

Paul Corbin Oral History Interview—JFK #2, 11/27/1967
Administrative Information

Creator: Paul Corbin
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Biographical Note

Corbin, a campaign worker for John F. Kennedy (JFK) (1960), Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee (1961-1964), a campaign worker for Robert F. Kennedy (1964, 1968) and an independent political consultant (1964-1968), discusses organizing John F. Kennedy's Wisconsin and New York Citizens' Committees, clashing with Carmine G. DeSapio and Michael H. Prendergast's over JFK's 1960 campaign in New York State, and his relationship with Robert F. Kennedy, among other issues.

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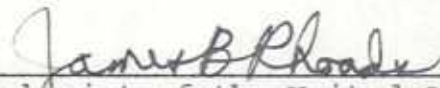
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Paul Corbin—JFK #2

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Second of Two Oral History Interviews

With

Paul Corbin

November 27, 1967
Alexandria, Virginia

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Why don't we just start by...

CORBIN: I was given the seventh district, congressional district. Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey] informed me to that effect. I went down to Madison, met him in Madison, and we drew up the plans for the seventh district. And Pat Lucey informed me that any city or village of three-hundred population or over should have a citizens' committee. As far as the Party was concerned, he gave me the names of all the county chairmen. There wasn't anyone who was worth anything. My first suggestion was to pay a courtesy call and then proceed to organize my Citizens' Committee, first with their consent, and if they didn't consent, you do it anyway. Of course, being a primary, most of the chairmen had a perfect out; they could say they were neutral. There was no chairman in my district who was for Jack Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. They were either neutral or they were for Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey].

STEWART: But yet they would cooperate with both.

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CORBIN: They would cooperate because of the tradition in Wisconsin, laid down by La Follette [Robert Marion La Follette] in 1900 when they changed the primary

law, and their slogan was, “Take the nomination out of the back rooms, away from the politicians, and give it to the people.” And that was strongly inbred in the voters regardless of how a person disliked Jack Kennedy. In fact, one incident as time passed—speaking, as it’s related—even the chairmen of the Humphrey committees cooperated in helping to get people out for Jack Kennedy, even though they were working for Humphrey. The chairmen, they were determined. I’ll have to admit that I didn’t extend the same courtesy to them that they did to me. And three days after I left Pat Lucey’s house, I had studied the formula, I studied the map....

Incidentally, I was given the dates that Jack Kennedy would appear in my district, the dates and the towns. And after Pat and I discussed it, we decided which town to take him to; we decided where we were going to take him to. Pat said he would deliver Jack Kennedy on those dates. He was giving me three days to study it, and I was supposed to leave for the seventh district on the following Monday. And Saturday night Pat Lucey called me and said that he was having difficulty, that Ivan Nestingen [Ivan A. Nestingen], who was chairman of the Citizens’ Committee—who incidentally was placed there by Pat Lucey. I don’t know if you were aware of that. I don’t know if I went into that either. I should go into that.

STEWART: No, I don’t think you did.

CORBIN: Well, just as a sideline, Ivan Nestingen was never for Jack Kennedy. Ivan Nestingen was against a Catholic for president and always used to laugh and ridicule Jack Kennedy. We’d approached him about helping for Jack Kennedy. And he’d say, “Jack Kennedy. Don’t be silly.”

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It just so happened that he lived three doors down from Pat Lucey. Pat Lucey was going into his house every morning to work on him. He pointed out to him that he was aware of Nestingen’s desire to run for governor, and being Norwegian with a Lutheran name, he already had the Lutherans on his side. And if he were to come out for Jack Kennedy, even though Jack Kennedy would lose, Ivan Nestingen would still gain by it because he would establish a rapport with the Catholics. It was in his interest to come out for Jack Kennedy. He wouldn’t go along with it; he just absolutely refused. Then we met... [Interruption]

Pat Lucey and I went to Milwaukee, and we met with Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen]. We had Ted Sorensen call Ivan Nestingen, as a non-Catholic, to point out the advantages for him. Finally, he accepted.

And then Pat Lucey recommended Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno], who had worked for Senator Proxmire [William Proxmire], to work in the Citizens’ headquarters, which were set up temporarily in Milwaukee, and to start organizing clubs to make it appear as though there was a groundswell movement for Jack Kennedy as a pre-runner of him coming into the primary. [Interruption]

Pat Lucey called me up at the house Saturday night and told me that my name had been scratched, that Ivan Nestingen and Jerry Bruno had opposed me going into the seventh district, but he would straighten it out; he’d get a hold of either Senator Kennedy or Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy]. I told him I didn’t need all these headaches; my business was

neglected. I said, "I can stay in Janesville and have a lot of fun." And I said, "To hell with it." He said, "No, Paul, it's got nothing to do with you." He said, "We've got to win this thing, and I'm not about to send a Boston guy up to the seventh district. I think we can take it, Corbin." And he said, "If we don't take the seventh, we're going to lose the ninth and we're going to lose the third and," he said, "he's going to get whipped. You might even lose the seventh, Corbin, but at least I'll have a feeling that we've got a run for our money. Listen, I'm not fighting for you. You don't mean a thing to me." So I said, "Well, let me know." Well, anyway, about two days later, he called me up, and he said, "Fine. You're moving in." I said, "All right."

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Moving into the seventh district, and I won't go into details, but I set up a citizens' committee in every village over three hundred. The first time I met Bob Kennedy was on March 3, 1960, at the Mead Motel in Wisconsin Rapids. He appeared with Lem Billings [Kirk Lemoyne Billings]. And when he walked in and he immediately told me—I had a room reserved for him—I walked into his room and he told me not to bother him right now; he had to shave and brush his teeth; he'd see me later. I told him politely that I didn't have time to wait because I had to go to a meeting; if he wanted to see me, he'd see me now. He turned around, and he said, "Don't you ever talk to me that way. I can see why people don't like you. You weren't my choice. If I had my way, I wouldn't hire you." He said, "I just made this as a gesture to Pat Lucey; we couldn't afford to fight a state chairman. So, inasmuch as we have to put up with each other, let's at least be civil to each other." And I said he didn't know what the hell the word civil meant, and as far as he's concerned, he can go to hell. I didn't give a shit about him. He was just a young whippersnapper. I said I was only doing it for Jack Kennedy. And I said, "You're not contributing anything. As far as I'm concerned, you can get the hell out of the seventh district and stay out." I said, "My committee's going well. My experience with you people is I've always had trouble with anybody that came from Massachusetts." And he was just completely shocked.

Well, we stayed around, and he was very cool. He informed me that the Kennedy girls were coming in, that I was to set up coffee hours, and he explained the system, how it was done. And he also told me that he would come in for a few days, in my district, at various periods and I was supposed to set up meetings for him and his brother Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] was coming in. I politely informed him right then and there that I didn't want Ted in there. And he said, "What do you mean you don't want Ted?" I said, "He's too young." I said, "We do have complaints. This is a conservative area, a farm area. They think your brother is too young as president. Bringing you in, they think you're too young." I said, "However you picked up a little notoriety about being against labor bosses, which could be used in this area." But I wasn't about to take Ted around because they'd mistake him for his brother Jack, and it would hurt. He looked at me; he said, "Okay, you haven't got Ted." I said, "Thank you."

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I set up a schedule for Bob. He came in about a week later, into my district. He called me up one day, and he said, “Why don’t you give your schedule, mail it to Kenny O’Donnell [Kenneth P. O’Donnell] so he knows where you’re going?” I said, “How in the hell does he know where I’m going? He’s never been in this area. He doesn’t know one town from another.” I said, “I’ll make the judgment.” I said, “I don’t think that the judgment should be left up to people from Massachusetts who have no idea about Wisconsin.” I said, “I’ve been talking to Pat Lucey, and I understand he’s having difficulty in all the other districts.” And I said, “I’m not about to send my schedule to anybody. If you want him to come in, he can come in, or he can stay out. Just let me know in advance. But I can’t send it out.” He said, “How many stops do you have?” I said, “Eighteen.” He said, “In one day?” I said, “That’s right.” He said, “Where’s my first stop?” It was Clinton, Wisconsin. He said, “Fine, I’ll be there.” He said, “Will you send it to my secretary, Angie Novello [Angela M. Novello], for my own personal use?” I said, “I’ll do that.”

I sent it to Angie Novello and two days later, I got a phone call from Kenny O’Donnell, the first time I spoke to him. He said, “You have in a little town”—I forget the town—“a farm meeting, and there’s no explanation given. Now you don’t inform anybody what kind of a town meeting it is.” He said, “We’re rather curious about that.” I said, “Well, I am breaking my pledge when I’m telling you this, but I hope you keep it quiet.” I said, “There is a cooperative farm convention going on. There will be five thousand delegates.” And I said, “They’re not having anybody there, but I made a deal with the chairman that if Bob Kennedy should just accidentally be in that town that day, he would be on the platform. Now if it leaks out, there’ll be a press release, and that’s the end of Robert Kennedy.” And I said, “The first thing, the Humphrey people will get there because co-ops are all controlled by Norwegians and Swedes.” He says, “Okay.”

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Bob Kennedy came in. I picked him up in Clinton, Wisconsin, and he spoke to the Rotary Club. And the next stop was this farm meeting—no, we had two other stops in between. And I said, “We can’t make these stops, Mr. Kennedy, because you’re....”

Oh, he was late; he was two hours late coming in. I met him at the airport and I said, “What the hell is the idea?” “Well,” he said, “Jerry Bruno was supposed to get me up here, but he got tied up, and the car’s broke, and there’s snow on the highway.” “Mr. Kennedy,” I said, “this is your first exposure in this county, in this area, you can’t miss appointments. You can’t miss schedules because so many people are involved.” I said, “If Jerry Bruno’s assignment was to get you here at 7 o’clock in the morning, that was his problem, not yours, not mine, and you should be there. And,” I said, “you’re never going to get to the presidency if you keep screwing around that way.” He said, “I’ll talk to you about it at the end of the day. Just keep driving.” Because we wanted to see how much we could do.

Well, anyway, at the end of the day, we checked into Stevens Point; we had made eighteen stops. I took him to his room, and he said, “Well, Corbin, I’ve changed my mind.” He said, “You’re all right.” He said, “I don’t have to worry about this district.”

The next morning we had breakfast, and he discovered—no, the next day we were going to another town and he was asking me how much expenses I was sending in, and I told him I wasn’t sending any in. And he informed me to send them to Kenny O’Donnell, which I

refused. Then he told me to send them to his father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.,]. And then he told me that I would regret that decision, but I suppose I could take care of myself.

STEWART: He told you you would regret it?

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CORBIN: Yes. He said, “You might regret it at times, but you can take care of yourself.” I said, “Fine.” Then I said, “Why?” He said I don’t know Kenny O’Donnell. I said, “Well, if he gets in my way I’ll kick the shit out of him.” He said, “Well, I wouldn’t suggest you do that, Paul, because he does pushups and he’ll make mincemeat out of you. If you have to fight him, don’t do it that way, for your own sake.” And I said, “Thanks for the tip.”

Well anyway, the President, Senator Kennedy, came into my area on four different occasions. When Senator Kennedy arrived in my area, he always had a policy of having his coordinator ride with him to brief him from time to time. Invariably Kenny O’Donnell sat there and we would have arguments in the car about speeches and strategy. I criticized the Senator for always making speeches quoting Massachusetts dignitaries from past history. I told him these people didn’t know who in the hell he was talking about. They were all farmers; the only name they knew here was La Follette, Abraham Lincoln, not some general, Winthrop or somebody else, they didn’t know what the hell he was talking about. And he kept bringing up this Massachusetts thing and it sort of irritated me. I thought he ought to play it down. He told me that he didn’t need any more speechwriters and my job was to just make sure this area was won and he’d appreciate it if I’d keep my advice to myself. I said, “Well, I couldn’t separate the two because if I was responsible for the winning of this area, then I had to say something about his speeches. He never answered me.

But the next stop we came to was Manawa, Wisconsin, and that was a town that Joe McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] used to hold court occasionally when he was judge. And he got through this farm meeting. And as we left the hall, he said, “Well, Paul, you won. I didn’t mention General Winthrop’s name once.” I said, “Yes, but I wish you’d learn how to pronounce La Follette correctly.” He always stumbled on the word La Follette.

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And I won’t go into the details of what the “mafia” would do to my schedule. They’d try to cancel town after town, would tell the Senator that they were behind schedule and they should skip this town, skip that town. We’d have battles in the car continuously. And I noticed that the Senator would concede to them once and let me win three or four towns. He tried to—a happy balance. But he was always in favor—I looked upon myself as a coordinator—he always sided, 90 percent of the time, with the coordinators, and he would occasionally just throw one to his Boston advisors. I immediately came to the conclusion that the “mafia” would not be any particular great problem; if you presented the entire question to the Senator, you’d get your way.

I later discovered that all you had to do was explain to Bob and that he would agree with you. He never disagreed with me once on tactics and would overrule the Boston people

every single time. I'd keep saying to him, "Gee, you're always good to me." He'd say, "I'm not good to you. The first time you bring up a wrong proposition, you'll know how I can be. But what you say makes sense." So throughout the campaign in Wisconsin at no time did Bob Kennedy ever say no to anything, and the President the same way, except just as I said, as a token.

