

Stanley Tretick Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 09/15/64
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Biographical Note

Photographer, United Press International, LOOK Magazine. In this interview, Tretick discusses what it was like to photograph John F. Kennedy and his family from his campaign through his presidency, among other issues.

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Stanley Tretick – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

STANLEY TRETICK

September 15, 1964

Unknown

By Diana Michaelis

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MICHAELIS: This is Diana Michaelis, September 15, at 3:05 pm, interviewing Stanley Tretick, photographer for *Look* magazine. Stan, you were here for fifteen years as a UPI photographer. What was your first encounter with President Kennedy, then Senator Kennedy?

TRETICK: The first real encounter was when he announced his candidacy, that he was going for the nomination. This was in January of 1960. He had a press conference in the Caucus Room. He brought Jackie with him. They announced it there with the usual mob scene. Almost all of the Washington reporters and photographers were present. I was with UPI then. After it was over we had one of these photo sessions and it was pretty good, with Jackie and him just standing there; excepting I noticed at that time that he was stiff and didn't like posing for the pictures. Also, a photographer said to him, "How about smiling?" So he objected, but in a nice way, he said he had read somewhere — a piece in the *New Yorker* — that candidates always smile, and he said why did they have to smile all the time? This photographer said, "That's okay, Senator, but everybody doesn't read the *New Yorker*." But still you could see that he wasn't enjoying it.

MICHAELIS: He was nervous probably.

TRETICK: He was very nervous about posing. I think we got some pretty fair pictures of him. Subsequently some of those pictures were pulled out of the UPI files and used on the campaign.

MICHAELIS: He was very sensitive about the way he was photographed and particularly about being seen in corny, traditional campaigning shots.

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TRETICK: Yes. His friend Joe Alsop said the two things that made him most nervous were nuns and silly hats, which I think really did. Excepting that on the campaign he was most gracious to nuns and he didn't shy away from them. He'd always kind of give them a little special wave or he'd stop and talk to them. He knew he was being photographed but didn't enjoy it at all because of being associated with the religious part. Although he never completely shied away from it. If they saw him and waved or he knew that they saw him he'd always go over to them. He was very courteous to them. He was that way with a lot of people

MICHAELIS: What about the fancy hats? Was there actually ever a photograph of him taken in the Indian head-dress?

TRETICK: Oh, the Indian headdress. Do you want me to go into that?

MICHAELIS: Sure.

TRETICK: The Indian headdress thing was a game that he played with me because early in the campaign I talked with him about posing in one. Well, in the first place other photographs said that Kennedy was a bad candidate to cover because he never would do anything, and this was quite true. If he got himself into an embarrassing position he wouldn't pose for it. So I had a talk with him coming back from Alaska on the plane. He was very candid in his conversation on how he felt about photographers in general. He maintained that in most cases his judgement on what he should pose for and what he shouldn't pose for — what kind of situation he should get into — was better than most of the photographers he came in contact with. He said, "After all, there are a lot of clods carrying cameras in this country." I said, "I'm going to be covering this entire

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campaign and I'd like to know what you like and what you don't like and I don't want to get you into a bad situation on purpose, but if you happen to get into one I'm just going to have to photograph it anyway." And he said that was all right as long as it actually happened. Even if it looked bad and you photographed it that was all right. He said that was the way the game was played. So I said, "Well, you know one of these days somebody's going to put an Indian headdress on your head." He said, "Well, I'll bridge that when I come to it." And I said, "You know, they're not going to just hand it to you, they're going to actually put it on your head as

part of the ceremony.” He said, “I’ll look for that, don’t worry.” So that became a game and then we went to Pontiac, Michigan, I remember. It was part of the ceremony and they did put it on his head and he kind of ducked out of it and I don’t think anybody really got a good picture of it. There were some photos made near his head but I never saw one published that was any good until we got to Sioux Falls. We’d always get in first on a campaign because I rode in the staff plane; that was the plane that landed first. Then there was the press plane, that always landed second, and the Caroline was third. That was the routine all the time.

MICHAELIS: About how many photographers were there from Washington covering the campaign?

TRETICK: There was an AP photographer always, there was a UPI photographer — me — then sometimes a *Life* guy — it was usually Paul Shutzer — and then on and off different photographers. Cornel Capa came along for a while, others.

MICHAELIS: But a group of about five or six....

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TRETICK: Five or six, then a couple of newsreel photographers, too. But that was the bulk of the national photographers and then there were many local photographers who showed at each stop. Then of course we were always enforced with other UPI photographers any place we went. A guy who photographs a campaign, his prime job is to stay close to the candidate. If you have to move back to show the crowd you take the chance of missing a picture in close — like an egg is thrown or a shot is fired, anything, you know, you’re really kind of an insurance policy more than anything else. Getting back to the headdress thing; we got to Sioux Falls. I talked to the people who were going to give him the Indian headdress and they told me when it was going to occur, and how some Chief was going to put it on his head. I said, “Is it part of the ceremony that they actually put it on his head?” They said, “Yes.” I said, “Well, okay.” I studied the stand and I got into what I thought was the logical position and he got up there, and God, he was so nervous, and he knew it was going to happen and it was killing him too, really. He kind of stood there real stiff and sure enough they put it on his head. But it stayed there about an eighth of a second because he took it off, just like that. “Thanks very much,” he said. Except that I did nail him with it right on his head and it’s a really silly looking picture, there’s no question about it. And it appeared in the papers next day, about three or four columns. So I clipped it out, put a little note on it saying, ‘You gotta be quick’ and sent it to him. He got a big kick out of it.

MICHAELIS: Did he ever acknowledge it to you?

TRETICK: Yes. He said something like...I can’t remember the exact words....

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something like ‘There’ll be better days,’ something like that, I can’t recall the exact words....

MICHAELIS: What other anecdotes on the campaign?

TRETICK: Well, here’s another. Once in St. Louis in the stockyard district they plunked a cowboy hat on his head. Somebody got one on — it only stayed on for a couple of seconds and we all missed the thing.... Some official was there and he was trying to be helpful and all the guys were screaming for him to put the hat on his head. The official said, “Would you put the hat on your head again, some of these fellows over here missed it.” And he turned to us and smiled and said, “I’m glad.” Oh yes, in Sioux City he did a very surprising thing. He got on a horse, but he would not have gotten on the horse had we asked him to get on. He got on because it was a challenge. Because the guys in the stockyard said to him, “I’ll bet you can’t ride this horse.” And he didn’t say anything, he just jumped on the horse. And we got a very nice picture of him. It wasn’t really a horse, it was a white mule but it looked like a horse. We did get a good picture and it looked very natural, and then afterwards he complimented me on the photo. He liked it and he said he’d like to get a copy of it. If he asked for a copy of a photograph he always liked it. And there again he was always watching the credit lines because if it said UPI — I was synonymous with UPI — and even though I didn’t make all the photos he would look at it and assume it was mine. And in most cases it was.

MICHAELIS: That’s very unusual, isn’t it, for a candidate to...

TRETICK: It’s very unusual. To most candidates it’s just another picture

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in the paper and they never really look at the credit lines — they really aren’t concerned with who made the pictures. But Kennedy was different in that he always wanted to know just who was doing what and kept very close track of most all the photographers who followed him. Because I followed him longer and more closely than any other photographer on the campaign he naturally got more used to me. At one point in the campaign a young college girl jumped into his automobile. We saw this from some distance, and then we got out of our car and started running toward him with the cameras to photograph this episode. Later he remarked during an interview to someone, “When I saw Stan and the others running toward my car I got the girl out as quickly as I could.” I was told by others that he always referred to the photographers as ‘Stan and the others’ The hats, let’s see. Yes, he would only pose in one kind of hat. That was a workman’s hard hat. He never objected to that, he put a couple of those on during the campaign. I think it was usually the situation he was in. I don’t think he thought a hard hat was a very corny thing. And then it would be kind of an affront to the laborers, the guys who were working there, who were working the granite quarries, the mines, whatever it was. But he would never keep it on very long. And then another hat thing — he said one day in New York City — “God, that was a terrible picture of me in the *New York Times* this morning, wearing that American legion hat. Did you make it, it looks like one of yours?”

MICHAELIS: Had you made it?

TRETICK: Yes, I had made it and it was terrible, too.

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MICHAELIS: He just didn't like the phoniness of it....

TRETICK: No, because he never wore a Texas hat, he never wore hard hats, he never wore Indian head-dresses, so why should he wear them for photographers. But I think one of the funniest hat stories was what he said to Lyndon Johnson when he went to the ranch. He got off the plane and Lyndon greeted him. I don't exactly remember what the exchange was but Lyndon gets his face about two inches away from him and Kennedy said, "Take off that silly hat."

