

Ronnie Eldridge Oral History Interview – RFK #3, 7/2/1970
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Biographical Note

Eldridge, New York City district leader for the Reform Independent Democrats (1963-1968) and vice chairperson of Citizen's Committee for Robert F. Kennedy (1968), discusses Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign and the Coalition for a Democratic Alternative in New York, among other issues.

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Ronnie Eldridge – RFK #3

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Third of Four Oral History Interviews

with

Ronnie Eldridge

July 2, 1970
New York, New York

By Roberta W. Greene

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program
of the John F. Kennedy Library

GREENE: Okay, just to bring together some of these miscellaneous things from '66, '67, I know in the earlier period we talked about projects you were suggesting to him and kind of getting started on this and that. Were there others in the later period?

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ELDRIDGE: We were going to do something on the aging. That was one of the things and we never got to it at all. Just the memos. He always wanted to do something that was a political... The elderly people needed something done for them. Also though, he was very unpopular with them. We thought in New York that they were not really...they thought he was young, ruthless and aggressive kind of thing. And we were going to try and do something. We had some good projects. We really just never got it off the ground. Excuse me. [Interruption]

GREENE: What about reform leaders? I guess the other chief people were Blumenthal [Albert H. Blumenthal], and Kretchmer [Jerome Kretchmer]. Did they come with things for you to do?

ELDRIDGE: It was the same old axis, Blumenthal, Kretchmer, Ohrenstein [Manfred Ohrenstein]. Well, Blumenthal was beginning, I think, the abortion thing just about then. He went to a conference that Eunice Shriver sponsored in Washington. I don't remember the details of it, but I remember Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] wanted him to go and it was a whole big thing. And then I guess it was in '66 that Kennedy was out on Nassau and somebody asked him about abortion. He said something like although he was a Catholic, he was

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for repeal of the abortion laws. I think they worked with him on housing and in different legislative things. Politically, it was the same old thing about getting him more involved. The O'Connor [Frank D. O'Connor] campaign left everybody cold. We went into that, I think, before the Nickerson [Eugene H. Nickerson] candidacy. The constitutional convention. Blumenthal became the campaign chairman for the committee to elect delegates to the constitutional convention. I worked on that as the treasurer or something. We sort of skirted the O'Connor thing, that was really pretty bad. Then the Silverman [Samuel J. Silverman] thing. Was that '66 also?

GREENE: Yes.

ELDRIDGE: That was early in the spring when we did that. It was a friendly kind of thing. I can't really remember anything terribly specific about it.

GREENE: Was he generally receptive to suggestions? Did he get involved in it?

ELDRIDGE: Oh, yeah. What? In the politics of this type?

GREENE: Yeah.

ELDRIDGE: He was receptive always to talking with us. I don't know how receptive he was to getting involved. It really put him off. We'd have all these meetings which

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I always used to have to broker. I'd have to, you know, set them up and go and say they want to talk to you again and this and that. And he'd sit through and listen to all their complaints about the reorganization of the assembly or who the delegates to the constitutional convention should be. That was another thing. Blumenthal really wanted to be a delegate to that. And they were all so concerned about the quality of the delegates.

We'd sit through these long meetings and they would really cry all the time. And he got very impatient. He'd always say, "Well, what do you want me to do? Tell me. What do you want me to do? You always come here and you talk and talk and talk, and there's never anything positive." So they would then have to go back and try and come up with something

positive. Either we'd come up with something positive or we'd talk and talk and get nowhere or we would sort of slide into some kind of action. Or they wouldn't come back again and they would evade it. But he was very responsive, and I think he sort of enjoyed talking to us. I know he did. It wasn't any really terrible thing. I can't think of any great arguments or disagree-

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ments. The organization of the constitutional convention, they were not happy with Judge Desmond [Charles S. Desmond]. Is that who eventually became president of the convention?

GREENE: I think so.

