

Joseph Kraft Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 03/07/1970
Administrative Information

Creator: Joseph Kraft
Interviewer: Roberta Greene
Date of Interview: March 7, 1970
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.
Length: 38 pages

Biographical Note

Joseph Kraft was a journalist, syndicated columnist (1963-1986). This interview focuses on Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] during the John F. Kennedy [JFK] Administration, a trip with RFK to Poland, and RFK's Senate years, among other issues.

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Joseph Kraft, recorded interview by Roberta Greene, March 7, 1970, (page number),
Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program of the John F. Kennedy Library.

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Oral History Interview

with

JOSEPH KRAFT

March 7, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By Roberta Greene

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program
of the Kennedy Library

GREENE: Okay. I had prepared largely for the '64-'68 period, but I also wanted to know if you had any significant recollections of the Senator [Robert F. Kennedy] during the Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] period. You had started to mention . . .

KRAFT: Yeah. Not many. We knew him only casually and through friends. But on either the Friday or Saturday night of the missile crisis we had just come down to Washington. There was a party for us given by Burke [Burke O. Marshall] and Violet Marshall and Tony [Anthony Lewis] and Linda Lewis. Bob came, and I remember that there was a long debate among various people about what was going to happen in the congressional elections. At one point he said, with some heat, "Something's now happening, I can't tell you what it is, that's going to throw out all these congressional elections and make them seem unimportant, though it will probably cause us to lose." I think he said, "Certainly cause us to lose." It was only the next day, or the day after, that I knew he was talking about the missile crisis. I think it had to be the Friday night.

It seemed to me kind of important because I think there had been, in some minds, the feeling that the president played the missile crisis for political purposes. But certainly this outburst, which I think was wholly uncontrolled, suggested that at least in Bob Kennedy's mind the missile crisis was going to be a political debit.

GREENE: Right. And you never talked to him later in retrospect about that?

KRAFT: Never mentioned it to him, never mentioned it to him.

GREENE: I know you wrote one column indirectly critical of the steel crisis, shortly after it, and largely a criticism of the Justice Department's antitrust performance. Do you recall that at all?

KRAFT: No, I don't. I know I talked to Bob. I did a piece in Harper's on the Justice Department under Kennedy, under Bob, and at that time I talked to him. I'd met him only slightly during the campaign and hadn't particularly liked him. I was impressed, but I don't know if I liked him all that much when I interviewed him for the Harper's piece. I remember he was very easily distracted, and there were parts of the interview that clearly didn't engage him.

We talked about the steel crisis, and it was my impression that he felt he would have done it in a different way. And it is my impression that a large part of what made the steel crisis look so sour resulted from a misinterpretation of some directions that were given to the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation].

GREENE: Are you speaking of the waking of the press?

KRAFT: Yeah. That in particular. I'm sure that must now be well known, but I think that he kind of acknowledged that to me at the time. Although, in general, on that kind of an issue--one of the things that was important about Bob was that he didn't like to seem to be begging off. In fact, I'm not sure he was the one who told me. I think it might have been Nick Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach] who told me. Bob would not easily beg off with somebody whom he thought was critical. So, he probably would have been loath to, even though there was a just case for saying that he had been misinterpreted, I think he would normally be loath to do that kind of thing. He would, in general, particularly with people he didn't know very well, prefer to go down as a tough guy in the wrong than a good guy who was copping out on a past action.

GREENE: What was his reputation with members of the press corps that you were involved with during that period?

KRAFT: Well, I didn't know him first through the press corps. I first knew him through Ted Sorensen's [Theodore C. Sorensen] entourage during the campaign, and he was considered then to be a pretty hard guy. I didn't have much in common with him. He came into my office once and introduced himself and said, "I'm Bob Kennedy," which I thought was--you know, who did I think he was?--a little bit much. No, I didn't sense any particular interest in me, not that there was any reason why he should be. But the sense I had was that of a fairly tough guy, a hard guy.

GREENE: Is there anything else on the administration period?

KRAFT: Well, I guess the thing that always struck me then was the quality of the people he had around him. Many of these were people I had known a long time before, who were very, very different kinds of people. It was just astonishing how he could synchronize all these people. And the kind of loyalty that he could evoke from them all was really astonishing. But otherwise, I don't think there was anything.

GREENE: The contacts would have been indirect, through them?

KRAFT: I assume that.

GREENE: Well, can you recall your conversations with him, or with close friends of his, in the period following the president's death about what he would be doing in the future, some of the alternatives that were open to him?

KRAFT: One thing I guess I should say. Shortly after the president's death, Jackie [Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis] moved in about two houses away. Bob would occasionally come around and bring me and, I assume, lots of other people over to see her. He was extremely solicitous, really. I mean, it's very, very difficult to describe the tenderness and concern and the care in the way he would sort of arrange things, bring people in to see her and leave them alone with her and try to get things up, and try to. . . I can remember him saying, "You see, she's living in the past all the time." There was this. I think, really, whatever his own grief was and however he may have been smothered in pity for her, I think he was very clear-sighted about what she was doing. He felt a need to pull her away from that. And I particularly remember him saying, "See, she's living in the past." This was the whole thrust of certainly getting me and a whole lot of other people that didn't know her well--I didn't know her well in any case--over to talk with her and to bring her out and to turn her around and make her look forward.

Then I guess I came to know him. I first came to know him well on a trip we took to Canada. I can't even remember why this was. It must have been in the spring of 1964. I remember Haynes Johnson. I think Haynes was along. I don't know whether Haynes was along, but Bob gave me a copy of Haynes's book. I think Dave Halberstam [David Halberstam] who was then on the Times [New York Times] was along.

We had a sort of funny Kennedy trip where everything went wrong. The plane couldn't land. Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] and I and somebody else went up from here. We were supposed to meet Bob at La Guardia, but the plane couldn't land at La Guardia so we had to go someplace down further on the Island [Long Island], some small air base. Nothing seemed to work out. Bob couldn't make it. I think he flew in a really dizzy flight that looked as though it was about to crash. Then we couldn't get out. There was this tone of absolute lighthearted gaiety that you always have with the Kennedys when things were really dreary and nothing was working at all. We finally did get out. We got there late. I guess we were going to Toronto. He gave a speech there. Then we went, again sort of typical Kennedy, to the last quarter or something like that of the Stanley Cup hockey game. There were enormous cheers. Then we went to the hotel and then came back to Washington. It was a very rapid trip, but I did establish, I guess at that point, some kind of personal intimacy with him.

I guess my main souvenir is a typical souvenir. I bought a coat to go up. [Interruption] I somehow didn't use the coat. When we got back here, I think Ethel swept it up or somebody swept it up. Bill Barry [William Barry] or one of those people swept it up with a

whole bunch of Kennedy clothing, took it out to Hickory Hill and, of course, I never saw it again. This was sort of typical of them.

GREENE: Were you along on this trip by their invitation, or were you covering it?

KRAFT: Oh, no. I was covering it. I can't remember why, but-- I guess I was then doing a column for the Star [Washington Evening Star] and it was in connection with that that I went with Bob.

GREENE: Was there anything else up until the time of the trip to Poland that is significant?

KRAFT: I don't think so. I think the Polish trip was the one that, I'm sure, in time was the one. And the things about the Polish trip that were significant. . . . Well, I think Bob did not have a very good feel for the European situation. His basic approach was macro-liberalism: we've got to take back Berlin, and the confrontation along the line; no sense that it could be made into a more porous situation; I think rather little sense--now maybe I'm exaggerating--but rather little sense that there was more to this situation than just standing firm. I think he began to get the drift as soon as we hit Germany.

We went on a commercial plane. I remember very well that Bob had a faculty of going to sleep fairly early. He used to wear those things you put on your eyes, put a sweater on, tilted back in the chair as soon as we left Kennedy [John F. Kennedy International Airport], and so far as I could tell, slept all the way through till we reached Frankfurt. We got met at Frankfurt, and this is one of the things I remember. We got driven to the 7th Army headquarters, I guess it was, and Bob went to a ceremony and a trip in a tank. And it's kind of typical of the way he would stick close to people who later--you know his capacity for identifying really good people. The guy who took him around in that tank was Creighton Abrams, whom he'd first known, I think, in either the Meredith [James H. Meredith] case or the Alabama case.

GREENE: Yes he did. I remember that.

KRAFT: Was it Alabama? I can't remember which one it was.

GREENE: I think it was Alabama. He thought very highly of him then.

KRAFT: Yeah, and always maintained this. That was one of the things about him, he kept up his relations with people whom he'd liked or been close to. We then went on to Bonn and he saw Konrad Adenauer.

GREENE: And Erhard [Ludwig Erhard].

KRAFT: And Erhard. But I think it was Adenauer that he went into. I mean he had obviously been getting a lot of briefing, and

it had been quite clear to him, I guess, that Adenauer was going to give him a lecture on standing firm. He started off with Adenauer, the way he would sometimes, by saying to him, "Now, don't give me a lecture about communism. The evils of communism," I guess was what he said to him. This is secondhand from him. But sure enough, Adenauer gave it to him. Now, that he told me later, suggests that he really was tipping around.

I did a little work for him on that trip. I think he was not too happy with the speech he'd done for the Free University of Berlin, and we did some work on it.

GREENE: So far as you know, was there any official or semi-official purpose to this trip, or was it simply to dedicate the plaque to JFK?

KRAFT: No, no. I think it was to dedicate the plaque. There was a political purpose to going to Eastern Europe.

GREENE: From his own standpoint?