MICHAELIS: This is when Johnson was Vice President elect.

TRETICK: Yes, Vice President Elect. He visited the ranch once. Another funny incident. We were pulling out of the stockyard district in St. Louis and they gave him a basket of apples. We got beyond the crowd and out of the stockyards and suddenly the air seemed to be alive with apples. We turned around — looking back from the photo car — and there was the candidate throwing apples in our direction. It was never determined whether he was trying to pelt us or feed us. Anyway we did our best and gloved a few.

MICHAELIS: Did he look playful or...

TRETICK: I don't know, he was just kind of throwing them. I guess he figured we could take care of ourselves.

MICHAELIS: You said that he was very much aware of the kind of squabbling that was going on in the photo cars.

TRETICK: He was very aware of it, he knew exactly — he saw your problems all the time in the photo car and he also saw the fights that we had with the local photographers. When you travel on a campaign you are always

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assigned to the first photo car — the national photographers got the first photo car which is directly in front of the candidate. If the street was wide enough then two cars rode abreast. We weren't kidding anybody, the second photo car just never really got the vantage point. So we'd always have fights with the local photographers who wanted to get in our car and we had to be very firm with them. The policy was "Think Mean!" If a guy tried to get on the car you just threw him off. He had to get off and get in his own car.

MICHAELIS: They were always maneuvering....

TRETICK: One of the hardest things to do was to dislodge a photographer from his picked or preferred position. And we were told by the Kennedy people, Salinger, O'Donnell, to police our own car. Don't come running to them all the time about the car and so forth. So we got nasty about it with the other photographers. Somewhere in Ohio a pretty big fellow, a local photographer, jumped in our car and wouldn't get out when we asked him. Things got pretty heated and finally we threatened to throw him out bodily. The car was kind of moving slow and he said, "Oh, you wouldn't dare." And I said, "Well, if you stay on the car you're going to get tossed out." He wouldn't budge so we pushed him off. And he was really fuming, you know. So he came around and grabbed hold of an official press badge that Paul Shutzer of *Life* was wearing. The badge said, 'Kennedy Campaign - Press,' and was signed by Henry M. Jackson, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. So he grabbed Shutzer's badge and he looked at it closely and he looked up at Shutzer and shook his fist in his face and said to Paul, "I'll get you, Henry M. Jackson." The funny

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part of that story is that Pierre Salinger got more mileage out of it inaccurately than anybody I know. He tells the story at lectures. The first year after he was in office he told it many places and said he got more laughs than any other story, except that he says it happened to me when actually the guy grabbed was Shutzer. I pushed the guy out of the car but he grabbed Shutzer's badge and he said it to him, he didn't say it to me. But it really doesn't make any difference because it's still a funny story.

MICHAELIS: But wasn't there an incident where Kennedy — it was quite apparent that he was aware of what was going on.

TRETICK: There was this incident in Philadelphia toward the final weeks of the campaign. Shutzer and I went to a toy store and bought a little model car — an old Stutz touring car from the 20s. We got some little figures of men — they were soldiers, we couldn't find any other kind — and scotch-taped them en masse in the car. Some on top, seats, fenders, hood, as many as we could jam in. We even had one hanging from the back bumper as though he were dragging the ground. Then on the side of the car we put the sign 'Photo Car.' We thought of putting 'Photo Cah' and spelling it that way but then we thought it was a little corny so we put 'Photo Car.' The next morning we went to Kennedy's suite in the hotel and Dave Powers took us in for the presentation. We had a hotel towel over it and we just handed it to Kennedy and he removed the towel and saw this little creation. He smiled brightly and then he pointed at the poor fellow hanging from the bumper and said, "Is that the local man?" This is when we knew he was really aware of it. He was also aware of any romance that might be going on between the staff — I mean the staff girls — and the photographers or

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anybody on the campaign. There was one pretty hot one going on and sometimes the girl was in the photo car. I heard later that he kept complete tabs on that and also knew when it got hot and when it cooled off. He enjoyed that kind of gossip. I think he relaxed with that kind of gossip too. He just kind of got a kick out of it.

MICHAELIS: That's quite unusual for someone who must have had a lot of worries.

TRETICK: But he relaxed with that sort of light gossip.

MICHAELIS: Was he protective about his own staff?

TRETICK: You mean did he protect his own girls?

MICHAELIS: He was certainly very considerate about...

TRETICK: He wasn't a gossip, don't get me wrong.

MICHAELIS: No, I mean protective in trying to keep the wolves of the press....

TRETICK: I know on one occasion he kind of pulled apart two people by shifting the girl somewhere else because it got a little too obvious. I think the lowest point on the campaign, and I told O'Donnell one time, was when he outlawed girls in the photo car. O'Donnell said, "It's the last couple of weeks of the campaign and we're going to get a bad name if you guys pull broads on the car everywhere you go." So they said no more girls on the photo car. But let me get on to some more campaign incidents which I think are rather funny. There was one picture-ducking incident on the campaign which I call 'The Staten Island Ferry Caper.' Just prior to boarding the ferry he stopped at a lunch counter at the ferry terminal to get a sandwich and a bowl of soup. He hated pictures of himself eating. He just couldn't stand to be photographed eating food. He mentioned once about a picture of Nixon eating poi in Hawaii. I don't know if you recall the picture but it's Nixon with a big finger full of poi and his mouth wide open. With

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Kennedy it would always be "No thanks" if he had a sandwich or anything like that. If he saw you he'd kind of try to duck you. So on Staten Island he got inside this little lunch counter and then they locked the doors. I was frantic I couldn't get inside. I saw visions of my competition inside. You get a fix in your mind when you're on a campaign that if you get an informal picture of a guy eating it's a hell of a good picture. I don't know why but it's just all part of it and you want to get everything you can, you don't want to miss anything. Anyway, I finally got in. I managed to gain entrance to the place just about at the end. I immediately went behind the counter and came on Kennedy and he was just finishing. I said, "Well, you outfoxed us again, Senator." And he wiped his mouth with the napkin and looked at me and said, "Where have you been, Stan, all the action's been in here." Because he knew he had screwed me and he took a

delight in it. He had outfoxed us again. But I thought this was a delightful thing in him. I could never see it as being nasty, malicious, or anything like that.

MICHAELIS: Just playing a game.

TRETICK: He plays a game, enjoys the game, but when he'd lose he never cried about it. He never said, 'You bastard, you made a picture of me doing such and such,' he just accepted it as it was. It was very refreshing in a politician. I've seen them where they really get incensed if you get them in something that they don't want to get into. They let themselves get into it mostly. It's just that he wouldn't let himself get into these things. It was his option. Another time with a hot dog was pretty funny. He loved Howard Johnson's.

MICHAELIS: Another old New England...

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TRETICK: He liked Howard Johnson's ice cream and he liked their hot dogs. So he stopped at a Howard Johnson's and he went in and we chased him in again as usual. He bought these two hot dogs. He had them — he had a funny way of trying to hide things — he'd kind of hold them down close to him like they weren't there. And he had these two hot dogs and he was shaking his head. We had the cameras and we were just waiting for him to eat one. He said, "No you don't! Not after that picture of Lodge, Lefkowitz and Rockefeller." And he kind of walked away and got in the car. So naturally we had to jump back in the photo car because we were leaving. We got a long lens out to make a shot of him eating the hot dogs in the car. So he slid down under the dash and hid under there and ate the hot dogs that way. He wouldn't touch the hot dogs until he got in the car and the motorcade started moving and he knew everyone was in the motorcade. Then he knew he had us, we couldn't get out of the car. We were locked in, so to speak. And then he slid under so we couldn't get him that way.

MICHAELIS: He was really serious about it, wasn't he?

TRETICK: Oh yes. And he also didn't like a picture of him combing his hair. And he constantly combed his hair on the campaign. So one of the sneakiest things he did was when we'd come to a viaduct or underpass or anything, or tunnel kind of thing he'd comb his hair in the tunnel. I said, "One day I'm going to wire one of those tunnels with flashbulbs." He said, "I hope they're all mis-fires." One of the funniest pictures I ever got of him, it's in the UPI files now, was a picture of him catching a bunch of bananas. It's really a riot. He's got his hands out and the bananas

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are coming to him.

MICHAELIS: Who was throwing the bananas?