ELDRIDGE: They wanted somebody younger, I think, and, you know, different. They didn't want Tony Travia [Anthony J. Travia]. That was what it was. I think originally the idea was that Travia was going to be chairman. They really did not like Travia. He eventually worked very well with Travia, which Blumenthal really was not very happy about—or Jerry for that matter because of the assembly leadership kind of thing. But over all, it was a nice kind of relationship, you know, and nobody had any great complaints.

GREENE: Did you get into discussions with him at all about support of the constitution? Did you disagree with him on that?

ELDRIDGE: They did very strongly. I didn't no. I've never been very touched with the whole question of the Blaine amendment. For some reason it's never really concerned me that much. And I don't get hysterical at the thought—although I may if I knew more about it—of aid to parochial schools. I sort of feel our

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whole school system is so bad that if the parochial school system collapsed we would not be able to take care of both of these systems. So I was never that strong about it. They were very strong about it and were very upset with it.

I think we also covered this. In our club... One night when I picked him up at the airport with Newfield [Jack Newfield], he came off a plane and gave me this big hug and kiss and he said, "I just want to thank you." I didn't know what he was talking about. It turned out that my club had eventually voted on whether to support the constitution results of the convention or not. They voted something like forty-nine against support of the constitution and one for and one abstention. I had abstained, which is kind of a finky vote.

GREENE: Oh, that's right. We did go over that. I had forgotten that.

ELDRIDGE: Right. And he took that as, you know—and I suppose it basically—I really did it for him. I thought some of the reforms in it were very needed and good and that the bad things in it were not that bad. I really would have much preferred to see something rather than nothing. We did have that. But that was about all. He was very upset, which I'm sure some other

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people have talked about, about the *New York Times* and the way they handled that whole thing.

GREENE: He was always upset with the *New York Times*.

ELDRIDGE: Right. I remember after he died Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz] called one day and he said, "I'm just reading the file of the letters I have that are 'letters written but never sent to the *New York Times*.'" And that one objecting about the fact they said "Robert Kennedy, a Roman Catholic.".. they said "Jacob Javits, nothing." I mean it was really quite incredible.

GREENE: Did you get involved at all in the Bedford-Stuyvesant project or any of these other things that the New York office was working on?

ELDRIDGE: Not really, no. I didn't do the Bedford-Stuyvesant thing, no. I did more or less some of the political things and one great big day at the Fair. And then some of these other little projects you got.

GREENE: You mentioned the Fair one, yeah. What about contact with his staff, particularly people in New York?

ELDRIDGE: No, I was very close to all of them. Thinking back, I think that Polly Finegold, when she was first on the staff after his election, was partially responsible for my being brought into a lot of things because we

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were very friendly. Then I just became friendly with everybody. You know, Phil Ryan [Philip J. Ryan, Jr.] I got along with well, Tim Hogan, Joe Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan] and I always had good communication with Peter [Peter B. Edelman] and Adam [Adam Walinsky] and Mankiewicz when he came on. So that was very good. I never got to Washington. I was always planning to take the children down and just kept postponing it. I never actually saw the office, but I really knew everybody there.

GREENE: And what about Tom Johnston [Thomas M.C. Johnston]? Did you think he was good to work with in New York?

ELDRIDGE: Yeah. He was fine with me. He had problems sometimes because he was not particularly political and I'm very political, you know, but he was all right. I don't know. It all looks much rosier now that it's so far back, I can't remember.

GREENE: Were you aware of any interoffice rivalries between Johnston and Graves [Earl G. Graves] and Carter Burden and...

ELDRIDGE: Oh, yes. Well, I brought Earl in really. I mean we found Earl during the Beame [Abraham D. Beame] campaign and he was an advance man for Beame in East Harlem. He then came in as one of the people working on one of the Christmas parties one year and then came on the staff. He always used to call me when he had problems. He tended to be slightly paranoid. Very conscious of

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his stature and his position and the prestige, etcetera.

