

Malcolm Kilduff Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 12/09/1965
Administrative Information

Creator: Malcolm Kilduff
Interviewer: Ronald J. Grele
Date of Interview: December 9, 1965
Place of Interview: Washington D.C.
Length: 18 pages

Biographical Note

Malcolm Kilduff (1927-2003) was the Assistant Press Secretary from 1962 to 1965 and the Information Director of Hubert Humphrey for President. This interview focuses on the White House's relationship with the press during the Kennedy administration among other topics.

Access

Open

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed March 1, 2000, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

Malcolm Kilduff, recorded interview by Ronald J. Grele, December 9, 1965, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (NARA)
JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of
MALCOLM KILDUFF

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Malcolm Kilduff, of Beattyville, Kentucky, do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of personal interviews conducted on December 9, 1965 and March 15, 1976 in Washington, DC, and prepared for deposit in the John F. Kennedy Library. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:


(1) The transcript shall be made available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the John F. Kennedy Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be made available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

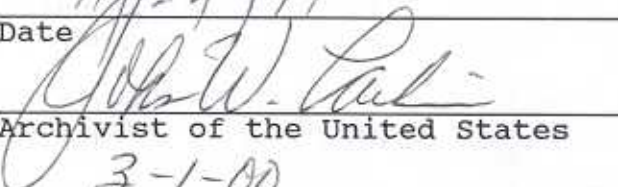
(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library.



Donor

11/29/99

Date



Archivist of the United States

3-1-00

Date

Malcolm Kilduff– JFK #1

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Meeting John F. Kennedy [JFK] for the first time
2	Objections by State Departments members to JFK's handling of foreign affairs
3	Blame for the Bay of Pigs incident
4	Preparing JFK for a trip to France and England
6	Appointment as Assistant Press Secretary
7	The White House's press relations
8	JFK's friendships with reporters
10	JFK's meetings with Nikita Khrushchev being kept from the press
11	Pierre Salinger's handling of the press
12	Press functions during Cuban Missile Crisis
13	White House staff during times of crisis
14	JFK's staff leaving the White House after the assassination
15	Reshuffling of White House staff after JFK's assassination
16	JFK's visit to Ireland
18	Differences between JFK's and Lyndon B. Johnson's handling of the press

Oral History Interview

with

MALCOLM KILDUFF

December 9, 1965
Washington DC

By Ronald J. Grele
(also present: Joseph O'Connor)

For the Oral History Project
of the John F. Kennedy Library

GRELE: Mr. Kilduff, do you recall when you first met John F. Kennedy?

KILDUFF: The first occasion I had to meet John F. Kennedy was the governors' reception committee the day before the inauguration, the day of the great snowstorm, when I was assigned as the inaugural committee aide. The then governor--the now governor of Massachusetts, John Volpe--I was in his box. It was just merely a shaking of hands. I didn't meet him again until after he'd become president, and he was holding his press conferences in the State Department. I then was in the Bureau of Public Affairs and had occasion, on days of press conferences, to come down into the back room behind the auditorium to feed him last-minute briefing papers prior to press conferences.

GRELE: When you worked in the State Department in the Bureau of Public Affairs, do you recall any of the opinions held by members of the State Department or of the bureau of Kennedy in his conduct of foreign policy in the early days of the administration?

KILDUFF: In that respect, yes. I would say that the more bureaucratic members of the department somewhat objected to his handling of foreign affairs on his own. But then you have to remember that one of the reasons for the objections is that President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower], in my opinion, did not handle foreign policy on his own. Foreign policy was handled almost entirely by John Foster Dulles, and then by Christian Herter. So you had this great contrast: a man who had great imagination in the field of foreign affairs on the one hand, and on the other hand, with Eisenhower, a man who just completely delegated the responsibility in the field of foreign affairs to someone else.

GRELE: Do you recall who specifically objected to President Kennedy's handling of . . .

KILDUFF: It was more at the middle level than it was at the higher level because certainly Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk], Chester Bowles, and the people who were on the top team of the president in the State Department knew exactly how he would handle foreign affairs, so it got at your mid- and upper-class foreign service officer who believed he knew more about foreign affairs than the president did. And I hasten to add that I spent seventeen years in that department. I think I'm in a fairly good position to judge.