TRETICK: Well, this was in Pennsylvania near Scranton somewhere. This guy had a bunch of bananas and he wanted Kennedy to have them. He was doing a little dance with them, getting all set to throw them. It was kind of funny. I turned around watching this guy. As Kennedy's car came abreast, Kennedy saw him, you know. The guy was yelling at him and he just tossed them. Kennedy caught the bananas. Then when we got to Wilkes Barre the bananas were sitting in Kennedy's car. Well Kennedy has always had an attraction, a great attraction for girls. Young, squealing teen-agers, you know. These two girls were waiting at the car and I remember I got one of the bananas out of Kennedy's car and I was eating it. One of the girls said, "Is that a banana out of Kennedy's car?" I said, "Yes." They said, "Can we have the skins?"

What do you want to get into now?

MICHAELIS: Are there any more incidents of fun and games on the campaign? They certainly are revealing!

TRETICK: You mean involving him directly?

MICHAELIS: Yes.

TRETICK: Once when he landed in New York City he was greeted at the airport by Jackie, who quickly kissed him on the arrival. And most of the photographers missed the picture due to a lot of Kennedy maneuvering. What he did was this. He was supposed to get out of the front of the plane but he got out of the back. This is one time when we were all on the same plan which was a jet. Instead he ran out of the back and he met Jackie. He kissed

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her there so everybody had to make a mad dash for the back instead of the front and we missed it. They all started screaming and yelling, "Kiss her again, Senator; kiss him again, Mrs. Kennedy; put your arm around her, Senator; hug him, Jackie," and all this stuff going on. Kennedy looked around and said, "You're sure an affectionate group of photographers." Once earlier in the campaign Kennedy was being shown around a livestock show in Tennessee by Senator Albert Gore. It was the usual, crowds following, photographers and reporters underfoot. A mad scramble. When he was shown a prize bull which Senator Gore owned, someone in the crowd yelled to Gore, "What's his name, Senator?" Kennedy, quick on the uptake, said, "Albert Gore the Second." But the best part is that when Kennedy saw the prize bull he looked over at Gore and he said, "Has he been getting much...uh...recognition lately?"

MICHAELIS: He had a marvelous wit.

TRETICK: Oh yes. Somebody gave him a watermelon that weighed 142 pounds and he just sort of handed it to him. He kind of went back and said, "Is it still

alive?" Oh, this is another great line. We were up in New York State once and we had stopped at one of the toll gates to kind of reorganize or something. He had been traveling all day. And there had been a guy following Kennedy almost all day in his own car who was a former Teamster, from the West Coast, I think from Oregon. He was a very rough, tough, gravel-voiced, big, heavy, fat guy. He got near the car and he'd start screaming and yelling at Kennedy and he was passing out Nixon buttons, and he was passing Nixon literature out. He just went on and on, screaming about how Kennedy had screwed the Teamsters. When he was yelling Kennedy

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was getting very nervous with him and you could see he was irritated. And the guy got kind of close to where Kennedy was, I think he was about ten feet away. We were all set. We didn't know what was going to happen. We were standing on the back of the photo car. When the guy got in real good earshot Kennedy said, "Get lost, fatso." The guy didn't know what to say. He just sort of went away. Then later on he started a fight in a town with somebody. Somebody got irritated with him in the crowd. He got a jackhammer out of the car and he was going to flail away. The cops picked him up and booked him finally. He looked dangerous.

MICHAELIS: Was there a lot of heckling like that?

TRETICK: There was enough heckling. That was one of the worst examples I had seen. Oh, sure, there were many hecklers in the crowds.

MICHAELIS: He always handled it though, didn't he?

TRETICK: But I can't really recall any incidents where he put down a heckler. That's something I can't recall at all, I just can't remember.

MICHAELIS: Wouldn't his own people take care of the guy like the Teamster, wouldn't they be able to just get him out of the way?

TRETICK: Well, there was nothing you could do with a guy like this. Kennedy had no personal protection on the campaign at all, nobody. Originally Jim McShane — you know, the U.S. Marshall — we had a meeting with Jim McShane before the campaign and he told us that he was going to go with Kennedy.

MICHAELIS: Bodyguard?

TRETICK: Well, somebody to walk through the crowds with him.

MICHAELIS: He didn't like contact with crowds.

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TRETICK: He had a lot of it though. I mean I never saw where he was really mauled or anything but there was a lot of hand shaking and bodily contact which I don't think he really enjoyed. For instance, he got very cautious with handshaking because women almost pulled him out of cars. Particularly women, men didn't bother him as much. But had a way of shaking hands after a while where he'd just sort of touch them barely when they put their hand out instead of grabbing it. He just sort of touched the fingertips quickly like that. Because he was afraid that they'd grab him and pull him. A couple of times he almost got pulled out of the car.

MICHAELIS: You couldn't tell that he was enduring this as an ordeal which was what...

TRETICK: Oh yes, I think he was. I don't think he really reveled in it. I don't think he reveled in the adulation thing. He wanted to win and he went along with whatever he could to win. But I don't think he reveled in that kind of thing like some people would. He never made it appear that it was distasteful to him. Now what he said after he got behind that closed door in his suite was something else again.

MICHAELIS: He appeared to be...

TRETICK: He did it with a lot of grace. He wouldn't go for the corn, true, but here he was in a crowd and he did go along the fence and he did touch the people and they touched him.

MICHAELIS: You were saying that McShane was assigned to him.

TRETICK: McShane told us that he was going to go with Kennedy everywhere. To us that was a good thing and I'll tell you why. When a candidate or anybody gets in a crowd and they swell in on you — if the Red Sea closes in — you can't photograph the candidate. You're photographing heads and

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shoulders. Now I know for a fact that if you've got three or four photographers forming a perimeter around the candidate and back through a crowd with him and keep maybe a space of say eight or ten feet between you and him, then your pictures can be very good. You can actually move the crowd back with you and they can come in and get close in without them getting completely in front of you. So we explained this to McShane and he wanted to be very helpful to us. And I said, "Try to tell all your advance men," you know, when they bring him through crowds to hold the people back off so we could photograph. This was purely a selfish thing on our part. We just didn't want the crowd in so we couldn't see him. And McShane said that he would do everything he could to do this.

MICHAELIS: What happened?

TRETICK: He just never showed up on the campaign in this capacity. He was advancing it. I saw him along the line advancing it and I said, "Aren't you going to travel with the candidate?" He said no, they were short-handed and they needed him for advancing. But Kennedy never had a bodyguard, never. O'Donnell naturally stayed with him the whole time. But the local police always took things in their own hands anyway. They always give you a problem no matter what. Oh yes, there was a damn good incident on the campaign of putting a guy down. A guy threw a drink in his face and I've forgotten where it was, it was at night when we were traveling. The car was going very slowly.

MICHAELIS: Was it an open car?

TRETICK: Yes it was an open car. He was in an overcoat, I remember. And this guy tossed a whole...

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MICHAELIS: What city was this?

TRETICK: I can't remember exactly — Akron, I think. This is a known incident. It was reported too, and I witnessed it. He threw the drink, he tossed the drink and the glass and everything all at once. I don't know whether it was a plastic glass or glass but he just tossed it into the car. Some of it got on Kennedy's coat but most of it fell on somebody else in the car, the drink part, and they stopped the car. And the guy was still standing in the crowd. And Kennedy picked the glass up and said, "Here's your glass." and gave it back to him. And he didn't say another word and we just went on. Of course when it happened everything sort of stopped. It was in the evening and we were going to a hall. And the guy was in a sort of hostile crowd. But they were all startled when he did throw the drink. Now he was obviously drunk.

MICHAELIS: Was Kennedy angry?

TRETICK: Oh yes, he was visibly angry but he really controlled it. I know he would have liked to have jumped out of the car and hit the guy. He had great control, you know. He just was against making any public display of himself. In private, I understand, he cursed like a sailor.

MICHAELIS: Let's go on to the next stage. After the inauguration you were still covering it for UPI at the time of the inauguration?

TRETICK: Yes, I was with UPI at the time of the inauguration, and then stayed with him. I covered him right through until the time he was inaugurated. I never left him. And then after that then we went back to the same routine where I was at the White House for like a month and a half and then got off for a little while and they sent another guy over, like that. And I got tired of it and I wanted to get into the magazine

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field and do that kind of work with Kennedy. I thought it would be an interesting eight years coming up.

MICHAELIS: More intimate and close range.