KRAFT: From his own standpoint. During this period he was wondering about what to do. Going to Eastern Europe would be a way of setting up, a way of showing his Catholic strength, particularly since he was going to Poland, of reminding the Poles of who he was in this country and there, and playing the kind of crossruff that I think the Kennedys always understood was there, an important crossruff. So, the Polish part of it was political; and while I'm not familiar with it, it's my impression that there were tremendous difficulties in the way of whether he should go or not. The Polish government itself raised some questions. It was hard to get visas for a lot of the people. And it's my impression that the State Department was up and down on it. What was the name of the State Department guy who went along with us? You would know that.

GREENE: Who went along with you?

KRAFT: Yeah. There was a fellow from the State Department who's now number two or three in the policy planning [Policy Planning Council] staff.

GREENE: I'm not sure I know that. I don't think I've come across that name at all. Anyway, we can get it with that description.

KRAFT: Yeah. He did go. He was the State Department adviser. He was quite good. But crossing over into Poland it was very unclear what Bob should be saying. He was beginning to gather stuff, and by that time, it was very, very clear that he understood that the way to get things moving in Eastern Europe was to turn it around and to try to encourage rapprochement between the East Europeans, particularly between the Germans and the Poles, not to take a hard line stand, but to sort of pull them together. That's what I can remember very vividly. He came back, or I went forward, and we talked on the whole trip to Poland about what he should be

saying. He was focusing entirely on the need for a rapprochement between Poles and Germans and, I think, on the German part of the trip had been taking soundings on what the Germans had been doing to try and make good with the Poles. The Polish trip was just a really almost incredible thing, beginning from that first moment, but I've sort of written everything he did in the article in the book.

GREENE: There are a couple of things in that article that, looking back on it now, I find interesting and maybe a little confusing. You seem very convinced in that article that what he really wanted to do was run for vice president, and you emphasized that now, I suppose this was a political build-up to ally the people back home with whom the decision would lie. This conflicts to some extent with reports that we've had, particularly from New York people, who felt that even after he'd taken himself out of the race officially after Edward Kennedy's [Edward M. Kennedy] accident that he was still seriously considering that, and that he made up his mind to run in New York shortly after he returned. So, I was wondering what your conversations were with him on this trip that convinced you that he was not interested seriously in New York?

KRAFT: Oh, I don't know if I said he was not seriously interested.

GREENE: Well, you said that he had put aside. Let's see, I have it with me.

KRAFT: No. I remember in talking, I don't know whether it was on this trip or later or earlier--at that point I was seeing a lot of him--he specifically talked about being in the Senate and how he wouldn't like the idea of being a senator. He correctly anticipated--and said later when you'd go to see him in the Senate--that he was an administrator, that he liked doing things, that he was an executive, that he didn't like sitting around making a lot of speeches. And I think that was certainly one of the things that put him off on New York. He also had various analyses done of the vice presidential situation. I think it was Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton] who did one that showed that vice presidents had been pushed down the throats of sitting presidents, and the cases of Barkley [Alben W. Barkley], Truman [Harry S. Truman], Wallace [Henry A. Wallace], a whole lot of cases, were cited. Dutton did a memorandum, I remember.

GREENE: And this was prior to the trip to Poland?

KRAFT: I think it's prior. I'm not sure about the dates. The trip to Poland was when?

GREENE: The . . .

KRAFT: May . . .

GREENE: June 25 to July 2.

KRAFT: Of '64. The Dutton memo was probably prior. It was

probably prior. I would almost certainly say it was prior. It was very, very clear to me that he was interested in that, that he thought it was possible. And, you know, it only became impossible after the Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] nomination, because it was the Goldwater nomination that made it possible for President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] to turn it around. So it wasn't all that buttoned up. But we talked. Those were the two elements in the picture that make it clear.

GREENE: On the time you spent in Poland: do you remember his meeting? It was a dinner on June 28, given by Ambassador John M. Cabot, but there were also members of the ruling party present. Do you remember that at all?

KRAFT: Yeah. There was an exchange with Winiewicz [Jozef Winiewicz] who is the deputy foreign minister. I don't remember any of the details, except it was an extremely-- Jozef Winiewicz is his name--heated and hot debate. It had something to do with . . .

GREENE: He said he should have gone to, not Buchenwald, but one of those camps, and Kennedy said that he didn't have to go. Wasn't that the exchange that you wrote about?

KRAFT: That was one of the elements in it, but it was started because of the way Bob, in visiting the Warsaw ghetto, had allowed people to collect around him. Winiewicz, whom I have subsequently come to know, is not that bad a guy. I think the Poles were basically very, very jittery and annoyed about the whole thing. They were going through all kinds of internal problems of their own, which I'm not sure any of us were sensitive to. They were looking, particularly the foreign minister, for something to hit at Bob with, and they picked the fact that he'd allowed a crowd to collect around him at the Warsaw ghetto. They then said, "Why didn't you go to. . . .?" Was it Belsen or. . . .?

GREENE: I don't remember, but one of those camps.

KRAFT: You sure it wasn't Dachau?

GREENE: Maybe it was Dachau. That sounds right. And he said he didn't have to go because he knew what the Nazis were.

KRAFT: Yeah, but that wasn't. . . . There was one exchange in which Winiewicz sort of was knocking these people who had come out to see Bob. It was not unimportant, it seems to me, in Bob's sense of self-identification with voters, with the electorate, because he did feel, and quite rightly. . . . I mean, the whole thrust of the Winiewicz line was that Bob was a demagogue stirring up trouble, and that rulers shouldn't have anything to do with people.

GREENE: That's right. I remember he said, "Communist leaders don't go into the crowds," and Kennedy said, "Perhaps they

should. That would be a good idea."

KRAFT: Yeah. That was with Winiewicz. It was kind of tense. I thought Bob handled himself quite well.

GREENE: What about his relationship with Cabot, Ambassador Cabot?

KRAFT: Well, it was clearly an unfortunate relationship. Look, it ought to be said that it is not easy for a resident diplomatic post when the Kennedys come in with an entourage. Even people who really tried to be very, very kind, found it was a strain on them. Just so many changes back and forth, "Do this, do that." It was difficult. It was particularly difficult for Ambassador Cabot, who is not a younger man, who is not use to that kind of ease, that kind of give-and-take, who was quite frequently the butt of some of Bob's jokes, who was, I think, very worried about the Winiewicz thing.

That was the evening in which Bob had invited all these. . . . You see, the Polish press did not print his schedule, so he used the occasion whenever he'd see people to tell them where he was going to go for the rest of the day. That day he had said to some group, I guess it was at the ghetto, that he was going to dinner at the ambassador's house. The ambassador's house was fairly far out in the suburb. There was a huge crowd out there to meet us and Bob stood on top of the limousine and talked to them. At one point he said, "I have to go into dinner now. Would you like to come in with me?" and they said, "Sure," yelled, "Yes, yes, yes." He then in mock, you know, make a pretense of talking to the ambassador over the wall and said, "No, the ambassador says you can't come," so they all groaned. I mean it was good-natured but I don't think the ambassador thought it was all that funny.

Then the ambassador had at the very beginning been involved in this episode outside the cathedral where Bob was literally mobbed. He got on top of the car. The ambassador was sitting inside the car and you know the line, "Would you please tell the attorney general that the roof is falling in?" The car started to buckle.

So, he was uneasy about it. I think and I gather, that he did offer his resignation. Is that not known? The ambassador certainly at that point threatened to resign. . . .

GREENE: I didn't realize that.

KRAFT: . . . and had to be mollified, I think, by Dean Rusk.

GREENE: While you were still over there?

KRAFT: It was either while we were there or within a couple of days. I think it must have been while we were there.

GREENE: Oh, I didn't know that.

KRAFT: Yeah. He was very, very upset.

GREENE: What about Ambassador Dowling [Walter Dowling] in Germany?

KRAFT: A guy you should see about that visit is Joe Smith, [Joseph Smith] who is J.Y. Smith or J.W. Smith, who is now on the Washington Post, who is kind of typical of the way Bob would pick up a guy. He was a guy then working for the UP [United Press International]. Bob took an immediate shine to him because he could speak Polish, and he sort of served as his running interpreter throughout. Bob, I think, did not, in general, like to work with embassy people. This guy he caught on to immediately, and it was kind of funny because Smith was, I later discovered, married to the niece of Cabot's wife and had a pretty intimate connection with the embassy. But he and Bob got on very well, and Smith was running along beside him all the way through his visit as his interpreter.

GREENE: What about Ambassador Dowling in Germany? Was that a better relationship? Did he spend much time with him?

KRAFT: I can't remember. I don't remember that. The one thing I remember was that he had a very good relationship with Willy Brandt. I remember going to see them just before the speech in Kennedyplatz. He was staying at the mayor's house. The mayor was standing around playing with his kids and Bob was mixing in that. He had a very good relationship with Willy Brandt. I just don't know about the Dowling relationship.

GREENE: What about Cardinal Wyszynski [Stefan Wyszynski]. He had a visit with him. There was never really much said about what took place, but his comments about the church-state relationship seem to have been toned down after that. Do you know anything about it?

KRAFT: I do remember that we went out to Czestochowa where they have this enormous monastery. I remember talking to Bob on the way back and Bob telling me that the cardinal had said--and this was part of the radicalization of Robert Kennedy; I was sort of surprised to hear him say this because, while I'd known it was true of John Kennedy, I didn't know it was true of Bob--saying to me something about "I'm not exactly clerical myself." But I remember him telling me that the cardinal had said to him something. He had remarked to the cardinal that all over Poland in many, many places he tended to see older people, particularly in anything to do with official party business. In this monastery it was full of very, very young people. The cardinal had said, "That's right. The Communists took away from us all our lands, and that is what established us with the young people. Now they all come and they like to work with us." Now, that's not an exact quote, but it was along these lines. It didn't say, "We are the opposition," but, "We are the hope for this younger people." He was a very, very impressive guy, and Bob was very much impressed by him. How do you mean "tone down" his remarks on church-state?

