

Charles Bartlett Oral History Interview – JFK #2, 2/20/1965
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Biographical Note

Bartlett, Washington correspondent for the *Chattanooga Times* from 1948 to 1962, columnist for the *Chicago Daily News*, and personal friend of John F. Kennedy (JFK), discusses the 1962 Steel Crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and JFK's personal life during the presidency, among other issues.

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Charles Bartlett – JFK #2

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Second of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Charles Bartlett

February 20, 1965
Washington, D.C.

By Fred Holborn

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HOLBORN: I think, Charlie, we might begin today by going in a little greater detail into a couple of the episodes in which you personally were particularly involved. Of those of a more official character in President Kennedy's [John F. Kennedy] life, there are two particularly that come to people's minds, to our minds. The first, in 1962, the so-called steel crisis, and then secondly, later that year, in the retrospect of the President's handling of the second Cuban crisis.

Beginning with the steel crisis,

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why don't you just in your own words, in your own way, tell us how you were a part of that, how you saw that whole episode?

BARTLETT: Well, my part in the steel situation was caused by the fact that I had a very close friend, Hal Korda, who was a New York businessman who had no business association with the United States Steel Company but for some reason was closely involved with the people that worked up there, with Tyson [Robert C. Tyson], and even with Roger Blough [Roger M. Blough]. As a matter of fact, back in 1960 at my request Korda had arranged for John Kennedy to sit down with Roger Blough and Henry Alexander. At that time I was very hopeful that Henry Alexander might be

the President's Secretary of the Treasury and had Korda, who was a great friend of Henry Alexander's, introduce him and they all had breakfast together up in New York.

Korda called me about four days before the steel price rise. Of course I'd been into some of it, when I was over at the White

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House I used to see the President conferring with Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg]. I remember one day in which they were working very hard to get Dave McDonald [David J. McDonald] to relax some of his demands. And I had been very impressed by the earnestness with which both Mr. Goldberg and the President were really trying to live up to their part of the role to negotiate a reasonable compromise of these differences. And particularly that Sunday when I saw them both working over Dave McDonald by long distance telephone to Florida, I realized that they were making a very sincere effort in behalf of the company. It wasn't just a question of holding the price line, but they were also trying to hold the wage demand.

But on this day Korda called me--it was a Friday--and Korda called me from New York and said that he had gotten a sniff around the Steel headquarters that the boys were going to raise their prices. And this was, of

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course, in April. It was very recently after the whole new pact had been signed, and it was rather surprising news to me. And I conveyed it immediately to the President. He said, "I'll check and call you right back," which he did. He apparently called Arthur Goldberg, because he called me a few minutes later and said that Goldberg couldn't find any sign of it, that there was no sign. I think Korda called again saying that he was pretty sure--the same day--that this was in the wind. But again Goldberg couldn't find any sign. And as far as I know, and I think the President told me that, this was the only warning of any kind that he had.

But I was up in Boston on, I guess it was a Tuesday night when the steel price thing was announced. In fact I was with Teddy Kennedy [Edward Moore Kennedy], and we stopped by the *Boston Globe*; Tom Winship told us about it. But then we had this.... So when I got back to Washington, why, the

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President was in all these meetings, and I didn't really talk to him until Wednesday night. Well, before he went on television, before he went on that press conference--that was on a Wednesday, I believe...

HOLBORN: Wednesday afternoon, yes.

BARTLETT: Wednesday afternoon. He called me that morning and asked whether I thought he should take a stiff or a conciliatory line. I said I didn't think he should do too much of either. I thought that just to play it rather straight and sort of suggest that various agencies of government might be interested in the

implications of this thing; try to scare them a little bit, but not overdo. Obviously, he went much stronger than that because I had a call from Korda about an hour after the President's press conference, and Korda had watched the thing with Blough and with Tyson at the Steel headquarters in New York. And

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he said that he thought the President had really thrown a scare into them with this thing.

That night I was having a dinner here--it was a stag dinner in honor of Arthur Krock. We had several young newspaper men, and we were all sitting around Mr. Krock trying to learn how to be great newspapermen. Korda called from New York about 11 o'clock and said that he thought that Tyson and Blough were ready to make peace with the President. He thought that they were so anxious to make peace that they would even be willing to rescind the price increase. I said that was very exciting, and I called the President immediately, but he was entertaining the Shah of Iran [Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi] and the dinner hadn't broken. So the operator said she'd have him call me as soon as he could get clear, which he did about a quarter of 12.

So his immediate reaction--I think this is the point that impressed me when I later saw how the business

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circles accused him of being intrinsically hostile to business. His immediate reaction was, "Well, gosh, if there's any way of making peace in this thing, let's make peace." I mean I've heard him say at that time, "My father [Joseph P. Kennedy] always told me that businessmen were bastards." And I guess he was saying it to everybody around the White House. And I think he was damned mad. But I mean that really wasn't the point of the thing. The point of it was when this opportunity came to make some peace, why, he jumped at it. So I got on the phone to Korda to say that the President was interested and would be very cooperative.

HOLBORN: Did he ask you to call?

BARTLETT: Oh, yes, the President asked me to convey this message back to them. Of course, it was the first gesture of cooperation. He said, "It would be useful if we could avert this debate between Tyson and Heller [Walter Wolfgang Heller] that is

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scheduled for television tomorrow morning." Martin Agronsky had gotten a hold of Heller, and they'd worked out this, that one was going to be in New York and one was going to be in Washington; they were going to debate the price increase on television on the "Today" show. Korda said if the President could get Heller not to go, well, then Tyson wouldn't go and then the whole thing would be called off.

Well, this sounded easy. I called the President, and he said he'd do it, but it was very hard because Heller was rather eager to debate. And Tyson was frightened that Heller would slip on and scoop him and get all the time. So they were very wary. And of course NBC [National Broadcasting Company] tried to make them increasingly wary when they saw they were attempting to get out of it. Heller finally agreed, but the next morning he was called by Martin Agronsky who said that Tyson was on his way to the studio. At this point

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this was about 7 in the morning--Heller called me and started shooting towards the studio. And they almost roped them in, but, as I gather what happened in New York, Tyson ended up in a drugstore across from the studio, ready to go on if Heller should show his face. They weren't trusting each other at all.

But at that point, why then Korda said that he thought the best thing would be for them to come down here. Tyson wanted to come down and perhaps negotiate with someone. And so the President said that he would be glad to arrange for Goldberg to meet with whoever came down. So I arranged for them to get a room in the Carlton Hotel. They were going to fly down, and they were going to meet at 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. But I think they finally went over to the Mayflower because they didn't like the room that they got there. And they met for several hours.

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HOLBORN: Who was "they"?