TRETICK: Oh, much more intimate. I had a lot of plans myself about what I wanted to do in the next campaign like now, like right this minute I'd like to be doing it. I was reaching a point with him where he put a tremendous amount of trust in me. And this is what I was working to. That's why I didn't want to do anything where you'd sort of blow it, you know. I wanted to — not so much not to displease him — but I wanted to do everything in the best taste and the best way I could, which I knew he wanted. I once said to him just after I went to *Look*, "You know, on the next campaign I'd like to do a really intimate story on you. Not this business of just what happens on the streets, but it's always been curious to me what happens after you walk into the suite and close the door." He said, "Well, I don't know for photographs, you know, I get into my shorts and drink a Heinekens or a daiquiri or something, sit on the bed and bawl out my aides. Can you photograph that?" I said, "Well, not exactly that but something a little more intimate." He said, "We'll talk, that's way off." The one story I'd like to tell about him which to my mind is more revealing of him than anything else was the time when he was in Hyannis and he had gone — this was after he was President — this is when I finally had gone to work for *Look* and I was up doing the golf cart series. And he had gone to a party at a neighbor's house up the street.

MICHAELIS: Larry Newman.

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TRETICK: Larry Newman. He stayed there about half an hour. Laura Bergquist, Senior Editor of *Look*, and I had an appointment with him. He came back, and he was shaking his head, he was irritated, and he started the conversation by saying, "You know, I don't understand people sometimes. I go to this party and here I am the President of the United States now and naturally everybody's going to try to impress me because I'm the President. I don't know why they have to, and I can understand people dropping names, but this first-name dropping really gets me. Somebody was discussing Carl this and Carl that — Carl Curtis. Then Styles this and Styles that — Styles Bridges. And Dick this and Dick that — Dick Russell. I've known Senator Russell ever since I was a fledgling congressman and I've never referred to him as anything except Senator Russell. Why do people do that?" I think the reason he told us was that it was on his mind and he just wanted to get it off right away and tell somebody about it and we were the handiest ones there. We were the first persons he saw after he came away from it and he just wanted to say something about it.

MICHAELIS: He had a great respect for the office of Senator or President....

TRETICK: The office of anybody.

MICHAELIS: It was obviously a very Republican party if they were talking about Senator Bridges....

TRETICK: Oh yes, it was. We used to call it the Hyannis Chapter of the John Birch Society and Madras Jacket set.

MICHAELIS: Did you get that golf cart story then?

TRETICK: Yes, it was that time after I had made those forbidden pictures of Caroline Kennedy and was trying to get Jackie to release them. That's

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when we'd see him doing the golf cart. I was doing a story on Shriver at the time. I'd see him on the cart and the guy was a natural. The kids all yelling, "Uncle Jack, Uncle Jack!" And everybody had heard about the candy store and really wanted the golf cart too. But I saw it and when you see it it's even more incredible. You know, with the kids hanging on it. He took me for a ride on the cart and I said, "You know, it'd be a great story to do you and the children on the cart." And he liked the idea right away so he gave me permission on the spot. It was just a matter of a couple of weeks and he went ahead and did it.

MICHAELIS: You stayed there?

TRETICK: No, well I went up from week to week. Then I dealt with Mrs. Lincoln on it because that was my contact with him really, with Mrs. Lincoln. If she knew that you were negotiating with him or communicating with him and it was okay she would do it. You didn't have to go through Pierre. It wasn't a sneaky thing, really, except that she knew how he felt about it — whether he wanted to see you or he didn't so then you could communicate with her. And you couldn't do it each time either. A lot of times you just couldn't get through to him.

MICHAELIS: Stan, why don't you mention what the situation was with the Caroline pictures, because we haven't talked about that before. It's rather interesting historically, particularly as it related to your future work with him.

TRETICK: The Caroline pictures occurred when I was doing a story on Shriver. Shriver invited me up to Hyannis on the Fourth of July weekend. The first Fourth of July when Kennedy was the President. This is always a

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big weekend with the Kennedys, that Fourth of July. It was the gathering of the clan so to speak. I went up to photograph Shriver's activities. But while I was there waiting for Shriver to show up, it was in the morning, Caroline came around with all her little friends. I know a picture when

I see one and I just photographed it. She was on the porch with all the children and she got into a big argument with Maria Shriver about a picture. It was a postcard, you know, one of these Kennedy postcards. And Maria Shriver said, "This is the President." And Caroline said, "That's my daddy." And Maria said, "Yes, but it's the President." And Caroline said, "THAT'S MY DADDY!" And she screamed at her. And this whole thing took place in front of me and so I photographed it. Caroline looked, well Jackie said she looked bratty in the pictures. But I don't think so. I think she looked as natural as any kid is when she's defending her father. Then about an hour later or so here she comes on the golf cart, Kennedy driving.

MICHAELIS: Who was on the golf cart?

TRETICK: On the golf cart was the President driving, Joe, sitting next to him and Jackie standing up behind holding on to both of them.

MICHAELIS: Mrs. Kennedy.

TRETICK: Yes, a beautiful picture which I never made. Laura Bergquist and I both always felt that Mrs. Kennedy had a kind of way with her that sort of strikes terror to your heart. She was a very strong minded girl and very tough. And she's one way about the way she wants it. I think this is one thing that old Joe Kennedy liked about her, that she was a tough babe. So then she caught my eye and said, "Oh, now you're not here

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to photograph us, are you, Stanley." I don't blame her, she wanted to protect that privacy — and I said, "No, I'm not." She said, "Or Caroline either?" And I had just made the Caroline pictures. And I said, "Well, uh, I'm not really here to photograph her, no." So then they went — they had that usual routine in Hyannis, about noon they'd all go down to the *Marlin* or the *Honey Fitz* and they'd go on their afternoon sail or picnic — they really knew how to relax. They had a great way with them. You know, there's nothing ostentatious about Hyannis, this is the way they loved to live. They just lived beautifully. They had everything packed when they went on the boat, and they had their swim and their water skiing and everything else and it was a marvelous life.

MICHAELIS: But I wonder, Stan, where the cart was coming and where you were and how you happened to be there.

TRETICK: I was on Joe's front porch. And you had to pass Joe's front porch to get out to the dock where they had the boat. So she passed by there. So then I went on a picnic. They always used to go on separate picnics. She went with the President and her guests, whoever they were that day and then Shriver had another picnic somewhere in which he took Bobby on. And then Caroline came on that picnic and Shriver invited me along. When Bobby saw me he got a little upset too, because Shriver didn't tell anybody he was bringing a photographer along. Then I went on the picnic and Bobby said something to me, "Well, look, don't make any pictures of me, I don't want to be photographed." I said, "Well, Sarge says it's all right." And he said, "Well

photograph Sarge and the rest of them. I don't want to be included." So I said okay. We got on the boat and Bobby was kind of broody about it. But then after we got

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to this little sand island we got out of the boat and I just put my camera away. I was a little mad about it and I said the hell with it to myself. So then he came over to me and said, "Oh, come on, take your camera out. I don't care. I just didn't know you were here, that's all." Then he said, "It's all right, anything you want to do." But then that's when, that afternoon, Mrs. Kennedy got wind of the Caroline pictures.

MICHAELIS: Caroline was on that picnic, not with her mother and father?

TRETICK: That's right. Then she knew that I photographed her. I don't think she knew anything about the morning pictures but she did find out about the afternoon photos. So then Pamela Turnure, Mrs. Kenendy's press secretary, came up to me in the Yachtsman where we were staying that evening and wanted to see me. She said, "Look, Mrs. Kennedy's very upset about you photographing Caroline. She said she doesn't want Caroline photographed, and you didn't come up here to photograph Caroline, you came up here to photograph the Shrivvers and Mrs. Kenendy doesn't want those pictures used." So I said, "Well, okay." Then the next morning I had to go back to the compound for one more photo session on the Shrivvers and here again the same thing occurred. I saw Caroline but this time I put my hand over the lens of the camera and didn't make any photos of her. A few minutes later Bobby came up from the beach after taking a swim with some of his children. He said, "Hey, my sister-in-law is pretty upset about those pictures you made of Caroline. Are you going to make sure they don't go in the magazine?" I said, "Yes, I'll tell them about it." He said, "Will you take responsibility then?" And I said, "Yes." Then I went back to the Yachtsman and wrote a 3-page memorandum explaining the whole Caroline pictures episode and