GREENE: Well, he had apparently been critical of the fact that Wyszynski was not allowed to speak openly and, you know, that there was a certain amount of suppression in the church, not just a certain amount but considerable in Poland. But

after speaking to the cardinal perhaps the cardinal had . . .

KRAFT: . . . told him to go easier.

GREENE: . . . and warned him that he should be less critical.

KRAFT: I just don't know about that. I just don't know.

GREENE: That was one of the things that he was very close mouthed about, that he did not wish to discuss.

KRAFT: You could not go to Czectochowa and have the impression that there was a lot repression--I mean the church was obviously flourishing--maybe there was, undoubtedly there was in some area, Clearly, he was getting steered away from the cathedral in Warsaw. But, I mean, the impression he gave to me after his talk with Wyszynski was that the church was the wave of the future, not the party, that the church had engaged all the young people, and the church was the force that stood for idealism.

I think that one of the things he did during that trip--now, maybe he may have done it earlier--was to identify himself very strongly with the young people. I guess he did do it earlier. I remember going south with him, I don't know when exactly, but he was still attorney general.

GREENE: He had already gone to the Far East for the president [Johnson] where it was very clear that . . .

KRAFT: Uh huh. But no, you see, I think the first time he used the line about "pick up the torch" from the '60 inaugural was in the Free University speech in Berlin. Sure, the president identified and he identified in the name of the president, but the notion that he was the repository for the hopes of all these youths certainly took on, let's say, new force there, if it wasn't born there. It probably wasn't, but it certainly took on a lot of new force.

GREENE: Did he have hopes, whether or not they were materialized, of seeing the president when he got back and having his view on on the trip considered? I think that was one of the things he complained about later, that he was never really debriefed by the president on any of his trips.

KRAFT: Yeah, or by anybody else. Yeah, I think that was . . .

GREENE: But at this point, was it clear to him that that's what would happen, or did he still have the thought that the relationship might be better?

KRAFT: I certainly don't have the feeling that he went through that trip looking forward to getting debriefed. I would think it was probably in the nature of a post-hoc complaint.

GREENE: Is there anything else on that trip?

KRAFT: Again, the sort of spirit of gaiety that went on. You know, everybody was just swept up in this enormous vitality. You know, it always generated when Ethel was around. That was one of the things that was so marvelous about it. And, you know, everybody got sort of transformed by this.

GREENE: Was it your impression that he had come out of the depths of his depression by this time? Was this trip helpful in that respect?

KRAFT: Yeah. I think the trip was helpful in that respect, that he was genuinely surprised and enormously pleased by the kind of reception he got in Warsaw. I think that did a lot to get the juices flowing again. Yeah, I think it did quite a lot to bring him back to life.

GREENE: Well, if there's nothing else on the trip, then maybe we could pick up when you get back and events began to happen. Of course, the meeting with the president at which he's eliminated was on July 22. Was there anything prior to that, anything further on the vice-presidential thing?

KRAFT: Well, I knew we sort of kept in touch with it, but I think Fred Dutton was the guy who was watching it most closely. I mean, there were a lot of people beating around and sort of everybody around was taking a position either for or against the vice-presidency or for the Senate in New York, or for university president. Everybody was wondering what to do, what Bob should be doing. I was one of those who felt the vice-presidency, wrongly. I mean, now, from what you know about Lyndon Johnson, I think it was dead wrong; but I was one of those who thought it was a possibility. When did the Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor] thing happen, by the way? When did Cabot Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge] come back?

GREENE: You've got me. I just couldn't . . .

KRAFT: It must have been in the spring of '64.

GREENE: . . . say definitely.

KRAFT: That was in the spring of '64, and Bob volunteered to take that job to be ambassador to Saigon.

GREENE: Oh, that's right. That was one of the early things that was considered. He actually wrote to the president on it.

KRAFT: Uh, well, anyhow. I remember talking about that, but I don't exactly remember what was said to him I thought he was lucky that they hadn't picked it up, and he sort of smiled ruefully, but that was the kind of going-against-the-grain situation he would always seek out for himself.

GREENE: He also had at least a small interest in becoming an under secretary of state for Latin America, overseeing the Alliance for Progress. Do you remember anything about that?

KRAFT: No.

GREENE: I don't know he ever did anything about it.

KRAFT: Uh huh.

GREENE: It was just one of those things.

KRAFT: The other thing was very, very genuine. He was right at the heart of that business. I mean, I was sort of in touch with him all along at that period and was thinking that going for the vice-presidency was a reality, that President Johnson would need help from the Kennedy forces. The president called him in. It must have been a Thursday, wasn't it?

GREENE: July 27th. I don't know what day of the week it was.

KRAFT: I think it was a Thursday. I don't know what Bob's movements were, but at some point after that he came by here.

GREENE: Was it the same day? It was my impression from other people that it was the same day that he came to see you.

KRAFT: I think it was the same day, I mean, but I can only tell if it was a Thursday, you know.

GREENE: I could check that, I guess.

KRAFT: I think the day he came by here was a Thursday.

GREENE: Uh huh.

KRAFT: Or maybe it was a Wednesday, I can't tell. He came by and he was really shaking. I remember he kept referring to the president as being "mean." He was very mad, and I think maybe wrongly mad, but I suspect he made it up with MacBundy [McGeorge Bundy]. That bitterness went on for quite a long time. He felt that Bundy had no business messing in this, that the president had asked him to take himself out, that's what had happened.

GREENE: Through Bundy.

KRAFT: Yeah. The president asked him to take himself out, not through himself, not direct. The president asked Bob to take himself out and Bob felt it should have been direct and then said "no." Then the president did this thing about all the cabinet members.

GREENE: But did he speak to you about the actual meeting with Johnson at the White House?

KRAFT: Yeah, he did. Sorry I can't remember much of what he said.

GREENE: I wondered if he was . . .

KRAFT: He said that Johnson was very, very mean.

GREENE: Was he most shaken at being eliminated or by the method in which it was done?

KRAFT: I think the method. I think the method, because he kept referring to how mean the president was. I think it was the method, but I think in those kind of circumstances. . . You know, I think that as far as the event itself, he seemed almost numb about that. I can't remember him saying, "Now, what will I do?" or anything like that. It was, I think, that he'd had the feeling that there was a brutal confrontation. This is, you know, the little boy side of him which tended to come out, you know, that there was meanness on the part of the president and deceit on the part of Mac.

I can remember weeks later, quite a long time later, when Bob had left the Justice Department or was on the point of leaving, there was a Justice Department good-bye party for him. Larry O'Brien [Laurence F. O'Brien] got up and began speaking the White House point of view, how much the people in the Justice Department had understood people at the White House, how great it was to work with Bob and everybody else at the Justice Department, and how they were the one department that never had any problems. They always helped people at the White House, including Mr. Bundy when he had his political problems. Mac laughed and pretended he was holding a knife and thrust it into his stomach. So, it went on for really quite a long time. But those are the two elements of it, that the president had been, I think "mean" was the word he kept using over and over again.

GREENE: I gathered that on an occasion like this when he would come to you, it was as a friend, rather than as a journalist. Is that correct?

KRAFT: Oh, sure. Oh, absolutely.

GREENE: Well, did you just know instinctively that these things were off the record? How did you determine what was usable publicly and what was not? Did you ever discuss it with him?

KRAFT: Never discussed it. And I don't think even now I could set out a good rule. I think this is just . . . I mean I think in general that I would go way overboard not to in those things, I mean, I just felt there were plenty of people who would get it, I mean that story certainly came out fast. I didn't feel that anything was being concealed. And it never even very much bothered me as a problem. I can't even remember any sort of feeble scratching at the back of my head about it.

GREENE: Do you think that was the case with other journalists who were close friends, that this was not a problem in determining what of the things they heard in their private conversations was off the record and what they could use?

KRAFT: I just can't say for other people. I suppose it represented some kind of a problem, but I don't think much of a problem. I don't think that the. . . . Certainly the problem of living on the fringes of Bob Kennedy was not the problem of getting information that you wouldn't know what to do with. That was certainly not the problem.

GREENE: Because I've noticed in your columns about him, even on issues there I know you had a lot more personal contact than the column reveals, you very seldom allude to personal conversations.

KRAFT: Yeah. I never used personal conversations. Once or twice I referred to a personal relationship when a political situation was going on, but otherwise, I don't think I did. But that was clearly not the kind of a question.

We had one other thing that was sort of not important. The kick-off statement that he made for his entry into the New York campaign was to some extent written, I can't remember how, but we stayed in touch. No, I guess some of us did a draft for it. Tony Lewis and I did a draft. I think it was a sign of how poorly organized he was.

GREENE: Did he consult you after this meeting with the president about what he was going to do, and particularly about the Senate race?

KRAFT: No.

GREENE: Not at all?

KRAFT: We would talk occasionally, and I would ask him questions occasionally as to what he was going to do, but, no I don't think that he would. That was a different ball game and he had other people to talk to. I assume he'd been talking to them all along about what he might do there.

GREENE: But you feel fairly convinced that had it been offered, he probably would have accepted the vice-presidency?

KRAFT: I have no doubt at all that, had it been offered, he would have accepted the vice-presidency. I know there were a lot of people around him who were saying, "You shouldn't." And on reflection I'm not sure it would have been all that wise, but I have no doubt at all that he would have accepted it.

GREENE: Do you know anything about people pressuring him, even after the president had eliminated him, to force himself on

Johnson at the convention [Democratic National Convention]. There was some discussion of that, and I knew Johnson was very afraid of it.

KRAFT: Yeah. I do not know of anybody who was pushing him.

