

**Jill Cowan and Priscilla Wear, Oral History Interview – 03/16/1965**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Jill Cowan and Priscilla Wear  
**Interviewer:** William J. vanden Heuvel  
**Date of Interview:** March 16, 1965  
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**Biographical Note**

Cowan was a staff member in the Office of the White House Press Secretary under Pierre E. G. Salinger; Wear was a staff member under President John F. Kennedy's [JFK] secretary, Evelyn N. Lincoln. In this interview they discuss their article in *Look* magazine; personal recollections of President JFK's assassination; working on JFK's 1960 presidential campaign; JFK's campaigning style; JFK's relationship with the press, White House staff, and his family; and JFK's trips to Nassau, Europe, and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson's ranch, among other issues.

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**Suggested Citation**

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by

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Oral History Interview

Of

Jill “Faddle” Cowan

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## NOTE TO FILE

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**Note for files to accompany John F. Kennedy Oral History Project interview with  
Priscilla S. Wear and Jill Cowen with William J. vanden Heuvel; March 16, 1965**

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### **EXPLANATION OF MISSPELLING OF NAMES OF SUBJECTS INTERVIEWED**

- 1.) As corrected in the typescript, the correct spelling for “Fiddle” is Priscilla Wear.
  
- 2.) Jill Cowan’s [sic] legal name was Halle Sanchia Cowen [note “e” not “a”]. Her widely used nickname was “Jill,” and she never introduced herself otherwise. During the period of her life when this interview was recorded, she chose to spell her last name as “Cowan.” Some years later she reverted to the legal spelling of her family name, “Cowen,” and kept that spelling until her death on September 18, 2003.

## Jill Cowan and Priscilla Wear

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Oral History Interview

With

Jill ("Faddle") Cowan and  
Priscilla ("Fiddle") Wear

March 16, 1965

By William J. vanden Heuvel

For the John F. Kennedy Library

VANDEN HEUVAL: This is William vanden Heuvel. The date is March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1965. I am having an interview with Jill Cowan, who was on the staff of President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] at the White House. With us is Priscilla Wear, who was also on the President's staff. We are going to begin a discussion, trying to recollect their memories of the President and those days in the White House. They were known as "Fiddle" and "Faddle" to the editors of *Look* magazine, who wrote an article about them that captured nationwide attention. By the way, Jill, what did the President think of that article?<sup>1</sup>

COWAN: He thought it was quite funny.

WEAR: He was happy that it didn't embarrass him.

COWAN: He didn't really say much about it. He thought it was kind of funny, and he thought the pictures were sort of cute.

WEAR: He liked the pictures with all the children.

COWAN: He liked a lot of the other articles much better.

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<sup>1</sup> "Fiddle & Faddle." *Look*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1962): 30-35.

VANDEN HEUVAL: I don't know how you begin an interview that recalls events that are, perhaps, now growing dim for you. Maybe the thing to do is to go backwards. Let's start with November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1963 – where you were on that day and your recollection of it.

COWAN: At that time I was working for Ralph Dungan. I walked into Kenny's [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] office, and there was John-John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] in there. John-John and Dave [David F. Powers] were marching around with the flag. John-John was running off and down the halls and playing and screaming. The President was about to take off for this trip. Then I walked by the President's office; he was sort of standing there, talking to Mrs. Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln], and getting all his papers ready for the trip. That was really the last time I actually saw him.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Where were you on the date of November 22<sup>nd</sup> itself?

COWAN: I was in the White House. The first time I heard it I was at Elizabeth Arden. I came rushing back to the White House. By the time I had gotten back, it was about twenty minutes after. There were police all around the White House. Because Ralph Dungan was sort of the headquarters for working on a lot of the arrangements, Sarge Shriver [Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.] came in, and Angie Duke [Angier Biddle Duke] and a lot of people were in there making all the arrangements. Then I actually stayed at the White House until Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] got back.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What was your role in the White House?

COWAN: It varied. I started out by working for the Press Office, working for Pierre Salinger. Then I changed and I worked for Ralph Dungan.

VANDEN HEUVAL: When did you first meet the President? Were you active in the campaign in 1960?

COWAN: The way I got involved was I went out to the Convention with "Fiddle." We worked out there on the Kennedy Bulletin newspaper.

VANDEN HEUVAL: You didn't know the President before that time?

COWAN: No, I didn't.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did you see much of him during the course of the campaign?

COWAN: Well, not too much because I was really working out of

Washington with “Fiddle.” Occasionally, I’d go campaigning, but I really didn’t see very much of him.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you recall his campaigning style at all? Did you see him as he was campaigning?

COWAN: I did. I remember when I first saw him you couldn’t help but be captured by his great emotion and by his dynamic speech and, you know, all his policies that he was usually trying to get across. I remember the first time I saw him in September he was so sort of excited, but somehow the crowds around him weren’t. Then by the time I saw him in October, he’d gained terrifically in popularity and even style. In October it was so terribly exciting – the crowds were all pushing...

VANDEN HEUVAL: How did he respond to the crowds?

COWAN: I think he loved them. I mean, you can’t help but not love to be liked when the people enthusiastically receive what you’re saying.

VANDEN HEUVAL: He didn’t resent being jostled and pushed?

COWAN: I think when they overpowered him, he didn’t like it. But I think that he loved having a warm reception.

WEAR: He was always interested in figures: How many people were there. After he gave a speech, he’d come back, and he’d talk it over with Kenny and Dave and go over the figures of how many people were there.

VANDEN HEUVAL: For fear that that distant voice may appear to be an echo, I’m going to ask “Fiddle” if she won’t come over and sit here with us so that we can be sure her voice is being transcribed in this microphone.

Did he like to speak?

COWAN: Yes, he did. You know, he loved the challenge. For instance, he loved press conferences; he really loved press conferences because this was a great challenge for him.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he always like press conferences?