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telling them about Mrs. Kennedy's feelings, Bobby's feelings, and that I didn't think we really should use them. We left for Washington as usual on Monday morning when the President left and I shipped all the film to New York, and several days later went up myself and went over the contact sheets with Laura Bergquist. When Laura saw the photographs of Caroline she said, "Do you realize what kind of exclusive this is?" And I said, "Yes, but we're not supposed to use them." She said, "Well, let's see if we can't get Jackie to shake some of them loose." Because at the time Laura had been assigned to do a story just on Caroline and we had no new pictures of her. We discussed between us several ways on how to approach Mrs. Kennedy, and decided the best way would be to have large prints made of all the new Caroline pictures and then put them in an album for a presentation and work from there. I remember Laura and I had a big discussion on what color the album should be, what color does Jackie like best. So we settled on white because it was involving the child. I remember after we got the pictures made we were both down in Washington preparing the album and I remember sitting in the Sheraton Carlton Hotel

on the floor with a scissors cutting the edge of the photographs trying to make them fit into the album. We both went up to Hyannis that following weekend with the usual press group that followed Kennedy there all the time, and I contacted Sarge Shriver so he could make an appointment for me with Jackie so I could show her the photos. He arranged an appointment for 5:00. Sarge and I both sat in the living room for a few minutes, then the President came down in a few minutes. He was very cordial to me and I remember getting

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into a discussion with him about various photographs in which he expounded at length his displeasure with high fashion photographers. I remember the phone interrupted us several times. I heard him say, "Yes, well what do you think de Gaulle thinks about that?" He was talking to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Jackie finally came down, greeted me very warmly and asked if I'd like a drink. I said I would and she went out and made the drink herself, then came back. I brought the album out and showed it to her. I was trying to explain it to her and she said, "Well, I think this is a nice album of pictures, Stanley, but I just don't want them in *Look* magazine, I just don't want them in the magazine. But thank you very much for the album." She then went to fix me another drink and I said to Kennedy, "How do you think I'm doing with her?" And he just shrugged his shoulders like that's your problem and I don't want anything to do with it. I couldn't budge her so we all went outside, we were all leaving; Shriver, myself, Jackie, and then Caroline. And Kennedy was just about to get on the cart. And he said, "Hey, you want a ride on the golf cart?" I said, "Sure." So I got on the cart and Shriver made a picture of it. So just before he took me for the ride I said, "Mr. President, it's a great thing about these kids on the cart and the candy store. I'd like to do a story on it. What do you think of it?" He said, "Yes, that'd be a good story."

MICHAELIS: He was anxious to make amends.

TRETICK: Well, I don't know if he was anxious to make amends so much in that I think that he was quick to see that it was a good kind of a story. He couldn't go wrong with a thing like that. He really liked the kids

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and he was a favorite uncle. They all ran up to him, you know. So he took me for a wild ride on the cart along with Jackie and Caroline. He rode up and down the hill in front of Joe's house. Sometimes I swear he was trying to dump me because I almost fell off a couple of times. But I think he was just having some fun. After the ride was over he and Jackie got off to go into Joe's house for dinner. He said to me, "You get in touch with Mrs. Lincoln. You call her Tuesday and we'll see." So then when I called her Tuesday she said the President said he would do it the weekend after next in Hyannis. I went up to Hyannis the weekend he designated. When I went over to the compound and saw him he asked me to explain exactly what I wanted with the cart. He'd say, "Now exactly what do you want?" He was always asking this, he always asked you to explain precisely what you had in mind. I said, "I don't want you to pose for any photographs, I just want you to do what you normally do with the cart and the children. Perhaps when all the

children do pile on the cart you can circle me several times down by your father's house and I'll just photograph you as you come by." He agreed to this but these things never really happen exactly the way you want, and I had to do the cart series at various times in bits and pieces because I was shooting both black and white and color. I had about three or four different cracks at it over a period of several weeks, and I never did get the candy story routine because it just never happened right for me.

MICHAELIS: But Caroline wasn't permitted to go on that ride.

TRETICK: Jackie would always pull her off. She acted like she felt sorry for me because she kept pulling Caroline off the cart. And she'd say, "Poor Stanley, poor Stanley." But she wouldn't let her on the cart for

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the pictures. She had a thing about not letting Caroline in the pictures.

MICHAELIS: And the President wouldn't intervene in that.

TRETICK: He never intervened. I'm sure he wanted her on the cart, but he just bowed to her wishes. He didn't want any problems with her. As a consequence she never appeared in the cover picture. She's not in the golf cart. Some people think she is because there's a kid in the back — I think it's Lawford's kid — Sydney Lawford. But I'll almost bet to this day that she wished Caroline was in this picture. Now I did get a couple of pictures with Caroline. We did use one in the magazine. Caroline had her head turned like that but we never had to show Jackie those pictures. I showed the President a set. He never saw any of the color. He never saw the golf cart picture until he had that copy of that magazine. You know, the cover picture. He only saw a set of black and white pictures one day in his office. There was one picture of a secret service man pushing the cart out of the sand. He said, "That's Secret Service, maybe you'd better not use this one." And that was the only one he objected to because the guy was a Secret Service. And he didn't look good in all of the pictures, but I don't think he was very vain about things like that. It's just a matter of taste again, that's all it really was. It was a matter of was it in good taste. You know, was it corny or — that kind of thing. That's the impression he gave me.

MICHAELIS: Stan, you had a nice story about his characteristic courtesy and thoughtfulness with Stoughton, the White House photographer.

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TRETICK: That was during the John-John thing. Look, before I get into John-John there's another anecdote which I think is kind of funny. And also revealing of him too. Before we left Palm Beach, just before he was inaugurated, Eisenhower threw a big dinner for the press. I don't think Eisenhower ever knew

what the list looked like. I think Hagerty got the list up. And it was kind of a big payoff thing to the press group that covered the White House regularly. There were about 70 of us in all. And this dinner occurred, oh, about four or five days before Kennedy's inauguration. Now I was in Palm Beach at the time so I flew to Washington to go to the dinner and then I came back. And then we were making a trip to New York with Kennedy and we were all on one plane together. And Kennedy wanted to know about this dinner. I had gotten two cigars from the dinner and I gave one to Pierre and on the plane I handed Kennedy the other cigar and I said to him, "Senator, here's your first cigar from the White House. I got it at the dinner the President had last night." He accepted the cigar and immediately took one out of his pocket, a small Havana, and handed it to me and said, "Here, have one of mine, Castro sends them to me." Then after that he said, "Say, tell me about that dinner. What kind of a dinner was it? What did President Eisenhower say?" I said, "I don't know, I couldn't hear him too well, I was drinking quite a bit." He said, "How blasé can you get." Now, getting back to the courtesy business again. After the John-John story was over, and I did show him the photographs — I showed him the color on that too. The Army photographer, Cecil Stoughton,

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was there most of the time I did the John-John pictures, except at Camp David. He didn't go to Camp David with us. He's always been very helpful to me on these stories. And he did make several pictures himself. Well, Cecil set the showing up in the Cabinet Room. I put them in various situations, a different pile for each situation. So when he came in to look at them I told him he could start here and then go around. He said, "Is the one on top, is that the best one?" I said, "No, they're just in situations." So he started going through them. He flipped through them very fast. When he got to the picture where the kid was under the desk he said, "You can't miss with these, can you, Stan?" Then he saw the color showing. When it was all over he started to leave and he turned to Cecil and said, "You must have gotten some nice pictures too, didn't you, Captain?" Which I think was a courtesy to Cecil more than anything else because he was sort of left out of it. Kennedy was concerned about his feelings. I don't think he ever intentionally hurt anyone's feelings.

MICHAELIS: How about the golf bit, after the campaign at Hyannis?

TRETICK: Oh, the golf thing was, well I always knew he played golf and I knew he didn't want to be photographed. He had an objection to it because of the identification with Eisenhower on the golf. Ike was criticized so severely for it during his administration. So he shied away from that kind of publicity, although he couldn't stop people from writing it. He didn't play publicly, he played on private courses, county clubs and private clubs. So I thought I might as well ask him. So I just went down and asked him. I went on the course, I had to walk

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this great distance. He said, no, he didn't want to be photographed. I had the camera with me. I said, "You know, everybody's writing about it." And he said, "Well, that's a lot of words, but one picture, you know what that can do." I said, "Well, okay." Then he said, "Did you come all the way down here to ask me that?" I said, "Yes." He said, "From there?" He pointed up on the hill. He said, "Well, why didn't you just make a picture of me with your long lens?" I said, "I knew you didn't want it or you'd have done it before" or something like that "so I just thought I'd ask you. And it's a private course." Then he invited me to walk around with him but he still wouldn't let me make the picture.

MICHAELIS: But he appreciated the courtesy.

TRETICK: He liked the courtesy. It's what he liked more than anything else.

MICHAELIS: Stan, how about those photographs of Caroline, what ever happened to them?

TRETICK: Well, we published them eventually, a year later.

MICHAELIS: Because other pictures were being shown.