GRELE: You worked in the State Department before you served on the inaugural committee?

KILDUFF: For seventeen years.

GRELE: How did you come to serve on the inaugural committee for Governor Volpe?

KILDUFF: John Morton, who is my partner here, was running the committee for his father-in-law, who is John Snyder, former secretary of the Treasury, who was chairman of that. John and I have known each other for a number of years, and he asked me if I would be one of the aides and assistant. They assigned me to Volpe, who was the Republican governor of the president's home state--somebody made very sure that he was not short-shifted in this inaugural process.

GRELE: You say you briefed the president before his press conferences?

KILDUFF: No, I brought briefing papers down as special assistant to the then assistant secretary of state for public affairs, Roger Tubby.

GRELE: Do you recall anything interesting or significant about the press conferences during periods of crisis such as the Bay of Pigs?

KILDUFF: After the Bay of Pigs there was a briefing at the State Department for certain editors and publishers, and it was all supposed to have been on background. In

the morning Secretary Rusk had addressed the group and had, when asked on a background basis, who he thought was to blame for the failure of the Bay of Pigs, said that he thought it was an intelligence failure. That afternoon Allen Dulles--I think about two o'clock or three o'clock--addressed the group and blamed it on a failure of planning by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Well, Don May [Donald H. May] of the United Press [United Press International] wrote a story based on this. As a matter of fact those two briefings were supposed to have been off the record. Well, Don May wrote a story and named both Rusk and Allen Dulles. The president came over about four or four-thirty to address this same group. Just as he came in I gave him a copy of the UPI story. It was very seldom that, and of course Pierre Salinger was much closer to the president, certainly, than I was. As I say, Pierre was much closer to him, so I never really saw him angry, but I did see him angry that day because he thought Dulles' statement, Allen Dulles' statement, was absolutely incorrect, and he went to the phone before he even went in there. There must have been a chewing session inside that room--nobody else was in there--to top all, from what he said to me.

GRELE: Calling Allen Dulles?

KILDUFF: Yes, calling Allen Dulles because he obviously felt that Allen Dulles had tried to shift the blame where it didn't belong.

GRELE: Did he ever say anything to Ed May or to the reporter?

KILDUFF: To Don May.

GRELE: To Don May.

KILDUFF: No.

GRELE: Shortly after that there was a great discussion about "managed news" during the Cuban missile crisis. Were you at all involved in any of this discussion at the State Department?

KILDUFF: Well, of course I was in the White House at the time and actually lived at the White House there for the whole period of the Cuban missile crisis. I was in Chicago when we returned prematurely from that trip.

GRELE: Not the missile crisis--I'm sorry--the Bay of Pigs.

KILDUFF: No, I was in the State Department then. No.

GRELE: No one ever questioned you about the "managed news?"

KILDUFF: No, the "managed news" charge didn't really come up until the year later when

Sylvester [Arthur Sylvester] made his famous statement. That was in connection with the missile crisis in October of 1962. That's when that came up.

GRELE: We'll get to that a little later. You joined the White House staff as assistant press secretary in May of 1962?

KILDUFF: That's true. I had been on detail to the White House, however, in May of 1961 and did the advance work for President Kennedy on his trip to Paris and England.

GRELE: What exactly did this involve?

KILDUFF: The same as any other advance work: just making preparatory arrangements--routes, times, press credentials--mainly on the press side.

GRELE: Why did they call you in?

KILDUFF: That was rather a peculiar thing because one of the things I had to do as special assistant to the assistant secretary of state for public affairs was to maintain a kind of liaison and channel to the White House on press releases and public affairs matters and got to know Pierre a little bit through that. And then when Pierre wanted somebody who had a background in foreign affairs to do advance work for the White House in Paris, he asked me if I would like to do it. I remember I went over there for three days and ended up spending five weeks. Then I got yanked off. I went with one set of clothes. I got yanked off and ended up in Oslo and Geneva and back to Paris

GRELE: Why Oslo and Geneva?

KILDUFF: I had to go to the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] meeting and then the Laos meeting.

GRELE: Do you recall anything about the Laos meeting?

KILDUFF: No, not particularly, because, you see, the president didn't go to that. This was just Rusk. I remember I was asked to put my State Department hat back on and go charging off out to Paris.