COWAN: Well, some went better than others; there’s no question about that.

WEAR: He’d get terribly nervous before each press conference. Very, very nervous. And when he came back from a press conference, he was just much more relaxed, and he’d always want to know what

everybody thought of him. He'd come back, and he'd ask, "What did you think of this press conference?" and ask you about certain questions that he answered, if you thought he answered them well.

COWAN: He loved the challenge of it because I really think he liked being tested all the time and preparing like for a big exam or for something of this type.

VANDEN HEUVAL: How did he prepare himself for it? Your office prepared him for each of those press conferences?

COWAN: He prepared himself really. People would present material to him.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did Pierre try to foresee the questions that were going to be asked and prepare briefing papers on them? Or did people throw questions at him or anything like that?

COWAN: Pierre would have a session every Tuesday afternoon; they were often held on Wednesdays – the press conferences. Usually, the day before he'd get together all the heads of the departments – all the press officers. They would sit around and try to discuss the major areas that perhaps would probably come up. Then they would bring over papers and discuss what questions they thought would be asked, and what answers they thought should be given. Then on Wednesday morning, before the press conference, Pierre and Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] and Bundy [McGeorge Bundy], Rusk [Dean Rusk], Secretary McNamara [Robert S. McNamara], Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] would all meet with him and go over the questions and some of the areas again that they thought would come up, and any opening statements; they'd go over some of those.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you remember any press conferences in particular?

COWAN: To continue with his, often, because the news was so up to date, our office would handle all the kind of up to date things that would come in. Minutes before he would be about to begin the press conference, the Defense Department would be calling up with figures. People in our office would take them down and rush them over to the mansion. Just as he'd be hopping into the car, they'd be giving him fresh facts and latest developments of, you know, bombings or whatever had been going on.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you remember any press conferences in particular that were outstanding from his point of view – ones that he particularly enjoyed, or any illustrations of press conferences that come to mind?

WEAR: I can't remember any off hand. In some, if he thought he did

particularly well, he'd be very elated over, and others...

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he have any particular personalities among the press corps whose questions he looked forward to or whose questions he did not look forward to?

COWAN: Yes, Sarah McClendon he always hated.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Wasn't there any way of avoiding a question of that kind?

COWAN: Well, there wasn't because, if he didn't acknowledge her question, people would say he was discriminating against women. He had to answer some of the women's questions. You know, people would say that he didn't like women. He was always very careful about answering as many questions from the right hand side of the room as the left because people kept very close figures on how he would answer them. You know, which side did he favor. And so he really had to act.... Even those he wanted to avoid, he couldn't help it. And then they'd all sort of pop up from their seat screaming and yelling, "Mr. President! Mr. President!" He was on television; there was no way of not answering them. But there were definitely some people he preferred. I mean, he resented some of the ways some of the press would get up and try to dictate answers to him or go on for about five minutes giving him a question like he wasn't up on the facts.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What was his attitude to the press in general as you recall it? Was he sensitive to criticism?

COWAN: Yes, he was. I think he was quite fascinated, actually, by the press. He certainly realized their importance. He also realized that this – television – was certainly one of the media of reaching people, of having them know what was going on in his Administration.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he feel that their criticisms were harsh or undue or personal? Did he resent them, or did he develop a thicker skin as the time went on?

WEAR: I think as the time went on he developed a much thicker skin. In the beginning he was terribly sensitive. He'd read each article very carefully, and he'd get terribly upset if he felt that there was unfair criticism. Sometimes he would call the guy on the phone and want to know why he said that. But then later he learned that you couldn't do anything about it; there's always going to be criticism, and what he tried to do himself wouldn't change it.

COWAN: Also, the press is very sensitive to being called up on the telephone and sort of trying to dictate to them or suggesting that their article had been wrong. He realized in the end that it backfired, and that it

really didn't work out.

WEAR: He was very terribly sensitive about the criticism that Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] received after her tour of the White House. Terribly, terribly. He was terribly upset about that because she tried so hard, and he thought that she'd done such a good job. He thought the criticism – I think it was David Wise of the *Herald Tribune* – he gave her was very unfair.

COWAN: Certain reporters always sort of were the ones to not kind of like pick on him or.... Whatever he did there were always certain reporters that sort of would really give it to him.

WEAR: He definitely had his favorites and “un-favorites” in the press.

COWAN: He didn't want to have anybody necessarily always show the kind of good qualities of the thing; he really just wanted to have an impartial kind of straight, factual story, if that's possible.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Something that never was and never will be, presumably. I read an article recently – I think by David Halberstam in the *Times* – that indicated that at one point the President in meeting Mr. Sulzberger [Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.], the new editor of the *Times*, had suggested to him that they recall Halberstam from Vietnam. Do you have any recollection at all of the President's feelings towards the reporting of the Vietnamese situation or his attitude toward Halberstam?

WEAR: I think he was rather upset with the way he went about it. Halberstam was obviously just after a story and wanted to get his name in the paper.

COWAN: Yes, but the *New York Times* was the one who played it on the front page. You can't just blame David Halberstam. The whole *New York Times* editorial staff, or the whole paper, was behind it. Otherwise, why would they have put him on the front page?

VANDEN HEUVAL: You don't recall any remarks by the President that indicated his own attitude at that time?

WEAR: I don't. I'm sure Mr. Salinger would know.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Let's go back to the first days of the Administration. When did you first have an opportunity to see the President in action? You've recounted the several episodes in the campaign where you saw him, presumably just in passing as the campaign was going on. When did you see him after that?

COWAN: Well, the next time was down in Palm Beach. We were helping Mrs. Lincoln.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Were you at Hyannis Port when he was elected – when the reports came in?

COWAN: I was in the Armory during the whole election eve with “Fiddle.” We were posting returns. Then we saw him come in with Mrs. Kennedy and the rest of his family and make his acceptance speech.