GREENE: Well, is there anything on the New York campaign? Did you cover that at all?

KRAFT: Yeah. What are there? Well, I guess my main sense of the New York campaign, and it was a sense that was to grow in the '68 campaign, was that campaigns that were well organized when Bob Kennedy was managing them were much less well organized when he was running. And I guess I have one anecdote.

The night of the debate with Kenneth Keating, I can't remember how I was up there but I went up to see him. He was sitting around with some people, Burke, maybe Joe Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan], I don't even know who they were, Bill vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel]. They were talking about what they should do and what particular line they should take; and they suddenly realized that it was getting so late they might not make it--Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] was there--and they all dashed for the elevator. Bob, I think, took the service elevator down. It was one of those typically makeshift arrangements, because the real elevator wasn't working or something like that, or else he went down by stairs. But everybody sort of disappeared into the night. The next thing you knew was that they did have the debate.

GREENE: Now, are you speaking of the night of the so-called "empty chair" debate or the night of the actual debate on the "Barry Gray Show?"

KRAFT: Oh, maybe this was the "empty chair" debate. I guess it was.

GREENE: That's interesting. So, it was your impression that they actually did intend to go down and debate and that the "empty chair" fiasco was just an accident because he really got there too late. Is that correct?

KRAFT: Oh, no. No, Bob was down there; no, this couldn't have been. But what time was the "Barry Gray Show"

GREENE: That was. . . . Well, it was a different night, perhaps two nights later. Just before the election, they finally debated on radio. But about two nights before that. . . .

KRAFT: But what time was it, do you remember? Because I remember this was about seven or eight. The "Barry Gray Show" is on late, isn't it?

GREENE: Well, it might have been taped. It's later, but it might have been taped.

KRAFT: I don't know. [Interruption]

GREENE: Well, if there's nothing else on the campaign, then we can move ahead to the Senate years.

KRAFT: The general sense I have of the Senate years is that Bob was not awfully happy in the Senate, that he felt it was a talking place rather than a doing place. He would frequently refer to how little it was in his style. He referred often, even contemptuously, to things that were going on as "five or six old men sitting around."

The big thing I had to do with him then was on Vietnam, partially turning, I don't think turning around, but at least participating a little bit in the evolution away from counter-insurgency toward negotiations. I had seen the other side very early on in Algiers. He knew that I had seen them and stayed abreast of that. He knew that I had known a lot about the Algerian war and that I had been in touch with the rebels in Algiers, because we once met at a party for Ben Bella [Ahmed Ben Bella] at the White House.

At one point he sent Wendell Pigman around to see me with respect to the Hertz [Gustave C. Hertz] case. Hertz was a prisoner. You know the Hertz case. And I think it was maybe a Friday or a Saturday that Pigman and I got to talking and I suggested that maybe the way to handle this would be through the Algerian rebels, through the Algerians. This must have been in the spring of 1965.

GREENE: That sounds right.

KRAFT: Maybe July even. And it occurred to me that a good way to handle . . . I was convinced--I guess Bob came to me because he knew I would play it this way--that the way to handle it was through the National Liberation Front, not through Hanoi particularly, but through the National Liberation Front. I suggested to him that the National Liberation Front had a man, not low down, pretty high up in Algiers and that we could talk to the Algerians about it. He picked this up, and within half an hour I guess, or maybe an hour, we were driving out to see Cherif Guellal who was the Algerian ambassador.

Bob put the case to him really very, very carefully, giving all the details very succinctly, telling about his own feeling for Algerian independence and really made an almost irresistible appeal. Cherif undertook to do something. I think he called Ben Bella, who was then president of Algeria and it looked as though something was in motion. It genuinely seemed from what Guellal told me--check this with him--that something really was going. And, in fact, I think the release was scheduled for a Third World conference that was supposed to take place in Algiers, I think like August 26. I mean the date was a big event. A week before the Third World conference, Ben Bella got axed, the Boumedienne [Houari Boumedienne] coup took place, the conference got called off, and the deal got called off.

I don't want to exaggerate it, but an important element in that whole experience was that Bob began coming rapidly off the sense that counter-insurgency was the way to do it, that we could put our men out in little patches of the country, which had been his clear

conviction before. He began to see the need for negotiations. More and more, there were lots and lots of people he talked to in this area. We talked all the time about this and I kept reinforcing it. And the problem with the insurgency kick is when you get that disease in your blood stream, you really keep going all the time. You keep seeing it, so getting rid of it is like getting rid of malaria. And there was a very, very long, slow process with Bob. When it finally crystallized was in that--when was it--'65 speech.

GREENE: No. The '65 statements were very militant.

KRAFT: Sixty-six speech?

GREENE: Sixty-six, February, '66.

KRAFT: February, '66. The background of that was . . .

GREENE: That was the one where he urged the coalition government.

KRAFT: He didn't urge a coalition government, did he?

GREENE: Yeah, and then he got into the hassle with the fox and the chicken coop.

KRAFT: Yeah, But he didn't urge a coalition government. What he said was that in order to have a settlement. . . . The background of that basically was that Bob was. . . . That focused, I think, these two streams: one, his gradual disenchantment with counter-insurgency and his increasing realization that the way to handle it was through negotiations; and two, his dissatisfaction with the Senate. A large part of the background of that was the Fulbright [J. William Fulbright] hearings, which I think took place days or weeks before, which really frustrated Bob because it was nothing if not a good question. What he found in those hearings, particularly the questioning of Rusk, was that these people kept avoiding the big question. They kept skirting around and swimming around the question. It was for him, I think intellectually--though I don't think of him as a guy who was primarily intellectual--a sloppy performance, and one of the motivating factors was that he was coming in right on the heels of that saying, "Look, this is what it's really all about." That was the focus of that, an important focus of that speech.

GREENE: That was the one, I think we're thinking of the same speech. That was the one after which there were all kinds of clarifications and reclarifications.

KRAFT: That's right. Now, in the course of the clarifications--I thought the clarifications were a mistake. . . . I guess some people have said something about my role in that speech. Let me be quite precise. I had very little to do with the composition of that speech until the last day. I think it was maybe even the morning.

GREENE: It was a Saturday morning, yeah.

KRAFT: Was it a Saturday morning?

GREENE: Yeah, that he gave it.

KRAFT: Oh. But that Saturday, or maybe it was Friday, I can't remember, he had me, Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and Burke Marshall come in and look at it. We suggested various different formulae that I don't think contributed very much. Certainly the idea of giving it and moving that direction was his own and his staff's, as far as I could tell. And he was very clear about what he wanted to do; it had crystallized in his own mind.

GREENE: Do you recall that he was somewhat taken aback by the enormous publicity that this speech received, that he hadn't anticipated it?

KRAFT: I think he was really surprised, and I don't think he was fully prepared intellectually because the subsequent standdowns I didn't think were that well organized or well prepared. This was still gestation period for him. But so far as I could tell he was being fairly careful about. . . . Now, clearly, the implication of what he was saying was some kind of coalition, but the phrase he kept using--and I think it was fairly carefully worked out--was that some chance of accession to power for the other side has to be offered. Peaceful accession to power, or something like that, was the formula he used. And I don't think he. . . . I mean, the coalition government was clearly not ruled out by that formula, but there were loads of other ways that you could interpret what he said. I mean, I think now almost everybody accepts that formula as being the right formula for a negotiated settlement. There are people who can't accept the idea of a negotiated settlement. I think everybody now. . . . I mean, it would seem to me it was a terrifically important speech because it really set out, beyond any question, the price you had to pay to get a settlement. It was a typically Kennedy speech, Bob Kennedy speech, because he was always prepared to set forth honestly the price you had to pay. He never kidded himself about it, and he didn't like it when other people were being kidded. I think he was not well prepared for the use that would be made of it, for people jumping on the coalition government part of it. That was certainly a fault on the part of all of us that had been talking to him. I think that should have been anticipated.

GREENE: It all ended up, as I recall, when Bill Moyers [Bill D. Moyers] finally issued a statement sort of, I think, trying to protect Kennedy's flank, saying, "President Johnson also agrees to work with the other side after free elections," or something.

KRAFT: That's right, free elections. I mean Bill Moyer's role in this did not strike me as being. . . .

GREENE: Yeah. And then Kennedy ended up as saying, "Well, then the president and I agree." I think that was the end of it.

KRAFT: It was an unsatisfactory resolution. It's too bad, because it contributed a good deal to the intellectual bamboozlement of the country. And I think that Bob's role was a basically healthy role there, that he was setting out the truth of the matter. I don't think anybody else would play the very. . . . You know, everybody else took cheap shots on it.

GREENE: At the end of '66, you wrote a column urging him. . . . Well, have you ever seen the Lasky [Victor Lasky] book on Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy: The Myth and the Man]?

KRAFT: Yeah.

GREENE: Well, before I had your column, I was sort of just taking these things from other sources wherever I could get them. He quoted a large section, about four or five paragraphs, from a column you wrote in 1966 urging Robert Kennedy to be less combatant, less controversial, to become just one more senator and withdraw to some extent. That's how it appeared in his book; that was the advice. When I saw your own text, I see that you also go on to say that this would be uncharacteristic of Robert Kennedy and terribly difficult for him to do and, you know, that you were actually a lot more dubious about the value and even the possibility of this. I wondered how he reacted to a column like that.

KRAFT: I remember that I wrote the column before going on a trip somewhere, and I was sort of surprised that it made the impact that it did. He liked it a lot, or at least so he told me; and I think even Ethel told me that she liked it a lot and that, you know, they took it precisely in that spirit. It would be marvelous if we could only do it. It would be great if we could give up smoking, but we can't give up smoking. It was that kind of a. . . . But you see there were lots of people telling him this.