STEWART: Well, how much freedom did you have in deciding the type of promotion and just what he was going to do when he...

CORBIN: Complete freedom, complete freedom. Absolute freedom. Now, the reason I had complete freedom was because I never discussed it with Ken O'Donnell and never communicated with him. Bob Kennedy allowed me to operate under his jurisdiction. So if there was any question, they would go to Bob. They would never come to me. They would try to get to Bob Kennedy to overrule some of my schedule, which he never did, never would. So I had complete freedom.

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I will admit that I never made a decision without discussing it with Pat Lucey. Every decision I made I discussed with Pat Lucey. Any revisions he suggested I would follow. I'd never argue with Pat because he was experienced and he always made sense—much more experienced than I was when it came to scheduling cities. And I'd always go along with any revisions he suggested. I'd go along with Pat Lucey, of course, again, that put me in the category that I was a Lucey man, which I was not. I was for Jack Kennedy. But these things just naturally follow. And every time Kenny would try to cancel a town, he'd go to Bob, and then Bob would talk to Pat. Bob would never try to say, "Don't do it, Corbin," because there'd be a battle. So he'd go to Pat and try Pat to change my mind. And Pat would sometimes call me and say, "Well, look, I've got to keep peace." And I'd say, "Nothing doing, Pat. If I lose, it's my fault." I'd say, "We're going to win." He'd laugh and say, "Go ahead."

Now, I did find myself with a handicap because I had no money for postage. The "mafia" gave me no money. All the other coordinators had anything they wanted: supplies, money. I got nothing, so I found it difficult at times. As a result, I would use my own money and Pat Lucey would give me some money. And when it came to mailings, I would go into Madison on a Saturday or Sunday and I would use Pat Lucey, his wife [Jean Lucey], his children; my wife [Gertrude McGowan Corbin] could come up from Janesville; I'd bring volunteers from Janesville to work in Madison for mailings for the seventh district. And there was a continual operation going on in Madison for me. And we would raise money. In fact, I raised money in Janesville for stamps in the seventh district because I couldn't get it from the "mafia." Well, anyway, the primary....

My first introduction to Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith, II] was my district, the seventh, was enlarged, and he had chopped—Bob Kennedy had added two other counties to me, to my district; one from the ninth and two from the tenth. This had happened because I had him scheduled to 4 o'clock in the afternoon and I wanted to have a full day, so I suggested to him that I take him into the other county. He said, "What the hell are you doing

in the other counties?” I said, “A lot of businessmen who have businesses in Wausau have homes fifty, a hundred miles away. Can I take them?” “Yes, you can have them.” So I scheduled him for two counties in the

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tenth district. And then I guess I got greedy, and I thought I'd get him for the next day. And he said, “You'll have to call Ben Smith to release me because I'm scheduled to go with Ben.” So I called Ben Smith, introduced myself, and asked him if he would release Bob Kennedy. [Interruption] Ben Smith appreciated my interest but said he wouldn't release him and said, “Good try.” So I appreciated his sense of humor. And he said he hoped we'd see each other some day. Do you want to shut that off?

STEWART: Yes. [Interruption]

CORBIN: Just relating one or two incidents which are off the—are not the usually orthodox way of running elections. In Stevens Point, which is a solid Polish Catholic city, I approached the Monsignor to try to get him to ring the church bells on election morning so as to remind the people to come out to vote, because being a heavily Lutheran area, Protestant area, we had to get every single Catholic vote to come close to win the district. And he informed me that he couldn't possibly do it, because only on holy days. I pointed out to him that holy days are created after some holy event takes place. It might be a hundred years from now. As far as I was concerned, say it was a holy day. He smiled and agreed and said he would do it. And sure enough, on election day every church bell in the city rang. And there have been some stories about it. I thought I'd just go for the record that it's true.

Anyway, during the seventh district campaign I got a frantic call from Wisconsin, from Janesville, my hometown. Sarge Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] was given the first congressional district, where I'd had Jack Kennedy come for the first dinner, and which—incidentally, Janesville was cited by the President after the primary as a city that went 12.5 to 1 for him. And I got a call from Janesville that Sarge Shriver was screwing up the whole campaign and would I come in: there was a coffee hour and the President was coming in, and there was nothing done, and there was bickering, and would I come in for the weekend. So I flew in.

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I drove into Janesville, and I called a meeting of about twenty women in my home to find out what was wrong. And they informed me that what had happened is that Sarge Shriver had picked people to run the campaign and they were all Catholics. And they set up a headquarters downtown. And none of the Protestants who originally were supporting us for the dinner for months were involved and now had walked away. It became a Catholic thing. And it had clearly become a religious campaign in Janesville. And the Catholics, of course, were a minority in that area—they were about 30 percent—and they were deeply concerned about it. Now these women were Catholic women who brought this problem to me. So I

immediately got in touch with the Protestant leaders in the city and they refused to discuss it with me. They were so shocked that they refused to discuss with me. In fact, they blamed me for starting it all, for bringing him to Janesville, and this was what was going to happen when Jack became President; the White House would be filled with Catholics; the Pope [Pope John XXIII] would be there.

As a result, I stayed there two days, and we mailed out invitations; we had printed up invitations and we mailed them to every single citizen in Janesville to make sure a crowd showed up. And John Reynolds [John W. Reynolds], who's now a federal judge, was then Attorney General, his sister was placed in charge of a coffee hour for the Kennedys. She was also a victim of the "mafia" because Reynolds was Attorney General and had fought some of the tactics of the Boston people. They retaliated against his sister, and she had no communications whatsoever. They would call her up and inform her a half a dozen times they were going to cancel out on her. Just havoc!

It was a great shock to all of us in Wisconsin. This was the first time in our lives, in our whole political lives, that we had run across people who were no longer interested in the cause but were allowing their personal feelings to interfere and actually chopping everybody down, which was actually costing at the expense of Senator Kennedy. We had complete distrust for every one of them. We came to the conclusion that they were more interested in their self-advancement, their self-aggrandizement, rather than Jack Kennedy. Maybe it's a harsh conclusion, but that's the only conclusion we could come to because

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we would do anything, those of us who joined would do anything, any sacrifice wasn't too great.

Going back to the seventh district—I won't go into any more incidents because you probably have hundreds of them, thousands of them.

STEWART: Could you just get into—you mentioned that you had organizations, what, in every town over three thousand people...?

CORBIN: Three hundred. Over three hundred.

STEWART: You had an actual organization of chairmen and some other people in each one of these? Could you just go into some of the main problems and the main considerations involved in selecting these people in each of these places?

CORBIN: Well, I'll give you a rough sketch. I'll start with Wisconsin Rapids and give you an idea as to how I came to certain conclusions in selecting a chairman. I would check the voting record. Of course, I already knew, being from Wisconsin, Wisconsin Rapids was a Republican city. Their per capita income was higher than any other city in the state. Their main industry was paper, paper manufacturing. The people were dressed; they spent more money on food; they were more affluent than any other part of the state. As a result of that affluence, they were mainly Republicans.

I came into the city, and I approached a Mr. Felker [Albert G. Felker], who owned the Felker Manufacturing Company in Marshfield. He made oil tanks. I got to him through a friend of mine, a gentleman called Jim Fitzgerald [James F. Fitzgerald], who's one of the largest oil distributors in Wisconsin, who bought oil tanks from him. Jim Fitzgerald, Janesville, was also a Republican [who] didn't vote for Jack Kennedy, but his mother [Chloris Beiter Fitzgerald], who was active in the League of Women Voters, was for Jack Kennedy and out of deference to his mother he agreed to call Felker and ask him to help me. So I called on Felker and Felker referred me to his brother in Wisconsin Rapids. And I asked him for names of Republicans in the city and he said, "They're all Republicans, Paul, but I'll give you a list of names of the socialites in this town. That's

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what you want, isn't it?" And I said, "That's right." "If you want a coffee hour," he said, "you want the socialites."

So he gave me a list of ten socialites. And I called them up on the telephone, told them I represented Senator Kennedy, and I wanted to have a little meeting with them at the Mead Motel, which is owned by the paper mill, the Mead family. And I talked to the motel manager, who was for Jack Kennedy, although he couldn't let it be known because he was a Republican. I told him I wanted sterling silver tea sets, coffee sets brought out, and I wanted to have five or six waitresses dressed in uniform. I said I want him to have the finest tea he's ever put on in his life, as long as he's worked for the Mead Motel, top class. And I said, "I want you to put on the bulletin board, as the people come in, 'Meeting of Senator Kennedy and Local Women.'"

And when the hour came in, the chauffeured Cadillacs pulled up, and these women came out—this was in March; it was cold weather—they all wore their mink coats, their jewelry. They walked in. We had a room put aside, and they came in. And we had these waitresses serving them tea and cakes and sandwiches. Then I got up and told them that—this formula that I'm using now in Wisconsin Rapids I used about, I would say, 90 percent of the time in every city, the same formula, because I never went to the Democrats, as I told you. I stayed away from the machine; and most of them were tied up with Humphrey. So I saw all the Republicans and I told them that my name was Paul Corbin; I was from Janesville, Wisconsin; I was a member of the Republican party; I was not a Catholic; but I was for Jack Kennedy. And I told them that the Senator and his wife [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] were coming to Wisconsin Rapids, which I think was a great event, irrespective of political party, when a senator of that stature like the President comes, and I thought these women who were socially conscious and were above the bickering of the local politicians, were more sophisticated than that, would help me out in getting a small crowd to meet Senator Kennedy and his wife. They agreed. And I said, "We don't want to have too many people," but if each one of them called up ten of their friends and invited them, I said, "You'll probably get two hundred commitments, probably half will show up." I

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said, "Just mail in the names of the ten people that you've invited." And they asked me when they were wanted. And I said, "Would two hours be enough?" They said, yes, they could do that in two hours. And they left and called me up in two hours and I had roughly two hundred names. Then I called a meeting of those two hundred women and asked them to call up ten. Well, of course, you know what happened when Senator Kennedy came.

And that's the system I used. And I immediately would select a chairman of the social event and ask them if they had any objections if we ran the story in the paper that they were in charge of the social event. No, they didn't have any objections at all. Basically, they weren't politically orientated; they didn't realize what they were doing. The next day the paper appeared: Mrs. So-and-So, all Republicans, were in charge of this social event for Senator Kennedy. And that's the system I used.

Then, of course, after they met Jackie and Jack, they were all for him. And the next strategy was to have all the girls in for coffee hours and use the same system with them again. As far as the names of the people, I would just call them the ten captains: They'd call up their ten, and they'd call up their ten, and it pyramided.

Also, then came the election. Election day, I used these people three or four days in advance to get out the vote. And we had a tabloid. We had a tabloid, which we had to distribute—the tabloid.

I can tell you one little story I think is interesting. In Wausau, Bob Kennedy and I met—he had been to Wausau in the early stages of the primary and he told me that they had a strong machine there and that I shouldn't get involved, just sort of keep check on them occasionally. But he thought they could produce. I told the Senator that I knew every one of those persons involved, had known them for years. "They mean well," I said, "but they can't possibly help. One of them is an attorney. The other one runs a big business. And they've got their own livelihoods. Although they're nice fellows, they're very ardent, we ought to go in and run the machine and start a citizens' committee." "No, you better not," he said. "You've got too much work to do and I don't like to get involved in a fight with all these people." He said, "They're all nice fellows." And I said, "Well, I'll abide by your decision."

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I checked. All my tabloids were being distributed. I decided I'd run into Wausau and check Wausau. It was the largest city in my area.

STEWART: Was this a tabloid just for the seventh district or...

CORBIN: No, it was a statewide tabloid.

STEWART: Statewide tabloid.

CORBIN: Statewide tabloid. We used it in every campaign; we used it for Bob Kennedy in 1964 in New York. It was a paper the size of the *Daily News* in New York. And I came into Wausau on a Friday morning, and the election was Tuesday, there wasn't a single tabloid passed out. I walked into the Democratic headquarters, the door

was locked; I had to go to an insurance agent to open the thing up. And there sat all those tabloids, stacked up to the ceiling.

So I got in touch with the Sister Superior at a school and convinced her that she could help Jack Kennedy by taking two classrooms and letting them out early, have the students distribute the tabloids and have the schoolteachers, the lay schoolteachers, or if she couldn't get lay schoolteachers to get her friends who worked for the school, the laywomen, to drive the children around to pass the tabloids. She said she'd do that.

Those tabloids were passed out that same night, on a Friday night. It just so happened that one boy came home—they didn't finish until 8 o'clock—one of those little boys that passed them out came home and his father said, "Where have you been?" He said, "I've been passing out Kennedy tabloids." It turned out that this boy's father, although a Catholic, was chairman of the Labor Committee for Humphrey. He immediately got a hold of Jerry Heaney [Gerald W. Heaney], who's now a federal judge, and informed Jerry Heaney. Of course, Jerry Heaney was quick to pick up the value of such a story. They were going to release the story on Monday, where Kennedy was employing the children in Catholic schools to help the campaign.

