

Clark Clifford Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 12/17/1974
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Clifford, lawyer and presidential advisor, 1961 - 1963; Secretary of Defense, 1968 – 1969, discusses his work on the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and advising Jackie Kennedy with the Fine Arts Committee for the White House, among other issues.

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Transcript of December 16, 1974 interview
page 7, line 5 through page 8, line 5
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Clark M. Clifford – JFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

With

CLARK M. CLIFFORD

December 17, 1974
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

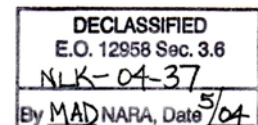
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HACKMAN: One of things that I found on the microfilm was a mention that President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] had discussed with you the possibility of heading the negotiations with the Russians early in the administration on cessation of nuclear testing. I know that you did not do that. Was that simply a request and your reply that you did not feel you could take that on or is there more involved in that that you recall?

CLIFFORD: It doesn't come to mind at all. I have one of those blank spots about it. I would never have thought of it had you not brought it up. Now, I know that it was a subject of discussion between him and me but I don't remember the details of it.

HACKMAN: He called you—I have the date—he called you on January 24. From what I could find out, it was just the sort of thing that you probably didn't feel that you could take on at that point in time; I'm not sure why I feel that was so.

CLIFFORD: What is the date again?



HACKMAN: This was January 24. That's just three days after the inauguration.

CLIFFORD: Well, without remembering the details, I would be sure that after having spent almost three months on the transition that I wasn't prepared to take on an

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assignment at that time that would take me away for possibly a similar period.

HACKMAN: There are some meetings, then, early in the administration, one on March 3. I know that date won't mean anything to you, but then I noticed in the microfilm of your files that on March 11 there was a memo on this committee on fine arts idea—the committee on fine arts [Fine Arts Committee for the White House]. I wondered if you recall a meeting fairly early on with the President at which that was discussed or was that almost completely with Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis] at that point?

CLIFFORD: Shortly after President Kennedy was inaugurated, he called and asked that I come over and have luncheon with him and Mrs. Kennedy. And we had a long luncheon in which we talked about the operation of the mansion part of the White House. And she and I talked together—I think maybe he had to leave—and she and I talked at considerable length about the White House, and she wanted to know more about how the ushers office operated. I think that was a little too early, but at some point she talked about her decision—it may have been sometime after that—to make the White House the first house in the land. And we discussed the fact that other First Ladies had had certain aims and this was certainly a laudable goal on her part. And it led to my forming the White House Historical Association.

Then, I recall that she asked me one time how many people went through the White House every day. And I checked and said I think eight or nine thousand. And she said did any of them buy any thing here or leave any money here, and I said no. And she said, "Well, I think we're missing a bet." And she was the innovator of the book that was later developed that became known as the *White House Guidebook* [*White House: An Historical Guide*]. She contacted National Geographic and they took a series of perfectly beautiful color photographs of different rooms in the White House, the presidential china, et cetera. And she had the copy written, and the book was turned out. My recollection is that it cost us about forty cents a book and we sold it for a dollar and made about sixty cents on the operation.

I continued to be a member of the board of the White House Historical Association and get their records. And some time ago the two millionth book was sold. And as that money came in, it was used for the White House. And so hundreds of thousands of dollars were produced because of that idea of Mrs. Kennedy. And she used it to get the best possible Aubusson rug for the Red Room or the finest early American secretary for another room. She

was able to finance the purchase of the Benjamin Franklin portrait that went in the Green Room. She did a superb job.

I would meet, from time to time, with her and a number of persons that she got together. Henry du Pont [Henry Francis du Pont] became an important figure in that whole effort—he is the man who had set up Winterthur up in Delaware—and was an outstanding authority on early American furniture and objects d’arts. And I thought it was one of the really unique and outstanding jobs ever performed by a First Lady.

HACKMAN: Any difficulties at all in terms of working out either legal questions involved there or in terms of your own relationship with her? Was that an easy working relationship or was she...?