I suspect that I wrote this column off a conversation with Teddy, I don't remember. Or maybe even it. . . . It was in the fall of 1966, is that right?

GREENE: Um.

KRAFT: September or August?

GREENE: I've got it. Well, we've got it right here. I don't remember offhand.

KRAFT: I suspect it was one I might have written even after a conversation with Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin].

GREENE: It was almost unnatural for him to do that, being such an activist and feeling restrained as he was by his role in the Senate, to further restrain himself.

KRAFT: Yeah. I think it was sort of unrealistic on my part and on the part of those around him who were saying this; although, I think we all said it sort of unreally, saying it is like Lyndon Johnson going to reorganize the office.

GREENE: Before we get back to Vietnam, I wanted to ask you some general questions about the Senate; for one thing, what you thought of his press staff. He had three press secretaries, Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman], Wes Barthelmes [A. Wesley Barthelmes, Jr.], and then Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz]. How did they compare and how were they for you to work with?

KRAFT: I never had any problems. I never really had much business with them as press guys. I mean they were guys I dealt with easily, no problems at all. I think that Bob. . . . Wes Barthelmes probably could have done him a lot of good, that he never sensed, that other people couldn't. But, again, this was the liking for an activist, you know, for guys who were quick and fast and full of quips.

GREENE: In what sense do you mean that Barthelmes could have helped him?

KRAFT: Well, you know. Wes Barthelmes has certainly been. . . . For example, in the Oregon situation, Wes Barthelmes would have known all about Edith Green [Edith S. Green] and a lot of those problems. I don't think that at that point they were particularly. . . . I don't know. Was Wes working for him then? I don't think so.

GREENE: No, but he did write a very extensive memoranda on Oregon.

KRAFT: Oh.

GREENE: In which he warned him . . . [Interruption]

KRAFT: . . . an easygoing cocksureness, a tendency to underestimate difficulties that I don't think served the senator very well. But this was strictly an off-the-cuff observation of no relevance at all. And certainly as far as my relations with the press people, or with any of the people, they were always very easy and relaxed. I never had any. . . . I mean they were all, I thought, always very easy to work with. I never had any problems with them.

GREENE: Did they, for the senator, or the senator himself, ever call you in to give you a story, to give you information on which you could base a story?

BEGIN SIDE TWO

KRAFT: No. I mean, if it ever happened I would be taking the initiative. I would quite a lot of times take the

initiative on things that involved crime, the Justice Department. I'd always want to know what Bob thought about things.

There's one episode. I don't know exactly when it happened, but it really needs to be run down. That was the trip that Bob and Burke Marshall were going to take to Vietnam.

GREENE: Yes. I vaguely remember that, but I don't know the details.

KRAFT: It has never been published as far as I know; I've never seen a reference to it, but it certainly was . . .

GREENE: Do you remember, at least generally, when that was and what the reasoning was behind it in terms of what he was saying on Vietnam?

KRAFT: I think it might have been just before the . . . I know it was just before Lyndon Johnson's first trip to either Midway or Guam. [Interruption]

GREENE: Was that true in general of journalists with whom he was close, that they would come to him rather than he'd feed them stories? I always wondered whether there would be jealousy in a tight group like you have in the Washington press corps when there's a newsmaker like Robert Kennedy who tends to give his stories to specific individuals.

KRAFT: I suppose there was. I mean, I wasn't all that close. I mean Rowlie [Rowland Evans, Jr.] was a lot closer than I was, and Art [Art Buchwald] certainly was. You know, you went up and down. I wouldn't say there was accord to this, but you went up and down anyhow, and you came in and out. I suppose there was an atmosphere in which the green-eyed monster played. So, I guess the answer is yes, although I can't. . . . I think that there was an awful lot of suspicion on the part of--and since I don't work in an organization I didn't get much of it. But certainly guys who work in organizations were always being accused by other competitors within the organization of being patsies for the Kennedys, or being in Bob's pocket. That happened all the time.

GREENE: Yeah. This whole ruthless image that he was always trying to live down, and yet you saw so few stories ever illustrating this. I wonder who it was that was perpetuating them and why they were never more specific. Were they the people on the periphery who really didn't have that much contact?

KRAFT: Oh, I don't think that that's the kind of thing that anybody can create or perpetuate. I mean, I think it arose out of his role as a prosecutor or out of the way he handled some of the . . . Hoffa [James R. Hoffa] case, the steel case, the questioning of Sam Yorty [Samuel W. Yorty], the sort of things his father [Joseph P. Kennedy] said about him. You know this isn't the kind of thing that people can whip up. Now, while I never saw it, it undoubtedly had roots, but not real roots for a lot of people.

It's, I think, one of those great mysteries about crowd psychology that nobody understands.

GREENE: Did he ever discuss with you his attitude towards the press and his problems with the press, the journalists he particularly admired, those he wished to avoid?

KRAFT: No. He would mention guys who he liked. I know he had a lot of respect for Haynes Johnson. I'm sure he was the one who got me into it with Haynes. Well, no, he was not. I never found him to be a gossip fellow, certainly not about other journalists. I never asked, and he never volunteered.

One of the things about Bob, at least I felt that you always had a very straight relationship with him. There were things he wouldn't tell you. I think that he didn't give me the full story on Bundy, on Bundy's role. At least, according to Bundy, Bob had at some point earlier asked him to get into this game and that was why he felt. . . . Bob didn't tell me that. But I have never known him to tell me something that wasn't true. There were things he didn't tell you, but he's one of the very few officials that I can remember who never told me something that wasn't true.

GREENE: What about the December columns you wrote on wiretapping that were somewhat critical, but not terribly of him when he was having the whole feud with J. Edgar Hoover?

KRAFT: Those were largely based on Nick [Katzenbach]. I don't think that Bob and I talked about them at all. I think he may have felt a little bit that Nick was in a difficult position and was trying to smooth things over with both sides, which is perhaps right. But Nick was convinced, and he was the one who seemed to know most about things, that there had been a genuine misunderstanding.

GREENE: Would the senator call frequently to comment or discuss a column, whether it was favorable or not favorable?

KRAFT: No. He'd pop over a lot. You know, he'd just walk in, come in, and bring some coffee or something like that. He'd always kid Polly [Polly Winton Kraft] about not being much of a cook. But no, at least . . .

He really didn't like Reston [James E. Reston]. I remember him once telling me about going to the Times for a lunch or something like that and how little they knew about the other side in Vietnam. That's one of the points he was making.

GREENE: Was this one of the luncheons he had with the editorial board of the Times?

KRAFT: No, no. I think it was here in Washington.

GREENE: I know there were some to try to smooth over his relationship with the Times.

KRAFT: I don't think he really liked them at all. He didn't feel comfortable with them. But that's the only time I can ever remember him saying anything. I knew he liked Tony [Lewis] because Tony was a good friend of mine. [Interruption]

GREENE: Again, I go back to one of your columns. In '65, or at the end of '65, you said at some point that you felt the reason Robert Kennedy had kept quiet or had been reticent to speak openly on Vietnam in '65 was because of not wishing to get openly combative with the president. Was this just your own feeling or had he openly expressed this?

KRAFT: He had talked about the difficulty of his saying anything because it would be put down to political ambition rather than to a statement of the case. And it did take something--because he was constantly aware of that--to trigger it. I think that's the kind of thing he would say with me because he knew I was very sensitive to that danger and I was, in general, in favor of his lying low. When he decided to go in '68, I wasn't one of the people he talked to. And if he was going to go I wasn't the right kind of guy to talk to because I didn't think it made a lot of sense.

GREENE: In '65 he made a fairly hawkish, by today's standards certainly, speech supporting the appropriations that the president had asked for and at the same time urging them to be more concerned with the other problems of Vietnam, namely of the lives of the people. Did you discuss this at all with him?

KRAFT: No, not at all. He knew where I stood long before that. I was in favor of the negotiations. He was very close during all this period to Bob McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] and to Max Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor]. At some point, I remember--this was after everything--he gave Max a copy of one of the books with the inscription: "I tell it the way you told me it was." No, "I tell it the way it was, or at least the way you told me it was."

GREENE: Did you ever ask him about that? He relied even as late as '67 quite heavily on Taylor and McNamara's advice, and a lot of people felt that was one of the reasons he was misled for so long. Did you ever discuss this with him?

KRAFT: By '67 he was certainly not relying on Taylor's advice. He would talk . . .

GREENE: Still consulting them though.

KRAFT: Did he consult with them on the '67 speech?

GREENE: Oh, I'm not thinking specifically in terms of a speech, but just in general.

KRAFT: When was his last Vietnam speech while he was still in the Senate? Was that '67? I know I was down with Harriman [W. Averell Harriman] in Hobe Sound.

GREENE: Well in '67 there was the meeting in February in Paris with the . . .

KRAFT: Oh, yes.

GREENE: And then that, plus the Tet offensive. All these things built up, and then on March second he made a speech in the Senate urging the president to take advantage of Premier Kosygin's [Aleksei Kosygin] . . .

KRAFT: Yeah. Well that was March second.

GREENE: '67. There were also later speeches on the elections.

KRAFT: But that March speech I knew quite a lot about. And the March speech, he may have showed to all the people, but it was done with the sense that you do this because they're friends and acquaintances but you know what they think and you're not going to let them soften it. I mean, there were efforts to soften it on the part of people who felt it was politically wise to soften it, and I think I was one of them, but he didn't pay any attention to us. And the notion that they would have influenced him I think was. . . .

By '67 he was well, well over the dam. Now in '67 he knew what had happened on the Kosygin thing, and that's sort of another example of his being able to keep his counsel. What happened in the Kosygin thing, a lot of it has now come out, but Bob never told me about it, or nothing in detail. The roll of Chet Cooper [Chester L. Cooper] and the mistake with Wilson [Harold Wilson].

