

John R. Reilly Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 10/22/1970
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

John R. Reilly was a campaign worker for John F. Kennedy for President, 1960; Assistant to the Deputy Attorney General and Chief for the Executive Office of United States Attorneys for Department of Justice, 1961 – 1964. This interview focuses on Reilly's first interactions with the Kennedys, involvement in the 1960 campaign for John F. Kennedy, and role in the Justice Department under Robert F. Kennedy from 1960 - 1963, among other issues.

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John R. Reilly – RFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

JOHN RICHARD REILLY

October 22, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By James A. Oesterle

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

OESTERLE: Mr. Reilly served with the Justice Department, as assistant to the Deputy Attorney General and also as chief of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys during the period 1961 through 1964.

Prior to going to work in the Justice Department you had worked with Lawrence O'Brien as his administrative assistant in the Kennedy for President organization in 1960. When did you first come into the John F. Kennedy sphere?

REILLY: I think the best way to describe that is just to go back to, really, the first time that I met [Robert F.] Bob Kennedy and the manner in which I met him, and what that led to, because it did lead to my being with Larry O'Brien. I was in Chicago with a group called the Council of State Governments, which was down at the University of Chicago (although not affiliated). They were the secretariat for a number of state organizations, such as the Governor's Conference and the Conference of Chief Justices, National Association of Attorneys General, and a number of other organizations of state officials. I worked primarily with the National Association of Attorneys General and the Chief Justices. As the staff man for the Association of Attorneys General, we became aware that the [John L.] McClellan Committee [Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations] was interested in, or Senator McClellan, perhaps--I'm not sure exactly whether it was the committee--was interested in the establishment of

a national clearinghouse for information re criminals and criminal activities. I presume this stemmed from the hearings which they had on labor organizations and criminal activities therein. Because Bob Kennedy at that time was staff man for the McClellan Committee, we did meet to explore the possibility of cooperation between the Association and the McClellan Committee.

I had some reservations as staff man because of the fact that many state attorneys general did not have any criminal jurisdiction. I really questioned whether the association as such would be helpful, or whether only certain members of the association, such as those attorneys general who had criminal jurisdiction. . . . At that time I recall Bob Kennedy had reservations also, primarily for the reason that, if a clearinghouse was established, that the information which, let's say, was obtained on a federal level would be made available to state officials who, because of the fact that they had been elected and perhaps were not of the finest character, would be able to make use of information which ordinarily would not be available to them--misuse it, in other words. At that time I also recall the director of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], Mr. [J. Edgar] Hoover, was very strongly against it and publicly against it. And this was one of his major reasons also--or major public reasons--because of the fact that it would be made available to people whom they weren't sure they could trust.

OESTERLE: It might also compromise his control over information that the FBI gathered.

REILLY: There's no question in my mind that that entered into it, of course, that it would let loose of information which he held--which was closely held--within the bureau. Frankly, the entire program kind of slipped into a limbo, and we didn't push it as an association and the McClellan Committee did not push it.

I guess the next. . . . The Council of State Governments also held regional meetings, at which state legislators and state officials were invited for three- or four-day conferences at which they would discuss state problems. One of the major parts of those conferences was what was called a state dinner. And there was always a major speaker at the state dinner. I had charge of the midwestern region and the midwestern regional conference that year, which was 1958. It was in the fall of '58, and I suggested that Bob Kennedy be the main speaker at the dinner, which was held in Kansas City, Missouri, the host state being Missouri. After a number of phone calls, et cetera, he accepted.

One of the interesting things to me at the time was, he was very interested as to how many people would be at this function, this dinner, and what the composition would be. And I think when I told him that there would be primarily state legislators, state officials, and that there would be approximately four hundred people there, he became much more interested than he was in the beginning. I guess, with hindsight, it appears that he was already thinking about his brother's campaign and what good the exposure would do.

There was some opposition actually within the organization to which I belonged because it was composed of both Democrats and Republicans, and some of the Republicans were aware that this would be . . .

OESTERLE: A coup for the Democrats.

RESILLY: . . . a forum for Bob Kennedy, who was described to me by one fellow as "a young guy who was not even dry behind the ears yet." But at any rate, he accepted, came to Kansas City, Missouri, and gave the dinner speech. The dinner speech which he gave was primarily taken from The Enemy Within, the book The Enemy Within, which had not been printed as yet, as I recall. He gave it extemporaneously, and he spoke of labor racketeering, primarily, and the fact that state legislators and state officials had great responsibilities in the areas that he was covering

I think everyone was very, very pleased with the speaker that evening, Bob Kennedy. One of the major comments that I can recall is the fact that here he is up there--he gave almost a forty-five minute to an hour speech in there somewhere, and spoke entirely extemporaneously. I don't think they realized that, again, this was part of The Enemy Within, which was coming out, and information which he had gleaned.

Another interesting thing is, he had with him accompanying him on that trip, Pierre Salinger, and Pierre really handled the press who attended that dinner for Bob Kennedy.

OESTERLE: Was this the first time that you met Pierre Salinger?

REILLY: This was the first time I had met Pierre, yes. We had a little poker game in the room that night. Bob Kennedy didn't join it, I recall, but we did visit. It was at that time that I became aware, hearing conversations between Bob Kennedy and Pierre Salinger, that Bob Kennedy was about to resign from the McClellan Committee--or was in the process of resigning,

and so was Pierre, and that the operation in the Esso Building, which we've all heard so much about, which was the beginning of the Jack Kennedy campaign, was being set up. I can recall discussing with Bob Kennedy the possibility of his brother running. I think at that point nobody was talking about anything but, "Will he run?" And the answers I received from Bob Kennedy indicated to me that he would.

I indicated that I had some interest in what President Kennedy believed in and would be interested in joining the operation. At that time I don't think there were any--there were some paid people. Bob Kennedy made clear to me that I would not be one of the paid people if I joined, but he did issue an invitation to me to join up with the Kennedy group, if you want to call it that. I think I had three children at the time, and since I couldn't see living without an income, I used all my astute political judgment and refused. But we did discuss the fact that since I was partial to Jack Kennedy and did travel around in state houses and state legislatures, and did have a particular insight or inroad or method of obtaining information, that Bob Kennedy would appreciate that if I did pick up any political information which would be interesting to him or to Pierre or to whoever else was involved, to let them know. So I guess that's what you could say I did for the next year.

I was not in Wisconsin, although I went up and did meet with Bob Kennedy and with Pierre once up there to talk to them about a number of political matters in some other states. I was asked. . . .

OESTERLE: Was this at your own expense, also?

REILLY: Yes. I was in Chicago. It was just Chicago to Milwaukee. I was not in West Virginia. I was not involved in the convention itself. Soon after the convention I called Bob Kennedy and after the nomination asked if I could, at that point, do something. And he said, "Come to Washington and talk to Pierre." I came to Washington and talked to Pierre and was going to be made an advance man.

I attended the first meeting that was held with those volunteers to be advance men in the campaign. This was prior to September-- Labor Day--with the traditional kickoff of all campaigns. We were being briefed. Many of us had had no experience as advance men, not having gone through any campaign. Bob Kennedy felt that he had some, since he had traveled on the plane with Adlai Stevenson a number of times and, as he said, sat in the back of the plane and observed. At the time there was a fellow who spoke to us and told

us what advance men did, and I didn't even know who he was. I later learned who he was, and it was [James H., Jr.] Jim Rowe, who, as you know, is one of the famous political figures of our time. Jim briefed the advance men.

I guess it was about that time that I ran into [Kenneth P.] Kenny O'Donnell and Kenny said, "I understand you're a friend of Pierre's," et cetera. "Maybe we've got something else for you to do rather than advance." The campaign organization was about as confused at that point as anything I've ever seen, and I think everybody admitted it. They were just preparing to go out on the road. There was no line of authority fully established at that point, although it was apparent that Bob Kennedy was going to be the man who ran the campaign.

OESTERLE: It was apparent also, wasn't it, that the campaign was being well-funded, that money would not be a problem, that organization was the primary problem?

REILLY: There was no talk about funding. There was no question-- although, we were not going to be paid, we were all volunteers--we understood that we were to be paid expenses, and there was not any limit placed on us or we were not told that we couldn't buy steaks instead of hamburgers if we were on the road. I guess the funding, if you want to call it that, was talked about more in the--was not talked about. It was left out of the conversation.

I'm a little confused as to just the next few days, but I was kind of around Washington, wandering around corridors and meeting people, and nobody really knew what anybody else was doing. There were an awful lot of people just like me there who wanted to get into the thing but had not found a slot. At that time Pierre arranged that I meet with Larry O'Brien. I did have an interview with Larry at which we discussed what my background was in politics-- which was, frankly, very little--my knowledge of state officials and individuals in states. I guess Larry was trying to determine just whether I could be helpful to him or not. And I think his conclusion must have been that I would be more helpful staying in Washington than going on the road as an advance man or as a state coordinator or something of that nature.

So I became kind of the fellow who sat out in front of Larry O'Brien's door, and when the old fellow from Oklahoma would come in with the key to winning the election, I was the fellow that talked to him rather than Larry. At that time the other fellows

involved with Larry were [Richard K.] Dick Donahue and Ralph Dungan, who were a step, let's say, above me in the hierarchy, and they were really Larry's assistants in the organization portion of the campaign.

OESTERLE: Did you work very closely with Donahue and Dungan, or even more closely with them than with Lawrence O'Brien at that point?

REILLY: I think I worked more closely with Dungan and Donahue. And I was performing, actually, the same role, and that was pretty much the type of role which is necessary in all campaigns. You do what I don't want to do, is what it amounts to. It was a troubleshooter type thing. If a problem would arise in Delaware where there was a meeting of state officials and somebody had to go up and kind of be the Kennedy man there and they couldn't, I would go up and be the Kennedy man and tell them what we were doing and how much we needed them, et cetera.

OESTERLE: Did you work under a great deal of pressure, very long hours?

REILLY: The hours were rather strange because we wouldn't work until, oh, between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning, it seemed to me, by the time we all got in and started functioning, and then of course we'd go until ten or eleven or twelve o'clock at night. I think this was mostly because the candidate out on the road and the organizations with which we were working were not really functioning early in the morning, either. And then, of course, the busy time of the day was up until seven or eight o'clock at night. And then the time for conferences and meetings and just general bull sessions occurred after that. We would normally go out to dinner, then come back and be there till ten, eleven, twelve, depending on how tired everybody was.