WEAR: And he came around, and he thanked everyone who had been working for him.

VANDEN HEUVAL: In that moment of elation were there any visible signs that the mantle had been passed and that this was the new President of the United States?

COWAN: The whole feeling was completely different. Before that his staff and the press and everybody had been moving around very freely. As soon as it became apparent that he’d won, the whole Massachusetts National Guard came in; the Secret Service came in. Suddenly you were frozen right at your spot. I mean, you couldn’t move around.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Both of you were part of the staff that the President took with him to Palm Beach immediately after the election. What was his own attitude in those days? Was it one of elation? Was he nervous? Was he confident that the results were final?

COWAN: Well, I think that he was still quite uneasy. I mean, as things turned out, all the returns hadn’t completely come in. I think that there was a terrific relief in some ways that the election had been over, but also it was...

WEAR: It was hard for him to relax. He’d been so keyed up during the campaign, and all of a sudden he had four or five days to relax and he didn’t. He was on the go every minute, talking about the campaign, recapturing certain moments.

COWAN: He wanted to completely practically go over the whole campaign. I mean, he was still so fascinated and caught up with it.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Was there a turning point in the campaign that he thought of?

WEAR: I think the debates. I think he really felt that the first debate was the turning point.

VANDEN HEUVAL: In reflecting on it at Palm Beach, did he talk about those debates? Do you recall?

COWAN: Well, he did somewhat.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he mention anything about how he had prepared for them or mistakes that he thought Mr. Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] had made?

COWAN: No. I think he did think it was a mistake, though, the way he went back into New York again just before election night. I mean, he should have gone out to California, he felt, or have stayed away from New York; that really was an error.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Why? Because he felt that New York was conclusively in his column?

COWAN: Well, it was much, much stronger, certainly, than California. And, also, there was quite a mix-up, I think, that night.

WEAR: He also felt that going to Maine the last time was pointless; he should have been in New York, in one of the big cities, in California. But that trip to Maine just wasted a lot of time.

COWAN: He was quite disappointed, I think, over Ohio, too, and couldn't figure out what really went wrong there.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he spend a lot of time trying to analyze what was right and what was wrong?

COWAN: Yes, he did.

VANDEN HEUVAL: In any kind of directed way or just in give and take?

WEAR: I also remember him saying how President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] had been very harmful to Nixon and how he thought that he was not terribly fair to him; he had not come out and supported him.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he feel that the trends of the election were going against him, that had the election been delayed another day or two or week or two it might very well have been a different result? Do you know?

WEAR: I'm not really sure. I think that when he won the nomination he felt he could win the election. I think that his turning point in his own mind was after he won the nomination.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Was he shocked by the close result?

WEAR: I think he was.

COWAN: I don't know. I don't think he really was that shocked because I think he always realized that he had this great religion problem working against him. I think he really was prepared for anything. I mean, obviously, in his own heart he really wanted and expected to win, but I don't think that it was that big a shock.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he feel that he'd handled the religious problem adequately? Did he have any misgivings about it after the election? Did he discuss it at all? Did he feel that a major breakthrough had been made and that no future candidate was going to have to face this problem of a Catholic President?

COWAN: I think he felt that some break though had been made. I don't know that you could say that it would never come up again, but I think the ministers down in Texas.... That was a big episode.

VANDEN HEUVAL: The Houston speech.

COWAN: Yes. That really helped a great deal.

WEAR: No, I think he did feel that he'd made a break through.

COWAN: Also that he was so young; that was another big breakthrough.

VANDEN HEUVAL: How did he relax in those days? Was his back bothering him? Was he in good shape? How do you recall those days?

COWAN: When he first arrived down there, he was quite vigorous. He was in very good shape. He was tired from the campaign, but he was so exuberant about the whole thing. You know, he was in very good shape.

WEAR: Physically he was in good shape. His back wasn't bothering him at all.

VANDEN HEUVAL: How did he spend his time? Was he besieged by phone calls? Did he make phone calls? Did he contact friends, or what did he do?

COWAN: He wasn't besieged by phone calls because they couldn't get through.

WEAR: One of the first things he did was call those Democratic Congressmen and Senators who had won to congratulate them.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you recall anything about those at all other than the fact that he was just talking to them?

WEAR: He was just talking to them and congratulating them.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What was his attitude towards Congress? Did he ever discuss that in your presence? Did he ever reflect on his days in the Senate and his own personal attitudes towards working with Congress? Not to you?

COWAN: He had some ideas but nothing really specific.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he look upon the Congress as an antagonistic force that had to be...

COWAN: Something very difficult and something that definitely had to be worked with all the time. And you could never forget them – not that you even wanted to – but, I mean, it was definitely a great force.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he talk to President Eisenhower at all while he was in Palm Beach in those days?

WEAR: I can't remember him talking to him; he might have.

COWAN: He spent quite a bit of time there talking to some of the candidates that lost.

VANDEN HEUVAL: He did?

COWAN: Yes. Again I can't really remember which ones, but I know he did.

VANDEN HEUVAL: I know I didn't get a call. Jill, what about his visit with Vice President Nixon at that time? Nixon was down in Florida at the same time, wasn't he?

COWAN: Yes, he was. He did go down to meet with him and to Key Biscayne. He flew down there and met with him for a few hours. I

think it was a very sort of brief trip.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What did he think of Nixon?

COWAN: I don't think he was too fond of him. I think he felt that he hadn't handled the campaign terribly well.

WEAR: I don't think he had very much respect for Nixon as a politician.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he feel that he was unfair? Unscrupulous?

COWAN: Well, that he had such sort of peculiar campaign tactics. I mean, like.... I don't know, I mean he was sort of quite hammy. The President always tried to keep his family – his own personal family – out of politics where I think Nixon so much brought them in with the little girls and the dogs and all that kind of thing. I mean, it was on a sort of different plane I think.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What about his attitude toward President Eisenhower?