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CLIFFORD: She and I got along very well together. She was most appreciative and I had no conflict of any kind with reference to any client of any sort. It interested me a good deal. The fact is she used me a lot in the first two years of the administration; she continued to use me as President Kennedy had used me. She wanted a place for weekend riding at Upperville, Virginia, and I have some recollection that I worked out the lease with the woman. Then I handled the sale of their house on N street and that got really snarled and became rather amusing to people because I was representing the Kennedys and the purchaser was represented by Dean Acheson [Dean G. Acheson]. So we had—it was laughingly suggested—a good deal of legal talent with reference to that. Some question came up about a first buyer who made an offer and then a better offer was made and the first buyer contended that he had the rights, but it had not really been accepted. We had quite a little to do over it—and then disposed of it on a very satisfactory basis from the Kennedy standpoint. And I had to deal from time to time with the owner of this house down in the hunt country in Virginia. And I have at home—or maybe I have it in my file here—a wonderful picture that Mrs. Kennedy drew for me of my going to beard this landlady in her den to get some other kind of concession.

HACKMAN: Did the President stay involved to any degree in Mrs. Kennedy’s activity on the arts side of things or not?

CLIFFORD: Only to a limited extent. He stayed in it enough to give the prestige of his office behind it. And we would meet from time to time in the late afternoon with Henry du Pont and a group of people of very substantial means that she had brought in who would contribute from time to time. And we might meet from 4:00 to 6:00 and he would show up at five minutes of 6:00; that kind of business. So, he gave his complete approval to what she was doing, he thought it was certainly in the public interest, and continued to support her without giving very much of his personal time to it. [Interruption]

HACKMAN: I'd like to do a little bit on the house in Georgetown. Would the President get involved and be interested in the financial aspects, particularly of that, or did he more or less let that go?

CLIFFORD: He was. It was a valuable piece of property. It became more valuable after he had lived in it and then became President. We discussed the fact that that was an element that should go into setting a reasonable price for it. It ultimately resulted that we sold it on the basis in which we made a very substantial profit from the deal. He was not interested in financial matters; he didn't want to have his time taken by being concerned with them. To a certain extent, I think maybe the same inclination existed on Mrs. Kennedy's part. Occasionally he would discuss with me the volume of bills that were being run up at the White House, the difficulty he was having in keeping that whole operation under control.

HACKMAN: Was he looking for sympathy or advice or what?

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CLIFFORD: Both. Both, and possibly some help with Mrs. Kennedy in that regard. It was a difficult kind of husband-wife relationship as far as expenditures were concerned. Money had no appeal to him; he had always had it as far as he could remember. I know his friends would sometimes tell stories: when he was in the Senate, oftentimes he would come to visit them and then have to borrow some money or get a check cashed or something of that kind. It was always there, it wasn't anything that you paid any particular attention to.

HACKMAN: Could we talk then about the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. There are two meetings, May 9 and 11, before the first meeting, which was on May 15, of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. Kennedy had issued an executive order on May 4 reconstituting and expanding that board, which had operated under a different name and a different form under Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower]. Can you recall discussions with him in advance of the first formal meeting, or even in advance of the executive order, along those lines?

CLIFFORD: Yes, I can. He called me to the White House after the Bay of Pigs and he was as serious as I had ever seen him. And the substance of his comment was that he had made a grave miscalculation with tragic results. And the reason he had was because he had gotten bad advice. And he had received bad advice because our intelligence was poor, and our intelligence was poor because the facts on which it was based were faulty. He had kind of traced it in logical sequence and progression in his own mind. He indicated that he probably would not survive another catastrophe of that kind. And he had decided to organize the intelligence board and gave me some indication of the men whom he was inviting and asked that I be a member of it at that time. He told me that Jim Killian [James R. Killian, Jr.] was to be chairman. I already knew some of the men who would be on it.

He suggested that our function would be to make a thorough examination of our foreign intelligence operation and recommend improvements from the standpoint of organization, from the standpoint of operation and from the standpoint of possible expenditure of funds. He said, "I have to have the best possible intelligence." He said, "This has come early; I would hope that I could live it down, but it's going to be difficult to do." It was an exceedingly traumatic experience for him and the men around him because everything about it went wrong. And the criticism in this country was violent, as you may remember, all over. And uncertainties and the decision not to use the Air Force [United States Air Force] in the invasion and then the manner in which the whole affair proved to have been fundamentally unsound shook him and his associates very badly. So he said, "Let's get at this. I want to get started on this. I want to take a personal interest in it." And with that kind of attitude the board was formed, met with him at lengthy meeting in the Cabinet Room and he instructed us again what our function was. It went far beyond what a president had had in mind with reference to some previous board. And we then went to work. It was a top flight group of men. We had a very experienced man.... Everybody there had had some previous experience with intelligence and...