GRELE: Would you say at that time that it was evident that the administration was seeking some kind of a *detente* with Khrushchev [Nikita Khrushchev] on the question of Laos?

KILDUFF: Oh, no question about that. That was one of the reasons for the Vienna

meeting.

GRELE: One of the reasons was to seek a *detente* rather than just get to know each other?

KILDUFF: Yes, I would say so.

GRELE: Were you at Vienna?

KILDUFF: No, I was not. I went directly from Paris to London.

GRELE: How would you say President Kennedy handled himself with de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle]?

KILDUFF: Well, you've got to consider de Gaulle. De Gaulle is an egotist of the highest order, and I don't think he was about to be "handled" by this young American upstart. We ran across that just in making the advance arrangements.

GRELE: How?

KILDUFF: Well, anything we would suggest they would automatically dismiss.

GRELE: Anything specific?

KILDUFF: The president wanted to stay at the embassy, for instance. Well, the French absolutely insisted that he stay at the Quai D'Orsay. That's not the best thing in the world for security purposes. The president can't very well talk freely in a foreign building. He can talk well in his own embassy, but he can't talk freely in a foreign building.

GRELE: Why? Why would they want him to?

KILDUFF: It was a matter of prestige.

GRELE: Who finally won out in all these negotiations? The French?

KILDUFF: Most of the time the French. You talk to the newsmen. The restrictions on newsmen as to where they could go and how many places they could cover were unbelievable.

GRELE: Yet there was a great deal of press handling of that trip?

KILDUFF: Oh yes. Certainly. Of course there was. You had hundreds of newsmen there.

There had to be. There were some newsmen who traveled clear from Washington and only got to view on or two of the ceremonies.

GRELE: Did the president ever comment on this state of affairs?

KILDUFF: Not that I know of.

GRELE: How did you come on the White House staff?

KILDUFF: There was a man by the name of Jay Gildner, who was assistant press secretary who was actually a USIA [United States Information Agency] employee. It was decided, or he decided--I never did know which--that it would be best if he returned to USIA. That was in May of 1962. Pierre having to refill the staff, I got word while I was in Athens at another NATO meeting a year later with Secretary Rusk, from Bob Manning [Robert Manning], who by that time had become assistant secretary of state, that Pierre wanted me to join the staff. Pierre at that time was in Moscow, so when Pierre got back the first week in May I went over and talked to him about it. He took me in and introduced me to the president--reintroduced me to the president. The president had seen me, but it took him a while to realize my name wasn't MacDuff, rather than Kilduff.

GRELE: What was your function in this position?

KILDUFF: Initially the function was designed to do little more than handle foreign correspondent. That was the concept of the job initially, but it was a fallacious concept on the part of Pierre, I'm afraid. You can't go in and sit down in that office and have an American correspondent walk in and say, "What's your nationality?" and then refuse to talk to him if he's not French or Japanese. So within a period of forty-eight hours I immediately became just a general assistant press secretary, which job, as I see it, is to back up the press secretary and to fill in for the press secretary when he's away.

GRELE: How do you feel that Pierre Salinger handled his job?

KILDUFF: Very well. The other day at a Rotary Club luncheon I was asked what my general impressions were of the job of press secretary and there is no winning in that job. The best you can do is fifty percent, and you can scarcely do that because if you serve the--especially under the present administration--if you serve the president too well, then the press grumbles. If you serve the press too well, then the president grumbles. I think that is a little more so now under President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] than it was under President Kennedy. Very frankly, I think President Kennedy understood the legitimate needs of the White House press corps a little bit better than President Johnson does.

GRELE: How would you describe President Kennedy's handling of the press, other than understanding their needs?

KILDUFF: Since he was so interested in journalism--he had such a tremendous interest in the press--I would describe them as exceptionally good if I needed an adjective, if I had to do it.

GRELE: Can you describe the technique of press relations at the White House at that time? Was there an established hierarchy among the White House press men that the president worked through or was this thrown open to everyone?

KILDUFF: No. It was thrown open to everyone.

GRELE: This wasn't changed then from the Eisenhower administration, was it?