BARTLETT: Well, as I understood, it was Tyson, Goldberg--and I think that may have been all.

HOLBORN: Was Clark Clifford [Clark McAdams Clifford] a part of that?

BARTLETT: No, not at all. So then about 7 o'clock at night or perhaps a few minutes after 7, Korda called and said that the meetings with Goldberg had not produced anything and that they were about to fly back to New York; but that Tyson had the feeling that if he had the opportunity to see the President, that he might be able to create some understanding. So I called the President on this, and he said that he had to go to the Iranian Embassy. I don't think he wanted really to get involved anyway.

But he said that since the relationship, since the dealings with Goldberg seemed to have run the string, he would like to have Clark Clifford talk to Mr. Tyson before he went back to New York. So he asked me if I

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would get a hold of Clark, which I did. And Clifford, as I understand it, he seemed to be keyed in, so I gathered that the President had perhaps discussed the thing with him earlier in

the day. But it was interesting that the President thought of Clifford in this moment because, I guess on the previous night in talking to me, he said, "This thing would never have happened if United States Steel had had in their employ a lawyer like Clifford who understood the workings of a politician's mind and understood the position that the politicians had to protect."

Clifford agreed to meet, and we had a long discussion about where they should meet, and there didn't seem to be any ideal place because it was obvious that it should be rather secret. And finally we agreed that they would meet in the United States Steel plane which was parked at the Butler Terminal at National

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Airport. That is where, as I understand, the Steel people served dinner. And from that meeting came an arrangement to meet the next day in New York. The next day the President had Clifford and Goldberg go up to New York and meet with the larger group of the United States Steel people.

One of the interesting aspects of that meeting was that after the price line broke in Chicago, Block [Joseph L. Block] and Bethlehem broke the price line and rescinded their increases, why, the Steel people had no way of getting a hold of Roger Blough to tell him because Blough, when he went into this conference with Goldberg and Clifford, left word at his office that he didn't want to be disturbed by anyone in the world, there was nothing that should bother him. So these people didn't dare call to tell him that their game was up. So they had Korda call me to ask if I could get word through to Clifford to tell Blough that it was all over. So I finally got the President. The President was just taking off.

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He was going down to inspect some troops off Norfolk, and he was taking off on the plane, and he said, "All right, you call him." I was trying to get him to do it. But he said, "You call him and tell him!" So I finally was able to reach Clark Clifford in New York, and he got the word. But it was a very interesting episode.

Then after that I dealt with the President when he was trying to put his speech together for the Chamber of Commerce group, I guess it was a few days later. And it seemed so unkind, as I watched him work over that speech and discussed it with him, the allegations of business that he was out to gut them or was out in any way to cut their throat. There certainly was a moment when there was a desire to punish United States Steel for what really seemed, from the White House view, to be an act of extreme perfidy. And

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I think the President really was interested in all the possible ways of applying punishment. I think that those were examined rather carefully by McNamara [Robert S. McNamara], by Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy].

Of course, perhaps I should tell the story that he told me of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] men who woke President Homer [Arthur Bartlett Homer] up in Bethlehem.

I mean that was--this fellow was told to get this information from Mr. Homer. He talked to the newspaperman in Bethlehem who remembered having been told by Homer something about the price increase. They were trying to establish a conspiracy. And he talked to him, and by the time he got through with him it was about 10 o'clock. So he got to Mr. Homer's house a little after 10 and Mr. Homer was out to dinner and didn't get back until 12 o'clock. So, therefore, the interview couldn't take place until sometime after midnight. But this became the great midnight raid of the FBI, which was highly overdone.

I think the

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President's sort of antagonism in the thing was really--I think Bobby did see a conspiracy case in the thing. I think Bobby was very intent on prosecuting it. I think that the President, you know, was less intent in every direction. He just wanted to get the thing solved. He said to me, and said to me several times in this period, that he believed that if Blough had only been smart enough to wait until summer he could have had his price increase and there would have been no trouble; it was just the juxtaposition of the increase with this settlement. And I think that he felt that U.S. Steel, which had not raised its prices since 1958, I believe, was entitled to an increase. The President was very un-doctrinaire in all of his conversations with me on this whole point.

I think that in that speech which went over so badly at the Chamber of Commerce, I think he attempted to

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say that he had no axe for business. But like these sort of madneses that develop, I think this fixation of that spring that Kennedy was somehow out to cut the throats of business just spread, and there was nothing that any human being could have done, including the President, to stop it. Of course when he went up to Yale, I personally felt and told him I thought that speech at Yale was a mistake because I didn't think it was necessary to go over this ground again or to even introduce any new thoughts because at this point the business community wasn't thinking; it was in an emotional grip.

HOLBORN: It was probably too close in time to the event.

BARTLETT: Well, it was. I mean the stock market had gone off, so they all felt poor, and then this speech at Yale which was written in some rather original language and rather original approach, I thought that was mistake. But I don't think the

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President did anything in that whole period that he really didn't have to do. The only thing that anybody could criticize him for was taking a rather fierce position in that press conference. But fierceness is a relative thing.

HOLBORN: Do you think that as a result of your original clue which you sent him on the weekend previous that he had some premonition why Blough was coming in to see him that Tuesday?

BARTLETT: I would think that by the time...

HOLBORN: The general view is that he was taken totally by surprise, but you think that, though Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] may not have known, the President did.

BARTLETT: I think that that was the only warning he had because he did tell me that later. And the fact that Goldberg could find nothing there, I think he put it out of his mind at that point because I must say that when I heard about it in Boston, why, you know, that was three or four days later, and he sort of had forgotten, and this thing comes back. I don't know whether....

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But I know he didn't get any other advance warnings.

HOLBORN: But you had no sense in the days afterwards that he had any sense of personal grievance about this?

BARTLETT: No, I think he felt very badly about the whole thing. I admired him enormously in this thing because I felt that he was so even and so balanced, and I thought that he was taking such particular care to be fair, you know, not to be rigid.

HOLBORN: Well, leaving aside people like Mr. Homer, but the people that you were closest to, Mr. Korda and, through him, Mr. Tyson and Blough, did they feel that they had been mistreated in their negotiations? Did they feel a strong sense of personal grievance?

BARTLETT: No, I really don't--my impression, of course, you never know with, these fellows because.... As I say, Korda's not a steel man; Korda's just somebody

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who knows these guys. But the feeling I got was that.... Then actually Blough came down and had dinner with a group of newspapermen sometime after, and at that point he made the rather poignant observation that there is no good time to raise the price of steel. And I think that they were sort of trapped and that they were trying to find a way out of the trap, and they sprung this, and it didn't work, and then they realized that they'd made a mistake. I think that

Blough was very big about the thing. I don't believe that he ever nursed any grudge against Kennedy. I think it was a failure of communication; it was a failure of understanding; it was the failure of a businessman to understand the problems of a President. I think that in those terms it was very sad because, as the President said to me, the thing could have been so easily avoided.

