. Or a member could call for a telephone to place a call.

The White House Mess tradition isn't very lengthy. Until after World War II staff members had to leave the building for lunch or send their secretaries out for hamburgers. Even now, staff officials frequently don't want to take the time to walk downstairs and wait for a meal, and for those there is a small room adjoining the Mess filled with machines vending soup, sandwiches, milk and the like. President Truman was persuaded that staff time would be saved if dining facilities within the West Wing furnished breakfast and lunch and that they should be operated by one of the military services. Spokesmen for the Army, Air Force, and Navy were called in, and the Navy lost. Hence the name "Mess." The Navy saw fit to select Filipinos as messboys and kitchen crew, and this tradition has gone unbroken through the years even though the Republic of the Philippines has been an independent nation since 1946. The Filipinos also cooked and served the meals on the yacht trips down the Potomac on warm evenings.

Meals in the Mess were excellent and cheap. Only one soup was available, but it was a different soup every day of the year. This must have strained the chef's imagination somewhat and he had to come up with the likes of peanut butter soup and cream of lettuce soup. But they were always interesting and they were always good.

The menus were printed daily and were done in good taste. Visitors were encouraged to take their menus and White House-inscribed match covers as souvenirs. Staff members could invite who they wished with the sole exception of news people. Too many matters of high secrecy were bandied about in that room to risk eavesdropping. Mess privileges necessarily were limited to senior staff. Each of us had a silver napkin ring with "White House Mess" and his name inscribed. We were expected to take

these with us when we retired from the White House.

On November 22nd the Mess Room was filled, as usual. I sat down at the big table eager to divulge my news about Medicare. But before I could describe it or even place an order for food, somebody said to me, "Tell the alligator shoe story."

This story had brought waves of ribald laughter a week earlier. Chuck Daly of our Congressional Relations staff who talked faster than I could listen, said: "Let me tell it, you'll take all day." He whipped through it in record time, and when he finished, not only nobody laughed, nobody even knew he was through. I said, "Well, Chuck, at least you told it fast." In the ensuing laughter the waiter put a telephone beside me, and I noticed that, oddly, other phones were ringing, too. It was Maura, "The President's been shot. I don't know anything more, and that came over television." In shock I hung up the telephone and turned to go upstairs to my office. The Mess was completely deserted. I was the last one there. Telephones on the various tables bore mute testimony to the fact that everybody else had gotten the message in the same way and at the same time I had.

We sat through that long terrible afternoon watching the television set in Larry O'Brien's office, which was the only one on the second floor of the West Wing. Except for the clatter of the television, there was an eerie silence in the offices that ordinarily so bustled with activity. No one had anything to say. On the rare occasions when one person spoke to another it was in hushed, whispered tones as in a church service.

When it was officially announced that the President was dead an

involuntary universal gasp went up. And still we sat and watched and occasionally whispered. Most of the secretaries were openly weeping. Late that night it occurred to me that I hadn't had anything to eat since an early breakfast, but I didn't want anything, and I'm not sure I could have held it down.

Meanwhile, my wife, Mary, and her parents had been visiting a seriously ill relative in Coatsville, Pennsylvania, which was about a hundred and fifty miles from our home in Virginia. As they were getting into the car to depart Coatsville, a neighbor came over and told them that the President had been shot. So they moved ahead with the radio on. Down the road they stopped for gas at a small filling station in Kennett Square in the heart of the charming Amish countryside. They waited for a while and finally an attendant appeared, tears streaming down his furrowed face. Mary said that during the three hour drive, that included a portion of the Washington beltway, she didn't meet more than half a dozen vehicles. Our children were dismissed early from school and were attended to by a thoughtful neighbor.

Meanwhile, in the White House we saw Air Force One alight at Andrews Air Force Base at sunset, and we watched the departure of the new President by helicopter to travel several miles to the South lawn of the White House in the gathering dusk.

As we walked downstairs to meet President Johnson we went past the open door of the Oval Office. The familiar light green carpet had turned blood red. It was almost more than I could bear. But it was no hallucination. I later learned that President Kennedy had ordered the change to be made during his trip to Texas.

We sat together numbly throughout the evening as if for mutual support, but also to be available to give President Johnson such help as he might need. Larry O'Brien and Ken O'Donnell finally came in, exhausted and grief-stricken, having accompanied the body of the slain President to Bethesda Hospital for the autopsy. After they had settled down somewhat I told Larry about the arrangement that had been made with Mills that morning about Medicare. We agreed that it was so important it should be related to the new President even on that tragic night.

We got Wilbur Cohen at home. He hastily put together a memorandum and brought it to the West Wing. We got it to LBJ, and he was appropriately impressed. He did all he could to move the bill along, but the magic moment was gone, and we got no Medicare bill until two years later.

The day which had begun on a note of such high expectancy had ended in horror. I got home that night between eleven and twelve o'clock and immediately was subjected by my children and my concerned and sympathetic in-laws to a barrage of questions for which I had no answers.

Finally I suggested that they all get some sleep. Mary and I got into a car, and drove around and talked for a while. I told her about the arrangement with Mills on the Medicare bill, and I mentioned that a procedural step had to be taken the first of the week to keep the Civil Rights bill alive. I suppose I raised these to her in an effort to divert her grief. Her predictable reaction was to reproach me for thinking of mundane matters at such a time. However, I had by then, during those long hours of listless waiting, decided that life had to go on and that somebody had to mind the store. This impression was buttressed by my recollection of my reaction upon learning of the death of FDR on



April 12, 1945. I was a twenty-three-year-old Army Lieutenant in a convoy in the mid-Atlantic. I couldn't imagine life without Franklin D. Roosevelt. I was ten years old when he was elected President, and I didn't really know about any other President. Nearly everyone, including many who regularly voted against him leaned upon his strength. He had seen us through the terrible Depression and through the War, and we knew that he was big enough to cope with whatever had to be coped with. I suppose we thought he was immortal, too, because we couldn't imagine life without him. When he died, it was as if the whole bottom dropped out. But it didn't. He had chosen his Vice President well, just as JFK had chosen his Vice President well.

Roosevelt had become everybody's father. Kennedy was a comrade in arms of my generation.

When Kennedy was killed the legislative machinery slowed but it didn't stop. One could not just throw up one's hands and let Medicare and Civil Rights be left to the tender mercies of the wolves who continued to snap at our heels even as the funeral arrangements proceeded. JFK would not have had it that way.

The Kennedy family and the Kennedy White House staff never got emotionally involved nor even very curious about whether there had been a conspiracy to slay the President. After the funeral I never heard it mentioned except when it was raised by outsiders. So far as we were concerned, JFK was gone, and no amount of retribution could restore him.

We shall never know just how deeply Kennedy's brief tenure as the leader of the free world embedded his image and example into the hearts

and minds of billions of people around the globe. We do know of the astonishing outpouring of grief that everywhere greeted the news of his assassination, and we do know that hundreds of millions of humble homes ranging from straw shacks in the jungles along the Amazon to igloos on the Siberian tundra bear his picture on their walls to this day. No doubt some of this reaction was a response to martyrdom, but not all of it. He was a special man.

We can never know, either, how JFK might have translated his standing into the achievement of peaceful, world-wide progress. We won't see his like again soon.