KILDUFF: No. You've always heard of the celebrities in the press corps like Merriman Smith and people like that. There was no. . . . We didn't operate through any hierarchy. If they did, if Jim Haggerty [James Haggerty] used that as a method of working with the press, I didn't know about it. One very interesting fact--this is just a thought that comes off the top of my head--I was in the Bureau of Public Affairs under Eisenhower when Andrew Burding was assistant secretary of state and we used to prepare foreign affairs briefing books for Eisenhower. They would contain probable questions which he would get, then the facts, and then the answer he should give. In other words, he would be told how to answer the question. Most of the time he used those answers. Of course, since we didn't have any better guidelines when President Kennedy came in, we did the same thing. President Kennedy didn't think too much of that old system. He just wanted to know what we thought the probable question would be and what the facts were and he'd make up his own mind, and we struck from the briefing paper the "suggested" answer.

GRELE: Who would suggest the answers?

KILDUFF: The various departments. They used to have staff meetings in Herter's office the day before the press conference and then turn the foreign affairs briefing book over to Jim Haggerty.

GRELE: How did President Kennedy prepare himself for the press conferences?

KILDUFF: If there were any subjects on which he didn't feel he had adequate information then he would read the paper. Most of the information, however, was in the form of statistics.

GRELE: Was that his choice or your choice?

KILDUFF: No, after a couple of months you could tell what it was he needed.

GRELE: Was there ever any comment about his friends in the press? Did they get

special handling?

KILDUFF: Oh, yes. Like Charlie Bartlett [Charles L. Bartlett] and Joe Alsop [Joseph W. Alsop], Ben Bradlee [Benjamin Bradlee]. Yes, some of the regular press corps would complain about that a bit.

GRELE: Did they get special handling?

KILDUFF: Well, they were friends. In other words, you know, he'd had dinner with them. I have plenty of friends in the press corps. I certainly wouldn't say because you're a newsman you can't be my friend anymore. I don't think that Ben Bradlee or Charlie Bartlett or Joe Alsop, Joe Kraft, or Ted White [Theodore E. White], I don't think they got any exclusive stories, or Phil Graham [Philip A. Graham]. No, I really don't. I do know of one instance which I don't want to mention where something was going to happen in about a two-hour period. At dinner one night President Kennedy mentioned it, and one paper in the country got the jump on one of the biggest stories of the decade.

GRELE: What story was that?

KILDUFF: The Francis Gary Powers story. The release of it. His release. There was only one paper in the country that had it on the street that morning.

GRELE: You don't want to tell us the paper?

KILDUFF: You can find out for yourself. It's a morning Washington paper. [Laughter] That was mentioned at the party and Phil jumped on it.

GRELE: There could be a kind of problem, I imagine, with friends who are in the press who do hear things at parties. Did anyone ever abuse his friendship?

KILDUFF: Not that I know of.

GRELE: Do you recall the origin or history of any of the Kennedy innovations in handling press relations such as the opening up of the staff to reporters?

KILDUFF: No, because I wasn't in the White House at that time when all that happened. I was with Pierre one day over in the State Department because I was in the State Department when we were selecting the site, the best site for a press conference, and we ended up in the State Department auditorium, which I still think is the best site for a press conference, far better than the East Room which President Johnson now uses.

GRELE: You weren't there when the debates over the admission of television cameras to the press conferences occurred?

KILDUFF: No. Pierre always wanted that. I don't know who opposed it, but I know Pierre always wanted it. You mean live?

GRELE: Yes.

KILDUFF: I'm pretty sure the president himself wanted it. I think some of the other members of the "palace guard" were a little bit reticent about opening it up to live coverage.

GRELE: Like who?

KILDUFF: I don't know. That's something that was told to me at a later date and never came to me specifically.

GRELE: Do you recall any specific reporters who did either an exceptional job under these new conditions or an exceptionally poor job under these new conditions?

KILDUFF: No, I don't think that they conducted themselves any differently than they did with Eisenhower. There were some of them who would prefer to ham it up because they knew they were going to be on television, but they did that under Eisenhower because they were on film.

GRELE: What were the relations among the Kennedy staff when you first arrived at the White House?

KILDUFF: Very, very close knit.

GRELE: The whole of the staff?

KILDUFF: Yes.