HACKMAN: I have a list of the membership if you care to consult it.

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CLIFFORD: Yes. He made a very wise selection. Jim Killian was a good chairman. He had two top scientists in the field of electronic intelligence, they were Dr. Baker [William O. Baker] and Dr. Edwin Land who had together perfected photo graphic devices that were used in that type of reconnaissance. General Doolittle [James H. Doolittle] brought something very valuable from his standpoint Bill Langer [William L. Langer] had been in intelligence for many, many years. There were some generally experienced men, Gordon Gray and Bob Murphy [Robert D. Murphy]. General Maxwell Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor], of course, brought the military view very much into it. Later on, Frank Pace was appointed; he was a valuable member too, a former secretary of the Army [United States Army]. The executive secretary of that board had a rather lengthy experience in intelligence matters. His name was Patrick Coyne [J. Patrick Coyne]. He had been with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations] and then had been in intelligence.

The board performed a very useful service. It was wise to have a board operating directly under the President, looking at our foreign intelligence operations. There had been a lot of freewheeling going on and practically no supervision. There were times, as we got into it, where we could see that in some instances in the foreign intelligence field, you had the feeling that you were in a ball park and a ball had been hit out to midway center left field, and the center fielder and the left fielder would both go for it and crash and the ball would fall to the ground. Other times—and some dramatic instances—a ball would be hit out to left center field and each would think that the other was going to get it and the ball would fall on the ground again.

So, in the time that I served on the board, my recollection is that we made something in the neighborhood of this remarkable number of important suggestions—I think the number

of recommendations we made exceeded two hundred. I have in my mind some 205 recommendations and perhaps maybe 194 or 195 of them were accepted by President Kennedy or President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] and put into operation. It caused a jacking up of the whole intelligence operation. We were meeting, my recollection is, every month that first year. We would have the director of central intelligence in; we would have the head of defense intelligence, and in some circumstances Army, Navy, and Air intelligence—each kept their own intelligence operations. It was a recommendation of this board that we have an office of defense intelligence so there should be some centralizing of that information. And the intelligence product was substantially improved.

Now, about two years after the board was formed, Jim Killian of MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] had a very serious operation, and it went badly; and he was in for a long convalescence. He wrote President Kennedy and said that he would have to resign from the board. And I think President Kennedy—I think I later learned—President Kennedy talked with him and then talked with the various members of the board and it was their suggestion that I be appointed to replace Dr. Killian, which he did at once and made the public announcement. Then I served as chairman of the board maybe the last year of the Kennedy administration then possibly three or four years of the Johnson administration.

HACKMAN: The *New York Times* didn't like the appointment, do you remember? And I remember Killian writing a letter saying that it had been the recommendation of the board that you were appointed. Do you remember that at all?

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CLIFFORD: I had forgotten that and I do remember it now. I don't know whether it was an—maybe it was an editorial in the *New York Times*.

HACKMAN: It was an editorial.

CLIFFORD: Was it? I didn't know whether it was a letter or an editorial, and they had raised some question about it. And then I do remember Killian immediately responding and saying that it was the recommendation of the board. I have now forgotten.... Why were they opposed to it?

HACKMAN: They thought that you had just been too involved in Democratic politics.

CLIFFORD: Oh, I see.

HACKMAN: That's not a completely logical objection but that was their objection.

CLIFFORD: But I might say that I found the experience a very gratifying one and the board continued to render a valuable service.

HACKMAN: This is a letter from yourself to the President on May 9, before the board actually had its first meeting and before you were officially named, in which you had given him your early thoughts on the problems the overwhelming concern on your part seems to be that the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] had lacked political sophistication in anticipating reactions of failed operations and visibility of failed operations. Was this report, do you recall, in response to a specific request from the President or is this something, because of a conversation, you felt you should put before him? Can you recall discussing that at all with him?

CLIFFORD: It shows what tricks your memory can play on you. Well, it's thirteen or fourteen years ago, but I would assume from the language in the accompanying letter that very likely he probably, at the time he talked with me, suggested that I might come up with any suggestions that I had. He spoke with me originally about the fact that I had been active in the writing of the original legislation, back in '47, that had led to the unification of the services and the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency. And that was one of the reasons that he asked that I go on the board, because I had been in at the birth of the Central Intelligence Agency and he thought that would be a valuable addition to the board. So I am assuming that very likely he said, as maybe he did to others, he said, "I'd like to have your views." So I had forgotten preparation of this and I see that I did prepare for him perhaps a six-page memorandum on different points that existed, commenting on conditions that existed in the intelligence field, and very likely it contains general suggestions for improvement and so forth. I will not take the time to read the memorandum.