TRETICK: Yes, pictures were being shown and they were coming out in other magazines. But the Caroline pictures incident was something special and they have long memories about things like this. Particularly since Bobby had asked if I'd take the responsibility of their not being used. I had given my word on that and wrote a long memo to the magazine. We didn't use them at that time and I never thought that would be used. Let me sum up my feelings on the entire matter. I really kind of stole the pictures to begin with. I was not up there to take those pictures.

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I think that they had a perfect right to object to them under the circumstances, because I was in on their private quarters, their private compound, and not invited to make those pictures. And I believe that they did have a right to object. Now if I poked the camera through a fence and found the kids in public and then made a few snaps of them, then they'd have no right because then they're public domain. But this wasn't public domain. It was private. So I told this to Dan Mich, the editor of *Look* magazine. I explained this whole thing. But a year later what upset it was that *Life* and several other competition magazines were running Kennedy children pictures, a few that Jackie had allowed. The reason that Jackie had given us for not using them — that she didn't want Caroline recognized — didn't seem valid. So Dan Mich just decided one day — this is a year later — and he said, "They'll lose all their value if we don't use them now, let's just use them. I don't suppose there's any objection anymore." So we did a layout called 'Caroline's Wonderful Summer.' They couldn't have timed it worse, because that's when the President agreed to do John-John. You know Pierre said, "Stanley, god-dammit, you're through through through, you'll never get John, you're just never going to get another thing out of here." And I understand Kennedy got very upset when the pictures appeared because he got the heat from

Jackie. Ted Sorensen told me, "It's a good thing you weren't here that minute. The President tried to get you on the phone."

MICHAELIS: Kennedy called you at your office.

TRETICK: At my home, it was in the evening.

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MICHAELIS: In Washington?

TRETICK: He said get that so-and-so Tretick on the phone. He used one of his favorite words, according to Sorensen. But he'd get sore about two minutes. I don't think he held grudges unless somebody did something really malicious to him. He got mad at that time because I'm sure Jackie called up and raised the devil about it. And then also Bobby told me later. He said, "You know, this thing was discussed in Hyannis at the time you made them. My father said to me, 'They'll tell you they won't use them and a year later they'll put them in the magazine.'" And it was exactly a year later that we did put them in the magazine. And Bobby said his father had said this. But Kennedy tried to get me on the phone. And then there was a funny encounter later on the phone between Pierre and me. I got home, I had no knowledge of this, I remember I was in a Safeway on Bradley Blvd. when all this occurred. I got home. My former wife said, "You'd better call the White House, Pierre's trying to get hold of you" So I got Pierre at home and I think Pierre had a couple of drinks in him. He said, "It's a good thing you weren't around here. The President's been trying to get in touch with you. You better get in touch with him." I said, "Get in touch with him!" He said, "You call the President." I said, "Me, call the President? Pierre, I don't call the President of the United States." He said, "I'll tell you what, you call him, you tell the switchboard I told you to call him, and I'll bet he'll talk to you." I said, "Okay." It was the dopiest phone call I ever made in my life. I picked up the phone, dialed National 8-1414 like I'd done many times

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before, but only this time I said, "This is Stanley Tretick of *Look* magazine. I'd like to speak to the President of the United States. Mr. Salinger told me to call him." Then there was a lot of clicking on the phone. About a minute elapsed. Apparently they had called Pierre and he okayed it. Finally the operator came back. She said, "Stanley, the President acknowledged your call and said for you to call him first thing in the morning." So then I hung up the phone. About three minutes later it rang again. It was Pierre. He said, "Maybe you better not call him in the morning. You call me in the morning first." So I said, "Okay." So I called Pierre in the morning but I never did call the President back. I saw Kenny O'Donnell in the hall about two or three days later and he said, "Oh, that was a nice set of pictures you had." In the same issue was a story I had done in Russia on Pierre's visit. I said, "You mean Pierre?" He said, "No, the Caroline pictures." I said, "Well, you know what happened." He said, "Oh, come on, the President's not upset. The President loves those pictures, forget it." I said, "Yes, but it's rather upsetting when

something like this happens. I don't like this sort of thing." And he said, "Oh don't worry, tomorrow's another ball game." I think it's the way Kennedy probably was. I don't think he held a grudge about those pictures. I think he secretly liked the pictures and didn't mind them being in the magazine. He didn't like the one picture in the group and that was where Caroline was holding up the picture of him. He didn't like the idea of the picture. It had an arranged look.

MICHAELIS: The point of it was the difficulty it put you in as far as the John-John story goes.

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TRETICK: Yes, it was cancelled out at Hyannis immediately. I really got immediately cancelled out of that.

MICHAELIS: You did a story on Steve Smith?

TRETICK: I did a story on Steve. He was very reluctant at first to do the story. I sensed immediately that he wasn't adverse to the publicity but he was very sensitive to how it was going to be done, you know. He didn't try to control it or anything like that, he was just curious about how you were going to do it, what kind of photographs you wanted. It was a very slow, drawn out thing.

MICHAELIS: What period was this?

TRETICK: This was at the time he was just beginning to take over the Democratic Committee. At that period we knew that he was taking over, there was no question about it. He was going to be Kennedy's campaign manager. He had not been named but he had been installed at the committee.

MICHAELIS: The Democratic National Committee.

TRETICK: Yes. In a small office. When I had been up there a couple of times it was obvious to me that he was sort of in charge. He was the liaison. He had the President's voice. Smith's a very cool customer. I said, "One of the things I do want on the story is a picture of you and the President which sounds like a standard picture, but I'd like to get it in some kind of a surrounding outside the White House." He said to me, "What about the Carlyle sometime?" And I said, "That's perfect." So I made these very elaborate arrangements and I clued everybody in on this thing. But they almost screwed it all up; Hatcher, Pierre and Kilduff all together. I don't know how three of them could do it so

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badly. Smith arranged for this and he went up to see the President. I was to wait upstairs in Pierre's room at the Carlyle — on the 16th floor — and Kennedy I think was on the 26th or 32nd. But I'd had this blow-up with Pierre the night before because I had gone into a private

dinner with Steve Smith — a birthday party for Kennedy — and no photographers were supposed to be allowed in. And I went in with Steve and I made some pictures. And so Pierre decided to bawl me out in front of everybody because I was there with a camera. So I had a big fight with Pierre. Steve said to me, “Don’t worry about Pierre, he just likes to hear himself yell.” Anyway, I waited in Pierre’s room and then he was supposed to take me upstairs. Now the reason I’m telling you all these details is because I’m leading up to an amusing incident with Kennedy. Kennedy was supposed to leave at 11:00 so it got to be 10:30, twenty-five of, twenty of eleven.... Kilduff was left in the room with me. Suddenly the phone rang about ten of eleven and Kilduff says, “Let’s go.” I said, “Fine, I’ll make the picture.” He said, “We’ve gotta go, the motorcade’s leaving.” I said, “Is Smith upstairs?” He says, “I don’t know, I don’t know.” I said, “I made these arrangements with Smith, isn’t he there?” Kilduff answered, “I don’t have anything to do with that, we’ve gotta go.” Then Kilduff takes me down in the main elevator and then when we go to the lobby all the other photographers were waiting at the elevator for Kennedy to come down. I’m sure the first thing that figured was ‘Tretick’s been upstairs again in the closet,’ a term used when you’re doing a special picture where no other photographers involved. I have a very strict rule that I never flaunt my

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“in” in front of other photographers. I try to work quietly and unobtrusively without too many people knowing about it. There’s a backlash involved where it just upsets the others and then also Pierre has to take a lot of heat from the other photographers and explain to them why I was there and they weren’t. Plus, it’s just not a nice thing to do, as I’ve been on both sides of the fence and I know how they feel. I left the lobby immediately and went outside in the street in front of the Carlyle. I just didn’t want to stand around in front of the other photographers, I was very embarrassed about it. I saw O’Donnell outside and I said, “Kenny, I’m supposed to make a picture of Steve Smith and the President, is Steve upstairs?” Kenny told me he hadn’t seen him but actually he had. At just about this time Andy Hatcher came tearing outside and said, “Man, where you been, where you been? The President’s upstairs waiting for you, he’s got Steve up there, come on, let’s go.” I said, “Andy, I was waiting in Pierre’s room for Kilduff to take me but he took me downstairs instead. I can’t go upstairs by myself.” Andy said, “Never mind that, come on, come on.” So back we go again, past the same group of photographers, adding more insult to injury. We got on the elevator to go up to make the picture. I didn’t get very much time, a few minutes at the most, but it turned out to be the big lead picture for the story. Kennedy was sitting on the couch and Steve on a French chair amid very elegant surroundings. You could see in the photograph that a rapport existed between the two men. Following the picture session everyone got up and the President, Steve, Pierre, Dave Powers and myself got on the same elevator to go down. The first thing

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that flashed through my mind was all those photographers waiting in the lobby and me coming past them for a third time, only this time with the President. I said, “All I need now is to get off the elevator once again in front of all those photographers, and especially with yourself, Mr. President.” Kennedy looked at me and smiled and said, “What’s the matter, Stan, afraid you’re

going to lose your amateur standing?” Then he said, “You’d better stop at the second floor and let Stanley out.” He caught it right away, he knew exactly what I was talking about and exactly the position I was in. So the elevator stopped on the second floor and I got out.