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The man on the scene in Wausau at the time was Gene Foley [Eugene P. Foley]. I don't know if you know who he is.

STEWART: Yes, yes.

CORBIN: Gene Foley. And I called Gene, and I said, "Gene, you've caught me with my pants down." I said, "I couldn't find a single Kennedy supporter in Wausau. You guys have the whole bloody town signed up and organized. Bob Kennedy told me not to waste a single day in Wausau because we'd written the whole town off." Of course, Bob didn't say that, but I told him that at the time. "So in desperation, trying to show that I was doing my job, I talked [to] this poor Sister Superior." I said, "I don't mind if you kick my fanny, but," I said, "Gene, do you know what's going to happen to this Sister Superior? They'll probably transfer her to Labrador or Africa." I said, "She's just an innocent bystander and all you're hurting is her." I said, "I'd think twice before I would do it." Now Gene Foley was a good Catholic. He listened to my story, and he said, "My gosh, you're right, Paul." He said, "All you're going to do is hurt the poor Sister Superior." They didn't do anything with it.

Now I have to state this for the record: the last chapter of Gene Foley. When I arrived in December 1960 to Washington I was naïve; I didn't know anything about patronage. My wife and I went to the Esplanade, which is a restaurant in Georgetown. And this was in early January. Walking up the stairs, I bumped into Gene Foley. I said, "Gene, how are you? I haven't seen you for a long time. What are you doing?" He said, "Oh, I'm going back to Minnesota?" He said, "The Boston Mafia won't give me a job." I said, "What do you mean, they won't give you a job? Hell, they're not the President." I said, "I'll talk to Bob Kennedy. He'll give you a job." He said, "You mean it?" I said, "Sure, don't worry. Where do you

want to go?" He said, "I was dickering for a job in Commerce." I said, "Don't worry about it."

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I went to Bob Kennedy, and I said, "Bob, do you remember Gene Foley?" He said, "Yes, I remember the name vaguely." I said, "That's the guy that caught me with my pants down in that Catholic thing." And I said, "I don't know why, but the 'mafia' won't..." I always referred to Kenny and that crowd when I spoke to Bob as the "mafia." If I would say Kenny, it would irritate him, so I'd say the "mafia," you see, so I said this, "The 'mafia' won't give him a job." He said, "Well, Paul, we sure owe him a job. The damn fool lost that election for Humphrey." He said, "Don't give him too big of a job because his judgment's wrong." I said, "Well, you'd better make sure." He said, "It's all right. I'll call my brother." And he picked up the telephone and called his brother, the President, and told him to make sure that Gene Foley got that job in Commerce, which Gene Foley did. Subsequently, of course, Gene Foley made his peace with the "mafia" and became their instrument in the Department of Commerce; then he got promoted.

STEWART: And later went on to S.B.A. [Small Business Administration].

CORBIN: S.B.A. They took care of him. But I thought I'd just give you the last chapter on Gene Foley. Incidentally, Gene Foley never forgot that I helped him get his job. Just for the sake of the record, he said to me, "Whenever you need a job, Paul, real bad—don't come to me unless you need something bad—I'll give it to you."

When Jack Kennedy was assassinated and I left the Committee [Democratic National Committee], we had one man from Tennessee called Bill Keel [William A. Keel] who was on the Committee, and the "mafia" couldn't wait to fire him. So they canned him about three weeks after they got rid of me. And Bill Keel was out of a job. He'd just bought a house in Vienna [Virginia]. He had a tremendous mortgage. He just had no knowledge of Washington. And he came and said, "Paul, I've got to get a job." So I said, "Well, I've only got one. We have no power because Jack Kennedy was assassinated. But," I said, "there's one man that owes me a chip, and that's Gene Foley." So I called Gene. I told him, "Remember, you made

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that statement." "Yes, I can give you a job." I said, "I don't want the job." I said, "I want it for Bill Keel." He said, "Fine, send him over; he's got the job."

Well, Bill Keel called me every day for three weeks. Finally I ran across Gene Foley outside the Sheraton Park Hotel. My wife and I were having dinner one night. And I said, "Gene, what gives?" He said, "Corbin, the White House won't approve of it, and the 'mafia' boys are all against it." He said, "I never heard so many derogatory things said about one human being, outside of yourself, Corbin. They just hate him: he's this, and he's that." I said, "Gene, I just say this to you, he's qualified." "He's not as qualified as the other guy they're sending me." I said, "I don't give a damn. I'm saying to you he's more qualified. And I don't

care if he's blind or crippled. Did you promise me a job?" "Yes." "I want it right now." "All right, you son of a bitch, you've got it," he says. "Now don't bug me anymore."

A week afterwards Gene Foley called me. He said, "Corbin, he's the best man I've ever had to work for me. Where did you find him?"

STEWART: Very good.

CORBIN: Subsequently, Bill Keel was stolen from Gene Foley by the chairman of the House Committee on Small Business. Just to give you, as I say, the last chapter on Gene Foley.

Going back to the seventh district, there are a lot of things I can tell you about. Well, I'll have to tell you this story about one fellow that called the Felkers.

STEWART: All right, just let me switch the tape.

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2]

STEWART: About teas, did you have...

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CORBIN: We called them coffee hours in Wisconsin, not teas. I suppose in Massachusetts they use teas, but in Wisconsin we had coffee hours. And Helen Keyes [Helen M. Keyes] and Polly Fitzgerald were sent in to help organize the coffee hours in my district, not for the girls—excuse me, I'll take that back. They had the schedule. They traveled with the girls, and I would give them the addresses of the coffee hours. I set up my own coffee hours; they just handled the scheduling. The only time they ran the coffee hours was they had a district coffee hour in—I believe it was Stevens Point or Wausau—in Wausau. And I had no control over that at all. I believe, because I was told to stay out of Wausau, they went in there.

Now, Helen Keyes was the most efficient worker that I met in the Kennedy campaign as far as a woman is concerned. She was very loyal to the Kennedys, very conscientious, I just can't say enough about her. She was very cooperative, very understanding, and I was able to maintain a dialogue with her. She understood the problems, that I was under pressure from the "mafia" I was attacking. She would never take sides. And I'd explain to her, "Helen, the 'mafia' are after me. Will you do this?" She'd always say, "Yes, I will." I just couldn't say enough about Helen. She's very capable. In fact, all the workers, the workers that worked in my district, the seventh district, they thought the world of Helen Keyes.

Now, speaking about girls, when the campaign was over, all the Wisconsin people that worked took a vote as to who they liked least and who they liked best amongst the women and then the men who worked in the office. The one that won first was Pamela Turnure.

STEWART: Oh, really?

CORBIN: Pam Turnure was the hardest worker, and she was abused by the “mafia.”

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STEWART: In what way? In a lot of little ways, or....

CORBIN: Well, yes. Abused in little ways. And anytime that Chuck Roche [Charles D. Roche] would goof up, he would always blame Pam Turnure. And I told Bob Kennedy about that, and I told the President what I thought of that crowd. And I informed them that Pam Turnure just worked—it’s hard for people to comprehend today but she would work at times twenty-two hours, twenty hours. Every single night, two or three hours sleep. Just at it. And actually the work she was doing was supposed to be done by others. They just piled it on her desk. And the rest would sit. They’d be the strategists and b.s. and poor old Pam was working. So I thought I’d just tell you about Pam Turnure and how we felt.

But Helen Keyes was terrific. She was the best of the girls. Polly Fitzgerald was very capable, knew her job, but at times a little temperamental and possessive about the Kennedys, but a hard working gal and knew the score. Very possessive about the girls, which we understood, but a terrific, hard worker.

STEWART: Did the [Kennedy] sisters come into the seventh district?

CORBIN: Oh, yes. Just for the sake of the record, I was the first Wisconsin person they met. I picked them up in—they flew into Madison or took a train; I forget which—Sarge brought them in. And they had dinner at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Madison. The first stop they were making was in my district, the seventh, and I picked up Jean Smith [Jean Kennedy Smith], Eunice Shriver [Eunice Kennedy Shriver], and Pat Lawford [Patricia Kennedy Lawford] and drove them to Wisconsin Rapids. Speaking of the girls, I personally like Jean Smith best of all the girls. She’s very shy and did her work. I would say that we liked Jean Smith best of all. Now, Eunice was more politically sophisticated than all the rest—she knew the score, just a little wee bit too professional—while Jean and Pat were more effective, were more effective. And every person attending the coffee hour sort of had the feeling that their sympathies went with the girls for the whole ordeal. And they were very, very effective. In fact, if they didn’t have the girls, I don’t think Jack Kennedy would have taken Wisconsin, between you and I, because they just tore through that state and had a tremendous impact on the

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state. Very, very effective.

STEWART: Did the President’s mother [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] come into your district at all?

CORBIN: No, the President’s mother never came into my district, just the three girls.

The first coffee hours they had—and they were terrific I just can't say enough about those girls—they went through hardships with the weather and cold. But I had to laugh because they all came in with campaigning clothes. They left all their minks and everything at home. They were great. They all had a sense of humor. Pat Lawford was a little difficult to handle. She was a little more difficult to handle, but very effective, very effective. But she was a little difficult to handle. In this, respect.... I won't go into that.

STEWART: Go ahead.

CORBIN: No. But anyway, she was a very effective girl. As far as seventh district is concerned, as far as the coffee hours and teas, you probably have that on record from every man here in town. I don't think ours worked different. So let's take a break for a second.

STEWART: All right. [Interruption]

CORBIN: Bob Kennedy assigned me to go to New York State and together with Ben Smith handle the fifty-seven counties. I asked him specifically the first day he—when he gave me that assignment and we met in New York, I asked him what he wanted me to do, specifically. He said, "I want you to do the same thing that you did in Wisconsin and West Virginia. No different." I said, "That means, of course, Robert, that I'll bypass the Democratic Party machine where they don't function." He said, "As I told you, you do, exactly what you did in Wisconsin and West Virginia. Use your judgment."

STEWART: Well, what kind of decisions had been made as to exactly who would be holding what positions as far as the whole campaign in New York was concerned?

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CORBIN: Who made those decisions?

STEWART: For example, right after the Convention there was a flurry involving Wagner [Robert Ferdinand Wagner, Jr.] and DeSapio [Carmin G. DeSapio] and Prendergast [Michael H. Prendergast], and DeSapio and Prendergast were insisting they had a commitment that there be no separate organization.

CORBIN: I'll get into that. I'll get into that. So I arrived in New York and met Bob at his father's apartment, and Ben Smith hadn't arrived as yet. I asked Bob what I was supposed to do. He said, "Do the same thing that you did in Wisconsin." He said, "Ben Smith will be here shortly, and, Paul, I don't have to impress upon you how vital it is that you get along with Ben. Now," he said, "Ben was my brother's choice for New York. You are my choice for New York. Now, I want you to lean over backwards. And if you have to compromise, if somebody has to compromise, I wish you would because you're vulnerable, Paul, for all the boys are after you." And he said, "They're going to push around,

but I want you to understand one thing, Paul: Don't take any calls from anybody from Washington. Don't talk to anybody from Washington. If they happen to catch you sometime, just say, 'yes, yes, yes,' but keep going. I want you to call me continuously, keep in touch with me." He said, "You'll have a clear line. And wherever I'm at, whatever part of the country I'm at, I have a secretary there." And I said, "Not Angie?" He said, "No, don't worry about Angie. You don't have to get in touch with her or anybody else. There'll be somebody there and I'll let you know who it is. And you just deal with me direct. Now don't pay any attention. Just say 'yes' and keep calling me."

Well, he took us down to.... He took Ben and I to meet Mike Prendergast, DeSapio, and Bob said, "I want you to meet Paul Corbin and Ben Smith." "Where are you from?" Mike said. And we said, "I'm from Massachusetts." "I'm from Wisconsin." "What the hell does a man from Wisconsin know about New York?" He [Bob] said, "They don't know a thing, Mike. They're just fellows who are sort of making a little survey and look over the state. They've got other states to travel around in. Just sort of keeping check. Nothing specific, just making a survey." "No press releases," says Mike. "No, no, no. Hell, these are fellows that aren't

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that important that they need a press release. They just thought they would make a little survey. And they'll be leaving tomorrow to cover a few towns." So Mike says, "All right. I will send a man along with you." So we said, "Fine."

When I left, I said, "Bob, what the hell goes on?" He says, "Corbin, once you get out of New York City, don't worry about it. Bill Walton's [William Walton] going to handle New York City. You just handle the fifty-seven counties." "What the hell, fifty-seven counties is New York." I said, "What the hell." He said, "Just do as I told you. Just like you're back in Wisconsin and West Virginia. "After all," he said, "Paul, you're not an amateur." I said, "No, I'm not." He said, "Go ahead. I told you what to do."

So this fellow, Pat Fisher, who was sent by Mike, the first meeting he had was we suggested to him that we would like to have meetings in five cities, five distinct cities in New York, and we wanted him to invite all the county chairmen so we could meet them. And the first meeting was in Albany, New York. All the county chairmen were there. We started the meeting, and the first thing that started, they had a birthday cake, they were serving coffee and booze, and they all sang "Happy Birthday" to Mike because it was Mike Prendergast's birthday. And Bob Kennedy had told them that for every dollar that they raised for registration, he would match it.