GRELE: One always hears about tensions or conflicts between various elements of the staff. I was wondering. . . .

KILDUFF: There were certainly differences of opinions.

GRELE: Between whom?

KILDUFF: Oh, between Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and Pierre. Kenny, for instance--well, I told him this--I don't think really had as good an understanding of the legitimate needs of the press as Pierre did. And, as Pierre would wish to surface something or bring something out, Kenny, for some reason or other, would not wish to bring it out. Conflicts would develop there.

GRELE: Were there any specific instances that you can recall?

KILDUFF: No, not that I can. . . . It was just kind of on a day-to-day basis. Just a running battle. But it never got bitter. Don't get me wrong. It never reduced itself down to anything that was personally bitter. It was just one of these things where Pierre felt that not to release, that you have to have a good reason not to release a piece of information, whereas Kenny felt that you had to have a real good reason to release a piece of information. It was the other side of the coin. It was rather strange.

GRELE: What was the president's position in this?

KILDUFF: Pierre usually would win out on a situation like that. As I said before, I think President Kennedy had a better understanding, certainly than President Eisenhower--God knows, better than Eisenhower--of the legitimate needs of the press corps. What is information and what it is you can release and what it is you can't release and what it is you should and should not release. And even better than President Johnson.

GRELE: There were stories, of course, that were never released such as the--well, they were released much later--the early negotiations of the Kennedy-Khrushchev correspondence which were carried on privately for a number of years, I believe.

KILDUFF: Well, of course, this goes to a very basic, and the president felt this way--this is very basic--and that is that two heads of state, especially when they are opposed to each other, must have the right to communicate with each other without having it splattered all over the front page of the *New York Times* every time they say hello. It's only through such a private exchange of correspondence that you can accomplish anything. That's my opinion, and I know that was President Kennedy's opinion. It's Rusk's opinion. Rusk will say that today. After all, he communicates with Gromyko [Andrei Gromyko] and Foy Kohler, our ambassador to Russia, talks to Gromyko all the time. He reports back to Rusk. If you're going to accomplish anything, for heaven's sakes, if you're going to make it public, then the only thing you're doing is engaging in an exchange of polemics day after day after day, then you accomplish nothing.

GRELE: This does bring up the question, though, of handling the news: where to draw the line.

KILDUFF: Let's take the instance we were just talking about. I think that there you're talking about something which affects national security. I think that you have to take a very, very hard look at the release of any piece of information which affects national security.

GRELE: Who made this decision finally?

KILDUFF: On release of letters like that it would be the president himself. Usually on the recommendation of Bundy [McGeorge Bundy] or Rusk.

GRELE: Occasionally one hears of Pierre Salinger's handling of the press in a jovial kind of frame of reference that he bumbled or was constantly in hot water. Did you find this to be true?

KILDUFF: No, I didn't. Pierre would sometimes go off, would not anticipate a question and then try to handle it when it came up, I'm afraid, where he should have checked back, checked back with the interested agency, checked back with the president. I saw him do that a couple of times. I can't even recall the exact instances. Usually if Pierre was joking it was a good reason.

GRELE: Do you recall any of the reactions of the newspapermen to various innovations at the White House. I've heard from one of them, refer to Pierre's insurance company or insurance office when they broke up the room into small compartments. Do you recall any of that? Supposedly they cleaned out the room--the press rooms--and threw the spittoons out.

KILDUFF: Oh, yes. No, that happened before I got there. As a matter of fact that's happened again. The room has been redesigned again, and I worked on that. That's the Kilduff Memorial Pressroom now. [Laughter] No, Pierre was just trying to find space there for the regulars. In past years, there were only about ten people who regularly covered the White House, so they each had great big desks. They used to sit there and play gin rummy all day long or poker. Then when Pierre came in it started to get more coverage. Well, a lot of the newsmen said, "Look, I cover here every day just like so-and-so does, so why shouldn't I have a place?" So they redesigned and made the pressroom into a series of cubicles. People could have a typewriter and a telephone, could speak with some degree of privacy without being heard.

GRELE: I've been told that the telephone system at the White House was all IBM'd or automated so that the press secretary could reach reporters at any time very effectively. Do you recall?

KILDUFF: That's not exactly true. The only thing we had was a call list. We would have to sit down and call them like anybody else.