At that time I also got involved in something which was called the tabloid. The tabloid was used in the Massachusetts campaign and was very successful. It was a newspaper the size of a newspaper tabloid and ran eight pages, I believe, in which was the Jack Kennedy from birth to the present day and pictures, historical background, et cetera.

OESTERLE: Involved in what sense? In writing it?

REILLY: No, not writing it at all. I was involved in the distribution of it. There were difficulties in choosing, first of all, where it should be distributed, where it

would be the most help, in what areas of what cities, et cetera. We finally decided that we would do it in areas where the previous congressional vote showed a one or two percent Democratic or Republican margin. I can't recall who printed it. We had trouble printing it because at that point we were in money trouble. Some places would refuse to print it because of the fact that we couldn't pay them ahead of time. So we had to find friends who would print the thing and then ship it somewhere for distribution, hoping that they would eventually get paid.

In fact, one night we did have one of the few times that Bob Kennedy was able to join a group that I was with. We were discussing materials. By that I mean the bumper stickers, placards, tabloid, tie clips, et cetera, and the fact that we were running awfully short and not able to ship the amounts that had been requested, nor were we able to print the amounts that were necessary to ship. And [David L.] Dave Hackett at that time was in charge, and I think he was during the whole campaign, as a matter of fact. So we had a big meeting, and Dave's figures finally came. . . . We finally got down to the point where Dave said, "Well, we need, to do what we really should do, seven hundred thousand dollars, and we don't have it." So everybody was kind of looking around the room at one another. I mean it was a staggering figure. Bob Kennedy was kind of sitting with his head down, and all of a sudden he looked up and he said, "Jeez, does anybody know anybody with seven hundred thousand dollars?" Of course, the room broke up because he was the only guy in the room that had seven hundred thousand dollars or could even touch it, you know.

So I got involved in the distribution of the tabloid. And major decisions were being made, not by me but by Larry and Ralph and Dick [Richard Maguire] was entering into it at that point, and John Seigenthaler, who was really Bob's AA [administrative assistant]-- as to where they should go. Then the question began to come about, "Who should we have distribute them?" I mean, if we give them to the local organization they may end up in sewers because many of the local organizations were not considered to be that good that they would walk down the street and make sure that it got into a household. So we tried to, as much as possible, let the citizens' organizations within a given jurisdiction . . .

OESTERLE: Citizens for Kennedy?

REILLY: Citizens for Kennedy. . . . distribute them because we knew they were enthusiastic people. That ran into many troubles because the local organization in many

places did not want the citizens organization to rear its head because it was competition, really. And the local organization only prevails because nobody else could challenge them. They felt that if they had a job such as this that perhaps they could challenge them.

Now, this was not general, but Cleveland was an example. Ray Miller at that time was what you might call (in quotes), "the boss of Cleveland." I had to go out one time and just hold Ray Miller's hand because we had started to let the Citizens for Kennedy, which was really a rival organization there, distribute this tabloid. Ray Miller ended up by winning the fight by simply picking up the phone and calling Larry and saying, "Who is this young punk you sent out here to straighten this out? He hasn't got it right. He went to see the wrong man in the first place." So Larry solved it all by saying, "Well, Ray, you're going to distribute the tabloids," which was obviously a very good solution under those circumstances.

OESTERLE: Did you in your capacity, you or . . .

REILLY: I seem to be talking about what I did. That isn't the . . .

OESTERLE: No, I think this is very important. It gives a background of the campaign. For instance, your Cleveland story is a story that I haven't heard before. The story of distributing the tabloid and the bumper stickers and all are stories that everyone has, one way or another. And I guess it's true today in these campaigns.

REILLY: Yes, that's right. You never have enough.

OESTERLE: Did O'Brien's office get involved in dealing with potential fat cats who would walk in or call in and indicate that for certain favors they might consider making a contribution?

REILLY: Yes. Yes, I mean, that happened from time to time. The biggest problem I think the people over the country had--assuming their support of Jack Kennedy--was to find the right person within the organization to talk to, to offer their services or their money or whatever they were capable of offering. I think this is a political problem which always exists and will continue to exist. And because of that, somebody would read that O'Brien was director of organization and know somebody else,

and they'd say, "Well, why don't you call Larry? I'll make sure he answers the phone," or something of that nature. Larry turned most of those problems over to the treasurer of the Democratic National Committee at that time or to [Henry M.] Scoop Jackson, who at that point was chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and let them handle it--at least those with which I am familiar. I do not ever recall Larry receiving money or taking money or negotiating for money or anything of that nature. I think Larry would always pass it off in some way and make sure that the ultimate repository for the package would be either Scoop Jackson or--I guess at that time it was the contractor from Philadelphia who later became ambassador to Ireland--oh, white-haired gentleman [Matthew H. McCloskey]. Anyhow, he was the treasurer. Or [John M.] Bailey. Bailey handled an awful lot of money.

OESTERLE: Did you also work closely with members of Senator Kennedy's staff at that point?

REILLY: No, most of the members of Senator Kennedy's--Senator Jack Kennedy--most of the members of his staff were on the road with him. [Theodore C.] Sorensen . . .

OESTERLE: Doing advance work or immediately with him.

REILLY: . . . [Timothy J.] Reardon, [Myer C.] Feldman, although I never did figure out what Mike did. He was around, and he raised money.

OESTERLE: Did they call from the field with crisis problems?

REILLY: Yes, always. Oh, yes, constant, you know, "Why have you done this?" Or, "Where's your man here? Where's the coordinator?" You know. "We landed in Rockford, Illinois, and the Kennedy coordinator for Illinois is not in sight. He's drunk in a hotel."

OESTERLE: Did the organization improve rapidly, week by week, the liaison between, say, DNC [Democratic National Committee] and your office?

REILLY: DNC never existed as a matter of fact. I mean, the Kennedy organization was the Democratic National Committee. Scoop had one or two or three of his own people who worked pretty much alone but with the campaign; but as far as an organization, the Kennedy campaign was the committee. The coordination in the field improved rapidly when we finally got out into the

field what we called coordinators. These were people who were the Kennedy man in a state, or one of two or three Kennedy men within a state, whose responsibility was directly to Larry O'Brien or to Bob Kennedy.

Their function was merely to be the Kennedy man there and to organize as much as possible within that state, without getting everybody mad at them, for the presidency. This meant organizing those people, obviously, who had been for [Stuart] Symington or for [Lyndon B.] Johnson or for somebody else other than Jack Kennedy. So for the most part they had to be pretty public relations minded. They had to be very careful about the way they were treading. And once we got the right people in the right places, then the organization of the campaign began to pick up.

Larry began to require--this was along about early October--weekly reports from the coordinators. And those reports would then come in and be more or less coordinated within Larry's organization--pointing out soft spots and pointing out problems: "We're having a problem with this organization or that organization," or "Labor's weak here," or so on and so forth. Larry's responsibility, of course, would be to get a hold of--let's say in the labor situation--the labor man here and say, "What's wrong with your local in Lansing, Michigan?" and so on. We also had to work with the speakers' bureau, let's say, or the. . . .

OESTERLE: The research operation.

REILLY: The researchers, also, where we'd be getting issues back that were interesting to those people out there, so if the candidate went in--or anybody went in--a speaker went in, he'd know what to talk about. That began to get more organized. For instance, an example of a problem would be if the coordinator in Kansas would say, "I've been trying to get a speaker for the state fair for three weeks and I can't get any satisfaction out of anybody in the organization." Well, then Larry would assign that task to me or to Dick or to Ralph Dungan, and we'd go to the speakers' bureau and say, "Now, let's get a speaker in there." At any rate, the organization began to function a little better, although we always had an internal joke about the well-oiled Kennedy machine really was not that well oiled. I mean it was. . . .

OESTERLE: It was assqueaky wheel.

REILLY: There were an awful lot of things falling apart at the wrong times.

OESTERLE: Did coordination improve between your office and the Citizens for Kennedy organization, or was that always just a very separate and distinct organization?

REILLY: It was a touchy situation from the beginning, from my view. The position that I held made it appear touchy. Byron White, as the head of it, was really not a pol. [Joseph F.] Joe Dolan, who was his assistant, was a pretty good pol, but [Harris L.] Wofford and a couple of the others that were in the citizens operation were really not straight political people. Now this, on hindsight, showed some real understanding on the part of the people who organized this thing because it's the old idea of even though two people aren't working together, just so they're working towards the same end. . . . It allowed, for instance, Bob Kennedy-- and I know of situations where he would get a complaint that the Citizens [for Kennedy] are doing such and such, and the local organization was angry--you know, he could say, "Well, I'll get a hold of them up there and straighten this out." Or vice versa.

OESTERLE: Is Paul Corbin with the advance. . . .

REILLY: Yes, Corbin was one of our coordinators in upstate New York, along with [Benjamin A., II] Ben Smith, who eventually took Jack Kennedy's spot in the Senate, appointed to his position in the Senate. Ben Smith and Paul Corbin were the two coordinators in New York State, the two of them being as different as night and day, really.

OESTERLE: But complementing each other's efforts?

REILLY: Complementing each other's efforts considerably because Paul would do the things that Ben would never consider doing, and then Ben could smooth them over. They always tell the story--I don't know whether it was ever true or not--about Paul Corbin passing out anti-Catholic literature in front of the Catholic churches on Sunday. I never really traced that down, but I think it's true.

OESTERLE: There are a thousand stories about. . . .

REILLY: Paul Corbin was one of the few people we never received weekly reports from. . . .

OESTERLE: Yes, I imagine that.

REILLY: . . . because nobody ever knew where Paul was. But he'd keep surfacing. Just generally, I would say the

organization improved because we began to get people in the states that became familiar with the states and knew what they were doing, and who got some, I guess, friendship with the people with whom they had to work in those states. So things began to function fairly well at that point. But towards the end of the campaign, the organization portion of it was really down now to the point of organizing get out the vote, organizing telephone banks, organizing things of that nature.

So I was asked if I would advance. . . . Bob Kennedy made the decision then that he was going to get out on the road more, that he'd been spending too much time within the confines of the committee and not really getting out and doing enough that he wanted to do. So he began to travel. So I think it was Dick Maguire asked me if I would advance him and his trips. So the last three weeks of the campaign I advanced Bob Kennedy. We became more friendly during that period of time.