Ben opened the meeting and said that I was with him, we were making a little survey, and that Paul Corbin will tell you what we want. I got up and told them that I was going to organize a citizens' committee and that would be distinct and apart from the organization. And I said, "The reason I did it...." And I recited some of the incidents such as in Wisconsin Rapids with the Republican women and other cities. And I spoke for about an hour and a half, told them how I did it. I said, "These were not Democrats. They were all Republicans. We're not going to touch the Democrats. We're after Republicans." But, as we didn't know who the people were in the community they could assist us by suggesting names for a citizens' chairman in the community. Oh, they all thought it was wonderful. But they were all

opposed to it. They had them under Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson]; the citizens' committees aren't worth a damn; they just got

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in their way. But this novel idea of getting Republicans was a wonderful idea and they would cooperate.

We would call them within two or three days—no, we'd call them in a week because we had this schedule of one in every town—and we'd get the names. And we went from city to city, five cities. The last two cities Ben left. He had a strike in his plant up in Gloucester, and he left.

So I started calling up these chairmen to get the names of the citizens' committees. Well, 60 percent of them didn't have anybody. The 40 percent that did, this is the way the conversation went: "Hi, Paul. Fine. Got a guy for you, terrific, yep, terrific guy, Corbin: He's my leader from the fourth ward. A real good guy. He's got an insurance agency, plenty of time." "But, Joe, I want a Republican." "Ah, you're kidding. You can't find them. Where the hell's a Republican going to come out for us? I know this guy, can swear by him. Look, Corbin, who the hell's got money for a headquarters? We'll put the Citizens' together with the regular organization. We'll give them a desk where the guy can sit." I said, "You've missed the whole point. I don't want a single Democrat to walk in that bloody headquarters. I don't want any posters on that headquarters but Jack Kennedy. Nobody else! No congressmen! No nothing!" He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Look, I'll call you back in a day or so. Find me a man." This is a typical conversation.

When Ben came back, I said, "Ben, this is the spot we're in." "What do you suggest, Corbin?" "To hell with them. We'll divide the state right down the middle. You take one end; I take the other end. And that's the way we'll work." Well, I went into the counties and I'd organize on the average of two committees a day. I'd come into a town.... I might as well tell you how it did it.

STEWART: All right.

CORBIN: I went to no politicians. I went right to the Catholic priest, told him my problem, where I was from. I said, "I want a Republican, a Protestant, that I can get to. Give me three or four names." I went to these people and I'd get them. I'd talk to them, the same formula, set up headquarters.

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The first repercussions I had, I went to Watertown, New York, and I had a name given to me by the state committee of a woman—I can't think of her name now—who was active in the Women's Democratic Party, lived all her life there and was very well known in the community, a socialite. I visited her and told her what I wanted. She said she knew all about me, she'd gotten a call from Mike Prendergast, she wasn't going to cooperate with any citizens' committee and she'd just as soon I get the hell out of town. And she never did like Jack Kennedy. And her preference was Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. And he'd never win,

he's a Catholic. And she went on and on and on. I told her, I said, "Look, young lady, I'm going to make one statement to you. I don't know anything about politics but I don't like Tammany Hall. I'm from Wisconsin; I don't like these corrupt bosses." And I said, "Let me tell you, when Jack Kennedy gets in, I'd bet my last bottom dollar when Robert gets through with those hoodlums in New York...." Now I want you to know that it was politically naïve for me to say that. But I was naïve, as all of us were in those days. But I was actually speaking from my heart instead of my brain. If I had any brains I'd have kept my mouth shut, but I tipped my mitt.

Now, the amazing thing about it is Bob knew I would do that. That's why he sent me to New York. And it didn't take a week before the whole thing spread through the state, there was a guy coming from upstate, Corbin, who was a son of a bitch, who's going to kick out DeSapio and get rid of the gangsters, get rid of the crooks. But you can talk to Ben, who's a nice guy.

Now Ben and I had agreed that in certain counties he would be the tough guy and in certain counties I would be the tough guy. As it turned out, though, I was the tough guy in every state, and Ben would quiet them down. And it got so bad the second week or third week that Ben had to sit with Mike Prendergast in Albany to quiet him down. You see, he insisted that I leave the state, that I be kicked out. In fact, he went—subsequently I found out, before the campaign was over, that him and DeSapio came in to see Robert Kennedy, into Washington, asking for my removal.

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STEWART: Let me just—there's some dispute about that point.

CORBIN: What?

STEWART: Could I ask you exactly how you found out that?

CORBIN: Yes, John Seigenthaler told me.

STEWART: All right. He talked to them, I guess.

CORBIN: I came in. John Seigenthaler told me about that. I know when the dispute was, but John.... All I can tell you is what I know. I was the.... How I know: The last two weeks of the campaign I was called in to Washington by Bob. He was having difficulty with some of his men and he wanted for me to conduct a class—he was going to call in all the people from all across the country—on how to organize meetings, how to organize citizens' committees, and how to schedule events, bypassing the Democratic Party. So I was called in, and that's the first time I personally met John Seigenthaler.

And John Seigenthaler at that time told me that DeSapio and Prendergast came in to see Bob and he talked to them. He had talked to them. In fact, during the campaign, Seigenthaler was the first one that tipped me off that the heat was on me, they wanted to get rid of me. And he said, "Get yourself conditioned in case you have to leave." And then he called, and I said, "If we leave, then we've lost the campaign." "Why?" "Because the image

has been created that we're against Tammany Hall. If I'm pushed out, that's the end." He called me back the next day, and he said, "No, Bob wouldn't even hear about it. Just keep going, but be careful." Well, anyway, what was I trying to.... Let's see. [Interruption]

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STEWART: Can you think of any examples of specific confrontations or specific cities or locations where you clashed with the organization people, with DeSapio and Prendergast people?

CORBIN: Yes. My first clash—I had the clash in Watertown, New York. And I had a clash in St. Lawrence County with Van Kernen [John D. Van Kernen]. And I had a clash with Ed Gosier [Edward J. Gosier], who was running for Congress and since then has been my closest political friend, after it was all over. And these were open clashes.

The next great confrontation was in Syracuse where we established a headquarters. I had come in there alone, and Ben was in a different part of the state or he might have been back in Gloucester. I met Bob in New York City. I told him I was going to Syracuse to set up a citizens' committee. He handed me a telegram. Somebody was suggesting Harlan Cleveland [J. Harlan Cleveland] for Citizen chairman. I said, "Who's Harlan Cleveland?" He said, "Well, he's a Stevensonian, Paul, and he's head of some college there, and he's a classmate of Byron White." Now Byron White [Byron R. White] was head of the Citizens' Committee. The only person that I communicated with in Washington, outside of John Seigenthaler, was Whizzer White, who was completely cooperative and on the same wavelength as I was all the time. There were never any disputes. Except one: About Syracuse.

I went into Syracuse, and I talked to the bellhop, told him I was with the Kennedy people, if he knew anybody for Kennedy around. He said, "Yes, a fellow called George Cregg [George W. Cregg]. He's chairman of the Kennedy Citizens' Committee." I said, "There ain't no Citizens' Committee yet." He said, "Oh, yes. This has been going for two years. They've got their headquarters over in the Onondaga Hotel."

I walked over to the Onondaga Hotel and here is the headquarters the Citizens' for Kennedy on the mezzanine floor. George Cregg. And here showed a picture of George Cregg, Chairman of the Americanism Committee of the American Legion, Commander of the Legion Post, getting an Americanism award, a prominent attorney. I called George Cregg up and told him to meet me. And he met me.

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I said, "George, my name is Corbin. I'm here to find a citizens' committee chairman." He said, "I am." I said, "You're an ex-chairman, if you ever were." I said, "We're closing up this headquarters and get one downstairs. We've got to find a Republican, if we can, a Protestant who has a rapport with the college because this is a college town." "Absolutely not. I'm the chairman, I've got wires from Jack Kennedy, letters." And he started showing me a flap of letters. They had been communicating with Dave Hackett [David L. Hackett]

and with Senator Kennedy's office for years. I said, "George, are you for Jack Kennedy?" He said, "Yes, I am." "Now if you're for Jack Kennedy, which you no doubt are," I said, "I can see what you've done. You've done the same thing in Syracuse which I did in Janesville. And I know how you feel, it's a question of your ego. I'll tell you what. You run the thing, but I've got to have a front man. You can be the executive director." "I want to be chairman: This is my baby." And he says, "Who in the hell are you to come in?" I said, "Well, don't fight with me George. You didn't choose me. I haven't got time for it, George. I'm offering you the executive directorship, the free run of the thing. I can't have a Catholic. Another thing, George, I can't have anybody who's been witch-hunting and chasing reds, chasing communists, chasing students. I don't want that." I said, "I'm not disagreeing with your philosophy, but," I said, "not in this kind of thing. I want to get all the liberals." I said, "I want to get all the Stevenson people. This is a hotbed for Stevenson." "What do you want those jerks for? They're all left wingers." I said, "George, I can't get in an ideological discussion with you." I said, "I'm going out to meet the county chairmen right now. In fact, they've just walked in."

They all walked in. And I can't think of this chairman's name. The chairman walked in, an Italian fellow who changed his name, and he walked in with a fellow, now the Postmaster, Caffrey [Tony Caffrey], who was the secretary of the Party. I informed them that George Cregg was.... I asked him for the names, the same pattern I used with everyone else. In any case, he came up with George Cregg. "I can't use George," I said, "I told you it's got to be a non-Catholic, an out of party guy." "Well, the hell with that. This is our county; you're not telling us what to do. I got a call from Mike Prendergast," says Caffrey. "You're a troublemaker."

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You're coming in and organizing your citizens' committee and I'll have nothing to do with you." I said, "Fine. Tell you what, boys, get the hell out of here. This is the Citizens' headquarters. I'm taking over." I said, "George, I want to talk to you. Are you for Jack Kennedy?" I spent two hours with him. He cried.

STEWART: Really?

CORBIN: He cried.

STEWART: He had been working on it?

CORBIN: For years. For years. He cried. He says, "You know," he said, "I have a friend of mine who's also working for the Kennedys." I said, "Oh?" "His name is Rip Horton [Ralph H. Horton]." I said, "I never heard of him." "He's the coordinator in Kansas." I figured Kansas, he can't be much of a coordinator if they gave him Kansas. "Actually, he was a classmate and a roommate of Jack Kennedy's. I'm going to call him." He came back in a half hour and said, "Well, I just talked to him and he says that whatever you say, I should do." I said, "Well, he's probably doing the same thing." He said, "He told me he's doing the same thing in Kansas as I'm doing, and he said, 'George, you're

lucky he's giving you the executive directorship." I said, "Fine. Okay, this is what you do. I want the best building downtown. Storefront. Set it up." Well, I had clashes....

Then I went to Harlan Cleveland who had a summer home on one of the lakes. And I asked George if he could give me any names. He gave me the name of Pat Moynihan [Daniel Patrick Moynihan].

STEWART: Really?

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CORBIN: I met Pat Moynihan. He walked into the headquarters at the Onondaga Hotel. He came in wearing an English cap and a muffler and he was dressed like a country squire from England. So I said to him, I says, "You must be hitting the English movies pretty heavy, eh, fellow?" He looked at me and he said, "You're the Kennedy guy?" And I said, "That's right. Who are you?" He said, "Well, I'm working for the college. I'm on the payroll of Harriman [William Averell Harriman]. He's paying me \$15,000 a year. I'm writing a book." I said, "I have a cousin of mine who's been writing a book for twenty years. Our family's supporting him. Each one throws a thousand bucks a year in. We're supporting him because he always gets in trouble. Are you one of those guys?" He said, "No, I'm really writing a book." I said, "Fine."

I said, "Pat, you seem to be a bright guy. You're a college fellow. You might have a suggestion for a citizens' chairman." "Yes," he said, "Harlan Cleveland." That's the name I had. I said, "Oh?" "Yes, he's a great guy. He's Protestant and he's a good Democrat." And I said, "Oh, no, I don't want a Democrat. But," I said, "I'm flexible if he has other assets, I'm willing to forget that." "Well," he said, "I'll tell you what. These guys are all Prendergast and DeSapio boys, and they're going to fight the Citizens' Committee. If you have Harlan Cleveland there they might accept it. And he can win the college people and all the intellectuals. He's the best you've got."

So I had this wire and Bob indicated, "Put him in." And I says, "All right, I'll go down and see him." I went down to see him at his summer home. And he wanted to be in charge, wanted to make the decisions. I thought, "I'm going to have trouble with this guy right off the bat. I said, "I'll tell you what, Mr. Cleveland. This is the form of the way I operate. I organize Republicans. I won't interfere with you organizing the Democrats and the college and your liaison in the party. Just don't interfere when I'm operating genuine Citizens'." "What do you mean 'genuine Citizens'?" I said, "Republicans." "It can't be done." I says, "It can be done." "Well, I'll let you know." I said, "Fine." As we walked to the door, he said, "Well, I'll take it." I said, "Fine."