WEAR: I don't think he was overly impressed with President Eisenhower. He'd often discuss how President Eisenhower's main points were his smile and how people just thought he was a benevolent man, and this won him the respect of the American public. But I don't really think that he felt President Eisenhower was capable.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Capable as a political leader?

WEAR: As a political leader. I don't think he was just very fond of him as a person.

VANDEN HEUVAL: They met, of course, during that time before President Kennedy was inaugurated. Were you in the White House at the time that President and Mrs. Eisenhower [Mamie Dowd Eisenhower] came to call on them?

WEAR: I was in the White House at that time. I remember him remarking that Mrs. Eisenhower didn't have any interest in looking at what Mrs. Kennedy had done to the White House. She was extremely jealous of the Kennedys and just had no interest in looking around.

COWAN: The President was so, so fond of the White House. I mean, all the refurnishings. Any time he had, he'd have people shown around, or he'd take them around himself.

WEAR: Terribly proud.

COWAN: He was very proud of the fact that Mrs. Kennedy had kept a book of all the place settings and pictures of the flowers – I mean, the whole sort of personal touches in the White House. It meant so, so much to him.

VANDEN HEUVAL: When he was down in Palm Beach shortly after the election, he also left briefly, didn't he, to visit Vice President-elect Johnson?

WEAR: Yes, he did.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Would you have any recollections of that, and what happened on that trip?

WEAR: I remember him relating funny incidents that happened. President Johnson took him out and made him look at the gravestones of all his relatives late into the night. He took him out deer hunting, which he didn't like very much at all.

VANDEN HEUVAL: The President wasn't a hunter?

WEAR: He was not a hunter, no.

COWAN: Also, he had to look at all Vice President Johnson's cattle, and it was pitch black at night as soon as he had gotten off the plane. He went down with Congressman Macdonald [Torbert H. Macdonald]. You know, he could have perfectly well seen them in the morning. I think he felt that the Vice President was very eager for him to see his ranch.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Any other recollections of that?

WEAR: Oh, yes. He was quite disturbed with going around the ranch all night, and he said that he was going to take the Vice President up to Hyannis Port and get him caught out on a boat in a high storm and see how he liked that to get back at him.

COWAN: I think they were quite competitive.

VANDEN HEUVAL: During that Palm Beach interlude – that was a terribly important time from the point of view of the President's choice of his own personal advisors and Cabinet – were you around at any of those discussions or conferences when he was choosing his Cabinet or advisors?

COWAN: No. I don't really remember. We were working at the Democratic National Committee when we got back from Florida.

VANDEN HEUVAL: The President returned to Washington – what, around November 25 or 24? – with the birth of his son. Subsequently, you both came back to Washington and...

WEAR: Continued working in the Democratic National Committee.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Until he became President.

WEAR: Until he became President when we moved into the White House.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What is your first recollections of crisis in the White House? Bay of Pigs?

WEAR: The Bay of Pigs.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What do you recall about those days? That was April, 1961?

WEAR: Yes. I remember how everything was so terribly hectic; there was really a sense that people didn't know what was going on and that the President didn't have command of the situation, which as a complete contrast to the second crisis in Cuba when you could have great confidence that the President did know what was going on and had complete control of the whole situation, had everything under his fingers. But during the Bay of Pigs there was just a sense of chaos. After it was over, the President was terribly, terribly depressed – I think it was one of the times he was most depressed – at the failure. He just didn't know what to think because, I think, he didn't really feel it was completely his fault, but he couldn't blame anybody but himself. He felt so terrible that people had been killed and the refugees and the prisoners.

COWAN: Also that it was his responsibility. I mean, it really drove home the point that he was the one.

WEAR: It was the first time anything that's bad had happened; everything else before had gone perfectly smoothly. And this was his first crisis.

COWAN: And that it was his decision really. I mean, the country was really in his hands.

WEAR: I think it shaped everybody up a bit because it made them realize that they had to get organized, and it wasn't so easy. I think it really made them all....

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he feel that anyone had let him down, that he had relied on the wrong people?

WEAR: I remember him mentioning the military, the Chiefs of Staffs, and how he said it was very difficult to make any good judgment or decisions when you were getting wrong information. I gathered that he felt he had gotten wrong information from the Chiefs of Staff and the military.

COWAN: That was one of the big things I think he was always butting against, especially in the beginning, because, I think, people like LeMay [Curtis E. LeMay] and a lot of those people were so kind of pro-action all the time that you had to sort of doubly weigh their opinions.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you recall anything being done in response to this failure that he felt had happened? I think you mentioned Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] being called down to Washington to reorganize the intelligence function of the State Department. Was it at that time?

WEAR: That was a result of the Bay of Pigs.

COWAN: There was a while group that was set up and then was later disbanded.

WEAR: To keep a closer watch on the areas of crisis and to inform the President more carefully of what was really going on and just to get the clearer and truer facts of the situation.

COWAN: I think, also, at this period he'd always been kind of calling directly to the State Department and Defense Department rather than, say, working through Secretary Rusk or Secretary McNamara. But I think, particularly after this, he would call up the sort of primary sources in these areas and try to figure himself really what people were saying and doing.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Out of the Bay of Pigs crisis were there any people who emerged more closely as his advisors than before? What about his relationship to his brother, the Attorney General [Robert F. Kennedy], for example?

WEAR: I can't recall that the Bay of Pigs had any great influence on his relationship with his brother. I think Bundy emerged as a closer figure to the President after that.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What about the next events that occurred after that of a colorful, dramatic nature, his first trip to Europe as President of the United States? Yes, I guess that occurred in the early Spring.