HACKMAN: Somewhere, I have seen a reference which implied that you did a separate

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report on the Bay of Pigs. I don't know that to be so. Was there something that you did on your own or at his request on the Bay of Pigs? Because I have never found that substantiated. That was a suggestion that you did something separate.

CLIFFORD: Well, I have an indistinct recollection of his talking with me about it and I don't believe that I did any separate report on it. I would assume that the intelligence board must have given some attention to it. And also, I have some recollection that Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] was instructed to look into that closely.

HACKMAN: Robert Kennedy, Maxwell Taylor, and Allen Dulles [Allen W. Dulles] collaborated on a report which was sort of the official report after the fact, which was much discussed.

CLIFFORD: Yes. Well, I had some recollection in that regard. It's entirely possible that if we talked about it—and maybe I'd gotten some additional information because the board looked into it, but I'm quite sure that I did not conduct any personal independent investigation.

HACKMAN: I find a couple of separate meetings in July and October of '61 in which only yourself and James Killian meet with President Kennedy. Can you recall any reason why the two of you would have met separately from the rest of the board? Was there something particular that the two of you were working on separate from the board?

CLIFFORD: No. It was rather interesting, and I'm not sure that I ever quite understood it. When the time came for Dr. Killian to meet with President Kennedy—either President Kennedy might want to talk with him about something—he would always call me and ask me to go with him. I was never quite sure why that existed. Perhaps he thought that because President Kennedy and I had had a previous personal experience that it would go better, that maybe that added something to it. But it happened on more than just two occasions; there were a number of other that that happened that maybe there was some informal meeting. But I was glad to do it, and he seemed to want it that way and I was perfectly agreeable to it.

HACKMAN: What were President Kennedy's continuing frustrations on the intelligence side, that you recall, as reflected in your conversations with him?

CLIFFORD: What he hoped we would get would be advance information on the possibility of important developments abroad. If there was going to be a coup someplace, he hoped that we might be able to give him some information in that regard. If there was likely to be a change of administration someplace, he would like to know that. He would like to know who possibly was preparing trouble for his neighbor. He placed substantial emphasis upon getting information, although perhaps not exact, that would give him some indication of what lay ahead in the future. This is, of course, a very difficult part of intelligence.

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I do remember, of course—and I'm sure it's a phase of the matter that you all will go into very, very carefully—the whole situation regarding the confrontation with Khrushchev [Nikita S. Khrushchev] about Cuba and the presence of offensive missiles in Cuba. And I know, for instance, we went back over all of the intelligence we had after that incident was over to ascertain whether better information could have been given President Kennedy regarding the confrontation that came later.

HACKMAN: Any problems that you recall in watching the CIA and then the government as a whole in terms of getting information that the board needed through Coyne and his staff, or were there roadblocks that had to...?

CLIFFORD: There were some. They didn't last very long. The greatest source of power in the whole federal government is the institution of the presidency. And if we found some reluctance on the part of any agency to produce information then we immediately got in touch with McGeorge Bundy. And McGeorge Bundy could then call from the White House and merely ask the question, "What seemed to be the difficulty?" That would very likely resolve it. There may have been one or two instances in which we weren't getting the degree of cooperation early, and we spoke to the President about it, and then he might personally pass word on, maybe through McGeorge Bundy. So, McGeorge Bundy might call the director of CIA and say, "The President has instructed me to inform you." And then the reason why it wasn't really necessary--there were a couple of places, a couple of times, that it came up that were useful--because all that gets through the intelligence community, it is called, within a very short space of time. We prepared for President Kennedy an executive order--I just now recall--that which was issued to everybody in the executive branch of government about the degree of cooperation that they were to give to this board which he was creating. And it really didn't leave any doubt in anybody's mind.

HACKMAN: I have either read or heard the generalization that the board was opposed to McCone [John A. McCone] becoming director of CIA. Is that a generalization that stands up? Does it reflect Killian's or your own views in conversations with the President? Or what do you recall in that regard?