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And then I called in the labor fellows. I discovered the labor guys hated the Democratic Party machine. They were corrupt; they were this; they were ineffective, never won elections; they don't allow labor to participate. I said, "This is a situation made to order. How would you like to shake up this county? I'll tell you what we do. We're going to organize a citizens' committee." And I said, "Do you know Harlan Cleveland?" "Yes," he

said, "he's an intellectual at the college." "I was thinking of making him chairman." "I'd rather have him than a Republican, which you guys are doing in other parts of the state." I said, "Can you work with Harlan?" He said, "Yes, we can." I said, "I'll tell you what I want you boys to do. You put up the dough, pay for the Hall, pay for the telephones, round enough people up. Do you know George Cregg?" "Yes, we like him. He was for Kennedy all the time." I said, "How about him being executive director?" "In name only," he says. "We will appoint an executive director called John Morelli"—by the way, he just died last week; personal representative of George Meany. We'll put up the money, and he'll run the headquarters. It'll be a labor headquarters." I said, "Fine, but it will be Citizens'." And we made the deal.

They met and George Cregg became—they changed their mind. We had rented a building that had a partition in between, so one was the labor headquarters for Citizens' and the next one was the Citizens' Committee. But the labor boys paid for the whole shebang, and Harlan Cleveland became chairman. And the first thing he did is he hired himself his own personal press agent, not to push Jack Kennedy but to push Harlan Cleveland. And George Cregg brought a fellow in—I forget his name—he became a press secretary. And George Cregg was very cooperative and worked very hard and turned out to be very good.

We had put on the first function. Bob Kennedy was coming in to town and I started a new thing, which had never been worked in New York, but we had done it in Wisconsin. It was called a bean supper for a dollar where everybody sat down just the way you sit at a banquet—not help yourself, not buffet, a regular dinner, bean supper. We got the Syracuse Hotel. They charged us a dollar for a big night. And we wanted the labor people there because I had discovered back in Wisconsin that in every town there's a

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big hotel, which is more or less the social center in the community, and about 99 percent of the people never walk in there. It's beyond their reach. So I thought if we can have this party at the Syracuse Hotel for a buck, every worker and his wife would go to that meeting, go to the supper.

As a result the place was jammed and the fire department came: we were violating the laws and had all kinds of hassle. Bob was up in his room and I said, "You have to speak twice because you have to get the people in once and shove them...." Bob said he wasn't going to speak. And Ben was there. We had a fight. I said, "Damn it, Bob, here we are. We get the schedule, and you're getting tired, and you're going to be a prima donna." He said, "I've been to California and Ohio." I said, "I don't give a shit where you've been. I've been in a lot of places, too." And I said, "I remember you used to bust your ass to see thirty people in Wisconsin and here you've got two thousand and you're getting to be a prima donna." "I'm not going to speak twice," he shouted. "And you go down and tell Harlan Cleveland to let everybody else make the speeches and when they're ready for me, you let me know." So I came down.

The place was jammed; everyone wants to hear Bob Kennedy. I went up to Harlan and I said, "Harlan, you go ahead and introduce everybody else. Bob will be down a little later." "Just a moment. Who do you think you're pushing around? I'm the chairman. I'm going to introduce nobody until Bob Kennedy comes down here." He says, "This is my event." I said,

That's what you think." And I just pushed Harlan to the side, grabbed the microphone, and said, "Boys, Bob Kennedy is tired. He's made a tour of Ohio and California. He's resting for a few moments and we're going to start introducing the other people and start eating. When we get through, Bob will come down."

Meantime, Harlan grabbed it back and just then Bob comes down. Of course, Bob immediately.... Harlan Cleveland started introducing: the sheriff.... He said, "I'm sorry, this is a Citizens' Committee meeting, Bob." So he [Bob] took the microphone: "I'm here for my brother." He was terrific, and he just cut the hell out of Harlan Cleveland at this meeting.

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Then Caffrey and the county chairman went up to Bob and asked for a meeting with Bob, asked me for a meeting. I said, "Sure, go right ahead." He says, "Mr. Kennedy, we're getting calls from Mike Prendergast and we're friends of Carmine DeSapio, and your man here, every time he has a Citizens' meeting he starts out by attacking Carmine DeSapio and Mike Prendergast. And he tells the people he doesn't blame them for voting Republican, that if he lived here he'd vote for a Republican too, before he'd vote for that corrupt machine in New York." And Bob had a big grin, you know. And he says, "We can't have that." He said, "I want to talk to you about this fellow. I'll tell you what. You have valid complaints but you discuss them with my secretary, Mr. Corbin, and whatever he says." So Caffrey says, "But Mr. Kennedy, what good would that do?" "You talk to Mr. Corbin." "Now, Mr. Kennedy," he [Caffrey] says, "President Kennedy is coming here and we want to invite him. I want to introduce him." He [Bob] said, "You want to introduce him?" "Yes, and I want to clear up the business of this bean supper." He [Caffrey] says, "We supported it, the machine did." I says, "That's a goddamn lie." I said, "Bob, they bought ten tickets. But," I says, "let's not fight about it." He said, "Well, we want to introduce him." He [Bob] said, "Well, that's entirely up to Mr. Corbin. I have nothing to say. I don't want to take either side on who introduces whom."

As we walked on out, he says (Bob said), "Corbin, if these guys introduce my brother, you can get your ass out of New York. You get Harlan Cleveland, get the Citizens'. But on the square, don't get these monkeys up here!" I said, "Don't you worry about that."

Well, Caffrey came to me. He came up to the hotel and he cried. He was having problems raising money. I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make one concession to you, Caffrey. I will let you get up first and you welcome the crowd on behalf of the Democratic Party of Onondaga County. I want you to introduce Mr. Harlan Cleveland, who is with the Citizens' Committee, and you welcome all the Republicans, and you'd like him to say a few words. Harlan Cleveland will then introduce Jack Kennedy." He cried. He said, "I can't do that," and he cried and cried. I said, "Well, let me think about it, Caffrey. I'll let you know. The next day I called him up, and I said, "I'll tell you what, Caffrey, I just talked to Harlan Cleveland, and I

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explained to him the role that you were going to play in there. And Harlan Cleveland got a little huffy and didn't even want you up there." So I said, "I told him that you, Caffrey, were

going to Kennedy and that you would introduce him and let him speak. And he cried. He was happy.

Three days later he calls me up and said, "I'm sorry. Corbin, I'm not going to introduce Jack Kennedy, I'm not even going to be there." I says, "Why?" "Mike Prendergast told me that Senator Kennedy was not going to speak in the square." I says, "What?" "He told he's not going to speak in the square. He's driving in, going to the hotel, and he's going to speak at a state dinner," which was held that night. I said, "I don't care what Mike Prendergast told you or what DeSapio says." And then the chairman called DeSapio because he's Italian, and he said, "He's not coming there. It's a big fraud."

In the meantime, we had had a hundred thousand leaflets printed to pass around the town square. The labor guys say, "Well, we just talked to the chairman, and he's not stopping here. Why should we get all these guys to pass them out?" I said, "Look," I said, "John—Morelli, he was the A.F.L. [American Federation of Labor] guy—I said, "I don't give a shit what he says, what you say, everybody says. Jack Kennedy's going to be there. Now, goddamn it, give me those leaflets and I'll pass them out." Well, Morelli grabbed me by the throat, and there was a bartender in the business and he grabbed me by the throat, and they were going to kick the shit out of me right in that hall.

STEWART: Really?

CORBIN: That's right. They had just gotten instructions that Jack Kennedy wasn't coming there. So I ran out the front of the building and I went into the next one. And Caffrey was there, and the county chairman was there and said, "Look, Paul, we know what you're trying to do and we know that you're working your butt off. We've watched you, and we sympathize with you. You're tired and you're broke. We're trying to tell you that you're going to make an ass out of all of us. Jack Kennedy ain't coming." I said, "Let me tell you something.

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That square's going to be filled, and if Jack Kennedy don't want to speak there, he's going to. There's going to be thousands."

STEWART: Why were you so cocky about it, or so confident?

CORBIN: I talked to Robert Kennedy.

STEWART: All right. You had it right from...

CORBIN: I talked to Bob Kennedy. He said, "Corbin, he's going to be there. Fill that square. To hell with them." "Okay." That's all. I talked to Bob every day. Hell, that's how I knew it.

Well, anyway, I got these leaflets and we passed them out. And finally word leaked that Jack Kennedy was really coming! Then Caffrey wanted to introduce Jack Kennedy. And I said, "No dice, it's going to be Harlan Cleveland."

Now, as a matter of fact, I've got to tell you this. The guy who really fought me was a fellow called Jim Byrnes [James E. Byrne, Jr.], who was running for Congress.

STEWART: John Byrnes.

CORBIN: Jim, Jim Byrnes. Not John, Jim.

STEWART: John Byrnes is now...

CORBIN: Not John Byrnes. Jim B-y-r-n-e-s. John Byrnes is from Binghamton, New York. This guy's from Syracuse. He was running for assembly—some little petty office—and he would come in every day with posters from the congressman, from the sheriff, and stick them in the Citizens' headquarters. And I wouldn't allow it. Jim threatened to beat the hell out of me one day and I said, "I'm sorry." But every time that I had a leaflet distribution in front of a plant, I'd call Jim Byrnes. He'd call me every name under the sun but he'd be there. And I'd pass out Jack Kennedy literature and he'd say, "How about passing mine?" I said, "Not yours. Fuck your staff." I said, "I'm for Jack Kennedy." He'd do it, so I realized the guy was for Jack Kennedy. Hated my guts.

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After Jack Kennedy got elected, the county chairman from Syracuse comes into town. This is the first week in oh, during the Inaugural. And we had lunch at the Democratic Party club at the Sheraton-Carlton, and the county chairman, Charley Greene, and Jim Byrnes was there, who got beaten, and myself. And he says, "Corbin, I'm here for a list of jobs." I said, "Oh?" He says, "Tony Caffrey." I felt like saying, "That son of a bitch you wouldn't nominate." But I said, "Let me tell you something: Tony Caffrey's an old-line Democrat. He was for Jack Kennedy. It's okay." And I said, "What are you doing, Jim?" He said, "I'm here. I got the concession to sell hot dogs at the Inaugural parade." I said, "You're a dumb bastard. You're absolutely stupid." He said, "Why?" "Because you're becoming a huckster." "Well, what's wrong with hucksters?" "Well, you can do whatever you want to do." Well, a snowstorm came up and he lost his pants.

They came back in town again. They took me out to dinner, the county chairman and Jim Byrnes, he said, "Oh, I should have listened to you, Corbin." I said, "I wasn't talking about the snow storms. How is it going to look if you're going to try to get a job in government and you're the guy that handled hot dogs?" "Oh," he said, "You would never give me a job, you son of a bitch, you'd probably cut my throat." I said, "No. Why should I?" "Well," he said, "you fought me tooth and nail." "No, I didn't. I was fighting for Jack Kennedy and you were fighting for your posters. But," I said, "we were both on the same team. In fact, Jim, you're hired right now." I said, "Don't let those things bother you. Hell, I was just fighting for Jack Kennedy. You wanted to put up the sheriff and all those guys, congressmen." I said, "What job would you like to have?" "Well," he said, "I'll tell you. I'd like to be the U.S. Marshal." I said, "Congratulations. You're it." He said, "What?" I said, "You're it." He said, "I thought you had to talk to the President." I said, "Bob Kennedy is the Attorney General. That's it."

He got the job; Bob gave it to him. He turned out a great U.S. Marshal. More on him later.

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[BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 3]

CORBIN: Now the reason there was no state chairman of the Citizens' Committee is that we had originally—at one time I had thought that because Harlan Cleveland was identified with the Stevenson people that there just might.... We had to have a figurehead; we might put in Harlan Cleveland. However, the thing that held me back is that I had called, after we had our argument—the third day after Harlan Cleveland was Citizens' chairman, I had an argument with him. He said he was going to complain about me and that he was in charge of the Citizens' Committee and he didn't want "any bums from Wisconsin hanging around telling him what to do." That's the exact phrase he used. And he was going to see his classmate, Whizzer White.

STEWART: He was presumably in charge of the Citizens' in Syracuse or...

CORBIN: In Syracuse. I wasn't going to have him telling me what to do. And he wanted to handle the coffee hour; he wanted to handle the bean supper; he wanted to handle everybody. I was telling him what to do and he was fed up with it. And he was going to see his old classmate in college, Whizzer White. I thought, "Oh, here I'm in trouble," because I was getting along terrific with Whizzer White and here a guy turns up who went to school with him.