WEAR: Neither of us were present during the trip to Europe where he saw

President deGaulle [Charles deGaulle] and Khrushchev [Nikita S. Khrushchev]. I remember seeing him after the trip. At that time he'd just been up to Canada where he had hurt his back planting a tree, and I think he was in great pain after that. He was also terribly depressed about his meeting with Khrushchev because he felt, before, that he could meet Khrushchev on a personal basis and get something accomplished. After meeting with Khrushchev, he then realized that a personal relationship with Khrushchev would be of no help.

VANDEN HEUVAL: How did this depression express itself?

WEAR: He was just very, very depressed – very gloomy. I think half of it was his pain in his back; he just didn't feel well for a couple of weeks when he got back from his trip. At that time he wanted to write down his impressions of Khrushchev, and he was thinking of writing his memoirs about that trip, but he never did.

COWAN: I think that he felt that perhaps this East-West confrontation would really be a confrontation. Instead it wasn't; it was just sort of a discussion back and forth, and it would take so terribly long before anything would evolve from it. It couldn't be handled on sort of a two top leader kind of diplomacy. It was much larger than that.

WEAR: I think, also, it really toughened him up; he realized that you had to be terribly tough with Khrushchev.

COWAN: He loved Kenny O'Donnell; the way Kenny O'Donnell, when he shook hands with Khrushchev, didn't smile. He just stuck his hand straight out and grasped it. He said that's the way they played it; that's the way we ought to treat them and play it back. Everybody else had been so sort of tried to be charming with them.

VANDEN HEUVAL: On that trip he'd also gone to England and France, hadn't he?

WEAR: Yes.

COWAN: Yes, he had.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Were there any recollections that he may have expressed about his impressions there?

COWAN: He was so, I think, terribly proud of Mrs. Kennedy and her fantastic reception. The way President deGaulle.... I mean, his wife's great charm had completely won over the French during that visit.

WEAR: I think he was very surprised – not surprised – that she'd been so well received, but I think he was very amazed that they all had loved her so much and really that they both had gotten such a wonderful reception in Paris. This was his first state visit, wasn't it? He was terribly, terribly pleased because he hadn't been out of the country; he didn't know how he'd be received in foreign countries.

COWAN: And, also, that a woman.... Because when you look back at some of the other Presidents' wives, they made a difference, but not to the extent Mrs. Kennedy did.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What about the President's attitude towards the various people who were very close to him? Well, what about his father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.]? What kind of a relationship did he have with his father? Did he speak to him often? Did he consult him for advice to your knowledge? What kind of relationship did they have?

WEAR: Well, before his father got sick, he did speak to him quite a few times on the telephone.

VANDEN HEUVAL: When you say that, do you mean daily?

WEAR: No, not daily. He might have spoken to him, maybe, four times a week – two or four times a week. I think his relationship with his father was very strained. He once said that he could never be around his father for more than three days without having to get away. His father was terribly dictatorial, always giving him advice on things. I think he just never felt relaxed around him. And I think especially when he was President and he had all the tension in his job, when he relaxed on weekends, he had to be with people that weren't constantly bickering at him or a challenge to him – people that he could relax with. I think he felt he could never really relax with his father.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What was the quality of his father that he respected most would you say?

WEAR: Among other things, he respected greatly his father's generosity. If any of the members of the family wanted something, Mr. Kennedy would always be right there, and he'd give them the shirt off his back. He'd go a hundred per cent for them; he was all for them.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What about his relationship to his brothers and sisters? Were there favorites, or were they all so closely bound together that he wouldn't identify favorites?

WEAR: I think he definitely had.... There were some that he could get

along with better than others. I think his relationship with Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] was more of a relaxed, fun relationship where with Bobby....When he was with Bobby, he'd mostly discuss work, what was going on, where as, with Teddy he could really relax. With Bobby he never really had that sort of relationship, I didn't feel.

VANDEN HEUVAL: How about his sisters?

WEAR: I think all of his sisters, he basically got along with Pat [Patricia Kennedy Lawford] the best. He seemed to be terribly competitive with Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver], and he thought Jean [Jean Kennedy Smith] was terribly, terribly sweet. But I think he was closer, really, to Pat. He often said that "Kick" [Kathleen Kennedy Townsend] was the greatest of them all.

COWAN: He was very proud of his family – I mean all of his sisters – and he took great interest in them. They were all quite close.

VANDEN HEUVAL: How about his brother Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.]? Did he ever mention him?

WEAR: No. He would just say how fantastic his brother really was, but he never mentioned him in great detail. He often did mention "Kick" though, saying how he had really, really been close to her and that she was the.... He'd kind of laugh and say she was the best of all the Kennedys he thought.

COWAN: I think he did feel some kind of competition, though, with Joe.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What about his advice to you, living in Washington, in the perspective of his own family? You mentioned the difficulty of living under this intense, glaring light constantly and how it affects your own personal lives.

WEAR: Well, I remember him saying once that he thought it was too bad that his sisters had been around such fantastic people all their lives – energetic and such high powered people. He felt it was very hard for them. He said it was all right for the boys in the family to have been influenced by all these people, but he thought it was very difficult for girls to be around high powered people all the time because they'd never be satisfied. He was all for everybody working in Washington who were around all this glamour and high power to get away because he felt that you wouldn't be satisfied with a normal life if you....

COWAN: He particularly.... I mean, when he was working, he worked terribly hard, and then when he was relaxed, he really relaxed. He thought that women should be in some ways that way, too.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Jill, you're going to be leaving the country again at the end of this week, so we've got to get as much out of you as we possibly can. Even at the risk of skipping around a bit, just to be sure that we have it, the Nassau meeting that the President had with the Prime Minister of Great Britain.... Can you recollect that for us? Were you there?

COWAN: Yes, I was.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you have notes that will recall to your memory any of the things that went on at that time?

COWAN: I remember I jotted down a few things that came to my mind. I remember the President was very fond of Prime Minister Macmillan [M. Harold Macmillan].