GRELE: Dial system?

KILDUFF: Yes, dial system. I had a system put in at one time in '62 in which you just spun a dial and when you got to the reporter's name, you pushed a button and

it automatically dialed the phone, but we only had one of those units so it really didn't do too much good.

GRELE: Do you recall the press functions during times of crisis like the Cuban missile crisis which we didn't really get into yet? How did the White House handle the press during these times of crisis?

KILDUFF: During the Cuban missile crisis, for instance, either Pierre, Andy Hatcher [Andrew Hatcher], or myself were there twenty-four hours a day for that whole eight-day, nine, ten-day period.

GRELE: Answering any questions?

KILDUFF: Any that we could get hold of.

GRELE: Was there a policy line established from the White House as to what the answers would be? Was there a line handed down from the president or the secretary of state as to what would be told the press during these times of crisis?

KILDUFF: No, just that general guidelines on matters of movements of military troops-- matters of that nature--they were shifted over to the Department of Defense to handle. The only thing that was handled out of the White House press office, generally, was where the president himself was involved such as in his communications with Khrushchev. That's about all, but you never knew when the president was going to get involved; therefore we had to man the office twenty-four hours a day.

GRELE: Were you at all involved in the debates over the policies?

KILDUFF: No, I was not. Pierre was, as a member of the executive committee of the National Security Council. No, I was not because necessarily the press secretary would be, not the assistant.

GRELE: Did Pierre tell you anything about the meetings?

KILDUFF: He'd always fill me in.

GRELE: Did he tell you who took what sides?

KILDUFF: No.

GRELE: During the Berlin crisis when the president had to go on television. . . .

KILDUFF: That was in '61. I wasn't there then.

GRELE: What about the March on Washington? Was that treated as a crisis?

KILDUFF: No.

GRELE: No?

KILDUFF: You mean the civil rights march? No.

GRELE: They didn't expect any trouble.

KILDUFF: No, that was pretty well G-2'd out. There wasn't a great deal of concern over that.

GRELE: Do you recall anything interesting or significant about the White House staff during these times of crisis? How did they operate? Efficiently, effectively, or did they. . . .

KILDUFF: In my opinion they operated extremely efficiently. In times of a national crisis, of course, you had Bundy leading the staff work who is an outstanding individual of supreme intelligence, in my judgment. It was a well-run ship at times like that.

GRELE: What about the televising of the crisis at the University of Alabama, Governor Wallace [George Wallace] standing before the door? That whole incident, I believe, was televised. Were you in on the negotiations of that program?

KILDUFF: No.

GRELE: Who handled that

KILDUFF: I don't know. I have no idea.

GRELE: At one time there were some rather snide remarks and ugly rumors about some of the girls in the press office. Was there any truth to any of these rumors?

KILDUFF: The only thing I can say about the girls who worked in the press office, and I worked with them even from the time I was in the State Department, was that they were one of the hardest working groups of girls I had ever seen in my life. In other words, nine to five-thirty meant absolutely nothing to them. They would sit up on a plane in the middle of the night typing out press releases. I know of the snide remarks you're talking about and if they ever had an opportunity to misbehave in any way I don't know how

in the world they found the time. I wish I could.

GRELE: Was it normal for them to go on these trips, say to Bermuda or to Paris?

KILDUFF: We always took a couple of girls with us. Oh yes, we had to get press releases typed. I've seen Pierre's secretary and my secretary work until three or four o'clock in the morning typing.

GRELE: Could you recollect for us the last trip of the president to Dallas and fill in the tape that you've already made?

KILDUFF: I don't think there is anything in addition that I have to say other than the tape which I'll give you--which I'll get for you--if you don't already have it, but check and see if you do, because it's a pretty comprehensive tape on that trip.

GRELE: What was the White House like in the early days of President Johnson? What was it like for the Kennedy people?

KILDUFF: It was very comfortable in the early days. Then it became increasingly apparent that the Kennedy people were going to be leaving. One by one. Bill Moyers one time made a remark to me shortly after the assassination that the greatest compliments that could be paid to the president would be if all the Kennedy people would stay. I mentioned that to a reporter who had been around the White House a number of years. He said, "Yeah, Mac, that's what Harry Truman said in 1945. Within six months there wasn't a Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] person left.? So actually the president's record was a little bit better than Truman's.