So I called Whizzer and I says, "Byron, I don't know if you know it or not, I put a classmate of yours in from Oxford, Harland Cleveland. And he may be a personal friend of yours, but I can't help that. I'm just going to give you my experience and analysis of this guy. He ain't worth a shit. He's got himself a press secretary, and he's difficult to handle. He acts as if he's the candidate." He said, "Stop right now, Corbin. Who in the hell told you to put that no good son of a bitch in?" I said, "Oh, thank God, Byron!" He said, "Why didn't you call me?" You knew he was my classmate." "I didn't know it until today." I said, "I got a wire from Bob, or Bob handed me some wire." And he said, "God, Corbin, that is the biggest mistake you ever made. That son of a bitch'll drive you.... Now, listen,

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Corbin, I expect you to stand up and don't let that guy push you around, Corbin." He said, "I put you with that egomaniac in college." And he says, "How in the hell—what kind of a judgment?" I said, "Dan Moynihan." He says, "Who in the hell is he?" "I don't know. I got sucked in on these intellectuals." I said, "It's too late, but I was just trying to get to you and give you my story because he's on his way down to see you." "I'm just waiting for that guy to come in, Corbin. Don't you worry." He said, "Don't you worry, and give him hell!" Then he says, "How in the hell did you...." And I said, "Byron, I was even toying with the idea of

putting him in for state chairman.” He says, “Well, let me tell you right now, Corbin, you’re crazy.” “Well,” I said, “don’t worry about it.”

Well, Ben and I were discussing the need for a state Citizens’ chairman. But we had discovered that some of the Citizens’ chairmen that we put up, a lot of them were terrific guys, but somehow or other the long hand of the Democratic state machine got to them. It seemed that in New York, regardless of what business you’re in on a county level, in order to get any favors in government, you have to go through the organization. This was alien to me in Wisconsin. But the influence of the Democratic Party was so great that all these people felt, on the basis of past history of Stevenson, once a Citizens’ Committee is disbanded that all power is back in the machine. So some of our county chairmen, although they were terrific, were under the pressure of Mike Prendergast and DeSapio, who used local people, local contacts, to get to these people.

So we felt that we had the thing in shape, things were going smoothly, why take on the bother of having a state chairman as a front man? The first thing he’d be issuing statements. So Ben and I said, “Look, we’ll be the state chairmen.” And the next time that Bob came to the state we discussed it with him, and Bob said, “Fine. Whatever you boys decide.” And he said, “I kind of like it that way, too.”

STEWART: So there never was a state chairman.

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CORBIN: There never was a state chairman. Now, I’d like to discuss several things with you about that campaign. Number one, Dan O’Connell [Daniel P. O’Connell], Dan O’Connell. We came into Albany, and Ben Smith tried to get a hold of Dan O’Connell. He spoke to him briefly over the telephone. It was hi, good-bye. I came in—and I can’t think of his name. He died. I even attended his funeral, and I can’t think of his name.

STEWART: In Albany.

CORBIN: That’s right. It was his right-hand man, who ran the show. He died in 1963. Well, anyway, I saw his man who ran the show and he informed me that he wanted no Citizens’ Committees around him. And he showed me statistics on how many votes they got. He showed me what he was doing. He spent four hours with me. And he said, “Now what do you think, Corbin? Do you think we need a citizens’ committee?” I said, “Absolutely not, with the exception I’d like to get that extra 1 or 2 percent.” He said, “All right, what do you want to do to get them?” “I want to bring in Pat Lawford here and the coffee hour.” He said, “Go ahead.” I found him completely cooperative.

I wasn’t able to get supplies because the Irish “mafia” wouldn’t give me any. I got them from Dan O’Connell. Dan O’Connell, being an organization man, got all this stuff from DeSapio and Mike, and he shifted it to me. So I had a complete supply, all through Dan O’Connell. I had the pleasure of meeting Dan O’Connell on two occasions, which I’ll go into later—well, I can go into it now if you want to...

STEWART: All right.

CORBIN: ...but it skips a few years. I also saw Dan O'Connell after the assassination of Jack Kennedy when we were preparing for Bob Kennedy's entry into the state for Senator. I knew that Dan O'Connell was a Wagner man. He had no use for intellectuals or liberals, but the reason he was for Wagner was because Wagner always had an alliance with Dan O'Connell, who would give him the

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necessary votes. In exchange, Dan O'Connell would get the things he wanted done.

So I went to see Dan O'Connell. I was picked up by Billy McKeon [William H. McKeon], who was state chairman then, and attorney Paul Pinkney, who was a nephew of Dan O'Connell and they drove me down to his house. Incidentally, his chauffeur didn't even know where Dan O'Connell lived. He had to be directed by Pinkney. I met the old fellow, and I guess he belongs actually in the nineteenth century. He wore high-buttoned shoes that you had to use one of those little hooks to hook up, a wide belt, and wide suspenders.

He informed me that he had watched my maneuvering in the state since I had come in. And he says, "DeSapio, Prendergast, Wagner: All these guys are stupid, Corbin. The day you came in to see my man in '60 and I told him to be nice to you because Jack Kennedy would not send a dope into New York, I told my man, 'Don't underestimate this guy. They're pros, and they're acting like dumbbells.' And I told him to spend all the time and explain what we were doing and I would decide if you were intelligent by the decision you made. If you decided to go ahead, you were stupid. If you decided to acquiesce, you used good judgment. You were very nice about it. You kept using us for supplies, money, everything you wanted." (And he controlled the whole Hudson River Valley). "And you used to call my man up to whip the other guys in line." I said, "That's right." He says, "If you had us tell them to pave the way for citizens' committees in their counties, I agreed with you because you had to have them in those counties. So," he said, "I have a lot of respect for you." And he said, "They were always fighting you, and they were crazy." He said, "They were fighting the President and they couldn't possibly win. You had no power. You're just like my man who works there at my office. He has no power. He has to call me." And he says, "You know, if you ever want to leave the Kennedys, why don't you come to Albany and work for me and run this town?"

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Then he described the problems. Now, Dan O'Connell was against corruption, he himself, but couldn't control it. He told me some of the problems he had was to keep the boys honest. And he said if it wasn't for the guys dipping in, he said they'd have, as far as he was concerned, a perfect county government. But he said he just couldn't watch everybody. And I agreed with him because I learned from my own experience in Washington that you can't control these fellows.

He was very loyal to the Kennedys. And I asked him to support, to help Bob Kennedy for the Senate. He said, "It'll never work. They'll never buy it." I says, "Well, how about your vote?" He said, "I won't kid you, Corbin, I've got to deal with Wagner." Then he explained to me why. "I've got to survive, so whatever Wagner wants, he'll get. If Wagner wants to run, he's got my vote. If Wagner says to vote against Bob, I vote against him." I said, "What about your loyalty?" "If he wants to be President, yes. But if he's coming onto my own bailiwick, no. He's now playing my game when he comes to New York. If he wants to be President.... Bobby Kennedy is the most misunderstood man in America." He says, "All the things he's doing, they call him 'hatchet man,' 'arrogant,' 'ruthless.' Don't the people know what he's doing? He's doing for his brother Jack what you're doing for him. He does the dirty work for Jack, and then he assigns some to you, some to others." He said, "You've got the worst because you're in New York, the spotlight." So he had complete understanding of him.

I then invited him—I said, "I have a personal invitation from Robert Kennedy that the *Caroline* will pick you up and fly you to see the Ambassador at Hyannis Port" because he was ill. "And Jackie Kennedy would like to have lunch with you. We'll fly you down to Washington." Tears came to his eyes. He said, "I'm too old for that. In the spring I will drive to Hyannis Port; my chauffeur will take me." And he says, "If you land with the *Caroline* in Albany, the whole country will know about it."

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Subsequently, Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] really goofed up. I don't know if you read it in the paper. He tried to get Dan O'Connell to come out for Robert for the Senate, so he flew down in the *Caroline*. And the press spotted it, and that was the end of that deal. Steve turned around and came back home.

But Dan O'Connell said that he was honored by the invitation from Jackie and he would gladly accept if he was fifty years younger. He said, "I'm an old man, why does she want to meet with an old man?" And I said, "Well, it's hard to explain," I said, "She knows that you helped Jack Kennedy in the early days and I think she's just trying to do things for people that Jack Kennedy never had a chance to do. I don't know what he had in mind for you, Dan, but I think Bobby talked to her." And I said, "Now, you're not the only one that was invited to go to Hyannis Port. So was Pete Crotty [Peter J. Crotty]." In fact, they flew Pete down to Hyannis Port to see the old man. He says, "Is that right?" I said, "Yes. I called Pete and arranged the meeting." So I had no arguments, no fights with Dan O'Connell at all. Now, Pete Crotty....

STEWART: And you had no real Citizens' organization, then, in Albany?

CORBIN: No, we did not. We had no Citizens' Committee. I will take that back. We had a very small group of women who helped with the coffee hour, but no Citizens' Committee in Albany. Now, if I'm not mistaken we did—yes, we did. Dan McNamee [Daniel Vincent McNamee, Jr.]. You ever run across that name?

STEWART: I don't think so.

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CORBIN: Well, Dan McNamee, who was a millionaire and a stockbroker in a bank.... And I had checked with Quinn—was this man’s name Quinn—and Quinn said that McNamee was an honorable man but he was against them. He was against the machine. He was a reformer but not a liberal reformer. And although he wasn’t ecstatic about it, he wouldn’t oppose any activities of Dan McNamee, and it was all right with him. And he said Dan McNamee would not pick any fights with them. So we did sort of have a semblance of it but no real one.

As far as Pete Crotty is concerned, from Buffalo, he was a strong organization man, admired DeSapio, didn’t think much of Mike Prendergast, was extremely loyal to him. And he also opposed the Citizens’ Committee at the start, but finally agreed to have one, which was in name only. Just to give you an example: I drove into Buffalo, and he followed my suggestion and had the best site in town, the biggest building for Citizens’ headquarters. Anybody who came into town had to get off the bus to do any shopping ran smack into the Citizens’ headquarters. I walked in there and there was some young fellow standing behind the desk, and I said, “I’m from the rural area of Buffalo, and we’d like to start a little citizens’ committee. Can I have some posters?” He said, “You’ll have to check with the state Democratic headquarters, Mr. Pete Crotty, before I can give you any leaflets.” So actually it was better off if we never had those headquarters there. But I didn’t fight with Pete. I never argued about it, just let it go, because he had a tremendous organization going there.

Well, for the sake of the record, though, I have to—just to give you the type of man Pete Crotty was. Always extremely loyal to Jack Kennedy. No question about that. He was also interested in winning the county. There was a county commissioner running, which corresponds to executive director. And as the posters ran, first was the county director, then came Jack Kennedy. And that’s how he ran it. That’s a typical machine boss. But, no complaints. He cooperated just a thousand percent. And if there was anything you didn’t like, you spoke to Pete and he’d correct it. No disagreements at all. But, just as a comment, there was a lot of criticism, especially by the *New York Times*, against Peter Crotty. In my opinion—and I believe Ben

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Smith holds the same views I have—Pete Crotty is probably the most liberal of Democrats in the entire state of New York. A highly educated man, genuine liberal, only he was more pragmatic than the rest. Very fine, fine man.

STEWART. What about raising funds? Did you...?

CORBIN: I didn’t raise a nickel, per se. I just got the labor unions to pay all the bills and got each citizens’ committee to organize a committee of financiers in town, local bankers, and made it a point never to get loans and anything but money. Just told them to rent the Hall, put the phones in. Just told them how to do it. Get labor, get

the bankers. And personally never made a solicitation for a nickel in the state of New York. That goes for Ben Smith as well as myself. You haven't got time.

STEWART: But all of this was done locally.

CORBIN: All locally. As a matter of fact—it's a matter of record; you can, check on it—because of the division between me and the "mafia," they never even gave me what was coming to us, which other coordinators got. We got nothing. And Ben Smith was not the type of fellow that would ask for money. Ben Smith would never ask them for money. He wouldn't even ask them for expenses. Occasionally he'd say to me, "Paul, I need some money," and I would, unbeknownst to him, tell John Seigenthaler or Dick Donahue [Richard K. Donahue], and they would send him a couple of hundred dollars.

Now, another thing, which I'd like to point out: Every coordinator, because of the travel, had a credit card on the airlines; it's a small little thing. Just to show you how these guys would sabotage me, they wouldn't give me one. The "mafia" wouldn't give me one. They understood the difficulties of the coordinator, that the last thing he worried about was money. Sometimes I didn't have enough for a pack of cigarettes. I was broke. And not having money to travel became a hardship. You'd have to go somewhere, and you'd plead with them. And they just, "Up your ass. Get it from Bob. Get it from Bob Kennedy." So I spoke to Bob about it and he told me to speak to Steve Smith. It was finally corrected. Steve sent me five hundred or a thousand dollars in

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advance and told me to use it. But they always made it difficult for us, always made it difficult.

And another thing. You'd get the schedule for President Kennedy to come in and they'd always call you up: "We're canceling out." And then you'd cancel your plans. "He's coming back in again." And they just harassed us continuously.

STEWART: I wanted to ask you about that. He made—well, I don't know precisely how many trips he made—probably two major swings through New York, including the last. What, a week before election day he was in New York City, which later caused some fuss. What exactly did you have to do with either of these trips?

CORBIN: The trips he made to upstate New York?

STEWART: Yes.

CORBIN: We had the schedule in advance and our job was to get every group—Citizens', labor and the Party—to get the crowds out. And we made the decisions: who introduced him and who sat at the head table and things of that nature. And primarily our job was to get the crowds out, to make sure the crowds were out and make sure he met the right people.