CLIFFORD: I had known McCone; I considered him an able man. My recollection is that he had been chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and I had gotten to know him in that capacity. I knew him as a successful businessman and I knew him as a friend. I had no objection to McCone. I do recall having some kind of discussion with President Kennedy about the director of central intelligence. A number of names were discussed--McCone's being one of them. My recollection is that I thought McCone would be completely satisfactory. One time I had read someplace, somebody had stated quite definitively that President Kennedy had asked me to become director of central intelligence.

HACKMAN: I read that too.

CLIFFORD: That is incorrect; that never came up. I'm not sure it ever entered his mind,

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but if it did he never imparted it to me.

HACKMAN: Can you recall other members of the board arguing vociferously against the McCone appointment? Was that something that was discussed in the board?

CLIFFORD: I do not recall that. There were times during his tenure as Director of Central Intelligence that some members of the board thought that maybe he wasn't as cooperative as he might be. But, even though there might be a little foot dragging, we got anything we wanted because there was no way that you could prevent us from getting it.

HACKMAN: Are there other appointments in CIA, lower: Bob Amory [Robert Amory Jr.] left after Cuba, Bissell [Richard Mervin Bissell, Jr.]; others that you can recall the board getting at all involved in or you as an individual member?

CLIFFORD: Not that I recall.

HACKMAN: Can you recall the board's concern with, or investigation of, leaks? There was—I will just mention one that I have heard was the most serious and that's the Hanson-Baldwin report on the United States knowledge of Russian missiles—the problem being that it gave away some of our intelligence capability. Can you remember the board tracking that down?

CLIFFORD: I do now remember that incident. I don't remember that the board tracked that one down. I assume it did because we were concerned about the whole question of confidentiality of intelligence information. And we gave a good deal of attention to it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember other instances that were regarded as serious?

CLIFFORD: Oh, I know. We went into one situation that was deeply disturbing. A top British intelligence official disappeared, and we later learned that he had been in British intelligence for a very long period of time—ten or fifteen years—and that all during that time he had been a Soviet agent. And he disappeared and then showed up in Moscow.

HACKMAN: This is the Kim Philby [Harold Adrian Russell Philby] thing?

CLIFFORD: Could possibly be. I don't recall the name. But we went through a very difficult time after that because some of our top agents in different parts of the world disappeared and were never heard of again. This is a very, very rough business. And you just stop a minute and think about what those fellows went through before they were finally done in, in order to get every last bit of information out of them. It's a cruel, cruel business. We had no alternative then, I assume we have no

alternative now. We have to try to be kept informed as to what's going on in the world. It's a very imperfect world. I

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didn't like it. I didn't like it then; I don't like it now. But I know of no alternative. We have to be kept informed.

HACKMAN: Was it apparent that Robert Kennedy was deeply involved in the intelligence side as a watchdog or in another capacity during the administration? Where did you sort of come across his involvement, or did you, in the intelligence side?

CLIFFORD: I have a clear recollection that he was involved in a study of the intelligence failure of the Bay of Pigs incident. Also, I have some recollection that from time to time, when we met with President Kennedy, that Bobby Kennedy was there—maybe on two or three occasions. And I'd just assumed that it was because we were going to discuss something important and he was a close advisor to President Kennedy and that was the reason he was there. I have an indistinct recollection that he was interested in intelligence but I don't know anything more than that. He never appeared before our board at any time. It was more of an informal capacity. Maybe it was some private interest that he had. I was never quite sure nor, of course, would I ask.

HACKMAN: But you don't remember...? Well, on the paramilitary side, one of the suggestions in your initial memo to President Kennedy was that the board should keep a close watch, or do an additional evaluation, of Maxwell Taylor's report on paramilitary operations and that whole counterinsurgency effort is something which people have said Robert Kennedy was very interested in and active in. Can you remember running across him on that side?

CLIFFORD: I do now recall that, and I recall hearing it, and I'm sure that it came up for discussion. But I, again, don't remember anything specific.

HACKMAN: On a slight tangent, can you recall ever talking with President Kennedy at the time or later about the missile gap issue in the '60 campaign? It was an important issue in the campaign and then sort of faded away quickly. Is that something that your group got involved in or that you recall discussing with him?

CLIFFORD: I can recall it but I don't remember specifically. It was an issue in the campaign. Later, it is said that the issue was a false issue. I never was able to accept that; I think it was not a false issue. I think that the information—the extent of the information that we had—would demonstrate that there was “a missile gap of some proportions” and that it was perfectly appropriate for him to make that

presentation. Later on, the intelligence board gave a substantial amount of time to our relationship to the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the respective military and strategic strengths.