HOLBORN: Moving from this into the wider subject, what do

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you really feel was President Kennedy's view of the business community and of businessmen as politicians and businessmen as public servants in government? Did he ever speak to you about this?

BARTLETT: Well, he did, because I must say that I thought that one of the things that I particularly hoped I would be helpful in was this role of sort of keeping him in touch with business. I don't think that President Kennedy had an enormously high opinion of most businessmen.

I think that he was very impressed by Henry Alexander, for example, when he met him up there. I remember that he said to me--Henry Alexander went the other way finally, became the head of a volunteer committee for Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon]--but I remember that he said to me that if Henry Alexander had, it wasn't even necessary that he would have supported him, but if he only had not gotten on the

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letterhead of that Nixon committee, he said he could have made him his Secretary of the Treasury. I think Alexander was the kind of guy that appealed to him.

Of course, we know that he had an enormous feeling for Robert Lovett [Robert A. Lovett] and respect. Of course, Lovett is also a government man, as well as a businessman. But I don't think there were too many businessmen. I remember one time he said to me, "Gosh, I just don't see how Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] sat around evening after evening with all those businessmen." I think that basically they seemed to him rather ponderous and rather dull.

HOLBORN: It was a sense of boredom as much as ideology, then.

BARTLETT: Yes, it wasn't ideology. I think he had an enormous sense of their selfishness, but I think he was willing to grant them that. But I think he didn't really crave their company. I think this may have been one of the

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problems. And yet he used to.... I remember Henry Ford [Henry Ford II] used to come down and have dinner with him before he was President. I can remember going to his house on several of those occasions. And there was Tom Watson [Thomas J. Watson, Jr.]. But basically I don't think it was a breed that fascinated him.

HOLBORN: But not a really--it's not a question of, it's important.... I mean it's not really, in your mind, that it was an ideological difference.

BARTLETT: No, it wasn't a rigidity. It wasn't a rigidity at all.

HOLBORN: It was a personality type.

BARTLETT: And I think he was wedded from the moment that he got into the White House, to the whole idea of trying to do what Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] actually has done, which is to try to unify the country. I think he really wanted that, and I think that this was very much in his mind.

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HOLBORN: What did Kennedy learn from this crisis as against what Blough....

BARTLETT: As against what Blough learned, huh?

HOLBORN: Do you think it changed his conduct of the office at all, subsequently?

BARTLETT: No, I think it, I think it--he kept his contacts. No, I really don't. I can't look at any change in his philosophy as a result of this thing. I think he regarded the damned thing as a tragic error; you know; it was just a misunderstanding which really needn't have happened. I did observe, and he never said anything to me, that when Goldberg went on the Supreme Court and Willard Wirtz [William Willard Wirtz] came in--and Wirtz, of course, represented a much more passive approach toward these labor problems and did not seek to involve the President--I noticed that he accepted that. He never complained about it. He never seemed to me to sort of miss the days in which he

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was exerting a more trenchant role.

HOLBORN: Well, in a way, that never really got tested under Wirtz. There was never a serious, major strike. It all happened just after...

BARTLETT: That's right. But he never showed any sign to me of feeling that--he never gave me any reaction to the marked change, really, that Wirtz

brought into that department, into the whole labor relations of the Administration.

HOLBORN: On the other side, did he ever make any general comments of labor leadership, with whom he had to work much more closely, particularly when he was running for the presidency?

BARTLETT: No, the only funny story, I remember the night that he was nominated Bobby said that he'd answered the telephone. He was out at his father's house in Bel Air, and he answered the telephone and he turned and said, "George

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Meany wants to come out." And Bobby said, "You mean to see Dad?" He said, "No, to see me." [Laughter] No, he never showed any particular--I never had any enormous sense.... I always had the feeling that he enjoyed Goldberg and was sort of slightly exasperated by him, but had an enormous respect for his intelligence. I had a feeling that with him I think most of these labor leaders were sort of like the business leaders. They were just to be dealt with. I think he viewed them sort of as objects in a game, and not as adversaries or as allies. As you know, his old attitude toward labor's role in politics was very negative. He never felt very strongly about labor's ability to deliver in an election. But I think the fact that they did contribute to that narrow victory in 1960, I never heard him say that after he got into the White House.

HOLBORN: Somehow, he always, as President, seemed to do

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very well before labor conventions. It was an audience he began to find easier and easier to talk to. It is true, though, isn't it, that even in 1962 he did recoup quite a lot of ground with business. It was also the year, after all, of the Trade bill in which he managed that summer to get...

BARTLETT: Well, of course, the tax bill I think was the thing, remember, and then he had that enormous test on the tax thing. And I thought he handled that extremely coolly, where you had all these sort of investment types in New York say that unless we had a tax cut before Congress adjourned, we would have a recession before the first of the year. And I must say that I don't think he was ever given the credit that he deserved for staying cool in that situation. I think his coolness was prompted by the realization that it would be damned hard to get a tax bill out of Congress between August and

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October. But he certainly stayed cool, and he was right, the economy didn't buckle. I think this was one of his great tests.

I have an interesting memorandum that Walter Heller gave me about that time. This was when we were getting ready for the tax cut, maybe it was a little after this, and you're getting ready to go into this big, two stage tax cut. And Heller wrote a memorandum to the President. He urged the President to go through some kind of a show of economy, to make some dramatic gesture towards economy, something that would impress the business leadership that he really wanted to pare government expenses. Heller made the very logical, cool point that this would make it easier for the businessmen to sign on to the tax cut, that they wanted some reason to sign on; they were looking for an excuse; they were all for it; and if he would

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just do this, go through some gesture, fire some people, no matter how superficial it was, it would have a very valuable effect in rallying the business sentiment.

Well, Heller told me at the time that Kennedy had rejected this idea, rejected it flatly because he didn't like that kind of sort of showiness. It would have been a sort of a medicine man pitch, and Kennedy was, as you know, not a medicine man. And it was rather amusing because I'm sure it was on the basis of a copy of that same memorandum that President Johnson began his lights out campaign some time later. And it worked very well.

HOLBORN: Yes. Again, now we get speculative, but in November of 1963 President Kennedy was about to make a decision as to whether or not to break the magic barrier of 100 billion. Do you think he would have tried to keep it

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under 100 or do you think this really, again, was not a matter of grave importance, symbolic importance to him?