Of course, my theory always has been when a president or any candidate comes to a community that he meets everybody, including the phoneys, because they vote, too. I always tried to make sure the women who do the telephoning, the ones that are in the back rooms licking stamps, that they'd get to meet him. And although it takes maybe another half hour on the part of the candidate, it pays off. So I was never—even if he was our worst enemy, if he asked me, he wanted to meet the President, I'd say yes. Or if he wanted to meet Bob, I'd say yes. I never used either Bob or Jack Kennedy as an instrument to retaliate against some of the guys. That's a mistake that everybody makes even today, that even the guy that you don't like who is not doing anything for you, if he meets a candidate, he may change the next day and work for you. So that was our policy. Then also Ben didn't go that far. Ben hated the phoneys. He hated the hypocrites.

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Now, you were talking about money. There was one county, just to give an example, where we did have problems about money after the campaign, Ontario County. There's a fellow called Fabrizi [John Fabrizi], who's still the county chairman. He was for Kennedy, set up a citizens' committee by a schoolteacher whom I met. He recommended him. And I told him that I wanted not a Democrat, not a Catholic. He came up—the only one that really came up with one that fit perfect. Oh, I'll take that back. The county chairman of Chautauqua was very good. I can't think of his name now. He did a tremendous job. He was a Lutheran—no, he was Unitarian. Fine man to have. He did all the work, tremendous, for Jack Kennedy, Bob Kennedy. He was very good, very honest.

But this county chairman, Fabrizi, after Jack Kennedy became elected, called me up, and he said I owed him four thousand dollars. I asked him what for, and he said, "Well, the Citizens' Committee that we financed." I said, "Are you kidding?" He said, "No, our party financed the Citizens' Committee; we owed it as our committee. We got the literature and the buttons, and you owe us four thousand dollars." And I said, "God, you won!" He said, "I don't care. I want my four thousand bucks." And then he turned around, and he said that if I would give him two jobs in the State Department that he would call it even. So he sent in the first guy, who ran a funeral parlor and a furniture store, and he wanted either Italy or the Court of St. James or Moscow, to be the first minister. And I couldn't believe my eyes. You ought to check with Ben Smith about Fabrizi.

Now as far as the organizing as such, in every single county, bar none, every county chairman had gotten the word. If he was an Irish leader, he got it from Mike Prendergast; if he was an Italian fellow, he got it from DeSapio. Now, they just fought you all the way, fought you all the way, and there was a constant harassment, especially when Jack Kennedy would come in or Bob Kennedy would come in.

STEWART: Excuse me, let me interrupt for a minute. Did you ever feel that maybe in some situations you stood a real risk of losing more than you were going to gain by bucking these people?

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CORBIN: No, I'm going to—that's a very good question and I'm going to give you an answer from my point of view. In areas like Buffalo and Albany where I waited, we backed off. In very few cities, as it has subsequently been proven, the organization of the Democratic Party isn't on paper. Now to give you a classic example: John O'Connor Conway [John O. Conway] is the county chairman at Oswego. Ben Smith and I decided to take a ride up there together because it was on the Canadian border. It was late in the afternoon when we started to go up for a ride together, discuss our strategy. We came up to see John O'Connor Conway, who had on his wall a picture of him and Richard Maguire, who I had not heard of, although I subsequently did. He said he was a classmate of his, and he was talking to Dick every day. I said, "Fine." Ben, incidentally, had been in there a month before and organized a citizens' committee in Oswego. We came in together to check into it. And Ben was mad because the headquarters was closed.

We went to see John O'Connor Conway, and he started immediately to blast the Citizens' Committee for a half hour, so we immediately knew that they were moving, because if they weren't doing nothing.... John O'Connor had to go somewhere so we went out for a sandwich, and I said, "Look, Ben, let's get the hell out of here. He's a friend of Dick Maguire, a small amount of votes. We don't want to get involved in a hassle." And he said, "You getting tired, Corbin?" He said, "You don't win elections that way." I said, "That's right. Let's get our ass back in there and straighten them out."

So we came back to see John O'Connor Conway, and I said, "John, I want to discuss what plans have you for election day?" "Oh, no trouble. I got a guy; I'm going to slip him twenty bucks and everything will be all right." I said, "What do you mean you got a guy and you're going to slip him twenty bucks?" "All I need is one guy to watch around. It's all you need. I said, "What about cars? Telephones?" "That's a lot of crap. For Christ's sake, everybody knows it's election day. What do you mean? Do we have to baby them? Listen, if an American doesn't vote if he's got that right, the hell with it." [Laughter] I said, "Ben, what are we going to do?" He said, "Corbin, you may not be tired, but I am. The hell with this son of a bitch." We drove ten miles out of town, but our conscience bothered us.

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We turned around. We got a hold of that Citizens' chairman. We spent about five hours with him, organizing voters and so on.

But going back to that question: These people had paper organizations. They consisted of five or six people. The only mistake a coordinator can make is to even talk to them, in my opinion. Just completely ignore them and take your citizens' organization plus labor—you can't omit labor. If you can't fit labor in your citizens' committee, you're not functioning, because they supply the money, the manpower, and the zeal for a cause. And invariably you find labor....

Now incidentally when Jack Kennedy made the tour, he wound up in Buffalo, and I ran across a labor leader who I had known in Chicago years ago, a Negro—I can't think of his name; he always used to smoke Parliament cigarettes—and he said, "Gosh, I got the shock of my life, Corbin, when I came into town and I found you're the big nuts." I said, "I wouldn't say that." He said, "Why didn't you contact us?" I said, "Why?" "Well, this thing is all loused up, this machine here." I said, "Well, Crotty's got a terrific machine." "Yes, he

has, for party hacks and for certain labor leaders he likes, but all of us are separated.” “What do you mean, ‘separated’?” I said. He said, “Well, he’s got a deal with Joe Maloney [Joseph P. Maloney] of the steel workers. We’re autoworkers. We’ve got more members than steel, but he cuts us out.” He says, “You made a mistake, Corbin.” I said, “Well, you’re here. You don’t need me.” He says, “You’re lucky I was here.” “Well, I’m awful sorry,” I says, “but I don’t think I ought to have taken them on.” He said, “Well, you made a mistake, Corbin. You should have.” So, one never knows, you see. In fact, even as good as Pete Crotty was, here was a labor leader at the U.A.W. who said I should have taken him on because the main ingredient of a citizens’ committee is labor.

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Now, we didn’t actually look for fights. We never had a chip on our shoulders, but when we ran across a county chairman.... Just to give you an example: Van Kennen of St. Lawrence County. Bob Kennedy was coming in. He [Van Kennen] was a buddy of Mike Prendergast; he wouldn’t move without talking to Mike. However, the first meeting we had, the first day when we had these five county chairmen coming into Albany, I talked to this fellow and he impressed me as very intelligent. And I asked him if he would object being the coordinator for all the county chairmen upstate. I told him I would talk to him and he would talk to the county chairmen. Well, I offered him the Citizens’ Committee. He said he was honored, that he would accept it. Excuse me. [Interruption]

STEWART: Do you remember when there started to be talk about the need to move DeSapio and Prendergast out after November?

CORBIN: Now, should I... Now, I had previously told you about the incident at Hyannis Port. Do you think that’s worth repeating or has no significance? Where Jack Kennedy himself wanted me to...

STEWART: Yes, yes.

CORBIN: Well, briefly, election night at Hyannis Port, President Kennedy came in from his home in the compound next-door and whispered to Bob. And Bob came over to me and wanted me to call Mike Prendergast and give him a hard time, which I did: for instance, telling him that he picked the wrong guy; I had the influence rather than the others. And he begged, begged repeatedly, to speak to the President, and we put on a little skit and said the President would want to talk to him but I wouldn’t let him. And then he begged for a telegram—and subsequently bombarded us with telegrams demanding—over the telephones demanding, which President Kennedy never did. If it was done, it was done by the Irish “mafia” who used the President’s name. But Jack Kennedy specifically said, “No telegrams to Mike Prendergast.” And Bob Kennedy said, “No

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telegrams.” If there were any available, it was not authorized by President Kennedy. In reply to your direct question, this is the first indication that they were aware, fully aware, of Mike’s shenanigans and DeSapio’s.

Of course, the first time is when Seigenthaler had called me in to Washington and said Bob Kennedy wanted to speak to me to conduct a class of the coordinators from across the country, and he had told me that DeSapio and Mike Prendergast had come in to speak to Bob Kennedy to get rid of me. And I asked John how he knew about it. He said, “I know because I talked to them.” And then he said, “Don’t worry about it. Just keep on doing as you’re doing, Corbin.” The amazing thing throughout the campaign in New York, all July, August, September and October, all this fighting I had with DeSapio and all these threats were being made you’re going to be removed the next day, you’re going to be kicked out, in my conversations with Bob it was always, “Pour it on.”

As a matter of fact, on a flight from Plattsburgh to the airport in Troy or Albany—I forget which one it was—Bob Kennedy told me on the plane, he said, “Now, Corbin...” I was resting, asleep, dozing, and Bob was talking to Ben Smith. You can check this out with Ben. Bob says, “Now, Ben, we’ve kept him quiet too long. You’re being too nice to these guys and it’s beginning to show up. I want you to rile him up.” I couldn’t believe my ears, so I kept my eyes closed and I kept listening. He says, “You mean it, Bob?” He says, “Yes.” And he says, “I can tell. The crowds aren’t coming out.” And he says, “Just tell him to go back to his own line. Lambast Prendergast. Get them all mad. Fire them up. Get them all going.” And he said, “Now be sure, Ben. I’m counting on you.” He said, “Tell him to keep it up right to election day, not to ease up.” Now this has to go down on the record. While I was dozing, he says, “Ben....

STEWART: Wait a minute. Hold on just a second.

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 3]

STEWART: Okay.

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CORBIN: I was dozing, supposedly dozing. He said, “Ben, I had another idea.” He said, “I have a real problem with the state of California. I have a feeling I’m going to lose it.” He said, “You overheard the argument I had with Larry O’Brien [Lawrence F. O’Brien] yesterday on the telephone,” which I also heard, where Larry O’Brien was insisting that Jack Kennedy spend more time in Ohio. Bob Kennedy told Larry O’Brien that he was running his brother’s campaign and he’d better do what he was told, and that he had spent too much time in Ohio, and if he couldn’t take Ohio by now, he never would, and that he had to take him to California, that he had to give him exposure, otherwise we could lose California. And Larry O’Brien fought him, [but] said he would. But Bob said, “He told me he would but I doubt very much he will. He’ll just say yes and disregard what I say.”

“Now, going back to California, Ben, I just got an idea sitting there. We’ve got two and a half weeks to go before election.” He says, “Supposing I took Corbin out of here. How much votes would you think it would cost us?” He said, “Oh, it’s very hard to tell that, Bob.

Maybe a hundred thousand.” “Well, if we’re going to take New York, as I think we are, it’ll be over a hundred thousand votes. So I am going to take Corbin and put him in charge of the state of California and let him loose and straighten out those kooks and those liberals.” He said, “They’ll be hopping in no time.” And Ben said, “It’s a brilliant idea.” And I said, “In a pig’s ass it is.” And I woke up. “You’re cheating,” Bob said. “You’re damned right I was cheating. You’re not sending me to California.” He said, “Now I’ve put up with enough from you for over a year and a half. You’re to do as you’re told, and I’m sick and tired of your tantrums. You’re going to California, and that’s it. Pack your bag. You’re getting the call tomorrow. You’re in charge of California.”

Bob asked me to come along with him to New York that night. I went along to New York with him. And I talked with him at the airport. In fact, he had the girls at the Admiral’s Club stay open until about 2:00 in the morning. And we had a conversation with Richard Harkness that night. He gave me an autograph, which I will show you later on (the newspaper gives you the date).

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Well, anyway, I said, “Bob, don’t send me to California.” He says, “Corbin, you’re the stupidest guy in the world. You’ve got New York and you’re going to have California. Gosh, what more do you want?” I said, “Bob, I want to bring the winner in.” He said, “Do you think we’re going to win?” I said, “We’re going to win New York, Bob. You can just feel it in the air. I want to be there when the horse comes in. I can’t want to be in California.” “I’m sorry, kid. You’re going to California.”

I rushed back to Syracuse, talked to Ben, and I pleaded with Ben. I said, “Now, Ben, they respect you. Why don’t you call up, call Jack Kennedy and tell him to tell Bob?” He says, “Well, Paul, you have to go to California.” I said, “I’ll tell you what, Ben, you make the decision as to whether you’d rather have me here or in California.” He said, “Well, I’ll tell you right now, Corbin, I need you right now.” “Why?” “You know why,” he said. “You’ll have these bastards working their butt off the last three weeks.” You see, Ben is deeply religious and a man of conscience. He will never do anything which he thinks is wrong. I know the fellow. I said, “Well, Ben, you just tell your conscience to think about it and you decide what you think is right for Jack Kennedy.”