We took one trip to Wisconsin; it was late in October, winter-time for Wisconsin. And he spoke at so many of the places where he had campaigned, and made the remark one time about the crowd that he was getting because he was speaking for his brother where, when they first arrived there in February, they were getting eight to ten people in a hall. And at that point the campaign and the feeling was building to the point where you really felt that Jack Kennedy was going to win. He enjoyed his trip to Wisconsin. It was a kind of a funny one because he was constantly complaining that he didn't really think there was any green grass in the whole state--all he'd ever seen was snow. Of course, this was the line he used with the people, and they kind of liked it for some reason or other.

I guess the next thing I remember that fall is, on the Saturday before the election we were to take a trip to Cincinnati [Ohio], Pikeville, Kentucky, Charlotte and Hickory, North Carolina, and then back here on a Saturday night. I had advanced the trip, then gone up to Chicago to meet Bob, who was coming in from Dallas. He had given a speech down there, and he had [Charles D.] Charlie Roche with him. Charlie later became deputy chairman of the national committee and early in the administration was really the press man in the. . . . Not in the administration--excuse me--early in the campaign, in the Wisconsin primary, and prior to that when they were in the Esso Building, and Charlie was handling an awful lot of the press. So we got down to Cincinnati and the weather was terrible, and we couldn't get into Pikeville, we couldn't go anywhere. So we hooked up a telephone line and he spoke to the people at Pikeville.

But we had some time to kill there. There was one of the normal novelty stores or sections in the Cincinnati airport and behind the counter was a doll of a dog that had to stand six feet tall. I don't know how long it was there or why they bought it, but I could never believe that they could sell the thing. We were standing, killing time, and Bob Kennedy asked the girl, "How much is that?" And she said a hundred dollars. And he said, "I'll take it." She just about fell down. And then he turned and he said, "I don't have any money." And I said, "I don't have any money either. Bob. Maybe she'll let you cash a check." Hard to believe, but this girl said, "Well, I'm not sure you could cash a check. What's your name?" And he said, "Robert F. Kennedy." It finally dawned on this girl that the check was probably good. So he wrote the damn thing, and we received the doll. For the remainder of that day we had to carry this doll around with us, and we were on a private plane. We couldn't get the thing in the plane. We had to screw the head off of it. And we carried it from Cincinnati to Charlotte to Hickory, back to Washington that day.

That Saturday night we ended up in Hickory, North Carolina, and Luther Hodges was there. There was a very good crowd which had been kept waiting about two hours. Hodges wanted us to stay at the governor's mansion, to drive over to the governor's mansion and stay that night. But Bob wanted to get home, which was kind of a thing that I began to realize was very, very normal with him when he was. . . . He wanted to be back, he wanted to be with his family. He wanted to go to Hickory Hill; he didn't want to spend the night in the governor's mansion and then get up the next morning and then come back. He wanted to get back that night, even though it was going to be ten or eleven o'clock when we got there. We had trouble with the weather, et cetera, but we finally got back. That to me-- I always remember that trip just simply because of the fact he had such a desire to get home and really almost blamed me for the bad weather, "Why can't you fly that plane tonight, John?"

And as we came back there was Fred Vinson, who later became, under Johnson, the head of the Criminal Division. He had been advancing part of Kentucky for this trip, and it was just the three of us on the way back. We had a couple of drinks--and the doll was sitting there--and after about the second drink we were discussing, he was asking Fred, "What do you think about Kentucky?", you know, and so on. And all of a sudden out of the clear blue he said, "Well," he said, "I've just given my last political speech." Now, this was the Saturday night before the election, and he had no plans, no schedule from Sunday, Monday or Tuesday to speak politically. I'll never forget it. I mean, he said this, "I've just given my last political speech."

OESTERLE: A sense of relief?

REILLY: No, just kind of, Boy, oh boy, it's all over. Now we've just got to hope that Tuesday comes in all right.

OESTERLE: Of course everyone was very optimistic about that.

REILLY: Everybody was optimistic. At that point there was a slight feeling beginning to come into the thing that perhaps [Richard M.] Nixon was moving faster than we had thought he would move at the end. And I recall the day before the election, when Nixon did the telethon, there was a feeling--which is hard to describe, and I don't think anybody really articulated it at the time--amongst everybody who was back in Washington at that time, getting ready to go to the Cape [Cape Cod, Mass.] or something for the returns, that he was really moving pretty well in that telethon, and that it was. . . . We wished that we had done something similar to take the TV time plus the exposure, at that point. So there was a slight--and as I say, I don't know how, or I can't point to anybody who said anything--but there was a kind of prevailing feeling that he was coming across pretty well and that he was really making points in that thing. And there was a fear at that time--of course you remember [Dwight D.] Eisenhower had appeared--that perhaps Eisenhower's appearance had helped him considerably. So there was almost a little denouement at the end of the last three or four days of the campaign there, that. . . .

OESTERLE: Just gnawing at you.

REILLY: Yes, it was. Maybe it was only personal. I don't know. But I recall it was also other people.

OESTERLE: This trip sounds as though it had been very successful. And you had planned the trip. How much of the work had you been able to accomplish while you were still in Washington?

REILLY: On the trip?

OESTERLE: Yes, in planning the work and advancing it.

REILLY: Well, very little other than the fact that Seigenthaler had scheduled him for one reason or another into these spots. So the advance work was started from the basis that, Bob Kennedy's coming here. He's arriving at two o'clock. What are we going to do? Now, what's the function? Where are we going to be? Who are the people? You know.

OESTERLE: It's a difficult task, too, to find the proper forums, proper hotels. . . .

REILLY: Well, it's difficult in that the local people always have extremely local ideas. They think only of that little period of time when he's there, and they want to make it the best there ever was. Of course the advance man does, too. But the advance man has all the little tricks. Like they want to hold it in the football stadium, and you say, "How many people are you going to have?" Well, they're going to have four thousand. Well, that means they're going to have two thousand, and two thousand in a football stadium looks like an empty stadium. So you have to convince them that they're going to hold it in the local theater, which holds one thousand. Little tricks of that nature.

But for the most part the local people are extremely cooperative, and you depended upon them for the local drumming up of the crowd-- for instance getting the band, getting the reception committee, getting the flyers, the newspaper advertisements, the radio spots, and things of that nature that say, "Bob Kennedy's coming to town tomorrow."

OESTERLE: Did you have much assistance from Seigenthaler, or he was just so busy doing other things that he couldn't help you too much?

REILLY: Not on that basis, but John would be very good. He'd say, "Now, when you get to Hickory, North Carolina, the guy that's going to be responsible for this is so and so and get hold of him right away and then work with him." As a matter of fact, the guy was Henry Hall Wilson in Hickory, North Carolina, which was the first time I had ever met him. That's always been a very interesting part of the whole ten years, is the people that you met through the campaign and where they ended up.

OESTERLE: Take us up to the election and then the days following.

REILLY: The election. . . . Everybody was going to the Cape. The returns were going to come in to the Cape. Larry said, "We're going to have to have somebody here at the [Democratic] National Committee manning a phone between the national committee and the Cape because there's going to be stuff coming in here, complaints and so on and so forth. They're not going to be able to call the Cape; they're not going to know the numbers; they're going to be. . . . People are going to call the Democratic National Committee because they don't know where else to

call." So I was assigned the task of staying at the Democratic National Committee, manning the phone between there and the Cape, which I think I used maybe twice during the whole evening. It didn't really work out that way. I stayed there through the whole evening.

We felt awfully cocky after Connecticut came in, felt awfully cocky in the early part of the evening. Started to sink a little as the evening progressed. I went over to the Mayflower [Hotel], where the function was being held for all the workers, et cetera. And since all the people were at the Cape. . . . I mean, I think the only people with any notoriety there were Scoop and Bailey and a few people of that nature, who were constantly coming in saying, "Well, although we're sinking in Illinois, it looks like we're going to come through all right." Or, "It looks good in California," That type of thing. I think I probably went to bed about four o'clock in the morning, fairly convinced that we had won, but not really, and woke up with a fright, finding out that there was still some question about whether the thing had been won or not.

OESTERLE: That evening, though, you did not have any conversations with Robert Kennedy?

REILLY: No, I did not. I talked only to Larry and to Pierre that night.

Well, then, I was still living in Chicago--my family was in Chicago--and I took off almost the next day and went back to Chicago. It must have been about a week later or so when things kind of settled down, I came back. Bob Kennedy was then back in Washington. I went to see him and his question was, "Well, we won. What do you want to do?" And the rumors had begun at that point that he would be attorney general--or there were rumors that he was thinking of being attorney general.

OESTERLE: With some bad press, and the New York Times. . . .

REILLY: Some very bad press, the nepotism business, and no experience, et cetera. So I said, "I don't know what you're going to do." And he said, "Well, I haven't made up my mind whether I'm. . . ." He volunteered the fact that he hadn't made up his mind whether he would be attorney general or not. And I said, "Whatever I do, I'd like to be as close to you as I possibly can," because, of course, I figured that obviously he was going to be the fulcrum of the whole administration, and it wouldn't hurt to be near him. I explained to him that I had had some experience

in the Justice Department, and if he did decide to go there, that I perhaps could be useful. And he said, "Well, what are you going to do now?" And I said, "Why, there's not much to do. I'm going to go back to Chicago with my family." And he said, "Sell your house." And I said, "Well, okay."

I had no idea what I was going to do. The idea was go back to Chicago, sell your house, and come to Washington. As I later began to know him better, I found that this was just a normal type of thing. I mean, you know, he's telling me to sell my house and come to Washington, although I don't know what I'm going to do. His idea seemed to be, "Well, haven't I just told you to sell your house? You're going to do something." Of course, when I got home and said, "We're moving to Washington," and we'd put the house up on the market, my wife's first question was, "What are you going to do?" "Well, I don't know." Of course, all the people in Chicago that knew that I was in the campaign, et cetera, were saying, "What are you going to do now in the big administration?" "I don't know." So I came back prior to the. . . . Oh, then there was the announcement that Bob Kennedy was going to be attorney general.

OESTERLE: Prior to selling your house?

REILLY: No, the house was on the market and we were preparing to come to Washington. I came back and was looking at homes and seeing all the old--you know, Donahue and Dungan and Maguire, O'Brien--and having great evenings reliving all the wonderful things that we had done.