BARTLETT: He liked those Keynesian [John Maynard Keynes] budgets, I think. He used to say to me, he said that "Everybody talks about our deficit; everybody wants us to cut spending." He said, "They don't seem to understand that that deficit, that that spending is what's keeping this economy pumped up." He said, "I love that deficit," he used to say. And I think he would have probably done whatever it took to keep the economy floating. He was very wedded to the Keynesian economic theory, in my opinion.

HOLBORN: He learned his Harvard economics after he left Harvard.

BARTLETT: He did. He learned them here, you know. Did we go through that? Did we go through the courses we used to have in economics? I guess we did.

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HOLBORN: Yes, you mentioned those in the.... What reactions did the President give to you about the role Walter Heller played during the time he was in office?

BARTLETT: Well, I think he liked Walter Heller. Of course, he had great regard for Walter, and I think he.... Then we had more problems during the steel thing. There was another television debate scheduled for the next day-- I forgot to include that--and we had a hell of a time getting that one called off because by this time Heller was rather anxious to get on and express his viewpoint. And so Kennedy wouldn't call him up again and tell him to get off. He said, "You do it, Charlie." And I'm sure that Walter Heller was a little surprised to be called in the middle of the night by a newspaperman and be told he mustn't go on television in the morning. But he didn't.

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Of course, Kennedy, I think, enjoyed Heller; I think he enjoyed Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon]; I think he had great respect for both of them. And the fact that their views conflicted many times, I think it made him probably enjoy them more. I mean, to me this was one of the most unique features, and probably one of the most remarkable features of his Administration, was this consensus that operated so well for the good of all the country in economic spheres. And out of this thing he was the sort of the balance wheel, and out of it came some extremely good judgments, which kept the economy on an even keel for well past his death. I think that the...

HOLBORN: Somehow it didn't sour into feuding, either.

BARTLETT: I must say it didn't. Of course, I think that Heller and Dillon are uniquely able men, and, you know, I don't think that either

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of them are vindictive. I think they both dealt with these things in a very enlightened way. I've never had any sense of bitterness between them.

HOLBORN: Did he look upon Roosa [Robert V. Roosa] as the principal advisor or was he more in the back room as far as he was concerned?

BARTLETT: Well, I don't have any direct impression of this from him. My impression as a newspaperman is that Roosa was in most of those meetings. He never mentioned Roosa to me.

HOLBORN: Well, we can turn then to the later part of this same year. Where, I

guess, your testimony to history becomes particularly important was the debate that arose out of the article which you and Stewart Alsop wrote in the *Saturday Evening Post* subsequent to the Cuban crisis. Here again, it's probably better if you develop this your own way.

BARTLETT: Well, this is one of those amazing episodes that begins rather simply on the day that

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Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev] threw in the towel after the Cuban missile crisis. I had for some reason seen more than usual of the President during the week before. I think the pressure of this period made him desire more to have friends around. I think I was over there for dinner three times in the week, or something like that, or more for just small groups which he would break up about 9:30 and go back to the cables. But I think he did feel the need for a little bit of relief from the pressure of this thing. So I had seen a little of it from his viewpoint and had been struck by the coolness with which he sort of bore it.

I remember one night, it was after the.... As we had dinner, why, he had just gotten word from the Navy that the Russian ships were standing off, that they weren't trying to come through his blockade. And

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this looked like pretty good news, and I kept saying, "Why, I should think you'd feel like really celebrating." And he said, "Well, you don't want to celebrate in this game this early," he said, "because anything can happen." And as I was going to bed--we'd left the White House. I think we stopped at Bill Walton's for a night cap. And then I was getting into bed about 11:30, and the phone rang from the White House. The President said, "You'd be interested to know I got a cable from our friend, and he says that those ships (of course, he was referring to Khrushchev) are coming through, they're coming through tomorrow. So it was on that kind of a note that he had to go to sleep.

But I must say that the President's coolness and temper were never more evident than they were that week. He kept a very balanced.... He

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was enormous. I remember the first time that I was aware of the damned missile crisis, in retrospect, was coming back from New Haven on the preceding Wednesday. I'd been very impressed by something that.... I'd had lunch with Thomas Mann [Thomas Clifton Mann], who was then the Ambassador to Mexico, and he had some theory about dealing with the businessmen in Mexico City and he wanted the President's support. And he'd come to me.

So I was on this press plane. Well, I was on the President's plane. I was actually one of the pool reporters coming back from the campaign trip to Connecticut, and he had me come back into the compartment. And I was talking to the President. I guess Kenny and

O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and the group was there, the political group, Pierre [Pierre E.G. Salinger]. We talked for a while about the campaign and so forth, and then I said, "This Mann thing," I said, "I'd like very much to have you see this Ambassador

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Mann from Mexico while he's up here. He's got some very interesting ideas." And just the mention of Mexico--it was an amazing thing. The sort of buoyancy of having been out in the fresh air and campaigned with cheering crowds and all that, the buoyancy just left him and he almost--his shoulders sort of caved, his face took on lines and he said, "Boy, Charlie, do I have problems down in that region." And his whole face.... And that was, as I look back on it, of course that was the--he'd just learned that the day before...

HOLBORN: That morning.

BARTLETT: That morning I guess, yes. So, after this denouncement, I guess we all went over to a Rusk [Dean Rusk] press conference in the State Department. I was rather excited by this thing. And I ran into Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan]. And somewhere in my mind the idea of sort of doing this great chapter in the Kennedy Administration had already

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occurred; that this was a great story; it should be told, well, and the fact that I had seen a certain amount of the President during the week, and I had been following it awfully closely, and I'd seen Bobby and so forth. I thought that maybe I ought to do it. And Dungan sort of delayed(?) me. I said, "This wouldn't be a bad article to write." I said, "It would be a good magazine article because the President certainly looks good from everything I know." And he said, "Yes," he said, "I think somebody's already started." He said, "I think they've already decided they're going to give it to somebody." I didn't pay much attention to that. But then I talked to Stewart Alsop the next day, and he thought it was a good idea. And so we said we'd do it.

I was over there for dinner, I think that night, Monday or Tuesday night, and I said to the President that I was going to do

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this thing. He said, "Well, I understand there are some others also." And he said, very clearly intending to notify me that he had no intention of being a source for my article, he said, "My role, I've decided, in all these articles will be not to talk to the writers who are doing them."

He said, "After all, I would just be putting credit on myself." And I think that that was a.... He said, "There's no point in sitting around patting myself on the back." So from that point I never had any inclination to go to him on any point of the article. It seemed to me he's made it very clear he didn't want to be a part of my article or anybody else's.