VANDEN HEUVAL: We're talking about a time now that was when? December of 1962?

COWAN: Yes, we are.

VANDEN HEUVAL: And the second Cuban missile crisis was already over.

COWAN: Right. I remember he was very fond of Macmillan. It was the first time that they'd really had a great deal to discuss. They'd met before, but the missile pact was really a big thing. He felt that he English were really getting quite a good thing, but that they should back around like mad. I mean, accept it, but then back around like mad and sort of try and ease the whole thing.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What do you mean "back around"?

COWAN: Well, because it made them look like, perhaps, that they were getting too much, or from their own political point of view they should back down. I mean, that they weren't accepting that much from the U.S.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he feel that it had been handled badly after the story had been released? There were a lot of political repercussions.

COWAN: There were. The French. I think he had sort of a difficult problem with the French because they felt that they'd not been asked. I mean, I don't think the President felt that he owed the French that much.

VANDEN HEUVAL: At that point. What about his relationship to Lord Harlech [William David Ormsby-Gore Harlech]?

COWAN: Well, he was very, very fond of him. In fact he talked to him a lot. I mean, I think he was certainly one of his favorite ambassadors in Washington. He'd talk to Macmillan, and then he always would kind of talk again to Lord Harlech to make sure that, you know, they all kind of agreed on the same point.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he talk to Macmillan often on his phone? They had a private telephone connection, didn't they?

WEAR: I don't think he talked too often. If there was something important to talk about, he would.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Lord Harlech is leaving the United States tomorrow sort of marking the end of this era more specifically than anyone else's departure. I gather he and the President had known each other for many, many years and that the President felt more relaxed with him, probably, than any other ambassador that he had to deal with in Washington.

COWAN: Diefenbaker [John G. Diefenbaker] also came down to Nassau at that time.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Oh, did he?

COWAN: Yes. He apparently was supposed to come down a bit later, and he arrived, for some reason, I think, earlier than had been expected.

WEAR: I don't think either Macmillan or the President appreciated it very much.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Let's go back to Cuba crisis number two – the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. What are the recollections of personalities at that time? Who emerged as the strong man in the President's mind from that?

WEAR: I think in the President's mind two figures emerged as the strongest: his brother, the Attorney General, and Secretary McNamara. I think that he felt that, if he had to rely on any two after that, he would rely on those two.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What about the Vice President?

WEAR: I don't really think he was terribly favorably impressed with the Vice President as a result of the Cuban crisis. I think he felt the Vice President's judgment was terribly weak during that time.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you recall during the years of the Kennedy Administration anything particular or anecdotal about the relationship between President Kennedy and now President Johnson?

WEAR: He never said any derogatory remarks about the Vice President at all. He always felt that the Vice President had definitely helped him during the campaign and helped him to win. He never really said any derogatory remarks. I don't think he really felt that he was doing that much for him in his role as Vice President. He always tried to keep him busy, tried to send him out on trips, and give him something to do. He often said what a horrible job it would be to be Vice President, and I think he realized that Johnson felt this way about it and tried to keep him as busy and give him as much to do as he could.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you have any stories, Jill? Any recollections?

COWAN: No, I think that's quite accurate, actually.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What about his relationship to other people who were around the White House staff?

COWAN: Well, I think he particularly was very, very fond of Kenny O'Donnell; I think he really respected him and felt that he was a kind of "gutsy" type person. I mean, he was tough and very good judgment; you could always rely on him. And utmost, that he was very loyal. I mean, I think loyalty was about the most important quality that a person could have in the President's judgment.

WEAR: He often said if Kenny ever let him down, he would really lose faith in human beings; he thought Kenny was so loyal.

COWAN: And I don't think Kenny ever would've. I mean, they were so terribly close.

WEAR: And Ted Sorensen was terribly close to the President. He often used to say that Ted Sorensen and Bundy had the highest I.Q.s of anybody around him and wanted to know which really had the highest I.Q.

VANDEN HEUVAL: That old competitive spirit.

WEAR: Exactly.

COWAN: He was very fond, of course, of Dave Powers. I think Dave, probably, was his best friend.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Personal relaxing.

WEAR: They needed him around the White House.

COWAN: Well, he was more than just sort a companion around the White House. I mean, just being with him....

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did the President wax philosophically on occasions? You mentioned, "Fiddle," his discussion of happiness.

WEAR: Yes, sometimes he would. He gave, once, his definition of happiness which, he said, was the old Greek philosophy "full use of all your powers along the lines excellence." I think this really was his definition; he always tried to live up to it. In everything he did, there was always that five per cent of extra effort.

VANDEN HEUVAL: That made the difference.

WEAR: Made the difference. Everything down to personal friendships.... Always made a terrific effort.... Another thing, he was terribly aware of the necessity for friends – and really good, loyal friends. He said you could go through anything in life if you had your friends and your family behind you, and he'd do anything for his friends and his family. They gave them security and support which you needed to go through life and do something with your life.

COWAN: And he wanted to keep the same friends. I mean, he didn't want to change them just because he'd become President because he felt that he'd, you know, grown up with so many of them and that they'd been so close that he felt no reason to change them. I think that's one of the things he really begrudged in President Eisenhower because, suddenly, the President had a completely different set, had a completely different group.

VANDEN HEUVAL: President Eisenhower acquired a new set of friends after he became President.

COWAN: Exactly. Also, though, I think one of the things the President really always was fascinated with was youth. Wouldn't you say that?

WEAR: Yes, definitely.

COWAN: I think, besides this kind of happiness, it was a really big thing with him to be young and...

WEAR: ...be enthusiastic. It was noticed more as the days wore on in the

White House that he was terribly concerned with what he would do after he left the White House, and he was terribly concerned with age increasing and growing old.

COWAN: And being left by himself, really. Even though he had his family.

WEAR: And what he would do to keep himself occupied. He thought maybe he could play golf all the time or....