Hogen [Tim Hogen], who was brought in by Tom—that dissolved their friendship. I mean Tim was down in South America and I guess must have met the Senator [Robert F. Kennedy] when they were in South America and then came on replacing Phil Ryan [Philip J. Ryan, Jr.]. They had total inability of firing anybody. If they decided they wanted to get rid of somebody, they couldn't just.... Joe Dolan and whoever was responsible never just told them. They really made their lives miserable until they finally quit. We went through that with Phil Ryan. Then Tim Hogen came in and everybody was a little uptight because he was a friend of Tom Johnston's and they felt it wasn't done very well.

Then when Tim was in, then in came Carter, and Tim sort of got pushed out up to the constitutional convention. I guess he worked on the O'Connor campaign. He worked on the O'Connor campaign, was in the office not too long, and then was sent up to the constitutional convention and never really came back.

GREENE: But he wasn't actually fired?

ELDRIDGE: No, never fired. Nobody was ever fired. Really, it was terrible. Then Carter came in, and Carter was Vanden Heuvel's [William J. vanden Heuvel] protégée really. That worked all

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right. Then Dall Forsythe somewhere got in. I mean he was there as a summer intern and then he stayed on. Then Joe picked Dall up. I think Joe and Carter never really got along too well. So they had the connection in New York and Washington.

GREENE: Joe Dolan and Carter never got along?

ELDRIDGE: Well, I think they did, but I don't think they did. Do you? I don't remember. I mean I think it was all civil and nice, but Dall was really Joe's guy in New York at one point.

GREENE: What was the dissatisfaction with Ryan? Why was he finally forced out?
[Interruption]

ELDRIDGE: Yeah, go on.

GREENE: Okay, I've read, or at least seen it implied that you and Adam didn't get along particularly well. Is that accurate or not? No?

ELDRIDGE: I don't think so. No.

GREENE: I can't even remember anymore where I saw it.

ELDRIDGE: No, I don't think so at all. I was just telling you before, Adam, who really had a reputation of being terribly arrogant and everything, we didn't have that much to do with each other because Adam really,

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until '66, '67, I mean until we began to get into the war thing and into the question of whether he ran or not, Adam and I knew each other and that was about it. But I walked in the office one day (and Adam was not known for his friendliness and his warmth) and this guy comes over to me with a yellow shirt on and a tie on and he said, "Ronnie!" And he gave me a big hug and a kiss. And I said, "Hello, Peter. It's so nice to see you." Anyway, it was Adam. Now we were all right. I was kind of shy. I mean I sort of didn't want to take everybody's time up and always talked fast and everything to get in quickly and out fast. No, but we got along all right.

GREENE: Okay. Then let's move into the decision to run starting, I guess, sometime in '67. Do you remember your first conversations with him about the possibility of running in '68?

ELDRIDGE: No, I can't remember the bridge. I can remember well—I think we covered this also—in February of '66 when Orin Lehman was running in that special election, where I was not yet sympathetic about his running for President in '68. I remember we talked about this ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] dinner. And I

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said that the ADA was so paranoid, he said, "Well, they have me now, and they'll have Hubert [Hubert H. Humphrey] in '68 when he's running for President." I said, "Well, you know, they all think you're running for President." At that point I remember I couldn't really

believe that people were really serious about his running. I think that I made the distinction then that I thought that that move for his being President in '68 was the old, the Washington crowd and the Jack Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] crowd and sort of the restoration to the throne and that they saw it as a Kennedy coming back. We hadn't yet gotten into the substantive thing of really opposing Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. Although the Johnson-Kennedy thing was really more personal. I can't really remember when we really started talking because obviously it was much earlier. I remember when he came up in '67, July of '67, on a tour of the West Side urban renewal area-- that was when I got Al Lowenstein [Allard K. Lowenstein] on the same plane with him. They went out to California together so Al could ask him whether he would consider running.

GREENE: When was this again?

ELDRIDGE: It was about July of '67.

GREENE: So he already knew he was going on the African trip—Lowenstein.