But when we did run into this story about Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] having proposed to give up the Guantanamo Naval Base, plus the missiles in Turkey, plus the missiles in Italy, having proposed this at an NSC [National Security Council] meeting, or at least at a meeting of the

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Ex Comm [Executive Committee], why, I was fascinated by it. And we checked it out very quickly, and as you know, there were seventeen people. We first heard of it from somebody who was not in the meeting who had learned it from somebody who was. We checked it, and it checked out very quickly. There were sixteen people there. Most of them did not like Adlai Stevenson, and most of them were very happy to verify it. And I think that most of them had been rather shocked by the proposal as it came out.

So, I did, in the course of another dinner at the White House, with the President, say that this was one piece of information that we had picked up. I guess it was down in Middleburg. And he had that sort of wary look, you know, but he said, "Did you hear about that?" I said, "Yes, we got it." He said, "Are you going to put it in the

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article?" I said, "Yes." He sort of shook his head. That was the only real comment that he made. My own guess, knowing him well, would be that he was not too displeased that this had turned up. I don't think at that point that he or I had any idea that this thing would be linked to him or that it would be a gesture of rebuff to Adlai. I think, my impression was, that he had been rather shocked when Adlai had proposed this in the meeting and, you know, felt that it was a part of the history of the thing.

But anyway, the article was prepared, and I guess that when Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] came running into his office on the Saturday before the magazine came out with the article in his hand, I guess he was then aware that it was going to be a major contretemps. Because I was in New York--I was in Far Hills, New Jersey, on that Sunday night, and he telephoned me, and he said that

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he hoped that it wasn't going to be too rough. At this point he knew it was going to happen.

On that Sunday night before the article came out, I talked to the President. I guess he called me. I was up in New Jersey with my wife's [Josephine Martha Buck Bartlett] parents. And we were talking about the thing. He was obviously then aware that there was going to be some excitement. And later that evening I happened to talk to Joe Alsop, who was in Washington, on the telephone. And Joe told me that he was writing an article that would say that it had been the President's desire to get rid of Adlai and that this might be the occasion on which Adlai might go out of the Cabinet. I said that I didn't think that it was the President's desire to get rid of Adlai. And he said he was absolutely certain that it was, that he had never liked Adlai, and that he had had enough of him.

So I called the President to tell him that Joe was

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writing this article. He was really shocked because he really did not want to get rid of Adlai for many reasons. I don't think that he had anybody else he particularly wanted to send up to the United Nations; I think he had a respect for Adlai Stevenson; I think that with all the limitations that we know are part of Adlai, I think he was very unanxious to take on the wrath of all of Adlai's supporters. I think this probably left him very anxious to keep Adlai in the Cabinet until after the election.

So I kept calling back. And I'd called Joe, and I'd say, "Now, Joe, this isn't true. I can tell you with some assurance now, this isn't true. You really better not write it." And Joe kept getting furious at me and he'd say, "That's balderdash, Charlie. Don't give me that twaddle." So then I'd called the President and say, "Look, I can't do anything with him. You better give him

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somebody who's an official to get a hold of him." And I think later the President had McGeorge Bundy get hold of Joe and persuade him that the whole thing was not really a scheme to get rid of Adlai.

But it made me feel very sad, this thing, because it blew high. It would have been easy for me after we'd gotten this information about Adlai to take my name off the article. And, in retrospect, that is exactly what I would have done because I think that it created a very hot two weeks for the President, which, as he pointed out to me with some sardonic glee, this could have been the happiest two weeks of his life in the White House. I don't think it was because of this one thing. But I think that he then made an enormous effort over Adlai afterwards. I think he had Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] go up and spend some time with him at the United Nations. I think that relationship worked out all right. Before he

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died he told me that he expected Adlai to become his Ambassador in London after the election. And I think that might have been a good place for Adlai.

HOLBORN: But he never took you aside and said, "Look you've got this wrong or that wrong," or he never attempted to dispute the article in its content.

BARTLETT: No, I think his feeling was the article was accurate. I think he would have stood behind every aspect of the article.

HOLBORN: Because he did tend to do that even when he hadn't helped a person.

BARTLETT: Yes. No, like the rest of us, and certainly like me, I think he might have objected to the emphasis upon Adlai. I mean the whole picture

play and everything did suggest that the whole article was written to point out that Adlai had no backbone, which it really was not. And I always resented that.

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I thought the *Saturday Evening Post* did a very unfair job, treated me unfairly. In fact, I concluded then that I would not only never collaborate with anybody as long as President Kennedy was alive, but I would also never write an article for the *Saturday Evening Post* as long as Clay Blair [Clay Drewry Blair, Jr.] was editor because I thought it was very unfair.

HOLBORN: Well, a lot of it was the captioning right under the pictures.

BARTLETT: It was the way it was played and advertised and built up and that kind of thing. I was caught between a cross fire in the coming week because Stewart Alsop wanted me to go on--Stewart Alsop was out of the country, but he wanted us to answer back. He wanted to keep hitting back at Stevenson. And the President, of course, his best interest was to have me do nothing and say nothing. They put Stevenson on "Today," if you remember, and Stevenson bitterly attacked

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us both and said we were infants. So I had no choice except to refuse to go on "Today," and to say nothing. It was a very painful period even for me, I must say. There was no joy in it because it was particularly annoying to me as a newspaper man to have something that I knew was absolutely accurate and to be attacked for it. I must say that the fury of Adlai's supporters was keenly felt.

HOLBORN: Did you have a lot of visits, calls, letters? How did this all... I mean, from Adlai's side, what kind of representations were made to you?

BARTLETT: Well, nothing. It was all done in the press and the television and Adlai himself. Some of his friends down here would get very vehement when I saw them, and it had a lot of ramifications. I must say that it was an amazing sort cause celebre because it really blew out of

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nothing. And finally after a month it died very slowly. It seemed painfully slowly to me. But it finally died, and I was glad to see it gone.

HOLBORN: Were there any other periods at which you felt that you performed for the President either as a listening post or as an intermediary where he either asked you to convey information to somebody or asked you to obtain information of any character?

BARTLETT: No. The only other thing I got involved in was unofficial and there were some public relations things which he asked me to do for him a couple of times. But the only business involving an official affair was after that junta had seized control in Cuba--I mean in Peru, excuse me, in Peru. And Fernando Berckemeyer; who had been a childhood friend of Mrs. Kennedy's and had known John Kennedy and knew me very well, called and asked if I would convey to the President his statement that he would not stay on as Ambassador

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if he did not feel that this new government was true blue, and Ambassador Berckemeyer said that his great loyalty was to the President and to Mrs. Kennedy and that he wanted him to know that. So I called him, and at that point the President said, "Well, why don't you tell him that we need this; he gave me three conditions that they had to meet for recognition. If they'll just do this, then we can give them the recognition they're seeking." So I conveyed that, and then Berckemeyer...