Bob Kennedy then went to the Justice Department and took over an office belonging to, **at that time, the head of the Civil Division**, who had resigned, and [William P.] Rogers made the office available to him for the interregnum, to begin to prepare to take over the Justice Department. At that time, of course, he was interviewing an awful lot of people for positions.

Seigenthaler was obviously still the number one and was Bob's confidant and right arm. And I said, "John, do you have any idea what I'm going to do?" And he said, "I haven't the slightest idea. I don't know what I'm going to do." And I said, "Well, there is a position. . . ." By that time we'd all found the "green book," which gave all the jobs and the pay and so on, and we knew what we wanted. We were all shooting very high--I mean, we were all going to be White House assistants or something--although I had made up my mind, and he knew it, that I wanted to stay in justice with him. John said, "Why don't you stay here and help us in this organization period

when we have people coming in to be interviewed?"

He'd already made his decision on Byron White to be deputy at that point. Most of the people that Bob was talking to at that time for positions as assistant attorneys general for his staff were people who were recommended by Byron. And as you go through the list of those who eventually made it, most of them had some connection or some familiarity with Byron White. So he used Byron, obviously, as his. . . . I mean they were very friendly and just exceptionally close, the two of them, and there was a great respect that one had for the other. You know, Bob recognized that he just couldn't staff that thing by himself, so he used Byron, really, to staff the Justice Department, I think.

I was assigned. . . . He was about to go up for his hearings then, The criticism, as you recall, was that he had had no experience, and "How can a lawyer who never tried a case be an attorney general?" et cetera. So I was assigned the task of going through all the biographical background of all former attorneys general to discover if there was anyone who had had less experience than him. Well, the fact was that even though I went back to the very, very beginning, I could find no one who hadn't practiced law. But we finally came up with the fact--or I finally came up with the fact--that Harry M. Daugherty, who was attorney general during the Teapot Dome scandal, had practiced law for thirty some odd years, so that we decided that experience wasn't much of a qualification anyhow. So at the time of the hearing we planted that question with [Philip A.] Phil Hart. And when they were kind of giving him a little zing, particularly the guy from Colorado who was the only fellow who voted against him. . . . Well, at any rate, so Phil Hart came up with the question regarding the fact that perhaps experience doesn't really mean that much, because Harry Daugherty had had all this experience and look what happened to him. I was always very proud of that particular fact.

OESTERLE: Was there laughter?

REILLY: Oh yes. When I finally said, "I can't find anybody that's had less experience, but I find somebody that went to jail that had more," well he got the biggest kick out of that. But it turned out to be about the only thing we had to go on.

OESTERLE: Did you get involved, along with everyone else that was around at that point, and did Seigenthaler get involved, in helping to make decisions in regard to personnel?

REILLY: Yes. John was very, very influential in that field, although as I said before, I think Byron was probably the most influential. The one area where it turned out that we had the most trouble was the field for antitrust--assistant attorney general in charge of the Antitrust Division. I happened to have a candidate and told John that I had a man who I thought was a tough guy and had big background in antitrust. As a matter of fact, he was my former boss in the Chicago office. So he did receive an interview with Bob Kennedy and evidently impressed him considerably, because he was just a tough guy and a trial lawyer and the kind of a guy that didn't really care about who was involved, he was prosecutor. But [Lee B.] Loevinger was coming up at that point and had all the credentials and was being pushed by [Orville L.] Freeman and by Hubert [Hubert H. Humphrey], and eventually received the position, which I happen to think was the weakest of all his appointments. Lee, although he was a brilliant man and a good fellow and so on, just did not fit in with the other guys like John Douglas and [Herbert J., Jr.] Jack Miller and so on, Ramsey [Ramsey Clark]. So Bob came up with a great group, really.

I guess it was right before the inauguration, he called me in one night, and he said, "How would you like to be assistant to Byron?" I said, "I'd love it." He said, "Okay, you're in charge of U.S. attorneys." Well, I didn't know what that was about, or what it. . . . So I went immediately to the. . . . I asked Seigenthaler and he said he didn't know either, so we went to the book and found out that there was a position called Chief of U.S. Attorneys and Assistant to the Deputy Attorney General.

Upon looking back, it really made fairly good sense to have me in that spot because we had to replace 93 U.S. attorneys. Most of them were done for political reasons. As you know, it's a political appointment--or has been in the past--and there was a problem of coordinating the. . . . At that point was when we really began to realize that 1600 Pennsylvania [Avenue] was one thing, but there was another place up on the other end of the street which had a lot of power, and that all U.S. attorneys had to be confirmed by the Senate, and by this time all the senators were coming in with their nominations.

Some of the first people who were recommended to us by senators we happened to know because of political background of going through the campaign, and some of them were not exactly the type of people that Bob Kennedy wanted to be his arm out in the states. So we had a meeting one of the first days with Byron and Bob and myself in which he made it very clear that political considerations must enter into it, as he recognized, but that he would not stand for any hacks

getting into that job because, as he said, "They are the only people that many of the populace understand as the Justice Department, and if the guy's a bum, it reflects upon the Justice Department and reflects upon the president." So he insisted that wherever possible, without just alienating completely a senator, we attempt to get good people and, if possible, Kennedy people because, as you recognize, there were other people out there who wouldn't necessarily identify with Kennedy.

So Byron and I decided that the only way we were going to be able to do this is if the senators sent in a bum name who we thought would not pass--who may pass an FBI investigation but we didn't think was the kind of a guy that we wanted--we set up our own little system of people out in the given state. And when we'd get a name, why we would have an informal group, maybe a guy that went to Yale with Byron, maybe somebody else that I had known in political circles, and so on and so forth, and we'd check and say, "What's the man's general reputation? Truth, veracity? How does he stand in the community? Is he a good lawyer? Could he handle the job?" et cetera.

So we'd have a pretty good line on that guy, you see, through our own informal investigation before we'd ever begin an FBI investigation. Because Bob Kennedy believed, and rightly so, that you had to have a pretty good idea that the man was going to be your choice before you began an FBI investigation because the FBI did go in like a herd of elephants, and everybody in his town knew that they were investigating the guy. And then if they did discover something and he was turned down, why, you know, it hurt the person, no matter what the reason was. I mean, let's say we decided he wasn't a good lawyer. If an FBI investigation had been run and he did not get the appointment, it always looked--I mean somebody thought the guy's a criminal or got caught with his hand in the till or something.

OESTERLE: Was a person's civil rights record, a candidate's civil rights record, a factor here, too, especially if he perhaps came from the South?

REILLY: It was a factor if it was anti.

OESTERLE: Yes, that's what I mean.

REILLY: There was no pro factor looked for except in some certain instances in the South where we wanted to be assured the man could go along with what was to be the Kennedy administration.

OESTERLE: Do you recall Robert Kennedy ever making this point?

REILLY: Oh yes.

OESTERLE: And do you recall any specific examples of a candidate being highly and strongly recommended by senators and others and turned down. . . .

REILLY: And turned down for civil rights reasons?

OESTERLE: Yes, at least where that was a principal factor.

REILLY: It happened, I know, but quite frankly, since the man was never appointed--I mean the men were never appointed-- I can't recall who they were and where they were. This is just a memory problem with me. But it did happen where we would discover that this guy really didn't have much of a civil rights record or, particularly in the South and the border states, where it was indicated that he perhaps would not be able to go prosecute. . . .

OESTERLE: One case that I came across, which was for U.S. attorney, was a person by the name of J. Lewis Hall of Tallahassee, which served on the Fabisinski [Judge L. L. Fabisinski] Committee, appointed by the governor of Florida in 1956 to study the Brown decision [Oliver Brown et al, v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas] and means of complying therewith.

REILLY: I don't recall that at all. I don't recall the name.

OESTERLE: The only question there was that the committee had criticized the decision and recommended some sort of pupil placement law which seemed to be designed to avoid the effects of the decision. I just wanted. . . .

REILLY: I can't think of it. I wouldn't even think that [George A.] Smathers would have recommended him.

OESTERLE: I notice, too, that the attorney general would often defer-- even before he would make a decision he would write a note saying, for instance, "What does Smathers think of this?"

REILLY: Oh yes. The way it began, actually, was that [Hyman B.] Hy Raskin, whose name I'm sure has turned up from time to time, who sat at the Democratic National Committee after the administration began, acted as kind of a clearinghouse for recommendations from the Senate. They would come through Hy and over

to us. And Hy, in many instances, knocked down people before they even got to us by saying, "Well, jeez, I can't get them to buy him. Can't you come up with another one?" But then he kind of disappeared out of the whole thing, and then it became more direct. Yes, he was always. . . . Until we really got organized, until he became aware, I mean until Bob was sure that. . . .

BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I

REILLY: We were talking about the necessity--and the awareness of Bob Kennedy for the necessity--of political aspects of appointing attorneys general. I mean U.S. attorneys, excuse me. And he was aware, of course, of the fact that they had to be confirmed by the Senate and that there were points to be won by taking a senator's appointment or his recommendation if the man measured up to what he seemed to feel was the position. This obviously presented problems from time to time where an influential senator would come up with a man who, upon our informal investigation, we felt that we could not handle or could not appoint. What we would normally do in that situation would be to come up with a candidate of our own through, again, informal investigation and our knowledge from campaigning, of good people. The job usually fell to Byron White to go to that given senator and say, "Look, senator, I don't think your man is the type of guy we want," which was always a difficult thing to say to a senator. Because his answer would be, "Well, I wouldn't have given him to you if I didn't think he was a great man." And the job that Byron would have to perform would be to say, "Well, for this reason or that reason we don't think he's going to measure up. However, we do have a guy out there who we think is outstanding."

Now, if the senator was smart and had any political astuteness and had become aware of the power of the attorney general at that point, vis-a-vis the president, he would many times adopt our candidate as his and, therefore, get political credit in his own state for naming this man who [sic] we said we think we'll appoint. Now, there were instances where the senator would stand up and say, "Well, I'm sorry, nobody else will get through this Senate except this guy." And there were a couple instances, then, when we had to run bureau investigations in order to make clear information that was not available, let's say, to the senator regarding the man on why we didn't want to appoint him. And that was the one thing that normally would cause them to back off because they wouldn't want to be associated with someone who had a problem in his background.