GREENE: I'm not sure I know the story.

KRAFT: Well, it was a complete goof up, and one message was sent through Wilson to Kosygin and another message was sent to Kosygin in the Soviet Union. I think one was conciliatory and one wasn't and it would have fortified all their feelings that the thing was a trap. That the United States was using the, was operating, was making dove noises while in fact trying to win the war, which has always been my fear.

That is what produced Bob's speech. He knew that. I don't know where he knew it from, but he knew exactly what had happened in that business and was appalled by it. I mean, this really cut him to the quick, not only because it meant the war, but because there was such terrible mishandling of the thing. That kind of thing used to really upset him, because he, himself, was very good at handling things. That really bugged him, and that was the genesis of that speech.

GREENE: I remember that Harriman called him, I think the very day that he was going to make the speech, to urge him not to.

KRAFT: That's right. From Hobe Sound.

GREENE: There was a lot of pressure against him. But what about

the events leading up to it, particularly the meeting in Paris?

KRAFT: Well the Paris meeting, who did he meet with in Paris?

GREENE: Etienne Manac'h?

KRAFT: Etienne Manac'h, yeah.

GREENE: And John Dean. Now, the Paris meeting had been, I think, mainly suggested by me. I had certainly been the one, or one of the ones, who had told him to see him, suggested that he see Manac'h. I had also tried to arrange through a friend of mine named Jean Lacouture a meeting with Mai Van Bo, who is the North Vietnamese ambassador there. I think Bob was uncertain as to whether to have that meeting, and eventually decided against it, went to see Manac'h to get a sense of what was--Manac'h was in constant touch with Bo and all the people on the other side. John Dean came with him as the interpreter, et cetera. And I think what followed was almost wholly misunderstanding.

The president was suspicious, you know, paranoiacally suspicious--really, I use the word not lightly--round-the-bend crazy suspicious, thought Bob was putting together something, that there was going to be a negotiation going behind his back, always ready to discredit him. He sent Nick Katzenbach over to see Bob. They started to have lunch, I guess it was. Nick hadn't even mentioned this to him, I think. You could get this better from Nick, but as I recall it, before they got to the subject, the president sent for both of them and really chewed up Bob. Bob came here, I think, after that also and kept referring again to how mean the president was, such a mean man.

I think the problem was compounded by a Newsweek story which implied that Bob was negotiating. Bob wasn't negotiating at all. He really didn't have an exact feel for that. He took Bill vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel] along, who, frankly, you know, would have been no help in the negotiations because he didn't have any sense of what was going on. I can't remember the details, but John Dean spotted something that Manac'h had said that was important.

GREENE: Well as I recall, the whole meeting was prompted by that Nyuyen Dinh Thuan . . .

KRAFT: Nyuyen Dinh Thuan statement?

GREENE: Isn't that lovely? A statement to Wilfred Burchett that indicated that if the bombing was stopped they would be ready to negotiate. The meeting was called by the French Foreign Office to emphasize through Kennedy to the American government that this was not to be taken lightly, that it was a very serious offering.

KRAFT: I see. In '67 that was?

GREENE: Yeah. February of '67. And that Dean acted both as an

interpreter and as a Vietnam scholar of some sort.

KRAFT: Well, he had been in on the negotiations. Well, if it followed the Burchett thing, then, yes. Then Manac'h was certainly using that occasion to get that message across.

GREENE: But is it your understanding, and I think I did get this feeling from a column that you wrote, that Kennedy really didn't understand the impact of what was going on?

KRAFT: That's right. He told me and I think that's pretty clear he didn't. It was Dean who picked up that point and shot it back. Newsweek then accused him, not accused, but wrote a story saying that Bob had been part of this negotiation which had really gone way beyond him, I think, as it would anybody. Yeah, I think that's right. And Nick certainly knew that there was no negotiation and that is why he wasn't at all concerned.

GREENE: But that meeting must have been a low point, his meeting with the president, in their relationship, wouldn't you say, that meeting in the White House that day?

KRAFT: I think the real low point was. . . . That must have been personally very, very bad. Apparently Johnson was really mean and bitter. I mean Nick. . . . I can't even trust my memory as to what exactly was said, but it was very, very mean, harsh, profane, nasty, you know. Sort of the implicit threat throughout it was "I can put you and your types up against the wall as traitors for what you're doing." But I think the really low point, I mean, the really important passage between them--and this really needs to get explored for historical purposes--was the trip that he and Burke were supposed to take to Vietnam which got undone by a Johnson trip. Bob was always convinced that Johnson took that trip to upstage him.

GREENE: Well, one of Johnson's trips to Honolulu was a spur of the moment thing in the middle of the Foreign Relations Committee hearings. That was one of the things, I think, that set Kennedy off.

KRAFT: That was one. That was one. Yeah. Bob himself. . . . Was that the one in '65?

GREENE: Six, I think '66.

KRAFT: That was before his first speech?

GREENE: Yeah. Just before.

KRAFT: Then that must have been an important trigger, that speech.

GREENE: It was. Yes, yes, that's right. The combination of the hearings and the Johnson effort to downgrade him. Maybe for one thing it would be good if you could give an

overview of the difference at this point between his personal feelings and his public feelings, his public expression through this whole period, and particularly who was important besides yourself in changing his attitude. People like Walinsky [Adam Walinsky], Edelman [Peter Edelman], and Goodwin, perhaps others like that.

KRAFT: Yeah, I'm sure they were all important, but I didn't know anything about them. Arthur Schlesinger must have been important. I suspect that Bob McNamara began to turn around this time and that that was probably very important. I'm not sure that we were that important, certainly not that I was. I did one thing; I emphasized the idea of talking to the other side early. But certainly Bob McNamara's part must have been terribly important. Who else was he in touch with? He was in touch with Allen Whiting at the State Department. I think Whiting was important. I think he was, whatever. I don't know what his relations were with Bill Moyers but he was not out of touch with Bill, and so he had from Bill Moyers a sense of how badly things were going. He, of course, saw a lot of Hilsman [Roger Hilsman] and Forrestal [Michael V. Forrestal], who had become critics of the war. . . . Well, certainly from the point they left. They were the first victims of the Johnson regime, and they had become early critics. They were important. Allen Whiting was, I think, quite important because he kept giving the Chinese side of it.

GREENE: Of course, this March speech is a real break. I mean, it's, I suppose, the first real overt, public break with the president, but . . .

KRAFT: Which one, the '67?

GREENE: Yeah.

KRAFT: No. The '66 is the important speech, I think. I think that's more important than the '67 speech.

GREENE: But even after that he seems to have back-tracked, to some extent. This one was a kind of no-compromise thing, wasn't it?

KRAFT: I think the '66 speech was the really important one. I could well be wrong in this, but my sense is that I can remember arriving there that morning. He'd called me up. I didn't know what he was going to do, and I remember looking at it and saying, "Alas, eureka, marvelous." The '66 speech, it seems to me, was the real turn around, intellectually. From that point on I never had any doubts about where he stood. Oh no, absolutely. He had understood that the only way to get out of that was through negotiations. The rest was just. . . . The '67 one may have been a more direct slap at the president, but that wasn't the real issue with Bob. Nobody ever doubted that Bob Kennedy was . . . Bob Kennedy wasn't afraid of Lyndon Johnson. That wasn't the issue with him. He wasn't one of these people trying to curry favor with the president. That wasn't his problem. He wasn't a guy who thought he could work from the inside. He didn't face the McNamara-Bundy-Ball [George W.

Ball] problem. His basic problem was to get counterinsurgency disease out of his blood and on to the other wicket, and he did that, I thought in '66, beyond any doubt.

GREENE: But there was no . . . What I was thinking about more was the conflict between what you were talking about, which was his personal philosophy and feelings, and what he felt free to say publicly. Of course, at that point he wasn't satisfying the doves either, until his '67 speech. You know, other people were a lot more dovish publicly than he was. Do you think there was a real gap, is what I'm getting at, between where he was privately and where he was publicly?

KRAFT: I would think not a real gap or a major gap. There may have been a little bit of trimming around the edges from day to day, but I don't think that there was a real gap. I think that there was, in general, a fairly well traced evolution of his private views that found public expression pretty rapidly and pretty close to a one-to-one relationship.

GREENE: Do you remember anything specific about the August speech he made on the Vietnam elections?

KRAFT: I was in Vietnam at the time. Frankly, I think it was not a well-considered speech. I flatter myself in thinking that, if I had been around, I might have been able to change it a little bit. I mean I don't think that anyone who knew a lot about Vietnam could have had anything to do with that speech, or even a little bit about Vietnam.

GREENE: And he was strongly criticized for it. Then in September, after the election, he made another, but I guess that wasn't too important a statement, urging the new re-elected leadership to use this as an opportunity to chart a new course. Did you have anything to do with that?

KRAFT: No, no, I was in Vietnam all through that period.

GREENE: Oh, still. The next thing that I have is this To Seek a New World chapter on Vietnam. Were you consulted at all on that?

KRAFT: No. I guess I saw proofs of it, or something like that, and thought it was good, but I have no role at all in that.

GREENE: What about the Chicago book and author luncheon in February of '68? This is now . . .

KRAFT: Is that the Chinese speech?

GREENE: You don't mean the "No Sanctuary?"

KRAFT: What was the February?

GREENE: This was his hardest hitting speech on Vietnam following Tet and just really no stops.

KRAFT: I think I remember something about that.

GREENE: I have the speech if you wanted to look at it.