There were several calls back and forth. And I remember they were interpreted in the State Department to indicate a sort of intervention that some of the liberals who very much resented my part in it. And it was leaked into Drew Pearson, and there was quite a fuss made about it. But as far as I was concerned, it was a very casual thing because I knew very little about Peruvian politics or the

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junta. But actually they finally did get recognition. Drew Pearson once wrote that I told the Ambassador; the first time that he knew that they would get recognition was when he was told by me. I don't think that's true. I think all I did was to tell them that if they did certain things then the President would feel it was possible for him to recognize them.

HOLBORN: And was there ever an occasion, as also has been apparently claimed a couple places, that the President asked you to try to obtain signals from contacts in the Russian Embassy and those quarters?

BARTLETT: No, just that, of course, during the Cuban missile crisis this fellow Georgi Bolshakov [Georgi N. Bolshakov] came to me--and Georgi Bolshakov is Bobby Kennedy's great friend, as you remember--and came to me and asked.... The story was that after the Cuban missile crisis broke, after it broke in the public domain, Bobby Kennedy said to me, "Tell Georgi Bolshakov that

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I'm very disappointed in the Soviet Union." And so I called Bolshakov and asked him to have lunch and gave him this message. No, I gave him the message, and he said, "Well, would you have lunch with me?" So we had lunch. And he had a piece of paper in his pocket. It had obviously been ____ important.

This paper was something that apparently Khrushchev had dictated to him to tell the President. He had written it down as Khrushchev said it. It was his expression of greatest fondness that we will do anything to further the peace. It was all this hypocritical, sort of obviously attempting to divert Kennedy while those missiles were put into place. Georgi hadn't been able to deliver it through Bobby because Bobby was annoyed at the Russians because they'd been putting the troops into Cuba, and so he hadn't been able to see Bobby. So I conveyed this to the President. Of course, by this time the

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missile crisis was.... I think it had already been conveyed through other channels. I'm not sure.

HOLBORN: Do you accept the Scali [John Scali] episode as written?

BARTLETT: I don't know. The Russians tell me it's not true. The Russians tell me it's completely untrue. And I don't know.

HOLBORN: But you never heard it mentioned at the time of being a key?

BARTLETT: No, I never heard it mentioned. They make the point that if they had had any contact like that, they would have used me because they knew that I could get it to Kennedy. So I don't know.

HOLBORN: Well, now if we can move into somewhat different terrain. We kind of began this interview last time, and I think this should bring us into the presidential period. You were probably in as good a position as anybody to see Kennedy in off hours, Kennedy on vacation, Kennedy at relative repose on evenings and particularly on all the weekends which you spent with him. Can you describe a little

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bit what this was like, and do you accept the view that he had an absolute separation between his official life and his private life, or did one throughout these weekends feel that his presidential responsibilities--were they clearly visible at all times?

BARTLETT: The job was never very far from him, was it? I must say that you'd you'd go there for dinner, and he'd always say, "Get there at 7:30."

Then you'd negotiate a little bit with Mrs. Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln], you'd find that if you arrived by a quarter of 8, you were going to still probably be a little bit early. And so you'd get up there, and George would put you in the Oval Room, and you'd generally sit there for ten minutes. Maybe Caroline [Caroline Bouvier Kennedy] would come in. You'd talk with your wife. I got so that I'd generally bring a newspaper. And then

about eight o'clock, generally on the button, the President, having taken his swim, would swing in very jauntily.

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He'd always, almost always, be in a very good mood, and always became very interesting from the moment he arrived because he had that marvelous capacity of sort of keying things up. He was never flat, let's say. And we talked generally. We'd talk about articles that had been written. We'd talk about things that had occurred in the press, latest column by some columnist or some development. We'd talk about politics.

Generally our dinners were just tremendous. And in most of them, why, the President would talk about just general subjects of national interest most of the time. We would talk about politics. Mrs. Kennedy and Martha would talk. I must say it was great fun. And it was generally over very early. He'd go to bed and read, you know, by 10 or so. It wasn't a long thing. Sometimes there was a movie, but I noticed that he never really stayed in the movies, never watched them through.

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I think his back bothered him in the movies, and he'd get up and leave. But I think this complete change of pace he liked, even if only for an hour or two hours. And when he'd go back into the thing, there'd always be a guy lurking in the background with a brown envelope marked "Urgent--President's eyes only." But there was that tremendous sense of gaiety which I think was an enormous asset to him in the White House. And of course John-John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] and Jackie. And Jackie was great fun at those dinners because she could keep him gay and tease him a little bit. And it was fun.

HOLBORN: Did you ever talk about the election of '64? What did he foresee?

BARTLETT: We used to talk a lot about that. I always had the impression that he viewed George Romney [George W. Romney] as his stiffest. I don't think he ever thought he'd be lucky enough to get Barry

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Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] as his opponent. I think he had a sort of a sinister feeling that George Romney would be there. And I don't think he ever quite knew whether Romney would be tough or very easy. I think he felt that he'd be a sort of a surprise figure and that he could be damned tough. I think that George Romney worried him. I think what you felt in him as his life came to a close was you felt in him sort of a gathering tension towards the election.

HOLBORN: He really didn't think it was going to be so easy?

BARTLETT: I don't think he thought it was going to be easy at all. I think he liked

to hear that it was going to be easy. And I think that he recognized the logical reasons why it might be easy. But I don't think he was, he wasn't going to miss any bet. My golly, he had all of you fellows working on different aspects of the argumentation for the campaign. I think if he'd run, it would have been an extremely

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interesting campaign. I mean it would have been a debate. I think he would have debated Cuba. I think he would have debated these issues. It would have been a much more interesting campaign.

HOLBORN: Yes, and I gather he'd pretty much made a decision that he was not only willing to have debates but even possibly appear on things like "Meet the Press" or that style of...

BARTLETT: Probably, yes. Well, I don't think he would have--he would have done it much differently than Johnson. I think he would have just.... I'm not sure he was happy that he was committed to that debate. I sort of got the impression that he sort of wished he hadn't so quickly committed himself to debate as President. That was my impression.

HOLBORN: But, he felt it was irreversible.

BARTLETT: Well, yes. He had no thought of getting out of it. He knew he was committed to a debate.

HOLBORN: Now, unlike Truman [Harry S. Truman] or Johnson he seemed to like

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to get away from the White House. Did you have a strong sense of this?