OESTERLE: Of course, on the other hand, they could make a big point saying that they would--confirmation hearings-- that they would make some statement that they found the candidate "personally obnoxious". . . .

REILLY: Well, it wasn't even that difficult for them because under the organization of the Senate, when a nomination was received by [James O.] Eastland as chairman, he sent out what was called either the blue or the green slip, which is sent to the senators from the man's state. And unless and until they returned that to him, which indicated that they had no objection, that blue or green slip--I've never been sure what it was; I've never seen one--he would take no action upon that man's nomination. So a senator could publicly say, "I don't know what's happening. Eastland's not moving on this," or, "For some reason or other nothing's happening on this man's nomination," when the real reason was he's got on his desk the man's clearance. So he never really had to say the man's personally obnoxious. You understand?

OESTERLE: Yes.

REILLY: It's a method. It's used today, it's still used. I mean, there's judgeships which are hung up in the Republican administration, judgeships which were hung up under [Lyndon B.] Johnson, U.S. attorney. . . .

We had another little ploy, and that is, where a vacancy occurred in a U.S. attorney's office--a U.S. attorney spot--the court could appoint a U.S. attorney. Now, if the court was friendly to us, sometimes we could have the court appoint our candidate, and he would serve until a man was nominated and confirmed. And in one instance, in western Pennsylvania, the U.S. attorney up there, [Gustave] Gus Diamond, served his entire five or six years as a court appointed U.S. attorney because the senators could never get together on who they wanted as the U.S. attorney in Pittsburgh. So we used that ploy. We had our own man in there, and he had all the functions and authority of a U.S. attorney, but he was never--the poor guy was never nominated and confirmed by the Senate. That was the only thing he lacked. That was another little thing we used.

Then, of course, we have had Republican senators, or where you had--we didn't have much of a problem because the club works, normally, so that they do not oppose a presidential appointment of the man on that. . . . Then you would run into situations where the leader of the Democratic delegation in the House of Representatives may have the power of patronage. But we were always in a good position there because we'd say, "You know, congressman, it really doesn't make any difference to us what you say because you can't stop his

confirmation." And we did that in a couple of places where we would refuse to take the recommendation and came up with our own man and put him in.

This all was done through myself, [William A.] Bill Geoghegan and Joe Dolan, who were assistants to Byron White, and Byron White. And Bob stayed out of the process of selection, for the most part, other than giving us the guidelines and being available for discussion of these problems we were running into, whenever we had to talk to him. But very seldom did he take the job--unless it was a terribly sticky one--of going and saying, "Look, senator, I'm not going to appoint your man." It usually fell upon the deputy.

Something when you asked a minute ago about civil rights reminded me of this. When a man went through the selection process, was going to be nominated by the attorney general, or the name was going to be sent by the attorney general to the president for nomination--and I can't recall more than one or two instances where the political people at the White House objected to what we were. . . . They objected to what we were doing a lot of times because they said, "You're appointing guys that we never heard of. Where the hell were they when we needed them," and all that stuff. The fact that we had the attorney general let us stand up against them fairly well.

But prior to the time the man's nomination was sent to the White House for the president to nominate, we would call the individual to Washington. I would tell him that he was going to be nominated. I had the papers on my desk, usually. I'd go through the responsibilities and what he had to do and the fact that we would pretty much allow him to name his own assistants, because Bob Kennedy strongly believed that if he once chose a man as United States attorney, that he should allow him to name the people who were going to be in his office, assuming they came up to requirements. But he really believed, I think, that if he had made the right choice in the first place, then he wasn't going to have to worry too much about the guy's assistants because the guy was going to make the choice of the right assistants. So we'd go through this whole routine, and then I'd take him in to see Byron. And Byron would meet him and say, you know, "Get in there and fight."

Then we'd take him up to Bob. And Bob would give a little kind of lecture type thing. I mean, you know, "Pleased to have you. I'm going to sign your. . . ." You know, I'd hand him the appointment thing, and he'd make some big fuss, he'd sign it, and I'd take it out. Then he'd give this man a little bit of a talk. It was never really exactly the same, except there was one strain running through

it constantly, and that is, "You have been recommended to us by people involved in politics. You yourself perhaps have been involved in politics and owe your appointment to somebody. But as of this minute you owe your appointment to only one person, and that's the president, and you are expected to be loyal to the president and to the Justice Department. And if any of your previous experiences or previous debts ever have to be. . . . If you ever have to compromise, you only have one loyalty, and that's to the Justice Department and that's all there is to it. And if it ever happens any other way, you're gone." It was just about that blunt. I mean, he said, "I will support you constantly. I will always support you as U.S. attorney in your district, and if you run into a problem, you are to talk to me about it, and I'll be available at any time to discuss it. But your loyalty is now to the Justice Department." And of course that. . . . You know, you get those blue eyes staring at you at that point across that desk, and there was not much question that the guy got the message, that he may have some political ambitions or political debts to pay, but he wasn't going to pay them during this administration.

It was always a very impressive thing to me, and I loved to hear it because I always kind of felt good about it. And the reaction of the U.S. attorney was always just amazing to me. Bob always kept his end of the bargain, also. He did support them constantly. And as a result, I don't think there ever was or there ever will be again an administration with greater loyalty between the men in the field and the attorney general. I get letters today, still, from people.

I'll tell you, during the campaign in 1968 I could call on. . . . At any state I could call on one guy that I knew very well was going to be helpful to me and to Bob Kennedy when he was running for president--it didn't matter who it was--and that was the U.S. attorney or a fellow who had left the U.S. attorney job, but had been appointed by Bob Kennedy. He was always loyal. And this went back to. . . . This goes to the South; this goes to guys who have gone through Republican, Democratic administrations because they normally remain the same, anyhow, down there. It goes to New York City. It goes to the major cities--San Francisco, Los Angeles--where they have terrible, terrible pressures on them all the time. Nebraska, any place. He built just an amazing nucleus of exceptionally loyal people, and this was part of--not an underground, but--a silent group, that nobody really understood, that he had in '68 that was just so helpful that it was just amazing. I'm jumping way ahead, I think.

OESTERLE: No, it's all right when you jump.

REILLY: And from my limited experience with the United States marshals, it was exactly the same. Hell, you had United States marshals that would lay down in front of him if they had to. The loyalty that he got from people like that--his appointees--was just incredible. And he got it by being loyal to them. It's the old story when you're sitting talking to a man, he's going to say, "Well, I'm going to help you in your relationships with the Justice Department, but you have to be loyal to me." I mean, you know, everybody says, "Yeah, okay, now I'm with you. But wait until we get into the first nutcracker." But every time we did, by God, he was there. And they could call him. The U.S. attorneys would call him. I was supposed to be the liaison, and many times they'd skip me, go right to him and say, "Jeez, I've got this problem down here. The judge is doing this." Of course, he would normally. . . . He would turn and then get the person who was basically responsible and have him work it out.

OESTERLE: Were there any particular instances that stand out in your mind, either because they're significant or amusing?

REILLY: Oh, boy. Well, we had one guy who was appointed in a state, a small state with a notorious city, and his FBI report. . . . The FBI reports, by the way, used to be just unbelievably ludicrous, the stuff they'd turn up. For instance, we appointed [David C.] Dave Acheson in the District of Columbia, and there's a rule that if anybody is referred to as a relative, and so on, of the appointee or the person who was being investigated, that their investigations also accompany the major investigation. Well, when we ran the FBI on Dave Acheson, they wheeled into my office a truckload of investigations of Dean Acheson. I mean, it was just so ridiculous for the most part, some of this stuff.

But this guy--the fellow from Nevada--turned up in the FBI report, and it said he was called "the stud of 8th Street" and that he had had a drinking problem, but the story was that he had licked it and for two years had not had a drink. So I used to make Bob Kennedy aware of these things. The decision that we made is, "Well, all right, here's a guy that had a problem. He appears to be a good lawyer. He appears to have licked the problem. Now, because he drank heavily two years ago, we're not going to knock him out of being U.S. attorney. But if we find out he's drinking again, of course he's going to lose his job. He's going to have to know that." So when he came to Washington, of course, this would be brought to his attention. You can imagine these poor guys sitting there and talking to Bob Kennedy and all of a sudden having him say to them, "Why are you known as 'the stud of 8th Street?'" You know, they'd

just become absolutely speechless. And then he might laugh about it or something like that and say, "Well, maybe you're the kind of guy we want," and relax them a little bit.

But this happened a number of times. We found one fellow whose report indicated that he had had a strong liaison with his secretary in his former position in a major city. It turned up in the bureau investigation. And then the bureau would always bring it in, you know, with paper clips on that part. You were supposed to be sure to read that part because maybe you wouldn't want this guy. So when I brought him up to Bob Kennedy, in the midst of the conversation Bob said, "I assume that you won't be taking your secretary from your old job to your new job." Well, of course the guy got the message just like that. I mean, he didn't embarrass him, he didn't really put it on him, didn't appear holier than thou, didn't do anything of that; it really just made him aware that he knew what was going on and that, you know, it didn't take a brick to hit them on the head for the most part.

We used to have some rare times reading some of these FBI reports, particularly on the assistants. We'd have to run an FBI report on all the assistants, also. We had one guy, upon graduation from law school he had gotten a little loaded and went to an amusement park with a bunch of his friends and urinated off the top of a ferris wheel. Now, this was a big thing in the FBI report: We shouldn't appoint him as assistant U.S. attorney. So I told Bob about it, and again he says, "Jeez, that sounds like just the kind of a fellow I want in there."

OESTERLE: Later there was some criticism--in fact, a man that served in the Justice Department with the same name as yours, John Reilly--in the [Otto F.] Otepka case . . .

REILLY: Right, John F. Reilly.

OESTERLE: . . . and everything. Yes. This provided some confusion for me when I was . . .

REILLY: It provided quite a little for me.

OESTERLE: . . . doing my initial research. I imagine. Would you care to comment just on that?

REILLY: Well, I know him. But frankly, as I recall, I think he was in the Justice Department for perhaps just a short time while we were there, and then I believe he went to

the State Department, into the security section or something of that nature. Now, why or where he--who he came off of, or why he got there, I don't know. He did get involved in it.