KRAFT: I remember something about that, but I don't remember much. But I'm sure by that time he knew exactly what he thought and I certainly was not playing any kind of role. I mean everything that happened confirmed the analysis he made really back in '66. That was really the basic turning point. Thereafter it was just a question of how you managed it. He got furious at the way Lyndon Johnson mismanaged the Kosygin thing and really furious at the way what Tet meant was misrepresented.

GREENE: Well, that's sort of all that comes together in the February speech. Could you tie this in with any conversations you might have been having with him about running in '68?

KRAFT: We talked about it over . . . Well, yeah. There's one passage that's sort of interesting, I guess. When I was in Vietnam, I met Al Lowenstein [Allard K. Lowenstein] and in fact flew out of Vietnam to Bangkok with Al, and Al mentioned to me that he was trying to get Gene McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] to go. And when I got back here, which must have been early October, I either ran into Gene or called him up, or something; in any case we talked about it. And Gene told me he was thinking of going, but he was worried about what Bob's reaction would be, and would I please sound out Bob. I'm sure there were loads of other people he did this to, but I was one of them.

I talked to Bob, and there was some kind of a meeting with Gene, either a conversation or something like that, because subsequently Gene and I talked about it and Bob and I talked about it. The gist of it was in my memory that. . . . I can remember Gene saying to me, "I don't want to get off on the track running and have him throw stones on the track." Gene at that point fully understood that the circumstances might develop in which Bob would want to come in. My understanding of what they had understood was that Bob would not throw stones at Gene, but there might be circumstances under which he would want to come in.

I remember talking to Bob about this right at the outset and saying, "I know this poses problems because you and the president don't like Gene." I'm not sure whether this was honest, but he said to me, "No, we've never had any problems with Gene. There were some things that Mrs. McCarthy, Abigail [Abigail Q. McCarthy], said that were very nasty." That seemed to conflict with something he once told me about Gene not campaigning very hard in '60. In any case, I was one of, I assume, a lot of go-betweens who, you know, played a part, I guess, in this feeling-out operation they had with each other. My impression was--and I remember Bob passing some advice on to Gene which I had relayed to Gene, which was, "Don't become a one-issue candidate. Try to get a broad range of issues." And Gene said

he thought that was right.

GREENE: Do you think at that point that the senator was fairly pleased with the fact that there was a peace candidate running? Did he feel that it made it a little easier for him to stay out?

KRAFT: He never said anything of the kind; on the contrary. I mean, I think he was an instinctive political manager. When he saw something, he'd go. He'd sense the problems and sense how to go about it. As soon as I'd mentioned it to him-- and now I don't know whether it was a surprise or not, but I don't think many people had talked to him about it, it seemed to be something of a, you know, he began seeing the pitfalls, the problems that would be created for Gene and trying to help him how to get around.

BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

GREENE: Once McCarthy was a candidate, but early in the race, November 9th I think it was, you quoted him explaining the reasons why he entered and saying that Robert Kennedy couldn't run because opposing the president for him would look like an act of revenge. This really shows a lot more understanding than he was later willing to concede for Kennedy's position. I wonder if either of you ever discussed this with Kennedy or you ever went back to McCarthy with the. . . .

KRAFT: Oh sure. That must be a direct quote. Is that a direct quote from Gene?

GREENE: Yeah, it was.

KRAFT: Because that must have been a direct quote arising from our conversations. And I can't tell whether--we had two meetings, both. . . . Gene came here one morning, early one morning, came for breakfast and then we had a walk on a Sunday morning. I don't remember the dates of them, but the first one opened this thing up and the second one sort of buttoned it up with the basic summary that we had. I think it was on the first one that Gene was saying, you know, that Bob couldn't go and so and so couldn't go and so and so couldn't go and was saying it not in any invidious way or anything. It was sort of explaining to himself and to me why him.

GREENE: But did you ever discuss it with him later when he became so bitter and . . .

KRAFT: I was sort of focus of bitterness, and we never had a chance to discuss it. Maybe we will one of these days. He got very, very angry and once kicked me out of the room.

GREENE: Anything related to Kennedy?

KRAFT: Not that I know of, because I don't think that up to that point I'd said anything very bad about Gene. But he sort of implied that I was a spy--not implied, said flatly that I was a spy. It was after Oregon, and I had written quite a teary column about Bob in Oregon. But anyhow, Gene was a . . . And then for quite a while we weren't speaking. So, you won't find out from me what that was all about.

GREENE: It was interesting though because he was so bitter towards Kennedy even early, criticizing him for not going to New Hampshire. For him to have shown this much understanding kind of surprised me.

KRAFT: Well, of course, this was well before the fight had gotten under way. But I don't want to talk about Gene.

GREENE: Well, is there anything in your conversations with the senator leading up to the announcement that gives you any additional insight into what finally pushed him into running besides the Vietnam thing?

KRAFT: I know it wasn't New Hampshire. I mean, I knew it was underway well before that. But no. I mean, he knew that I was pretty dubious about the whole venture, and he didn't talk to me. Maybe there were other reasons, but in any case, we did not talk about that.

GREENE: Okay. Then you did spend, according to your columns, time in Indiana, Nebraska, and Oregon, and perhaps even some in California.

KRAFT: Yeah.

GREENE: How much personal contact did you have with him in this period?

KRAFT: Oh. Let me see. I was on the Wabash Cannonball with him and that was a really great fun trip. I saw him in Indiana a little bit. I guess I saw him a couple of times in Indiana. I saw him shoot one set of whatever it was, cutaways with John Glenn. Frankenheimer [John M. Frankenheimer], Goodwin, and everybody was around there. I had the feeling that that was a kind of new world for him, doing that. I had the sense of a very disorganized campaign again.

I saw him in California, I guess. Polly and I both saw him in California a couple of nights before the debate, and he looked terribly tired, really worn out. I remember it was late at night. It must have been one o'clock. He'd come from a full day's campaigning and someone had told us to go up and see him. It was just terribly late. Ethel was bringing him some eggs or something like that and Arthur Schlesinger and a couple of other people were up there talking about what he ought to say in the debate. It really struck me as being absurd to be telling him what to say in the debate at that time of night. I mean, he just couldn't work, and that

struck me as being kind of symbolic of the campaign. I mean, I had watched Nixon [Richard M.] campaign and this was a really frenetic operation.

GREENE: Well, your columns were pretty pessimistic. You had predicted, I think, that he would lose in Indiana, and he won.

KRAFT: I didn't predict losing in Indiana, did I?

GREENE: Well, that he would have a real tough time, that he would probably lose Lake County. He ended up doing much better than. . . .

KRAFT: Did I predict losing Lake County? I think. . . . Anyhow, I remember putting together a column that he liked a great deal because they used it in Oregon, about "He was the one person who could put together blacks and ethnics." I think when I went into Lake County I was pretty pessimistic, when I went in before him to Lake County. But I was in general pessimistic about that. We saw him. . . . Well, I've written a little bit about his flying into Medford. There's no point in going over that again.

GREENE: I wondered if there was anything in your conversation that night in Portland, the one you wrote for in Mrs. Lawford's book [Patricia Kennedy Lawford, That Shining Hour], the book of significance. You said it was a fairly lengthy conversation.

KRAFT: Oh, going up to. . . .

GREENE: I think it was in Portland the same night as you had been in Medford.

KRAFT: That's right. We flew up to Portland together. That was when I saw him. Well, he used a little phrase about "I'm going to chase Hubert Humphrey's [Hubert H. Humphrey] ass all over the country." He kept saying things about Oregon being a suburb, "There's no problem here. It's all white. It's a suburb. It's all white Protestants. There's nothing for me to get a hold of." He kept using that phrase over and over again. I remember going up. Was he there? I guess he wasn't there that evening. Was he there? I remember I was with Mrs. Greene, but I can't remember. I don't think Bob had come in then as the results were going in and I remember Mrs. Greene saying over and over again, "Wait till they come in from Multnomah County." Of course, they came in from Multnomah County and it didn't make any difference.

Bob, flying up, was pretty pessimistic about Oregon, and I think felt that he was. . . . He was terribly tired. I think that night I didn't hear him speak in Medford, but I did hear him speak later on in Corvallis, I guess it was, and he really lost the thread of what he was trying to say. I felt he was going to fall over. I'd never seen him so tired. He really was exhausted. By the time he got to Medford he was--I don't know exactly what I said, but one of the things that struck me was that he was so surprised to find anybody

that knew people who lived in Medford, Oregon. There was that sort of childish, boyish touch and delight about that.

GREENE: Did he discuss at all what it would mean in terms of the overall picture if he lost in Oregon? Did he think he could survive a loss like that? I know you indicated in your column later that you didn't think he could.

KRAFT: I didn't think he could. I remember at some point, and I can't remember, I think it might have been in California, I had talked to him about making sure that he didn't get trapped. I talked to him about that. I don't remember how or when at all. I had once suggested to him that if he lost, he had to avoid getting trapped and that he had to support first Gene, and then Hubert, even though both of them lost. And it seemed to me, he acknowledged that.

GREENE: Does this sound logical to you? I had heard that he said after the bitterness of McCarthy in Oregon that if he lost in California that he would support Humphrey but he would never support McCarthy.

KRAFT: He never said that to me. He never said that to me.

GREENE: Does that seem inconsistent with your conversations?

KRAFT: I don't think. . . . It wouldn't be inconsistent, it wouldn't be consistent. We really never focused on that. One thing I do remember is that I was in the hotel that night, in the Ambassador. Just before he went down, as he was walking down, I caught his eye and said to him, "Now you're trapped," and he nodded because he won. I was thinking, you know, that escaping the trap would be getting out of the race. And when I said, "Now you're trapped," I mean it was. . . .