And the next morning the phone rang, and it was John Seigenthaler. “Why you cheap, grubby politician.” “What’s the matter?” “You got to Ben Smith.” I said, “Why?” “He called Bob.” “What did he tell Bob?” “He said to Bob that no man was indispensable but he couldn’t guarantee New York unless Corbin was there. And Bob asked if he could guarantee New York if Corbin was there. He said, “I’d feel a lot better about it.” Bob said, “Okay Ben, keep him there.” And after the election in Hyannis Port, he [Bob] said, “Corbin, you should have gone to California. We lost it by sixty thousand votes. Damn it!”

STEWART: That would have made a difference.

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CORBIN: Then for about three or four days there was some doubt because it might have

even gone into the House of Representatives. Louisiana was acting up and he kept turning to me, “You should have gone to California. Corbin, you could have picked up a hundred fifty.” “Yes, I sure could have. I’m always good for that.” I thought I’d just point that out.

Now, going back to the same question as to when it really manifested itself. Well, I’ll tell you when: About December the tenth, or eleventh, 1960, I had left Hyannis Port and went home. Bob went to Mexico. And I had no idea, by the way, because it’s very hard to believe there’s such thing as patronage in jobs in Washington, coming from Wisconsin, which has a civil service system and very little patronage. And as the rule the only recollection I have when the Democrats’ won, which is Gaylord Nelson [Gaylord Nelson] as governor—I was chairman of the first campaign when he ran for governor. The first thing we decided when Governor Nelson was elected was to appoint Republicans, not to let the public think that here was a political machine—qualified Republicans. So I had always been orientated to appointing people on the basis of ability. That had nothing to do with jobs—of course, not realizing that Wisconsin was a unique state, probably the only one in the Union, with the exception of Minnesota, which had changed after a few years.

So I went back to my business. And I called Bob Kennedy up—I went to call Bob Kennedy up and it took me about ten days to get to him. And finally, by accident, one of the girls answered, Susan Steinko, who knew me. And I said, “Suzy, is Bob around?” She said, “He’s not here now but I’ll give him your number as soon as he arrives.” And about five minutes later the phone rang. It was Bob Kennedy. He said, “Where in the hell are you?” I said, “I’m up in Iowa. I’ve got a big campaign going, advertising campaign.” “You say an advertising campaign?” “Yes, I’m back to my business, trying to save it.” He said, “You must be crazy. Why don’t you come to Washington?” I said, “I haven’t got any money.” He said, “I’ll pay your fare.” “Well,” I said, “it’s not the fare.” I said, “Bob, the expenses, the hotel expenses are high and I really haven’t got that money.” I says, “I’ll see you a little later on. Maybe I’ll come in for the Inaugural Ball.” I says, “Think

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I can get an invitation?” He said, “You’re just crazy Corbin. Come on in. I’ll fix you up with a hotel room and I’ll pay you eighty dollars a week.” He was stingy. “It ain’t much, but all right, I’ll come in for that.”

I flew in and I came to the Democratic National Committee, and, hell, there were people lined up blocks long, policemen standing there. When I walked in and asked for Bob Kennedy people thought I was a nut. What’s this guy want to see Bob Kennedy for? Finally, I got to the girls who knew me and I got in. Bob put his arms around me and he said, “Where the hell have you been? Well, they’re cutting up the pie, Corbin.” I said, “What pie?” He said, “Well, all these jobs.” I said, “How many?” He said, “Thirty thousand.” “You’re kidding!”

I went out to his house for dinner that night and I said, “What do I do?” He said, “You’re my secretary.” And I became Bob’s secretary when he was on the Democratic National Committee. And he said, “Your job, Corbin, is to screen people. Whoever you want me to see, I will see.” I said, “You’re kidding.” So I sat there, just dumber than hell.

There were congressmen and senators coming up, and I would say no. But if it was some guy who helped us in the campaign, I'd say, "Sure, come on in." And Bob said to me one day, "Geez, I got a call from a senator who couldn't see me." I said, "Well, I thought you wanted to see Jim Manchin [A. James "Jimmy" Manchin] from West Virginia." "Yes, I guess you're all right, Corbin. Just keep doing what you're doing." He said, "Be sure and help those senators, Paul." He said, "One guy asked you to see me and you asked him how many buttons he passed out for my brother." He said, "That guy, he called me up." "Hell, Bob, he didn't." "I know, but you don't say those things in Washington, Corbin. You're in the big city now."

Well, anyway about the tenth of December Seigenthaler came up to me. He says, "Corbin, you're leaving. Bob wants you to do something more important than just sit there and ward off these bums." Seigenthaler had just returned. He had been somewhere and just returned—Nashville or someplace. And I said, "What does he want me to do?" He said, "He wants you to call up every county chairman in the state of New York and tell them to send in all the patronage requests

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to you." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, any things they want, Corbin, they send them to you." I said, "What the hell am I going to do with them?" "Well," he says, "you get together with Bob and you'll work that out." "Ah, that's a crock of shit," I said. "Let me talk to Bob," and walked in.

Bob had somebody—I forget who he had. I think he had Hy Raskin [Hyman B. Raskin] in there that day that I barged in. "I want to see you." He sent Hy out, and I said, "Seigenthaler tells you wanted me to call up these county chairmen." "Yes." "Why the hell didn't you tell me? Why did you have Seigenthaler do it for?" "Oh, I don't know, I just happened to tell him to get a hold of you. I wanted to talk about it. That's all." I said, "Of course you know what you're doing, don't you, Bob?" "What am I doing?" I said, "You're cutting the throat of Mike Prendergast." "That's right." I said, "What the hell for? We won! Let the old bastard stay." "I don't want you to do that, Corbin." I said, "Why?" "All right, Corbin, you got the list of those corrupt chairmen?" "Yes, I got them." "Now what do you think of Rufie Elefante [Rufus P. Elefante] in Utica? What would you do if he recommended a guy for U.S. Marshal?" "Why, shit," I said, "he's Mafia." "All right. Now if he's sending them to you, what would you do with them?" I said, "I'd throw it in the basket." "That's right. But he's sending them to Mike and Mike sends it to the White House. So I want you to watch every single one." I said, "That's the end of Mike Prendergast." He said, "That's right." And I said, "Okay."

STEWART: Who else was involved in the decision, do you know, besides the President and Robert Kennedy...

CORBIN: Nobody else.

STEWART: ...and possibly Seigenthaler.

CORBIN: No.

STEWART: Seigenthaler was.... But it was theirs totally, as far as you know?

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CORBIN: Yes. Nobody else.

STEWART: Yes, okay.

CORBIN: Now, I will say this, that I really didn't know how to handle it. So I started calling the chairman. Then the story appeared in the paper. Bob said, "Go home for Christmas Corbin and stop calling." "Fine." No. Excuse me, I said, "I'm quitting calling Bob. I'm going to go home for Christmas."

STEWART: Oh, you hadn't called them all?

CORBIN: Oh, no. There were fifty-seven. I'd call five or six a day, something like that. And I said, "I want to go home for Christmas." "Well, you can call from Janesville, can't you? You've got a telephone." I said, "Now, wait a minute, Robert." I said, "I have to pay for my airplane ticket. I'm stuck with the hotel bill. The hell with this crap," And he said, "Oh, cut it out, Corbin. Here's a credit card." "Fine. Well, the hell with that," I said. "Where's the eighty bucks you were supposed to pay me?" "Well, I'll tell you what you do," he said. "You send it in today. You go see Steve. Come back and we'll see what we'll pay you." "Well, okay."

So I got back home and I started calling from Wisconsin. About the twenty-third—no, it was the twenty-first; it was the day the story appeared—I got a call from Bob: "Hey, Corbin, ease up a little bit." "What's the matter?" "They got to my old man. Ease up a little bit." I says, "Okay, fine." "See you after the first of the year." "Okay, Bob."

I came back at the first of the year and I went to see Bob in his office. I used to go to his house about every day and we'd talk and have dinner. And he came in one day and he said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "Oh, I don't know if I want to do anything." He said, "What do you mean? Don't you want a job?" "Oh, I don't know." I says, "What's Seigenthaler going to do?" "He knows what he's going to do." I said, "Well, I don't." He said, "That's true what they say about you. You're dumber than hell." "What do you mean? Do you know what the hell you're going to do, Robert?" "You got me. I don't know either." He says, "I was thinking of missiles." Have you heard that before?

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STEWART: Yes, I think so.

CORBIN: The Defense Department. He said, "I had a meeting with him," with McNamara [Robert S. McNamara]. He says, "What do you think?" I said, "I have different views." He said, "Well, we'll discuss it tonight."

So I went to his house that night and he asked me what I thought. And I said, “I would run for the Senate.” “You’re dumber than hell, Corbin.” I said, “Why? There’s only a hundred senators in the world.” And I said, “You can have any other kind of a job and it’s all over history. Nothing. If you’re a senator, you’ll always know it.”

The next morning he came into the office and he was irritable. “Now, what the hell’s the matter with you, Corbin? What are you going to do?” I said, “I don’t know.” “Now, here’s that big green book.” Did you ever see it?

STEWART: I’ve heard of it.

CORBIN: “Pick a job out.” [Inaudible] A week later, I came back, and I said, “Okay, Bob. I picked out my job.” “What is it?” “Now look,” I said, “Bob, in that book there’s a job that covers the jurisdiction from the Virgin Islands to Guam. You travel all over.” “What is it?” I says, “National Parks. I want to head that. I can go to Hawaii; I can go to the Virgin Islands. You can go all over. That’s the job for me.” He said, “Shit, do you think I’m bringing you to this town to give you a job to feed the goddamned bears in Yellowstone Park? You better come up with something else.” “Well,” I said, “that’s the only one that intrigues me. There’s nothing else.” “What the—there’s this, that...” “I don’t want it. Well, there is something I want, Robert.” “What is it?” “If I’m to stay in Washington, I’d like to stay with you.” “It sure took you a hell of a long time to say it, Corbin. Fine, you’re with me.”

[-78-]

And then he became Attorney General. He called me up, and he says, “Okay, you’re not a lawyer.” I said, “No.” “Well,” he said, “I’m going to make you my special assistant.” “Fine.” He says, “Now, I started an F.B.I. report on you. Now before I do, Corbin, do you want this job?” I said, “Yes.” “Are you sure?” “Why?” “Well, I hear a lot of things about you.” “Well,” I said, “I got you beat, Robert. I don’t know if you know this, Robert,” I said, “but one day in Wisconsin Steve Smith, your brother-in-law, came up to me, and he said, ‘Corbin, we’ve got a lot of complaints about you.’ He said, ‘Of course, they all came from the Humphrey people, so we ran an F.B.I. check on you.’ He said, ‘You’re clean as a whistle.’” So I said, “Big deal, as far as I’m concerned.” “Well, of course, as you know, I started the F.B.I. report.”

And then I got a call from an editor of a paper in Wisconsin, Miles McMillin [Miles J. McMillin], who told me that two fellows had come in from New York and they tried to dig up everything they possibly could on me. I said, “Well, who is?” He said, “Well, it’s obvious, Corbin. It’s DeSapio.” And I said, “Oh.” And about a week later the first blast appeared against me in the *New York Times*. Then Seigenthaler called me, and he said, “Corbin, you’re in trouble.” “Why?” He said, “Ken O’Donnell has got Walter [Francis Eugene Walter] of the House Un-American Committee stirred up. He told Walter that he would be doing a great service to America and to the President if he torpedoed you. I said, “You’re shitting me.” He says, “No. They’re starting.” I said, “I give a shit.” [Interruption]

STEWART: ...New York.

CORBIN: Yes. I was calling county chairmen to give the patronage to me. And of course I would then take it to Bob Kennedy. There really wasn't much patronage. Well, there really was, come to think of it, a lot of jobs: Agriculture Stabilization, Small Business, Marshals, U.S. Attorneys. Now...

[-79-]

STEWART: They all sent in lists initially, or just how did it work?

CORBIN: Well, they sent me a letter recommending. Each county chairman would send you—have something you want. Now, traditionally in New York, there are various judicial districts to tie in with the Judiciary. There is the U.S. Attorney in New York City and there is one in Syracuse; I believe one in Buffalo or Rochester—I can't remember. And traditionally they would go to certain big areas, like U.S. Marshals. There was a U.S. Marshal in Rochester; there was one in Syracuse. And there's U.S. Attorneys also in those areas. For instance, the U.S. Attorney in Rochester—I can't remember which one it was: yes, it was Rochester; in one of those cities—he was a Dan O'Connell. And I can remember, and I think this should be noted, that even though Dan O'Connell had greatly contributed to Jack Kennedy's election, his nomination, especially his nomination, the conventions, when the names were sent in, their names were scratched, even though they sent them to me direct. Bob Kennedy scratched their names because they weren't clean.

The mere fact that they sent them to me didn't mean to say that they'd get the jobs. The only thing, the only promise, we made them is that we'd accept their recommendation only if it fit into a certain pattern. And if the man was no good we'd ask him for another one and another one. Maybe five, six times would they have to send us sometimes. And we would tell them we wanted a clean fellow, wanted an Italian. He had to fit. So....

[Interruption]

[END OF INTERVIEW #2]

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