BARTLETT: He loved those weekends, yes. He loved those, the helicopter and the whole change of scene. I must say that on the weekends, he spent a few weekends there, and on a couple of them I was down. We took a long walk one weekend. One of them was rather interesting because we took a walk--he was all alone, I don't know where Jackie was--but we took a walk. It was a beautiful spring day. It was the last year of his life. And we walked all over, first around the White House and then he had the car take us to the air museum. And he went through all the air exhibits. And then he had the car take us down to the Mall. We walked down that long reflecting pool towards Lincoln's [Abraham Lincoln] monument. I said, "Let's go up and see Lincoln's monument." By this time this crowd was sort of gathering around. And he

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was very resisting; he had no anxiety to go up there. He said, "No, we're not going to do that."

Then we got into the car, and we drove over to Arlington Cemetery. It really was rather amazing because we wandered all through that, where those stones are at the top of the hill. We didn't go down to of the part of the hill where he was buried. We walked sort of up around, into the Lee Mansion. And he'd never been there, nor had I. We really went through it all. There were some very nice fellows from the Park Service who showed us through it. And he said, "Wouldn't this be a fine place to have the White House?" And we discussed that day where he was going to be buried. He said, guess I'll have to go back to Boston." And I remember arguing for the National Cemetery. But we left it sort of up in the air.

But this trip was very much in my mind the night that he was killed when Bob McNamara was bold enough--I'm

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not sure that I ever would have been bold enough to try to suggest to the family where the President should be buried. But Bob McNamara had urged that he be buried at Arlington. And as soon as I heard Bob say this, why, then I, of course, jumped in with this thing and I did say that it is such a beautiful place, and it was something that he loved and was part of the heritage that he loved. So I must say that I've always been grateful to Mrs. Kennedy for making the decision to bury the President because I think the country's going to be richer for it.

HOLBORN: In a curious way, though he liked to get away from the place, he did have some identity with Washington, too, which many presidents didn't.

BARTLETT: Well, he always went away. I mean even when he was a young congressman, he used to take that plane to Florida or to Hyannis Port on the weekends. He really had that soul. He liked to move. He loved Florida. He loved Hyannis Port. I don't

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think he loved Middleburg. One time when they were putting in the foundations of that new house in Middleburg he said, "Can you imagine me ending up in a place like this?" I think he felt that was pretty deadly. But he liked Camp David. He loved Camp David. And I must say that it was very good for him. It was relaxing. He'd sit up on the.... Have a drink before lunch and talk. And he might take a walk in the afternoon or he'd play a little golf or do something. And then he'd take a nap and have dinner. And I think those weekends really did a lot to restore him. Then by Sunday afternoon when he was getting ready for that helicopter, why, then the whole thing sort of came back and papers started bustling around again and so on.

HOLBORN: And he liked to use the time traveling to do work.

BARTLETT: Yes, as soon as he got on the helicopter, they'd always hand him a sheet of paper, and he'd be signing and reading papers all the way out when he was flying, yes.

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HOLBORN: Your mention of this trip to the Mall and Arlington Cemetery, were there any other occasions where overtones or premonitions of death...

BARTLETT: He talked about it several times with me. I suppose any president would because it's obviously one of the hazards in which he lives. But we had a talk about it in September before he was shot, I remember, up on the boat off Hyannis Port. It just was interesting that we would discuss it at some length. I mean, you know, what Lyndon would be like as President....

But of course he had that kind of mind that he always talking about all the eventualities. I mean on that same afternoon he talked about what he was going to do when he got out of the presidency. He said he thought now he'd like to be Ambassador to Italy if a friendly regime were put in. He thought that would be a good place because Jackie would like it,

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because he would be out of the country and, therefore, the man who took the presidency wouldn't be in his way. So, I mean, I don't think the fact--perhaps it wasn't a premonition. I do remember one time down in Middleburg we were driving along a back country road, and a car shot by the Secret Service car and us. And he was shaken a little bit by this car going by. And he said, "The secret service should have stopped that car." And then he disliked the fact that he was showing concern and he said, "Charlie, that man might have shot you." But the thing obviously was on his mind. You certainly couldn't say that there was any premonition or any nightmares.

HOLBORN: And what do you think he might have done after the presidency when it came right down to...

BARTLETT: When you got down to it? I don't know. I think that ambassador thing interested me because it

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might have been an answer. I don't know. At first it used to depress him. But I felt that this time when we discussed it, the last time we discussed it, I felt it depressed him less. I think he used to worry about, you know, what it was going to be like. I think that he loved the presidency. He loved it so much. And he never made any bones about how much, you know-

-he loved the comforts of it. He loved the whole thing. He loved the people that were around him. He really loved it. I don't think he was looking forward to it. I remember once he said, "I'm going to use my allowance when I leave here to bring those telephone operators with me." He loved those telephone operators. He said, "I'm going to use my money to bring those telephone operators with me. Of course," he said, "then nobody will want to talk to me," he said, "but at least I'll have them." [Laughter]

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HOLBORN: You don't think, as many have argued, that he would have become a publisher or...

BARTLETT: No, no.

HOLBORN: It did not really appeal that much to him.

BARTLETT: The best line I always like was one Sunday Jackie brought it up, and she was sort of being very funny about it. She said, "What are you going to do Jack?" She said, "I don't want to be the wife of a headmaster of a girl's school." And the whole conversation was rather annoying to him for some reason. It was a gloomy Sunday. I remember he said, "Well now, let's not worry Jackie." He said, "Something will turn up." [Laughter] I suspect he might have ended up in Congress again even though he had no great, enormous regard for that. I just have a feeling that to be out of tradition would appeal to him.

HOLBORN: It would appeal to his historic sense at least.

BARTLETT: Yes, and I think he might have done something like that.

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HOLBORN: And, talking to you, what did he foresee for Bobby and Teddy?

BARTLETT: Well, the Teddy thing he never discussed except when the question of his running in Massachusetts was up. I don't think that at first he was enormously enthusiastic about that. His point was that, "The House of Representatives was good enough for me, I don't quite see why Teddy has to come in as Senator." I always had the feeling that this was something he accepted as his father's wish and that was all. He just had to live with it. I think the Bobby thing--what he used to say was.... We used to talk about it quite a lot. "Who do you think will be the nominee in '68?" He'd always say it this way, "Who do you think will be the nominee in '68, Bobby?"

But of course, one of the fascinating things to me is the question of his relationship with Lyndon Johnson.

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I'd love to understand that more because I really.... I think it was a very ambivalent relationship. I think he rather enjoyed Johnson. I think he enjoyed Johnson's sense of humor. He enjoyed those rather sardonic jokes of Johnson's. I think he sort of enjoyed Johnson as a personality. I think he felt awfully sorry for Johnson. I remember Liz Carpenter [Elizabeth S. Carpenter] called me and said, "Couldn't you get him to call the Vice President and ask him more opinions about things because he feels awfully lonely up here." I told this to the President, and he said, "God, I wish I could remember." He said "I feel so sorry for that guy." He said, "You know, when you get into an exciting one or when you get into a hot one, you just don't think to call people who haven't read the cables." I think this was his feeling. He never could quite bring Johnson into things in which he was not really very deeply grounded. I just don't know what....