MICHAELIS: He had a professional sense of what was involved.

TRETICK: He knew it was bad. It was obvious I was in with the President making pictures and here all these other photographs down there want the same thing because it involved the President. So he did let me off the elevator.

MICHAELIS: Why don’t we get back to where you first made the approach about John-John — when he picked up the idea and liked it.

TRETICK: All right. Let me get the letter in reference to that.

MICHAELIS: You were doing a story on Mrs. Lincoln.

TRETICK: Yes. I was doing a story on Mrs. Lincoln. I can get to the exact letter.

MICHAELIS: Why don’t you give the date of the letter?

TRETICK: The date is June 26, 1962. I’ll read it shortly.

MICHAELIS: Sure.

TRETICK: We were doing a story on Mrs. Lincoln and trying to get permission to do some pictures of Caroline and Mrs. Lincoln, which Mrs. Lincoln

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said was fine, she agreed she’d like to do it.

MICHAELIS: She had a warm relationship with Caroline.

TRETICK: A very warm relationship with Caroline. We were in her office and I was making some other pictures so the President came out and he saw Bergquist and I standing there so he came over. He liked to talk to Laura about Cuba and things like that — pick her brains a little. Then we explained to the President that we’d like to get a picture. He said, “I don’t know — Caroline....” So then — Laura cited to him that some picture Cecil Stoughton had made of Caroline and John that the White House had released, it was a fairly good picture.. He said something — “John — well, John’s okay.” Well that got me to thinking when he said that. So I wrote this letter, June 26, 1962: ‘Dear Mr. President. Something you said last week when you were talking to Laura Bergquist and myself gave me the idea which could be a sensitive story with a lot of appeal. We were discussing Mrs. Kenedy’s objections to photographs of Caroline and how we cited the picture of John Jr.

walking across your office which the White House released. At that point you said, "John is okay." Therefore, the story I have in mind would be titled, simply, 'The President and His Son,' and would be composed of pictures of only the two of you together, preferably on a weekend at the Cape. It could possibly be done in one shooting session, the earlier this summer the better, due to our long lead time. The photographs and layout naturally would be submitted to you for approval before final publication.' (Well we never did submit them in layout, I said this in the letter but we never did. Now it says....) 'I'll start

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working out the details with Pierre as soon as you give the word to Mrs. Lincoln on these projects and if Mrs. Kennedy will not permit the pictures of Caroline with your secretary I certainly hope that there would be no objection to a sequence with you and John, Jr.' Then I put a P.S. on it: 'After the Washington issue appeared someone asked me, it was a great cover but what do you do for an encore?' You know, the golf cart picture. And I said, 'The President and his son would be a good try.' So that's when he indicated back after that and said he'd do it but then the Caroline pictures appeared and he did say something funny, it was relayed to me later by someone. And he said, "Stanley asked me for the John Jr. story when he knew those Caroline pictures would appear in *Look*. That doesn't sound right." So it was a long drawn out procedure getting the pictures. After the Caroline thing kind of blew over I'd reactivate the thing by sending notes to him. You know, I'd still like to do the John pictures, and I'd also mention that the story was my idea. One thing I did like about him, he respected your ideas and wouldn't give them to anybody else. And I had a feeling that he would give me the story if he was going to do it at all because it was my idea. Also, another point. It was very important in presenting an idea to the President that you got to him personally and avoided doing it through Pierre. I always felt that if you went to Pierre with an idea and let him transmit it to the President it would lose in the translation. With Kennedy, presentation was 9/10ths of the battle. I don't believe Pierre ever really objected to this technique, as he was

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always wrung in on it and I'm sure that the President discussed these ideas with Pierre before giving me an okay on them anyway.

MICHAELIS: Well you established your contact.

TRETICK: Yes, I established the contact but in many instances even this contact didn't do me much good. I had many ideas turned down cold for one reason or another. For example, I wanted to do the Flying White House, (which later I did with Johnson who didn't object to it) but Kennedy said no, he would never do it. I asked him three times and he turned me down every single time. Later on after his death, Kenny O'Donnell told me that the President said it would come out looking like a rich man's plane. He had a thing about that airplane. It was very private.

MICHAELIS: U.S. One?

TRETICK: Air Force One. Both he and Mrs. Kennedy had a lot to do with colors, fabrics, interior design and general decorating, and it was a very private place to him and he didn't want any cameras there. So you could never do that story. Also you couldn't get a picture of him swimming. I tried that and he wouldn't go for it — you know, in the White House pool.

MICHAELIS: So he finally agreed to do John, Jr.

TRETICK: Yes. After putting me off for eighteen months he finally decided to do John Jr. I was called Tuesday by Pierre and I remember his conversation on the phone went something like — “Stanley, what are you doing tomorrow?” I said, “Nothing.” He said, “How about coming here to the White House, we're going to do a little story on John, Jr. Be here

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at 9:30 tomorrow morning.” Well I was down there the next morning at 9:00 and about 10:00 Pierre took me in to see the President so I could outline to him what I wanted. Here again I told him that I didn't want any posed pictures with the exception of maybe a special arrangement in color for the cover which wouldn't take very long — that I wanted John to just do what he did and I would just like the access to photograph it. He agreed to this. You really didn't have to explain too much to the President. He had a unique grasp of what you meant. He then asked me who the writer was on the piece. I told him Laura Bergquist. He said, “Where is she?” I said, “Well she's in New York and the reason she's not here is that we weren't sure whether you would want two of us around all the time, that maybe it would be easier if I photographed John and then relayed as much information as I could to Laura daily.” He looked a little surprised and said, “Well, how is she going to get the mood of the boy?” I said, “Well, I'll contact her immediately and tell her to come down.” He said that would be fine. I then left his office and took up what was to be my station for the next four days — a chair outside Mrs. Lincoln's office. With the exception of about a fifteen minute break for a sandwich I waited there until 7:10 that night when John first appeared in his office.

MICHAELIS: What was the date on that?

TRETICK: October 9, 1963.

MICHAELIS: Stan, since this part is so very important and interesting why don't you just go back a little bit and recount — when I said

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‘then he picked it up again’ I meant the invitation to you to come to Palm Beach in Christmas 1962. What happened then?

TRETICK: Well we finally kind of reactivated the story after the Caroline fiasco and Laura had gone in to see him at one point. I think it was in early December, 1962. And he said, "Well, okay, we'll do it Christmas time in Palm Beach. Tell Stanley to come down to Palm Beach." So I went down at Christmas time and immediately contacted Mrs. Lincoln and she said she would answer me. And then a couple of days went by and she didn't have an answer yet. She hadn't had a chance to talk to him or something, I don't know. So then finally, she called me and said the President said that he didn't think he wanted to do it down here right now. The time wasn't right.

MICHAELIS: Why do you think that was?

TRETICK: I couldn't figure at that time why. The only thing I could figure was that maybe this — the surroundings of Palm Beach were so plush, you know, and I never really wanted to do it in Palm Beach but I couldn't be very picky. I had to do it wherever they wanted to do it. So I kept insisting. I sent several messages back again through Mrs. Lincoln. So finally — Pierre even got into the act and one day in the lobby of the Palm Beach Towers he said, "I've got some bad news for you, the John Jr. story is off right now." He said it out loud in the lobby in earshot of a lot of other people, I could have killed him. So then I decided, well, I'd write one more letter. I even talked to Kennedy prior to that on Christmas day when he invited everybody over for this little Christmas party he had given for us. I wrote this last letter

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and was told again that no, they couldn't do it at this time.

MICHAELIS: And you learned later why probably that was so.

TRETICK: Well I learned later — and to the best of my knowledge — that between the two of them — he and John — they just weren't getting along like a father and son — a very good father and son relationship. John would cry a lot or something when he'd get near him. Things like that. He was just going through a bad stage at that time. And it wasn't until the spring until the thing really blossomed.