GRELE: When did you leave the White House?

KILDUFF: In June. Actually, I had been planning long before that and before the assassination to set up the office that I have here now with John Horton and then the assassination came along and then the post-assassination period and then Pierre resigned. Then we had a campaign coming up. All of these things prevented my leaving. Then in February after the inauguration was all over and done with I told George Reedy that we would be working--John and I would be working--on setting up this operation. The president was very, very nice about it.

GRELE: What would you say were the relations between the old Kennedy people and the Johnson staff?

KILDUFF: Among most of the Johnson staff, excellent; among some of the Johnson staff and Kennedy people there was an air of continued hostility dating back to 1960. But these were the people who had rather short-term views. They're

still there.

GRELE: I've been told that at one time almost immediately President Johnson shuffled the Kennedy people to sort of back seats in the decision-making in the White House.

KILDUFF: Well, of course, Kenny O'Donnell didn't have an awful lot to do anymore. Ted Sorensen [Theodore Sorensen] left almost immediately. Bundy certainly never had his role never diminished under Johnson, to my knowledge. To the contrary, it increased. Yes, that's a good point. Pierre, for the short time he was there--he resigned on March 19, 1964--was consulted just as regularly by Johnson as he was by President Kennedy. Reardon [Timothy J. "Ted" Reardon] left to go to FDIC [Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation]. Larry O'Brien's [Lawrence F. O'Brien] influence, I think, was just as substantial under Johnson as it was under Kennedy. In some respects, even more so.

GRELE: Do you have any offhand comments on any of the issues of the Kennedy years in terms of the handling of the press such as, well, we've already covered "managed news." Well, we haven't, I guess, really, have we?

KILDUFF: I think "managed news" is a farce for the simple reason that you really can't manage news. If a reporter is determined to find out a fact in this town, he can find it out. It's so easy to find out anything you want to in this town if you know where to go.

GRELE: What was the White House reaction to Sylvester's remarks about using the news as an element of national policy?

KILDUFF: The reaction was one of slight annoyance, but not too great an annoyance and not even the newsmen were too annoyed. You read that they were and all the great protestations but everybody knows that in times of crisis you do use the news. You've got to. The only thing the newsmen objected to was that Sylvester said it.

GRELE: Did you work closely with people like Sylvester?

KILDUFF: Yes.

GRELE: How did he handle his job?

KILDUFF: I think he handled it quite well.

GRELE: I've been told that one of his functions was to coordinate the various publicity releases of the three branches of the armed forces and that they resented him over at the Pentagon.

KILDUFF: That's probably true. Any major announcement put out by one of the services had to be cleared by Sylvester and when you take a major general or vice admiral who is in charge of information for his branch of the service having to clear with a civilian, he considers it somewhat beneath him. But if you don't have a coordination, the right hand is never going to know what the left hand is doing. The assistant secretary of defense for public affairs shouldn't have to read what the Department of Army said in the next morning's newspaper. It's absolutely necessary just like any other piece of paper that's issued. I'm sure that in the logistical field the assistant secretary of the, I mean the chief of logistics for the army has to clear with the assistant secretary of Defense for logistics. It's no different.

GRELE: Is there anything that we haven't hit on? There must be.

KILDUFF: No, not that I can think of.

GRELE: Any other incidents or events that you can recall?

KILDUFF: No. There is only one other thing that I think is interesting. The other day I went to a Mass in Dublin, Ireland. I was over there on business for President Kennedy. I couldn't help but recall I did the advance work for him in Ireland. I was there about three weeks. I don't think he ever enjoyed a trip more than he did that one. He had a ball on that trip.

GRELE: That wasn't a state visit. It was just to his old home and to. . . .

KILDUFF: No, it was a state visit. He went to Dublin and New Ross, Wexford, Dunganstown, Limerick, Galway, Cork, and Shannon. We popped all over that country in helicopters. Irishmen had never seen so many helicopters in their life. [Laughter]

GRELE: Did he ever comment on sending a Scotsman to Ireland?