HACKMAN: Do you recall any involvement of Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] on the intelligence side at all?

CLIFFORD: I don't remember him in that at all.

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HACKMAN: All right. Let me just skip around a bit then. There is an off-the-record meeting of October 30, 1962, which would have been during and right at the conclusion of the Missile Crisis, of yourself and Phil Graham [Philip L. Graham] with the President. Do you recall that at all what that would have been about?

CLIFFORD: Can you give me the date?

HACKMAN: It's October 30 of '62. It's a late afternoon meeting of over a half hour, off-the-record meeting with Clifford and Graham.

CLIFFORD: My guess is that that had to do with the establishment of the Communications Satellite Corporation. President Kennedy selected Phil Graham to be chairman of what became known as Comsat. And after selecting Philip Graham as chairman, he called me over and asked if I would generally keep an eye on the operation, and that he was going to tell Phil Graham that I was an advisor to President Kennedy and he would like for me to be an advisor to Philip Graham. I might say it was a very wise decision because I think President Kennedy did not know it at the time, but already an emotional erosion had started within Philip Graham that became progressively worse. And as the matter progressed, and as I would see President Kennedy from time to time, I would let him know how it was going.

Then I became concerned about the manner in which it was going because Philip Graham, one evening early in Comsat, had a dinner at the F Street Club for the board of Comsat. And I was invited. In an after dinner speech, after discussing Comsat, [Graham] launched into a violent attack on Jews. And there were four Jews on the board, as I remember, one of whom was Sidney Weinberg [Sidney James Weinberg] of Goldman, Sachs [Goldman, Sachs, and Company]. And Sidney was outraged by it and it was all I could do for the next week to keep Sidney from resigning. And I just put it on the basis that Philip had had too much to drink and that he didn't mean it and one thing and another, and finally Sidney calmed down. Some of the others were also outraged by it. But it was a warning of what lay ahead.

And one time, I have some recollection that Philip was going to Europe on Comsat business, and rather important business, and I went with him. And the manic phase of his ailment was becoming obvious. And I kept President Kennedy informed of it. It became very, very serious. And I have some recollection that it was my task to get a resignation from

Phil. And I think that at the time—I can't be positive of this—I think he had been placed in an institution, but we had to get a resignation. I'm indistinct about that.

But my guess is this was at the beginning of that operation and that President Kennedy called Graham and me over to talk about Comsat. That's what it looks like.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any persuasion being needed or just discussing this with President Kennedy as to how Comsat should be set up, whether it should involve the private sector or whether it should be entirely public?

CLIFFORD: I think those decisions had pretty well been made and I was to be his eyes and

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ears as the whole plan evolved. I was not a member of the board but I attended the meetings whenever it seemed appropriate and had had a number of private meetings with Philip Graham. Philip Graham did not resent my presence, he welcomed it. And from time to time he had ideas about changes that ought to take place and he would pass those ideas on to me in the hope that I in turn would forward them to President Kennedy.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any problems within the administration in keeping everyone on board on that issue? Was there sniping going on, that you recall, because people disagreed with the way Comsat was going to be organized?

CLIFFORD: Not that I can recall. I might add parenthetically, it serves as a model for future efforts in that same regard. Our entire economy is becoming so complex that in the future we are going to have to have more corporations of that type. For instance, a quick illustration, the SST [supersonic transport] cannot be financed by private industry. The government does not want to go into the plane-building business. So whenever the SST comes—and it will—I believe that we're going to have to develop a type of corporation along the line of Comsat. There is another one that's come along lately called Amtrak which is somewhat similar. The government is going to have to get into these great developments which are beyond the ability of private industry to finance and plan.

HACKMAN: One other matter that I believe you were involved in a discussion of, was the Fred Korth resignation. Can you remember that? It was back and forth in the administration on what should happen there.

CLIFFORD: Yes. I had not recalled that either but President Kennedy talked with me about that. I do not recall what it was, but it had a certain sensitivity about it. And we discussed it, I'm sure, on more than one

occasion. Then I can't recall whether I ever talked to Korth about it. I knew Fred Korth. But it seems to me that there was some minor question of an ethnical nature; possibly entertaining potential clients on the President's ship or something like that. And I may have talked to Fred Korth about it. But, as I remember, why he resigned and the matter was disposed of quietly.