I was constantly being. . . . Clark Mollenhoff confused me with him one time. I'm from Dubuque, Iowa, and Clark's from the Des Moines Register and almost caused me all kinds of problems, but that was typical with Clark. You know, about President Kennedy appointing this liar, a person who lied under oath, to the Federal Trade Commission. Luckily, the story was killed before he wrote it. I do think that when I went up for my confirmation hearings to the Senate on the FTC thing that I was mistaken for him by both [Strom] Thurmond and [Howard W.] Cannon, who questioned me quite thoroughly on wiretapping and my views on wiretapping. And here I was going to be a Federal Trade Commissioner and my views on wiretapping really didn't make much difference. But I generally supported the attorney general's bill and explained the legislation and went through all that stuff. And they were on me, back and forth, and I really believe they kind of confused me with the other John Reilly, although they never said anything. I went back to the Justice Department after that was all over, and Bob said, "How did your hearings go?" And I said, "Well, fine, except they questioned me thoroughly on wiretapping." He says, "You know, they could have picked anybody in the department that knew more about wiretapping than you do," which was true.

OESTERLE: One other confusing thing, too, is that John F. Reilly later had something to do with the FCC [Federal Communications Commission].

REILLY: Yes, I believe he's still at the FCC. I believe he went to the FCC about the time that [E. William] Bill Henry was made chairman, and I personally think that that was a result of some compassion on the part of some Justice Department people who felt that maybe Reilly got into trouble at their instance. And I think Bob may have gotten him the job with Bill Henry. I'm not sure about that, I don't know that.

OESTERLE: Did he leave early on? His tenure did not parallel yours more than--what?--six months a year?

REILLY: No, I wouldn't think it would be. Six months, my guess. I only met him after he was at the State Department, prior to the Otepka. . . . And actually, I guess, the only thing he did, really, was to lie before the congressional committee. I'm not accusing him, but that is my recollection of the newspaper. It seems to me that he was in security and was pulling some of Otepka's wastepaper baskets or something, to check and see if Otepka was talking

to the Congress. I don't know what it was. But I was confused with him for a while, but, thank heaven, not too long. I don't know whether you want to go into too much of this.

One thing that Bob Kennedy did, by the way, that had never been done by an attorney general prior, was that he visited U.S. attorneys' offices all over the country.

OESTERLE: You went on those trips. . . .

REILLY: I went on all those trips, which was probably. . . . Those two years were two of the greatest years I've ever had, simply because I traveled with him so much. And what we'd normally do, he'd ask me to plan a trip. And we would hit the major cities as often as possible, but where we. . . . Let's say we had a U.S. attorney in northern Iowa and southern Iowa and Nebraska and South Dakota. We may go to Omaha and call them all in and then hold our meeting in Omaha. And we'd hold a meeting with the U.S. attorneys and their assistants, with the FBI, and sometimes the Internal Revenue [Service] people or sometimes the Organized Crime [Section] people who happened to be in the area. But this was one of the things that he always did. So we'd just plan a trip where we were busier than. . . .

I learned how to plan a trip for him, and that was that you had to have him busy every minute or he just said, you know, "How come we have two hours? What are we going to do with these two hours?" His attitude was he could be doing something else. You know, he could have stayed back in the office and wasted two hours. "Why am I out here in Omaha when you haven't got anything for me to do?"

We'd meet with the judges, which he was always very, very careful about. One of the stories he always told the judges, which I always felt was very good, was that he had just come off a political job, electing his brother, where he had asked a lot of favors and that he was now in a job, as attorney general, where he knew that he would be asked favors in return. And he personally assured the bench, in each instance where he had a private conversation with the four or five district court judges, that he now was out of politics and would be attorney general and nothing else and those favors would never be granted. It was always quite an impressive thing to the judges because they didn't know him either, you know. I mean, here's a guy who ran his brother's campaign and now he's attorney general. The attorney general's supposed to be a political spot-- Howard McGrath and so on and so forth. [Herbert, Jr.] Herb Brownell, that type of thing. And he was very sincere about all of this, and of course his activities proved it when he indicted [Eugene J.] Gene

Keogh's brother [J. Vincent Keogh] and put him away, from New York.

He visited the U.S. attorneys. We'd go into these offices, the U.S. attorneys' staff women are under civil service, so they were always old women in these places that have been there for thirty, forty years, you know. And then we'd go in the FBI office, and they always had these young, lovely little things around. He'd say, "John, can't you do something about that? I go into the U.S. attorney's office and we have this, and I come over here and all these lovely little things." And I'd cautiously explain that this was civil service, and he knew damn well it was.

But we'd go into so many offices where women who had been chief clerks or something of the U.S. attorney's office for thirty years would say, "You're the first attorney general I've ever met in my life." I mean it was the first guy that had ever been in their office. And you can imagine what this would do to them, I mean, they would just, oh my. . . .

OESTERLE: The morale.

REILLY: We'd go into courthouses, and for some reason or other they'd know we were coming--not because we publicized it--just because maybe the U.S. attorney would have told a number of people, and the lobby of the courthouse might be filled with people from the offices and so on just to meet Bob Kennedy as he came through there. I'm getting very confusing in this, I know. But when he'd speak to the assistants--perhaps, I think, he told this story at the Justice Department, too, so you probably picked it up from somebody else--in parting he'd say, "Well, now I just want you to know that I'm proud that you're working for me, and I want you to work hard." And he said, "You know, it was just four years ago"--or six, or whatever it was--"that I came into the Justice Department as an attorney at forty-two hundred dollars a year. I worked hard and had a lot of integrity, skill, courage, and elected my brother president, and look where I am now. So this can happen to you." Of course, it endeared him to all of these guys.

Forso many of them, it's just the very fact that the attorney general. . . . And we'd brief him fully prior to his going into a district so that he would sit there and ask, "Now what about this case? What's happening on this case?" And you know, that's their life out there in the field; they live these cases. And to be able to talk to the attorney general about the migratory bird case or something, is unbelievable.

Problems would arise as we were out in the field. For instance, the U.S. attorney would say, "Well, I just can't get any answer out of Ramsey Clark for what's happening on this lands division problem." So he'd turn to me and he'd say, "John, would you straighten it out?" So I'd come back usually with a yellow pad--maybe five or six pages--filled with notes. And my responsibility then was to straighten out that particular problem which I picked up in Tulsa and get hold of Ramsey and say, "What's going on?" and get it worked out for these people.

OESTERLE: And he would write a letter, then, following through on this? It would be over his signature?

REILLY: Yes, for the most part, yes. But this points up something which happened in the Justice Department that I'm not sure happens any longer, and that is that we all felt that we were a team. And although we had individual responsibilities, there was no jealousy if, for instance, because of the fact I was with the attorney general when he told me to do something it crossed somebody else's line of jurisdiction. I mean, the fact that I went to Ramsey Clark and said, "Look, Bob wants to know why the hell you haven't handled this thing in Tulsa," Ramsey wouldn't get upset with that any more than. . . . I used to say it depended on who was standing next to him when he thought of something to do. If you were standing next to him, and he had a criminal matter that bothered him and he wanted you to check into it, he wouldn't go get Jack Miller. He might say, "John, will you find out about this?" And I could go to Jack Miller, and Jack wouldn't get upset because, "Why isn't the attorney general talking to me?" We had none of that, absolutely none of that, which was always very amazing because these guys are prima donnas, the same as, you know, well-known lawyers.

OESTERLE: I guess the lights burned very late in the night after a trip like this.

REILLY: Oh yes, we used to. . . . He'd come up with the craziest things, too. We were out in St. Louis one time and somebody proudly pointed out the fact that this arch [Gateway Arch] the Gateway to the West, was just about completed over the Mississippi, and he said, "Where's that money coming from?" And you know, it turned out it was ninety-ten money or something--the government was paying for it. He'd say, "You mean to tell me you're paying all this money for this arch, and down under that arch is the slums, and these people are starving? What kind of a government have we got going?" And then he'd, "Okay, Reilly, find out why we spent the money for the arch." That would take me two days to find out where

the money for the arch came from. I'd go through nine different departments and eventually find out--and it would usually be some goofy explanation which I'd have to give him, but it was done, and there was no turning it around. But if I didn't do it, he'd come up two weeks later, and he'd say, "Why did we spend the money on that arch?" And you'd have to have an answer. So I finally started with one of these things [a tape recorder] and took it with me, and every night I'd dictate onto a tape all the goofy questions I'd been assigned during the day.

OESTERLE: Was there a sense of frustration in regard to the bureaucracy?

REILLY: On his part?

OESTERLE: Yes, on his and, let's say, your part, too.

REILLY: Yes. Well, I think my frustration was less than his because on the level where I had to cross lines in the executive branch I would always be able to say, "I'm calling for Bob Kennedy," or "the attorney general wants me to find out." Well, you could call a secretary--I mean, you could call Hodges, you could call Freeman, under those auspices and, by God, find out.

I think his problem was--or his frustration was simply. . . . I think the arch is a good example. You could just see the thought process: "Why are we building this steel structure, which is just a lovely thing, and it's the Gateway to the West and so on, but we've cleared out underneath it eighteen blocks of slums? Now where have those people gone? Now they're in a high-rise slum instead of a low-rise slum. Why did we do it?" And then he'd get into it and find out there was nothing he could do about it. It had been done; the wheels had ground, or Congress was somehow involved, and you couldn't turn it around. Those were the things which really got to him. He'd get down to a point where he'd just shake his head. It would be over, you'd checked it out, got the answer, be up against a brick wall. He'd just shake his head.

He became frustrated, also, with his relationships with the FBI, which I think you probably heard before. I don't think he ever really established them to the point where he wished that he had them. I should say with [J. Edgar] Hoover, not with. . . .

OESTERLE: The agents in the field.

REILLY: The agents, no. We used to have a standing joke. When we'd visit the U.S. attorneys' offices, we'd visit the FBI office, too. And we'd walk into the special-agent-in-charge's office--if that's a word--the SAC's office, and his desk was always clean, always four pencils up in the right-hand corner, always something over in the left-hand corner, you know, neat, clean, everything, a picture of J. Edgar behind him. And after about the third one we visited, Bob said to one of the SAC's, he said, "I don't see a picture of President Kennedy around here." The guy said, "Well, I tried to get one." So Courtney [Courtney A. Evans], being very bright, caught this immediately, and from then on we didn't walk into any FBI office anywhere in the country that as soon as you walked into the door, bang, there was a picture of President Kennedy staring you in the face. It got to be, we walked into one where behind the reception desk there was a picture window with the drapes drawn and the picture was on the drapes. And he used to get such a kick out of this. He'd say, "Well, John, how did you get the picture up?" And I said, "We have arrangements, Bob. We ship it ahead, wherever you're going to be."