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ELDRIDGE: Right. The African trip was at the same time as the Silverman campaign. Yeah. I remember the first time Al Lowenstein...I mean I introduced them the first time and then we really put those meetings together. We drove out once to...I introduced him in February of '66. He met Adam then, too, and Adam, I think, brought him in on the African speech. It was at the same time as the Silverman thing because I remember I was over at the apartment and I answered the door when Al came over to look over the draft of the African speech, and he was so shocked when he rang the apartment bell in the UN Plaza and I opened the door and there was Lowenstein. So then they went off and -- when was that? That was the summer of '66?

GREENE: Right.

ELDRIDGE: Then in the fall of '66...It was during the Manchester [William Manchester] time, I remember. We were all in the car so I guess maybe we were talking Presidency then, although very vaguely. We were really talking about doing something about the Democratic Party. Lowenstein, Blumenthal, and I drove out to St. Albans Naval Hospital together and that was during Manchester stuff so

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it was December. He was going away.

GREENE: January 19th?

ELDRIDGE: No, that was Newfield and me. That was January 19th of '68, wasn't it? Yeah?

GREENE: Right.

ELDRIDGE: Yeah. This was earlier. We drove out to see the Vietnam veterans, wounded, at St. Albans. We picked him up at a press conference at the Overseas Press Club. It was during the Manchester thing because he was in a terrible mood and the press was trying to talk to him and couldn't. It must have been at Christmas time because we had a long talk about Christmas shopping. Anyway, I sat in the front and Lowenstein and Blumenthal were in the back. Al Blumenthal is very deaf in one ear but very vain and won't tell anybody and really didn't tell me for the longest time. We used to go to a lot of meetings in the car and he'd always resist it terribly—I never knew why—because he invariably always got into the side of the car that his ear, that he couldn't hear it. He'd never remember what we talked about. It was the most incredible experience. We'd get out of the car and he had a totally different recollection of the conversation than I would. Finally, he told me it's

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because he doesn't hear in one ear. I mean I couldn't believe it. I don't know how many meetings we went through.

This was a meeting that Lowenstein had wanted very much for several things. One, we were talking about the County leadership and the control of the party, two, we must have been talking about the war, and I don't remember what else we were talking about. We came back and I remember we all had coffee because he landed up doing a Sonny Fox Christmas program again and went around, left him there, and went and had coffee at some luncheonette—where Blumenthal had an entirely different reading of the meeting. I don't remember exactly. That was there I asked him if the reform delegates had supported Nickerson wouldn't he have supported me. And he said yeah. We talked about his needing to get involved and stuff. I guess we must have talked about the war. So that....When was the Manchester, '67?

GREENE: Yeah.

ELDRIDGE: But we were talking much....But it couldn't have been Christmas '67, no.

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GREENE: It could have been January?

ELDRIDGE: Christmas '66? No? Maybe. It was near Christmas. I don't know. We'll have to check it. Maybe somebody has a record. I remember very well talking about running, I mean, much earlier. He knew...we had a fund-raising party for...what's-his-name, the mayor of Gary, Indiana? Hatcher [Richard G. Hatcher].

GREENE: Hatcher.

ELDRIDGE: Before his election. When was that election? I don't remember. There was a fund-raising party for him at a rich lady's house in Central Park. Carol Haussamen, who never liked Kennedy. We always took particular delight—I think I told you that—in getting people to finance things, people he hated and who hated him. I remember the Silverman campaign the first night after Sam became an announced candidate, I picked him up. That was that great phone call. I'm remembering all this now. Steve Smith told me.... This was when I really.... I mean each time this happened to me I couldn't believe it was happening to me, you know go back to this hobby kind of stuff. Steve Smith—I went home and told my husband or somebody—Steve Smith told me I had to

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call Bobby Kennedy at Jackie Kennedy's [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] house and pick him up to take him on a tour of these couple of clubs at the beginning of the Silverman thing. It was in '66. I called Jackie Kennedy's house. I asked for Senator Kennedy and the maid said which one. I mean the whole thing was so crazy. They were all there for dinner. It was just such a funny....