I think my recollections aren't wrong but I'm not sure my interpretation is right. I mean it may well be that he was feeling as Marie Riddor and others felt that he was on home base and that South Dakota was the big deal. I didn't feel that. It wasn't until Chicago when I saw how weak Humphrey was that it struck me that I had been wrong and that Bob could have won. But would Humphrey have been that weak? I don't know.

GREENE: That's right. That's the big question.

KRAFT: In any event now. . . .

GREENE: Is there anything to add on the campaign or on anything in general that you can think of?

KRAFT: There's one thing. I was one of the people who came back on the plane, and there has been some talk about bitterness, bitter remarks made about the times. I just didn't hear anything like that at all. The whole spirit of it wasn't--there was no spirit of bitterness at all on that plane. The

people that created the spirit on that plane were basically the Justice Department people. I mean, at least I didn't hear anybody talk about any of that stuff at all. There was no appearance of bitterness at all.

GREENE: Was there any discussion of what these people would do politically, particularly the senator?

KRAFT: Teddy called me up to the When does this come out?

GREENE: Oh, whenever you want it to. You have control of that.

KRAFT: See, 'cause Teddy called me up, I guess he called everybody up. But I, at one point I went up and sat by Teddy next to the coffin in the front of the plane. He told me a story about how he and Bob and the president were once down in Palm Beach. It must have been the summer of '61, at the time of the Berlin crisis. And their father [Joseph P. Kennedy] had said to them, had said to the president, "You may solve the Berlin crisis or you may not solve the Berlin crisis, but nothing you do is as important as raising your family, the way you raise your family." Teddy told me that Bob had reminded him of that story two weeks earlier when young Bobby [Robert Kennedy, Jr.] had gotten involved in that little episode. Ted had said to me that Bob was very worried about those considerations and whether he'd been able to spend as much time as he should have at that sort of thing.

I was one of the people that saw him in those last moments before they pronounced him dead and I remember thinking that he and Ethel were side by side and that seemed to me so right. I can also remember thinking that this is the way the rich die, that, you know, he really hadn't been alive for an awful long time, that it was just a technical question that they were keeping things pumping. I remember how small he looked.

GREENE: Did you interpret the senator's remarks about family as what was going through his own mind, that he felt that was his first obligation?

KRAFT: Yes. That's why I felt pretty clear he wouldn't go, I felt absolutely clear he wouldn't go in '68. At no point did it, did it seem to me that that was going to be likely to happen.

You asked a couple of questions about reporter's attitudes, and it does seem to me that there is one. I think in general, people in the press had, you know, wanted to be close but also had misgivings about it. They had the feeling that they were moths with the flame, that it would be something too brilliant or too bright. And I think that there was always an awareness that there was a treatment, that you were objects of consideration and affection and that they pulled you in or maybe didn't pull you in. I just say that the logic of this never became plain to me. I couldn't begin to chart my own ups and downs or know what they were connected with, but I suppose there was some kind of a logic, If it really preyed on your mind you could get awfully concerned about it. And I think probably the approach

was not in some cases very, very subtle. I remember Louden Wainwright of Life once coming up to me and saying, "Oh, they're beginning to get chummy with me now."

GREENE: Do you think this was because they had a real genuine affection for journalists and liked having them around, or was it a more opportunistic thing?

KRAFT: No, well, I tend to think that it wasn't very insidious. I think it was very easy to resist. I think that in general when it took, it was because they had an affection and it didn't take with people where you didn't have the affection. I mean it didn't work with Reston; it would never work with Walter Lippman, because they were just completely different. You know, the whole age focus was different. I mean, they liked people who were basically pretty quick and who went in for a lot of fast repartee and could handle that kind of dialogue. Some people could, and some people couldn't; and I think that those were much more important considerations.

GREENE: Did you see him change very much in the period you knew him, in the period you observed him, even earlier in the Justice Department?

KRAFT: Well, there was certainly continuing growth. There was certainly continuing growth. He learned all the time. He took in information all the time. It was just extraordinary the way he could get in information, the way he could go to the joint of an issue. That was a gift of his own that sharpened, I guess, as a prosecutor, and there was his immense curiosity.

Did I tell the story somewhere about the Edith Hamilton book? I remember the time we went on this Canadian trip. He was reading Edith Hamilton, The Greek Way, and I think it was Macbeth. I thought to myself, "My God, what things to be reading this late in life!" You know, I don't know whether he had read them before--maybe he had or maybe he hadn't--but at least he did keep reading, and unashamedly. So there was a sort of natural evolutionary growth well past the stage that most people stop growing. I think his sense of the complexity of international affairs certainly deepened. His sense of confrontation with communism acquired more nuances, more dimensions.

I guess at bottom I do not buy the notion, really don't accept the idea that has been widely spread that there was an existential change in him, that there was a sea of change, that he beca=) a very different kind of person. The fact is, I think, that the people who have spread that idea are people who harbored really ridiculous prejudices--well, let's say who harbored preconceptions about him, who had prejudices against him, who came to know him and then had to explain why they turned around, so they imputed the turn-around to him. I don't think that's the case. I think that there's a perfectly clean line of development wholly consistent with what he had always thought. You know the friends that were his friends stayed his friends and it was amazing at the funeral how much it was

a Justice Department affair of his friends.

GREENE: But, of course, he did acquire many new friends as he went along.

KRAFT: That's right.

GREENE: Bringing them in.

KRAFT: But I don't think there was a basic change. The emphasis I would put on it anyhow was the emphasis on straight line development.

GREENE: You once wrote, and I can't remember any longer where I saw it, that he--and, of course, this is not, I'm sure, something that was thought only by you--had no patience, no interest in that philosophical, that his whole orientation was towards the factual and the activist. Was this sort of annoying to you?

KRAFT: I remember why I wrote that.

GREENE: . . .that he was so impatient with philosophy and the larger questions?

KRAFT: No, because I'm not very patient with them. No, I was just trying to describe him. I think I said--I mean, I'd tell him the story of a sunset in the Hong Kong Bay. But, you know, very few people in politics do have that kind of sensitivity. But, he was very sensitive to people. I mean, going through Poland, this was something that astonished me because he kept looking at those people's faces and saying, "Look at those faces. What strength, what power, what suffering." And most--well, not a lot of politicians are sensitive to that kind of thing. He was very sensitive to people. He was sort of, you know, instinctively sensitive as to whether they liked him, or feared him, or hated him, or were suspicious of him, or were at ease with him. One of the things that you have to try to convey is the tremendous personal charm he could have particularly toward people in trouble. The best one I can remember is the Judy Garland episode. Is that familiar?

GREENE: No.

KRAFT: They gave some kind of a party out at Hickory Hill. I don't remember when it was. It was after John Tunney came here as a congressman. I don't know when that was. Judy Garland was there really looking terrible, with some new husband, and everybody was sort of ignoring her and not even remembering who she was. You know, at Kennedy's parties you really had to fence for yourself and if you couldn't make it you were in trouble. And she was sort of visibly down in the dumps. And at one point in the party Bob came along and said, "Come on, let's dance!" I mean it was one of the lightest and most graceful movements I've ever seen. He took her up to, it was, I guess, the room that Ethel used to use as a

dining room for big parties, the big living room at Hickory Hill. And they began doing a kind of soft shoe routine. It was done in a quick motion. The whole thing was a big single glide. It was just done with relaxation, ease, enormous grace, and was funny and sort of bucked her up. I think the whole party then became a going business. That was the kind of thing he could do. You know, whenever he'd come in here, he'd brighten the place up. And you have loads and loads of that--I mean, the humor was always turned against himself and was wry.

GREENE: Could he appreciate it when someone else turned it against him?

KRAFT: I think so, but I think only if you knew what you were doing. It seems to me I could joke, even pretty wryly, about losing the coat or about, "You know, you gotta remember it's a real world." I don't know if you know that story.

GREENE: No.

KRAFT: "A real world with real water?"

GREENE: No.

KRAFT: Ethel was a fairly sloppy customer, not sloppy, but she would forget things. At one point, on one of their first trips, I think it was in Japan, she left the bath running and it went over. Brandon Grove who was in their escort office--and he became very friendly with her--said, "You gotta remember it's a real world with real water!" I would say that to them, you know, thereafter all the time whenever they would goof or forget things. I think he was a fairly wary fellow. I think it took him a while. I think it took him. . . .

Part of the growth, I guess, is that he really learned, and maybe he was the first American politico of any importance who had learned how to talk to blacks. He really knew blacks and how to put them at their ease. He could talk to Watts or any of those people, to [Black] Panthers, to anybody, and easily. Now, he couldn't always do that. When he met with Jimmy Baldwin [James Baldwin] and those guys back in '63, that was a terrible disaster. So that was something he really got a feel for, how to kid around with them and how to, you know, make it plain that he knew they had a hustle going. And that was something that he learned. But, I mean, I don't think that was a new Bob Kennedy. He did learn how to make out with all kinds of people that he didn't know. I don't think he knew many Jews before he came down here. But he certainly became easy and familiar with all kinds of people; he'd interact with anybody who'd come in.

I guess there was a naive side to him. He was really sort of idealistic. I guess the '67 speech--when I think about the '67 speech he was terribly bothered that Lyndon Johnson had messed up the Kosygin negotiation opportunity. I can remember not being very bothered by it because I assumed that he would mess it up since I assumed that he was trying to win the war and not negotiate a settlement. That's why I felt, you know, "Why is he making such a

big deal about this?" This was the way the policy was and the right thing to do was not to get excited about it for moralistic reasons but to react to it in a calculated, politic way.

He did have reserves of indignation. I think, particularly, intellectual dishonesty bothered him a lot, people who said they were doing one thing and were really doing another. I think that really bugged him very, very badly.

GREENE: Do you have anything else to add?

KRAFT: I think that covers it.