OESTERLE: The same picture.

REILLY: Yes, the same, I said, "We only have one picture. We just ship it ahead. You know, we can't afford more than one." So one time we came from the west coast to Atlanta, and we walked into Atlanta. There's the picture. And he went through the same line. I said, "Well, we shipped it ahead." And he said, "No, you didn't. The one in San Francisco had a black frame, this one has a blond frame." And I said, "We have two: one for west of the Mississippi, one for east of the Mississippi."

He used to get the biggest kick out of going through the FBI offices because they had these bullpens filled with these bright, attractive, fresh kids who do nothing but sit there and type all day long, and every time we walked into. . . . He'd walk to each desk and shake hands with these little girls, and, of course, they'd be thrilled. But we always noticed that as soon as he shook hands they'd go right back and they'd start typing, and they hardly ever moved after that. When we walked in it would be silent, and when we walked out it would be silent.

So one time I stopped and turned around and went back into one of the offices we'd just been into. And all of these kinds were up on their feet, giggling, and, "Oh, he shook my hand," and so on. And it became apparent to me that they were under instructions: "When the attorney general comes in, you're to be working." So I gave Courtney

the raspberry about this. So the new instructions went out that they were to remain working all the time he was in the building so I wouldn't catch them when I turned around. I mean it was just unbelievable. And he used to get the biggest kick--he used to double back himself once in awhile to try to catch them.

And it was the same trip in Atlanta where we. . . . There was an SAC down there who was just particularly pompous and just right down the line on rules and regulations. In the lobby there's the "ten most wanted" pictures, as you know--which we always used to say, a man didn't go up on that "ten most wanted" until they knew where he was so they could pick him up the next day. That's been disproven by Angela Davis, I guess. There was one guy whose picture was up there on the "ten most wanted," and he was cross-eyed and he had a scar which ran from his forehead all the way down his cheek to the corner of his mouth. It was one of the most ugly men you've ever seen in your life. We were standing out there, and Bob just happened to be looking at these things. And he points to this guy and turns to the SAC and he said, "Can't you find him?" And of course, the guy was just such a martinet, he said, "Well, you know, Mr. Attorney General, they change their appearance sometimes." Bob just looked at him like--you know, couldn't even get the humor of the thing. He said, "Can't you find him?"

OESTERLE: Did Courtney Evans travel with you at all in any of these. . . .

REILLY: Courtney traveled always. There was Courtney, myself, usually [Edwin O.] Ed Guthman--unless for some reason or other he couldn't, but 95 percent of the time Guthman--and then half the time [James J.P.] Jim McShane, who was the chief marshal. And that was the team unless we, for some reason or other . . . Sometimes we'd go south, and Burke Marshall would come with us. If there was a specific criminal problem, let's say maybe we'd go to Chicago. Maybe the head of organized crime--or Jack Miller--might go with us, where we knew we were going to be discussing that more than anything else.

But Courtney always went. And Courtney was responsible primarily for, you see, when we went to a town, the bureau was our people. It sounds funny, but they were the people who picked us up, got us hotel rooms, registered us in, got us out, took us to the airport, drove us around, and so on. The bureau acted in that capacity, and Courtney was responsible for arranging that.

OESTERLE: Did you start these trips to the field the first year?

REILLY: Oh yes.

OESTERLE: Did they pick up in frequency through the . . .

REILLY: No, they kind of. . . . As we got into '63 and more of the civil rights disorders, the problems in Mississippi and Alabama, they decreased. He had wanted to visit all offices. I don't think he ever succeeded in doing so. I think we may have visited eighty out of ninety or something like that--or ninety-three, I don't know--or saw that many U.S. attorneys, let's say. But we didn't go to Alaska; we didn't go to Hawaii, although I always tried to convince him we should go to Hawaii.

But I also found out. . . . There was a very interesting thing. We used to get in more arguments; this is so typical. He never had money, you know. He never had money with him. No matter where you'd go, you'd end up paying cab drivers, and you'd end up tipping bellhops, and you'd end up paying checks unless he happened to think, "Well, I'm buying tonight," or something. Then he couldn't find any money. For the first couple of weeks I began to think, I can't stand this." Finally, I talked to [Angela M.] Angie Novello, and she said, "Just keep track, and when you come back, tell me, and I'll give you the money. It's been going on for years, John, you're not the first one to have gone through it."

One of the first trips we took was out to Chicago. Guthman was not really familiar with how to travel with him, and so I got him a suite at the Drake [Hotel]. Well, we walked in, and he said, "Who's paying for this?" I said, "Well, you are." He said, "I can't afford this. How much is it?" And I said, "I think it's seventy-five dollars a day or something." He said, "How much do I get as attorney general for traveling?" And I said, "I think you get actual expenses up to forty dollars." He said, "How am I going to. . . . I'm not going to pay for this." We're standing there, you know, and here's the hotel man who's just bowing and scraping, and the attorney general's telling him he's not going to pay for the room. So then Guthman and I decided, "Well, we'll really fix him."

Then we began to get single rooms, no matter where we went, of course. The next time we went to Chicago, one of the things he was going to do the next morning was to have a breakfast with the mayor. Mayor [Richard J.] Daley was going to come up and visit with him. So we got him the smallest room that you've ever seen in your life, for about fourteen dollars or something like that. He walked in, checked in that night. The next morning the phone rang about 7 o'clock, and he said, "I have a breakfast this morning with Mayor Daley at 7:30." And I said, "That's right." He said, "Well, where are we

going to have it?" I said, "Why, in your room, Bob, of course. I would have gotten you a suite, but I don't know who'd pay for it." "Well, the Mayor's coming up here. Where am I going to put him? There's not even room to put a table in here." So he said, "What kind of a room do you and Guthman have?" And I said, "We've got a nice double room." So he comes wandering down the hall and sees, of course, we have a sumptuous room because half the time we'd get our room comped because we were traveling with the attorney general. So it finally ended up that he had to entertain the mayor in our room rather than his room because his was too small.

Another thing we used to do that I got caught at finally. . . . Kenny O'Donnell was a close friend of mine, and Kenny always used to say, "John, when you travel with the attorney general. . . . I just heard the other day that you went into Chicago and that he didn't even call the mayor." I said, "Yes, that's right. He maintains he's nonpolitical." And he said, "Yes, but someday the president's going to have to run again, and he's going to have to get political, or somebody is. And you just can't go into Chicago without at least telling Mayor Daley that you're in town." So he said, "I'm going to make you responsible for at least checking in with the right people so that they don't read the newspaper that Bob Kennedy was there and hasn't even chosen to speak to them."

So one of the things that Bob Kennedy always did. . . . Let's say that he had a speech at seven o'clock at night or there was a six-thirty to seven-thirty cocktail party and then a dinner at which he was speaking. He normally skipped the cocktail party and arrived at the dinner as they were sitting down. And during that period of time we would have had him scheduled so he maybe was arriving at the hotel at six-thirty, quarter to seven. Then he'd immediately fill the bathtub up, almost up to the top, and get in the bathtub and relax in the hot tub and read his speech and so on. So I finally hit upon the idea that while he was in the tub I'd always make sure right before he got out, I would call whoever I had figured would be somebody that he should call in that town, that had been helpful during the campaign, just to think of somebody--not Mayor Daley, but Frank Chelf in Louisville, Kentucky--and say, "Frank, this is John Reilly. I'm traveling with the attorney general. He's just in town for a few hours and wanted to say hello." Frank would say, "Fine." So I then called Bob. I said, "Frank Chelf's on the phone. He wants to say hello." So the two of them would talk, and that would be the end of it, and everything would go off fine. And I'd come back and tell O'Donnell, "Well, we talked to so-and-so and so-and-so, and everybody's happy."

Well, this went on for about two years. I think we were in San Francisco, and by that time [John F.] Jack Shelley, who was a congressman and was then mayor. . . . So I called Jack Shelley, and I said, "Mr. Mayor, Bob Kennedy is here in the hotel and is going to a dinner party tonight and wanted to say hello." So I said, "Bob, Jack Shelley's on the phone." So he got on the phone, and Bob said, "Hello, Jack, how are you?" The Mayor said, "Fine, Bob, how are you?" There's silence. Bob says, "What's up?" Shelley said, "I don't know, you called me." Bob said, "No, you called me." So they go through this whole thing, and he finally hung up, and he turned to me, and he said, "You son of a bitch, you've been doing this for two years, haven't you?" He finally caught me.

The days of the traveling were fun. You know, they were good days. He really felt, and we all really felt, that he was accomplishing something because of just this great camaraderie with the people in the field. I've had so many of the U.S. attorneys tell me that just a visit like that with him. . . . And then many times, if we had the time, we'd just have a dinner that evening with the U.S. attorney and his assistants where everybody would just sit around and have a good time and a couple of drinks and dinner and, you know, a little conversation, a few speeches--not speeches, but introductory remarks by somebody. The U.S. attorney would be pleased that Bob Kennedy's here. Perhaps he'd like to tell us about what's happening in Vietnam or what's happening in the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] or why Cuba went bad. So that was all. And U.S. attorneys used to tell me that just the increase in the morale in their offices just was unbelievable. They wouldn't have any trouble with anybody, as far as working.

Of course, Bob Kennedy always took the position, for instance, with people in the field like an assistant U.S. attorney, "Now, you know, your hours are not nine to five; your hours are whatever it takes to get the work done. Now, if you have to work weekends, then that's your job, and you still get paid the same amount of money. There's no overtime; there's no comp time; you're professional people. And if you want to go off to a ball game some afternoon and you don't have any work to do, then go off to a ball game. Let's not worry about taking leave and 'the government owes me two hours' and all this stuff. You're professionals, you're lawyers. You work when the work's there."

As a result of this, of course, these guys just loved it. You know, they'd work weekends, they'd work nights. And if they wanted to go to a ball game, they'd go to a ball game.

OESTERLE: You were successful in raising the salaries.