MICHAELIS: Then Mrs. Kennedy went to Greece?

TRETICK: Well then I had to wait, see, keep waiting and waiting. And I knew the kid was getting better. And then little pictures were coming out of John every once in a while. You know, he'd be seen.... and interest was building — the interest was really being created. And everybody wanted him, I know. This made me push all the more for it. And I knew that if we didn't get it soon that somebody was going to go in there and get that story. Or at least kill my story somehow. So I just kept after him and kept after him. And Mrs. Lincoln was the one that gave me the most encouragement. She'd say, "He's going to do it, he's going to do it." So finally it got down to where Mrs. Kennedy was almost leaving for Greece. And even I knew, boy, if she's going out of town maybe, you know, maybe

she's been the stumbling block all along. I don't know for sure. So when I called Mrs. Lincoln that last time she said, "Well, maybe soon. You better call me a little later." And I said you mean like Friday after eleven o'clock or something? (It was that time that Jackie was leaving.) She said, "Well, I didn't

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say that but it might be a good idea." So I did call her immediately after Jackie got out. As soon as she snuck out I snuck in. So then — the President was rather candid about it. When I talked to him that morning (the morning I started the story) he said something like, "Now you know we better get this out of the way pretty quick. Things get kind of sticky when Jackie's around." So then I went in on a Wednesday and I finished up on a Saturday at Camp David. Kind of bits and pieces. I really got much more stuff with John than I got with John and him. And I never really got the picture I wanted with the two of them together that I'd like for the cover. Now the cover was okay but that picture was another situation where it was just kind of quick. He couldn't really pose too well. And McNamara was coming over to see him about some minor crisis coming up. So I sat him down on the bench outside and I knew — Dave Powers had told me about this whispering thing he did. John would just go over and whisper in his ear and the President would roar back and say, "Oh, is that a fact?" And John would get a big charge out of this. And I tried to do this with him in about six seconds but it never really came off like I wanted it and we finally had to pull the cover out of that situation which was fair but I think we could have gotten something better if we'd had a little more time. We went to Camp David and we made a whole set with him and the boy in a hurry. And he said, "Can you do this quick?" And it looked posed. It didn't look good. So that take wasn't really too good either.

MICHAELIS: But you did go up on a helicopter.

TRETICK: I went up on a helicopter and I did arrive before he did and at least I could make this business where John greeted him, which I wanted. Well, that was real — that was very good. He said, "Well, I guess you have enough now." I said, "Well, no I need one more thing of the two of you together. I'm looking for something with the two of you for the cover." I said, "Can we do it Monday, lunchtime?" Because I knew John was always around about that time. He said, "Okay, okay." Then he left and we were going to get back on the helicopter to go back and then suddenly a Secret Service man rushes over and says, "The President wants you to come up to the house right away." So we got in the car — we were at the landing pad — and we got in the car, Laura and I, and went over to the house. We went into the house and he said, "I don't want to keep fooling around until Monday. How about something right now with John and me? Make the pictures now." Well the light at Camp David is about the worst in the world. It's harsh and it was noontime with bad overhead light. And he was unrelaxed at the time. He was trying to get it over with. So that take wasn't really too good. There was one picture that came out of it that was fair. Somehow the thing between them wasn't good at that period.

MICHAELIS: How did you take the one of John coming out of the desk?

TRETICK: That was a complete surprise. John just was in the office running around and the President's desk flew open and there he was.

MICHAELIS: And nobody knew the way that...

TRETICK: I never knew. I almost fainted. But you know, you know

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instinctively that that's a hell of a picture. You couldn't miss with a picture like that. So he went around the desk a couple of times and did that. Then he whispered a few times with this father. Then Randolph Churchill came in for an interview — one of these private little things that Kennedy always had. And he was playing with John a little bit and then they brought a bottle of scotch in. Kennedy looked over at me and he got a little nervous when he saw the scotch. I said something about don't let John get near the booze. But the most interesting thing about the story — the thing that stays with me more than anything else — is Kennedy's interest in the child which was incredible. You know, he was more concerned with what I thought about the child than he was about my pictures. He kept saying, "What do you think of him? Isn't he a charge?" And then he asked Laura, "How do you like him, how do you like him?" He'd never say well have you got enough pictures, or is that okay, or anything like that. But he always asked about the boy. And he really liked him. For instance, there were several times where he displayed a thing with him which I thought was — it's almost sensual — like John was sitting on the floor of his office that first night and he was talking to him. And he was saying something to the President and the President was looking down and talking to him. And then he just kind of reached for him — he reached for the boy and pulled his pajama up — you know, bathrobe and pajama — and he kind of rubbed his bare skin right above his rear end. He wanted to touch him. And then another time when he was sitting outside with him he put him over his knee like he was going to spank him but you could see the way he was feeling him and he

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was having fun with him. He'd always kind of feel at him. And, you know, it was a genuine thing between the two of them. The boy also sensed his father. I think it would have really grown. This year would have been a particularly good year between the two of them. And then I was told later — after I showed him the pictures — we gave him a set of the pictures which appeared in the magazine. He ran all over the White House with them, showing people. There again it was like a guy with a wallet full of pictures more than anything else. Like a father showing a wallet full of pictures — this is my boy, how do you like him? It wasn't my pictures — he didn't care whose pictures they were, they were just pictures of the boy that he liked so much. He was just showing them around. He ran all over showing them to people. Then when Jackie — she was back — and he had this set of pictures and he showed them to her upstairs. He showed her the pictures upstairs and she was pleased with them. She wasn't mad about it at all. And then she couldn't wait for the magazine to come out to see them. Mrs. Lincoln called me — I don't know she must have called me at least a half a dozen times during the period of several

days. And we have a thing, we don't like to show a copy of our magazine until the last possible minute. We get a make-ready two weeks before it comes out and then we get a full copy a week before it comes out. So I waited. He saw the pictures I guess about six days before they came out. He saw the copy of the magazine, that is, he'd already seen the pictures. So I brought them all over to him and that was the last time I saw him.

MICHAELIS: He was excited about it. Since he had seen the pictures he probably didn't...

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TRETICK: He had seen the pictures and he looked at them real fast but he was more interested in the Iowa poll than he was in anything else in that magazine. But the Iowa poll — they pulled it out of the magazine — was a poll they were going to run called 'Kennedy Could Lose in Iowa' — a poll by a Des Moines reporter named George Mills. And he heard about it and wanted to see it.

MICHAELIS: And you got them for him eventually.

TRETICK: Eventually I got him a copy before he died. He did see it.

MICHAELIS: I think that just about covers it except where — your own reactions at the time when you heard the news. The pictures had only appeared in — what, the first of November?

TRETICK: No, the pictures appeared — he died on the 22nd, Friday, and the pictures were first on the stands I'd say about Monday or Tuesday. So it was four or five days before he was killed. And the run is two full weeks.

MICHAELIS: Perhaps there is one other thing you want to say, Stan, and that is originally they were intended for a much later release.

TRETICK: Well we were going to use them some time in January. In order to get a full range of color. You can't get color in the magazine unless you have the space for it. And the issue it appeared in — all the color space was gone so they had to revert to black and white on it. But there was a big hassle I remember at the magazine about it. And I had arguments with them about using the pictures as quickly as they could. Now I don't know why, I'm not going to sit here and say it was fate or whatever it was, I don't know.

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MICHAELIS: Well, you had seen some pictures at Arlington with John.

TRETICK: The Arlington thing had come out and I still don't know whether he had shown the child because I had the story and he wanted to take the sting off

of it a little bit, or another story I get is that he had seen him playing outside and he just picked him up and took him to Arlington. He'd do things like that. And this was a very good set of pictures too. But again, this only whetted peoples' appetites to see more of John. They were just delighted in John. And the magazine didn't want to use this until later and then finally they decided they'd use it in an issue six weeks later, their normal lead time. But if they rushed it they could do it in four weeks. What I told them was this. That the story is hottest now and it's very competitive and somebody is going to come in and get something and we can get killed by waiting that long. So then they said they'd do it. So this was the incredible timing of it.

MICHAELIS: Who was it that said it was an act of God that the pictures were made when they were?

TRETICK: Jackie. According to Pamela Turnure, Jackie told her on that Friday night when they were back here. Whether they were in the Bethesda Hospital waiting for the body or in the White House or what — she said it was an act of God the pictures were made when they were.

MICHAELIS: That's a wonderful quote. Particularly in view of all the struggle you had in earlier days. It kind of makes a perfect circle.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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