KILDUFF: I'm an Irishman. [Laughter] One time I had told him the story of the chairman of the New Ross County Council, a man by the name of Andrew Minnehan. He stands about six feet one and he's got a magnificent red beard. When he talks he is so Irish he makes Barry Fitzgerald sound like a Jew. It's ridiculous. One time when we were down there with Matt McCloskey [Matthew H. McCloskey] doing the advance work they had the speaker's platform out in the middle of the square which was next to the quayside along the New Ross River which is a swift flowing river. I mean it just rushes by. I told President Kennedy the story, and he later one time called me back in the cabin of the plane and had me retell it to David Ormsby Gore [Lord Harlech], former British ambassador. We didn't agree with the way this Andy Minnehan had made the arrangements for the president's speech because the speaker's platform was going to be out in the middle of the

square which meant that people were going to be all around him and which meant that you had no access to get him back to the motorcade and get the motorcade moving again. We suggested that he push the speaker's platform back by the quayside and put up a fence, and he says, "Man, now what do you want to put up a fence for?" I said, "Well, first of all we want to be able to get the motorcade through." He says, "Well, Christ, that won't be any trouble. The people will just move. They'll move out of the way of the cars." I said, "Well, it's not that easy." I said, "They don't always move. And furthermore, if you get people up next to that quayside, somebody's likely to fall in the river." He says, "Well, Christ, of course they are, man. I know that. Do you think I'm daft? I'm going to have two boats out there to haul them out." [Laughter] And then to get the motorcade around. . . . We finally convinced him that what we were talking about was right, but then we had one more obstacle. There was about an eight-foot pile of dung on the quay, and we have to swing around the harbormaster's shack--swinging the motorcade around the harbormaster's shack--and we had to remove the pile of dung to get the motorcade by. By that time Andy Minnehan was so mad. I said, "Mr. Minnehan, you will remove that pile of dung, won't you?" He says, "Remove it?" He says, "Christ no, man!" He says, "We're going to pile it twice as high and make the man think he's crossing the Alps." [Laughter]

Since that time, however, Andy Minnehan has become a very close personal friend of mine, and I've been back down to his home to see him, and he's been here to Washington twice and we got him squiffed here in Duke Ziebert's one night. You never saw a drunker Irishman in all your life. The president really enjoyed the stories even of the preparation, of the preparatory work in Ireland.

GRELE: You say he was relaxed on that trip?

KILDUFF: Oh, yes, completely relaxed.

GRELE: Was he tense on any other trips?

KILDUFF: Well, he was relaxed, but his back was giving him a great deal of trouble on that trip.

GRELE: Did you have to make special arrangements because of his back at any time?

KILDUFF: No.

GRELE: Would you say he was tense before other visits such as the visit with de Gaulle or Khrushchev?

KILDUFF: I didn't know him before the visit with de Gaulle. You see I was in Paris the whole time during the work. So therefore I had no opportunity to observe that whatsoever.

GRELE: One last question. How would you compare the handling of the press under Pierre Salinger and then under Bill Moyers, having worked under both?

KILDUFF: Well, it really doesn't make any difference how a press secretary wants to handle the press. It depends upon the attitude of the president and how he wants the press handled.

GRELE: Would you say there's a difference between the Kennedy and Johnson administrations?

KILDUFF: Yes, I would.

GRELE: In what way?

KILDUFF: Well, I go back to what I've said previously. I think that President Kennedy had a better understanding of what the needs of the press were than President Johnson. President Johnson has, unfortunately, taken the advice of some people--and I do not mean Moyers and I do not mean Reedy--that you get good press relations out of "public relations." Whereas in my judgment, it is exactly the opposite. I think that President Kennedy recognized this, that you get good public relations out of decent and honest press relations. You can't sell those newsmen. Some of those men have been over there twenty to twenty-five years. Hell, you can't sell them a bar of soap like you were an advertising man. President Kennedy recognized that. Some of the aides of President Johnson do not.

GRELE: It seems strange that President Johnson being vice president under President Kennedy, seeing him operate and seeing him be so successful with the press, wouldn't continue the same policies.

KILDUFF: They're different men with different mentalities. You can't compare the two men. It's unfair to try.

GRELE: Do you have any final comments you would like to make?

KILDUFF: No.

GRELE: I guess that's about it.