One time I asked him if he was

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going to drop Johnson--I guess this was in about 1961--if he would drop Johnson and take another running mate in 1964. And he turned on me with considerable fury and said, "Absolutely not." He said, "That would be a crazy thing to do." He said he'd just lose Texas. I'm convinced that they had absolutely no mind to that they'd have to have found enormously incriminating things on Johnson to induce the President to change him. I think they'd have to have found him stealing personally or something almost indictable before Kennedy would have dropped him off the ticket. I think his strong mood was to go into the 1964 election with the exact same team that he had. I don't think that he wanted to change one section.

HOLBORN: No, he seemed to look upon the Cabinet as an almost permanent institution with a few exceptions.

BARTLETT: Yes. I don't think he ever.... All these whispers that used to come out of the White House about

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getting rid of people and so-and-so was going to resign—except the Day [J. Edward Day] thing, he never discussed the Day thing with me so I don't know what the mechanics of that were—I always had the feeling that this was much more the Mafia than it was the President.

HOLBORN: I think this was particularly true after Cuba because he found a sort of collegiality in this group that had worked even with differences among them.

BARTLETT: Yes. I remember he said after the Cuban Missile Crisis that were three men on that Ex Comm that he would be glad to see become president

of the United States: McNamara, Dillon, and his brother Bobby. He said that a couple of times, and it was clear that those three men of the group that had met impressed him the most.

HOLBORN: To return to a remark that President Kennedy made about then Vice President Johnson about the difficulty of using people that don't read the cables, the criticism that you often hear now

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about Kennedy is that he read the cables too much and too closely, and he put a disproportionate effort, particularly in the last year and a half, on foreign policy. Do you accept this criticism? Do you think there was under the circumstances a right balance between domestic and foreign policy? Was he trying to be his own desk officer on the Congo or Cuba or Peru, or whatever it may have been, too much?

BARTLETT: I wouldn't presume to judge it because.... My inclination would be to accept his sense of proprieties. I remember he did say to me that, "As far as I'm concerned 90 percent of the domestic problems are in the hands of Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman]." He said, "If Mike Feldman's a crook, we're all in jail." And I think he felt that he did want to give his time to these foreign problems, and I think that particularly the ones that were aggravating to the country. But I think it

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was instinctive with him. I don't think.... I don't know whether he took too much time or not. He certainly immersed himself in every issue, read every.... And he knew it. He knew it cold.

HOLBORN: He never gave to you the impression that he felt that he had to neglect a problem that he ought to be on top of.

BARTLETT: No. No, I don't feel that because I think the economy was big, and I think he spent a lot of time on that. And I think these various domestic programs, I don't think he felt he was omitting anything that he should be doing. I really don't.

HOLBORN: And did he ever react to you to the rather heavy criticism that he had--I guess it was particularly true of his second year in office--that he somehow was neglecting the public educator, particularly the criticism from the liberals in the Senate, after the steel crisis particularly, that he

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behaved better to his enemies than to his friends?

BARTLETT: Well, I think the business which has always been put forward by, particularly I guess by Scotty Reston [James B. Reston], that he should educate the people more, I think Walter Lippman was also heavy in this, I think this chafed him. But I never heard his answer to it, I never quite understood his answer to it except he did have the feeling for a man to go on television continually and stand before those microphones was not a valuable exercise. I think he had a feeling that this was something.... He had strong desire to reserve his appeals to the people for those occasions on which he felt they would really be necessary. I don't think he wanted to use them lightly or sort of blow his credibility with the people or anything. I think he was saving it for the times when he really needed it.

HOLBORN: Yes, he did feel apparently that over-accessibility to people doesn't win you friends either.

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BARTLETT: I don't think he.... He didn't use the White House in the way it is used under the present Administration. I think he realized that it, you know, wears off; that if you do too much of it, it wears off. I was there at some splendid small dinners with senators whom he liked, but I'm not sure he ever invited any senators he didn't like to private dinners. I think that he had them to lunch or something like that.

I think the luncheons with publishers around the country, those were rather interesting. I think he did enjoy those. He enjoyed meeting with those fellows, even when Mr. Deale [Edward M. Deale] told him he wished he would spend so much time riding Caroline's tricycle. I think he got a big kick out of it. He got a big kick out of the Missouri publisher who got so drunk, was drunk all through lunch, and then as he left the White House, the President heard him

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ask one of the butlers, he said, "Do you know where I can get a drink?" [Laughter] I think he regarded those as time well spent. It would have been interesting to see how many editorial endorsements they would have brought him. I actually had argued with him that he would have better spent his time having editors to lunch, that the editors were more influential in the papers than the publishers and more responsive to his kind of thinking. And I think maybe I was right; I think these publishers might have drunk his wine and then gone back and endorsed his opponent.

HOLBORN: Well, I think, Charlie, by way of conclusion here, I think, particularly in your case, I think most properly you might want a few final thoughts about simply what Jack Kennedy, President Kennedy was like as a personal friend, the way you knew him first and the way you really knew him at the end.

BARTLETT: Of course, I think the marvelous quality he had

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as a friend was his enormous sort of lift that he gave. It was that personal lift that I think so many of us felt. And this was a marvelous thing. It was just marvelous to know it was there.

And it was great fun to go up and spend a long dreary day in the damn Capitol and have five minutes with Jack Kennedy whether he was in the House or in the Senate. It was always a sort of a very pertinent lift. He had that buoyancy and that gaiety, which was a tremendous thing. And I must say that it was a unique quality.

And, of course, as a friend he did this, he was marvelously sort of constructive about his friends and certainly about me. I was a very happy correspondent for the *Chattanooga Times*, and yet I think that one of the stimuluses, that I felt to go on--I'm not riddled with ambition—but one of the stimuluses was Kennedy's saying, "It's a shame to keep writing that stuff

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and sending it down to die in Chattanooga. And this was his practical exhortation. And when I did decide in 1959 that I would try to syndicate my stuff, why, he was very, awfully nice. He introduced me to the publisher of the *New Bedford Standard Times*, Mr. Basil Brewer whose paper is still a client of mine. And he had that constructive interest in his friends, and he said, "What are you doing?" Even when he was completely bound up in all these problems he had in the White House, he always was sort of testing to see what somebody like myself that he knew whose progress had some interest to him and what direction he was going in. And this was really a great thing in a friend because it was a spur. And it was often helpful.

[END OF INTERVIEW #2]

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