COWAN: He thought about becoming, perhaps, President of Harvard or being an ambassador. He just couldn't really figure out.... I remember in Nassau that was one of the things he was even preoccupied with during the Nassau Pact. For some reason it came up; what he would do.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Was this a subject that was amusing to him, or did he really seriously give it thought?

WEAR: No. He seriously gave it thought because he was very concerned with what he would do after the White House and how he would spend his days growing old, writing memoirs or what. He often remarked how he just didn't want to grow old like his father and grow old slowly. He'd much rather have a quicker death and die at the height of his career.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he ever contemplate in your mind the possibilities of assassination?

WEAR: Oh, it was mentioned at times. I don't think he ever really, really thought that it was a possibility. I think that'd be very hard to conceive of the possibility. I wasn't around at the time right before he did go to Dallas so I don't know how he felt about that trip.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Among his friends were there any other than those that are well known to the press and to the public? Torbie Macdonald and Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings] and Chuck Spaulding [Charles Spaulding] – any others that come to mind.

COWAN: Peter Lawford he was very...

WEAR: Yes, Peter Lawford, I would say. He once listed his closest friends, and Peter Lawford was amongst them. Peter was terribly loyal to him, and he knew that he could count on Peter any time to do anything. Peter never wanted anything from him; he was just a very loyal friend.

VANDEN HEUVAL: What about the civil rights crisis? Do you have any recollections of his reaction to it? His feelings about it? The march in 1963 – any

of that? Did he ever discuss it in your presence? His own sense of reaction to the injustice?

COWAN: Again, he felt very concerned. I mean, like he did, let's say, during the missile crisis. I mean, that, you know, here it was up to him to see that, you know, civil rights was really being carried out in this country. But I was away for the Mississippi part.

WEAR: He was always very conscious that he was the.... I mean, that he knew that integration had to come sometime, and he was the President of the United States, and he had to be for it. He really felt this, and he was going to do everything he could.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Jill, you were on the trip to Europe in 1963 – June of '63, wasn't it? What do you recall about that – the high points and other reactions?

COWAN: Well, Berlin. I mean, that was so fantastic. In fact.... I mean, just the fantastic reception he had. I remember there was a kind of staff dinner before his Berlin speech. Ted Sorensen and a whole group of people – Lee [Caroline Lee Bouvier Radziwill] and Eunice.... He was trying to figure out how he could say that he was a Berliner like “I was a Roman citizen.” Somebody at the table came up with “Ich bin ein Berliner.” So then he kept saying it, and he kept saying it wrong, and everybody'd laugh. The next day, of course, he used it so perfectly. But, I mean, he was so...

WEAR: He was terribly moved by the crowds in Berlin. Terribly, terribly moved.

COWAN: And then, of course, Ireland was...

WEAR: Ireland was the strong.... He really felt more moved by his reception in Ireland.

COWAN: And also the way just something like two generations ago that, you know, he'd actually come from Ireland and that he could have been so easily back there living there today. And here he had come back as the President of the United States. I mean, that was one of the most remarkable qualities; he never wanted to kind of forget that.

WEAR: To forget his past, to forget what he was or where he came from. He never forgot that one day he wouldn't be President; he often said that people were so interested in the President – in him because he was the President. If he weren't the President, people wouldn't have the interest in him as a person. He never let it all go to his head; he had everything in great perspective.

VANDEN HEUVAL: He kept the office of the Presidency separate and apart from the personality of John Kennedy, did he? What about his.... He went to Italy on that trip, too, didn't he? Were you on that?

COWAN: Yes, he did. He did go to Italy.

WEAR: That was rather not as successful as other countries he visited. The organization was rather bad.

COWAN: And they just had the new Pope [Pope Paul VI] which caused this great, chaotic...

WEAR: The crowds had been through a great emotional experience with the death of the Pope, and they weren't really ready to welcome the President there.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Were there any recollections of Pope John or Pope Paul and the President's meeting with .... I guess he met only with Pope Paul, didn't he? He was the first chief of state to meet with Pope Paul. You don't recall anything that was said on that occasion?

COWAN: No, I don't.

VANDEN HEUVAL: "Fiddle," nothing?

WEAR: No.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Nothing more on the trip. Ireland and Berlin were the high points, were they?

COWAN: Yes, they were.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Well, let's talk about some of the appointments that the President might have made, or did make during his Administration, and any comments that you might recall his having made. What about.... You mentioned Byron White and his selection as the Justice of the Supreme Court.

COWAN: Well, one of the things was that again this kind of loyalty came into it; that Byron White had worked for him during... He'd been, I think, head – or one of the heads – of Citizens for Kennedy during the campaign. He certainly was qualified. I mean, here he'd been an All American football player; he'd been a Rhodes scholar; plus the fact that he'd been very loyal. So when it came down, I think, to choosing a Justice, I guess it narrowed down between Byron White and also the head of the Harvard Law School. He chose Byron White because of these

qualities.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Do you remember other appointments and personalities? You mentioned Angie Duke.

COWAN: Well, I'm not quite sure, actually, how Angie did get to be appointed, but just that I remember him saying how he'd done so much for the job once he'd gotten it and that he hadn't actually wanted it to begin with.

WEAR: He thought it was a terribly difficult job, and he thought he was awfully, awfully good at it.

COWAN: He remarked how, you know, he initiated all these kind of ceremonies and arrivals at the White House, starting with Ben Bella's [Ahmed Ben Bella]. Actually, it had really meant a lot to these countries and also to the U.S.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Jill, did you go with the President to the Costa Rica conference?

COWAN: Yes, I did, and "Fiddle" as well. This was a really sort of fascinating trip. I hadn't gone on the Venezuelan one, and so it was the first time that I'd really seen him in sort of Central America or South American surroundings. He was very interested, I'd certainly say, in the problems of Central America. But I don't think it had completely caught his imagination. Shortly before he died I remember him saying that Secretary Rusk should not be going to Europe much, that he really ought to be going down to South America, and that our whole sort of State Department and foreign affairs ought to be more oriented South America.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Did he feel the Alliance for Progress had been successful?