REILLY: Yes. Through his complete support and cooperation on that. When we went in, when he first heard about the salaries, he was shocked. I think we were paying an assistant U.S. attorney right out of law school six thousand dollars, where he could probably go into any other area in government and make eight thousand dollars. And as a result, of course, it was difficult to get good assistants because six. . . . And everything else was proportionate, including the U.S. attorneys. I mean, for instance, a U.S. attorney in South Dakota made fifteen thousand dollars--no, he made twelve-five when we started. [Robert M.] Bob Morgenthau in New York City, the busiest district in the country, made twenty thousand dollars a year when he first took that job.

So one of the assignments was to get it up. Well, of course, you had to do this through John Rooney's committee. So when I began to investigate, I found out that what they had done in the past--and I could never understand this--is that they had gone in and attempted to get money, appropriations, by increasing the request for bodies, by saying, "We need seventy new assistant U.S. attorneys," when perhaps they could only justify twenty. And if they got them, they could use that money for raising salaries. So I said, "Why can't we go in and just say we need money for raising salaries? We're not paying these kids enough. Let's just make it that simple, I mean, be honest about it." So it took two years, but we finally got increased appropriation on the basis of raising salaries in increments each year according to the man's experience and time in the office. It was just that simple. Of course, he testified to it. It was one of the major things he testified to each year, on the general appropriations testimony, and then I would specifically testify to it when I went up to justify my budget. But he was always shocked on that.

OESTERLE: Did he ever say anything about the fact that the director of the FBI was never challenged about his budget?

REILLY: Oh, yes. It used to be a constant gripe with him. One of the gripes. . . . Yes, he did. And he said it in many ways about, "How the hell can he go up there and go off the record and convince John Rooney that he's saving America and get all kinds of money, and we are the fellows that are prosecuting. . . ." And that's what used to gripe him because the FBI statistics used to include convictions as a justification for budgetary reasons, when the convictions were actually obtained by the U.S. attorneys and their assistants. And we'd go up and use convictions, and it never carried much weight. The fact is because Hoover had already used it. That really got under his skin. Arrests, we used to have big fights about who was going to make the arrest, the FBI or the marshal. The marshal is supposed to make the arrest,

but the FBI would make them from time to time so that they could list under their category of arrests this great figure.

OESTERLE: How much of a concern were the statistics?

REILLY: Very little except as a housekeeping tool and administrative tool. They were of concern to the Congress. You had to play the numbers game with Congress or they couldn't justify themselves giving you an increased appropriation.

OESTERLE: Did the method of reporting at all change from the Eisenhower years?

REILLY: No. At the very end of the Eisenhower years, in 1958, they had gone on a reporting system from the U.S. attorneys' offices to the Justice Department which was computerized, and we continued the same system. It was less than a year old when we got it, and it was an exceptionally good one. It was a good check on what was happening within an office, also. On a sheet of paper you could see how many old cases were there, why they weren't moving, and so on; civil, criminal, types of cases.

OESTERLE: On an informal basis, could or would the attorney general kid the director of the FBI about the statistics or something like this?

REILLY: Not in my presence.

OESTERLE: Was the relationship. . . .

REILLY: There was a period of. . . . I mean, there was a confrontation that I've heard secondhand, at one time, about the number of Negroes in the FBI, which I'm sure you've heard from Burke or somebody. I've got a great story about that. He used to be on me once in a while. "How many blacks, John, have you got as assistant U.S. attorneys?"

One day I was driving in the deputy attorney general's car and his driver was talking to me, and I was talking to the driver. And I said, "How do you like this job now that we're here and you're driving for Byron White instead of [Lawrence E.] Larry Walsh?" And he said, "Oh, it's a lot of fun, and I really enjoy it and enjoy the deputy attorney general; but I think I'm going to switch to the FBI." I said, "What do you mean? What's the difference between driving for the FBI and driving for the Justice Department?" He says, "Oh, all those guys that drive for the FBI, you know, they made

them agents." I said, "They what?" He said, "They made them agents. They got an increase in salary, and they're now special agents." And I said, "They are?" Gee, that sounded odd to me, so I went back and checked on it. It turns out that Bob had gigged Hoover on the lack of blacks--I think there was one or two or three, maybe, in the FBI at that time, when we took over--so what Hoover did is he took his drivers and he made them agents, so that appearing on the rolls were all of a sudden five more black agents or something. This guy says, "I think I'm going to go over there."

OESTERLE: Macy Walker was one of the only blacks working in the Department of Justice who had any rank at all.

REILLY: Yes. Was it Macy Walker or Macy. . . .

OESTERLE: Macio Walker.

REILLY: Macio, Macio. . . . Sure, I remember, a big tall fellow. I thought it was Macio Taylor*: I don't know why I thought that either, but I know. . . .

OESTERLE: At the time, I guess, that the attorney general looked into this, there were maybe eight Negroes in total, including janitorial positions.

REILLY: I think that's probably right.

OESTERLE: A written report was made by Seigenthaler to the attorney general, and [Salvador A.] Sal Andretta, who had been there, was most embarrassed. Letters went out to law schools around the country encouraging applications from law schools.

REILLY: That was at the time that I was instructed to make a special effort for assistant U.S. attorneys.

OESTERLE: Oh, you did this, actually?

REILLY: No, I was instructed by Bob Kennedy to make a special effort in the field to get qualified blacks into assistant U.S. attorney spots.

OESTERLE: Was this effective?

REILLY: Yes. As a matter of fact, I was always kind of proud of it because we were successful. We had some problems, believe me, in some areas. You did it in a variety of ways.

*Interviewee's note: "It was Macio Taylor!"

I put one in in Memphis. A lot of these kids we got were outstanding, much better than the whites we had in the job, but nobody ever considered hiring them before. And I had one in Memphis, and I called the U.S. attorney, and I said that I had an assistant U.S. attorney for him, and I recognized the fact that we had told him that he could hire his own people, so I hoped that he would look this man over and so on. So he looked him over, and he called me and he said, "John, I think I'd better come up there and talk to you." So he came up.

I knew what was happening, and I had [Estes] Kefauver's approval already, and Kefauver was a backer of this man. So Kefauver's man, his AA--I can't even remember his name, a terrific guy--anyhow, I had him in my office at the time the U.S. attorney came in. And the U.S. attorney started explaining to him, he says, "I just don't think that Memphis is ready for this." Then I said, "Well, I'm not sure that that's so. You know, Memphis will never be ready unless the U.S. attorney down there shows the way a little bit." He says, "Where's he going to go to the law library?" And I said, "Well, yours. Where else is he going to go?" So the poor guy was just. . . . And he knew that I had Kefauver's man there, and he just didn't know how he was going to get out of hiring this guy. So he decided he'd go over to the hotel and pray a little. So I said, "You can go over and pray, and I think it's probably a good idea, for divine guidance in this thing. But," I said, "you'd better pray in such a manner that when you come back that you're going to tell me that you're going to hire this man, or else you're not going to be U.S. attorney any longer." "Well, maybe I don't have to pray." He said, "Well, John, there's something you don't understand about the South." He says, "You know, we got nothing but white girls in there working as clerks and secretaries. I don't know how I'm going to sell this to them." And I said, "I've got that all solved." He says, "How?" I says, "You're hiring a black clerk." The poor guy, I mean, I really felt sorry for him because we just put it on him so hard, and it worked out exactly that way. But he was going to go over and pray about that.

He became a great friend and called me one time, and he said, "John, the best assistant U.S. attorney that I have in my office is this man. I want to make him my first assistant." And also, something else that he, he got religion and integrated the Memphis Bar Association Law Library, which had, at that point, not allowed Negroes in it. And he, through his own civic activities, got going on the thing.

Matter of fact, you know the fellow that's mayor of Gary [Indiana], [Richard G.] Hatcher, he was one of our assistant U.S. attorneys. We got him up there. Of course, guys like [Vance] Hartke

and people like that were terribly cooperative, and they'd go out and search the boondocks. I'm afraid we may have practiced reverse discrimination from time to time in that situation. It was just so bad; it was just unbelievable.

I just don't understand, for instance, how the FBI can do any undercover work in Harlem. I mean, how can they function if they don't have a black man that's doing undercover work? I think the only man that they had at that time was this football star from Notre Dame, who was a great kid, still with the Bureau. Anyhow, doesn't make much difference.

But that was always frustrating to Bob. I think his failure to assume the complete role of attorney general over that one bureau always kind of bothered him, like it may have been a failure on his part. I think it got to him a little bit. I mean, I think he felt that he should have done more.

OESTERLE: Did he ever indicate that he had discussed this matter with the president, or that, perhaps, something might be changed? For instance, that the director of the FBI might retire?

REILLY: Yeah. He never indicated that to me, but I learned it in another manner. I learned it from Kenny O'Donnell that he had discussed it with the president, and my understanding was that there was a plan that Hoover would retire in the president's second term. But I do not know that firsthand.

OESTERLE: But the implication is that the president and the director of the FBI had an agreement?

REILLY: No, that was not my understanding. My understanding was that he was going to be offered retirement or thrown out. But of course you've got to think back. The first two appointments Jack Kennedy made were [Allen W.] Dulles and Hoover. So I don't know whether that's accurate or not. But Courtney was probably the real saving. Courtney had the toughest job in the administration, in my book, liaisoning.

OESTERLE: He handled it well?

REILLY: He handled it very well, but was constantly in hot water with one or the other, you know, because there was a point there when I think they were only speaking through Courtney. I can remember one time Bob wanted to have a Saturday morning party for the sons of diplomats--sons and daughters--children

of diplomats, down in the Justice Department, in the courtyard.

OESTERLE: I remember that.

REILLY: One of the things which he wanted to do was have an exhibition of FBI marksmanship down in the range. So we told Courtney, and Courtney came back with the information that the FBI range was closed on Saturday morning. You know, Hoover wasn't going to do it. So Bob said to Courtney, "You go back and tell the director that the range is now open on Saturday morning." You know, this was a head-butting thing, and Courtney had to handle it. The range was open, they did give an exhibition, it was wonderful, and so on. But poor Courtney had to come back, one, with the information that Hoover wasn't going to open the range, and then go back to Hoover and say, "You've been directed to open the range."

OESTERLE: Was this early on in the administration?

REILLY: Yes, this was the first year, '61, I'm almost positive. But I was just pointing. . . . I used that as an example of the tough role that Courtney had to play.

OESTERLE: What kinds of things did he get involved in with the attorney general and yourself, other than the more formal liaison between FBI and your office?

REILLY: You mean Courtney?

OESTERLE: Yes.