HACKMAN: Right. Well, I had an explanation that—and I don't know whether I had come by this on your microfilm or from another source—you felt he should not resign. Robert Kennedy felt strongly that he should resign. I believe O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and President Johnson were consulted and they both agreed with you, that Korth should not...

CLIFFORD: President Kennedy?

HACKMAN: No. President Johnson, I had heard. I don't know whether because of the Texas aspect or whatever. Does any of that ring a bell?

CLIFFORD: It does now. I do remember there was quite a cry. Now, it brings it back that

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maybe he was using the *Sequoia* to entertain business associates, maybe from Texas.

HACKMAN: From the bank in Texas.

CLIFFORD: Yes. And it was felt that maybe that wasn't a very wise plan. I have some recollection of going to him and sitting down and talking to him. And I think it resulted in his resignation.

HACKMAN: Do you remember a discussion with Robert Kennedy on that at all or not?

CLIFFORD: No. I sat in so many of those meetings with President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy—many of which I know would not be on the record, you see—that I don't recall that one. I remember sitting in one meeting one time, my recollection is, with President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy about Dean Landis [James M. Landis].

HACKMAN: I was going to ask you about that. What do you recall about that case, the resignation?

CLIFFORD: Well, I remember the position that I took on it. I think it was found out, after a while, there was a period of three or four years in which he had had a substantial income and paid no federal income tax. And he had been lawyer to Ambassador Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] for years. And—I do not know this—I had the feeling that President Kennedy was under substantial pressure to keep him on. No, I think he was in private practice at that time. But the question was whether or not a formal charge should be made against him. I took a definite position. I knew Dean Landis; he had been an excellent lawyer; we had been associates, not friends. I had never had any trouble with him. I remember taking as strong a position that I could that President Kennedy had no alternative about it, he had to proceed. That at some stage it would come out that he had not and it would be the ugliest kind of black eye for the administration. Here is a man who was a lawyer, in the first place, sworn to uphold the law; a man who had held important public office and should have a stronger concept of public responsibility than the ordinary laymen. I think that part of the explanation which would seem to be inextricable was, I think, there was a drinking problem. But in any event, President Kennedy made that decision and made the right decision. And then I think Mr. Landis took a plea in the case.

HACKMAN: Yesterday, you talked about Robert Kennedy coming to you after the assassination and looking for your advice but that the relationship prior to that had not been that close or warm a one. Can you remember particular policies or events in which the two of you really clashed in your advice to the President? Or personally between the two of you?

CLIFFORD: I think I cannot. And the reason I cannot is because it was a customary method of approach on President Kennedy's part. If it had happened only once or

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twice or three times, I might remember them, but it happened a lot, and as a result, I cannot recall any one particular item.

HACKMAN: You knew Lyndon Johnson to some degree before the administration. What can you recall in your conversations with then Vice President Johnson, during that administration, about his role in the administration, his feeling about his role, his discontent with his role, things like that?

CLIFFORD: I was not close to him. I would see him once in a while. We'd have something come up and even in those early days he might have some important problem come up and he would call me and call Abe Fortas [Abraham Fortas] and we would go over and have dinner and spend the evening with him and talk it out. I think he was really quite badly used in that period. It was difficult for him to get access to President Kennedy. It's that small cabal around President Kennedy in the White House that wanted to keep "outsiders" out. And they didn't like Vice President Johnson. I gave some of the reasons yesterday as to why they didn't. He is a proud man. He wasn't

given anything to do—two or three minor missions abroad—he wasn't consulted, his opinion wasn't asked, I don't even know if he attended cabinet meetings.

The fact is he was pretty much the fifth wheel on that particular automobile and was exceedingly sensitive about it. He had had a very important position as majority leader in the Senate in which he had done superbly well and then to be demoted to the point where he amounted almost to a cipher. And the reaction of those about President Kennedy to President Johnson's accession to the White House was an unfortunate chapter; they made it very difficult. They treated him as though he were an imposter of some kind, as though he were a trespasser, and he already was pretty sensitive about it. It was an unhappy period for him. The fact is there has never, in my knowledge, ever been a close relationship between a president and a vice president. This was even more distant than most.

HACKMAN: We're about to run out of tape on this side and I've probably got about an hour of questions left. I know I will be back on this Nancy Hanks thing in January.

CLIFFORD: I'll be here the whole month of January.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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