COWAN: Well, I think he felt that it had many downfalls – loopholes. But that he really had kind of hope for it. It certainly wasn't all that he had wanted it to be. I think that...

WEAR: I think that his attention was definitely sort of focused on South America more, and he had had another administration it would've been, definitely, the focal point.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Why do you think that was so? What was it about Latin America that was interesting to him? Why did he feel this strong?

COWAN: Well, because, if you're interested in politics, you can't help but not to be interested in people that are so close to you. First of all, politically it's fascinating, and, also, just geographically it's so

close. When he first came into office, he wasn't that interested in the problems of South America. Like lots of other politicians, they're more European-oriented.

WEAR: I also feel that it was the Cuban crisis, and he realized that Latin America was going to be such a crucial area in the world and that we were in a position to have strong influence there.

COWAN: Beside having strong influence, I really feel that he started to get really involved in South America. I think that Ed Martin [Edwin M. Martin] he particularly liked as Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Oh, he did.

COWAN: Yes, he did.

WEAR: Also, he was strongly loved in Latin America. He had such a wonderful reception in Mexico. I think he really felt that he, himself, could have a great influence down there.

VANDEN HEUVAL: His personal leadership.

WEAR: His personal leadership. He could be the President identified with Latin America and that he could really, himself, do something and make great inroads in our relationship with Latin America. I think this increased as the Administration wore on.

VANDEN HEUVAL: How about the Peace Corps in Latin America?

COWAN: I think he thought that they were doing a good job and that the Peace Corps ought to be more focused on South America, again rather than being sort of European-oriented.

WEAR: He thought that we could do more with Latin America and, therefore, should concentrate the Peace Corps in Latin America. It would be more effective in Latin America than, say, in Africa and other countries.

COWAN: Of course, I think he was also encouraged by the.... Just before the second Cuban sort of invasion part that, when he went before all the ambassadors of South America and talked to them and told them what his plans were going to be for Cuba, they were very kind of responsive. I think that brightened up his whole kind of negotiations with them because they felt that they had been let in on the negotiation. I think that again it was his sort of personal leadership that got this going.

VANDEN HEUVAL: You mentioned his thinking ahead to what would have been his second administration. How did he look at that campaign that was to come, or did he ever talk about it?

COWAN: He did talk about it, and I think he was really quite worried about it.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Who did he expect to be his opponent?

COWAN: I think he thought that Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] was going to be. I think he felt that Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] would have been a tougher opponent.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Even despite the Governor's divorce?

COWAN: Well, until that all came up, and then I guess he realized that it would have been, probably, Goldwater who was going to be his opponent. But I think he was really quite scared about it. I mean, I don't think he ever felt...

WEAR: I remember right before he died his watching the two candidates on television and taking careful notice of how they treated questions and what kind of an opponent they would be towards him. He was discussing the subject of debates.

COWAN: He never for one moment forgot the close margin that he'd won by. He also said, though, that he wasn't going to have any debates. I don't think he would have.

WEAR: He, also, was very aware that in the press at that time people were always attacking him. He never really realized how much he was appreciated or loved which, I think, definitely came out after the assassination.

COWAN: I think that's one of the real horrible things about the whole sort of great tragedy – that he was so well liked and, also, so bitterly hated. I think everybody forgets how bitterly hated he was.

WEAR: He felt that he was more hated than liked.

COWAN: He was always watching his own popularity and having – he wasn't having polls taken, but he was watching the polls being taken. He was always conscious of, perhaps, that he wouldn't have another four years in the White House.

VANDEN HEUVAL: But after the second Cuban crisis, certainly, his popularity went ahead considerably.

COWAN: It did. But even so he was still, you know, aware that some great crisis could come up, or that his popularity could just go.

WEAR: But he was certainly happy after that. I mean, he was well aware that this had really boosted him in the eyes and the opinion of not only the American public but all around the world.

COWAN: But I think that's another one of his sort of strong qualities is that he would make decisions that were unpopular. He didn't just make them because he felt that that was going to gain him popularity. And that he also would make the decisions and then kind of put them out of his mind. I mean, millions of little, tiny decisions, which you have to do as a leader.

WEAR: Once something was decided upon, he wouldn't dwell on it and think back "Why did I do this?" and "Was this the right way?" He'd made a decision, and that was it. He never thought about it.

COWAN: I know I've talked to a lot of other people in the Administration, and they all felt that it was so fantastic to work with somebody like that.

VANDEN HEUVAL: Jill, you mentioned, while we were talking privately, about the President looking at films on the Tuesday before his death.

COWAN: Oh, yes. I'd taken some pictures into him to be signed. Just as I was in his office, Chief Knudsen [Robert LeRoy Knudsen], who was the Navy photographer, came in and asked him if he would like to see a film on Arlington. He said, "Well, is John-John in it?" Chief Knudsen said he was. So he sat down in the chair and said why didn't I stay and watch it, too. There he sort of sat in his rocking chair in between the two sofas near the fireplace. You could just see the great sort of proud expression when John-John would come on the film.

VANDEN HEUVAL: He was a member of a large family. How did he feel about large families?

WEAR: You know, it was very funny, seeing that his opinion of a large family changed in the years that he was in the White House. I remember him saying once in the beginning that he would not want to have a large family as his brother, the Attorney General, had because he felt in his family – a family of nine – he never got the personal attention from his parents or from his brothers and sisters that he would have gotten in a smaller family. Then later before he died, I

think he really wanted children so badly. He began to realize that what he had left in life was to have a family, and he really missed the fact that he didn't have more than two children. I think he really wanted an increase in his family.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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