Anyway, we got into the car and we were driving over to the two clubs and we were talking about who we were going to get to finance this campaign and who should we find. And he wanted Ruth Fields and I can't remember the name, Freddy Richman. We couldn't remember Freddy Richman's name. He said "You know, that guy who I can't stand who hates me." Anyway, Ruth Fields, who always hated him, and Freddy Richman. He always would try to, you know, really screw these people by taking advantage of this fact. Carol Haussamen was another one who I think was always anti-Kennedy, and yet for Hatcher she couldn't resist it, they were great liberal types. So we had this big cocktail party which Earl Graves really put together. He wanted me to call him that night, which was the usual kind of thing. I remember there were many more things, but he wanted to know how the "Dump Johnson" movement was coming so we had been well into discussions

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about it earlier than that. He was always kept up to date on it from the very first meetings that we had of what we were doing. That started over the summer of '67. So I think...the pinpoint of it, although we had talked about it earlier and the fact that we were going to something....

Then Lowenstein in July of '67 flew out to California with him. I went up to Vermont for the month of August. Allard, I remember, was speaking at the NSA [National Student Association] convention down in Maryland. They had just had their first baby. We were talking on the pay phone. I had called him and saying that when we came back.... I mean we had started this nationally but not in New York. Then we started it in New York after that, when I came back. And then that fall we talked about it all the time. Maybe the Hatcher party was that fall. I don't remember.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling at any point that he was really tempted to join it as a candidate?

ELDRIDGE: You mean that early?

GREENE: Yeah.

ELDRIDGE: I think he was sorely tempted at times because he sort of romanticized the whole thing and he would have liked to be on this crusade. I think that the basic

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judgments, I think, where he made the mistake and where it was always clear to me.... I mean I always knew that Lyndon Johnson was going to withdraw, very early. I just knew he was not going to run. I remember one night, Newfield and I picked him up at the airport—it may well have been the same night of the constitutional convention so that would have been fairly early, October of '67. That's when he....I'm getting it all mixed up. It's not the same conversation when he decided not to run, when he told Jack that he was worried about all the things Jack had heard. It was the night, I think, when we told him—it was around October or November, it must have been the end of October—that the story was that McCarthy [Eugene G. McCarthy] was considering running. We had been through this before because this is not a new conversation. That's when he said that Eugene McCarthy has always thought that he knew more Thomas Aquinas than Kennedy. He said, "Don't they know he's a crook" and blah, blah, blah and he went on a whole long discussion. We got back to the apartment—and, I don't know if we talked about this, I think we have—and that was the night that Truman Capote was having some kind of a party down at Luchow's. What's his name? The speechwriter. Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin]. Dick Goodwin was there getting dressed in the apartment. I was helping him

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put his cummerbund on. We were having a long discussion about what we were doing as far as the Dump Johnson movement, about the fact that Lowenstein wanted to have a big meeting in December and that McCarthy was going to announce shortly then, that first week of December or something. Their thinking all along had been that Johnson was going to withdraw but would withdraw a week before the Convention.

GREENE: When you say their thinking....

ELDRIDGE: Well, I mean Goodwin was talking that way also. And Kennedy, really saying that he thought if Johnson was going to withdraw or not run, or if we were going to not re-nominate Johnson, that it would be done either at the Convention proper or a week before the Convention when Johnson would say he's not running and throw his support to Humphrey and that's why he couldn't get into it this early. I mean there were many reasons. He felt he was too personally involved with Johnson. He worried always about that personal interaction of what Johnson would do in response to his saying he was going to run and all that. But I basically think that his thinking

had been that he really didn't realize that Johnson would ever pull out early. That's where we

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differed. I wasn't necessarily prevailing upon him to run. I must say I...I mean I wanted him eventually to run. I wasn't saying that he should announce his candidacy in November or December. Although when he started initiating these discussions, which he did around that December and January, I was for it. I'm trying to think of why I told people to write to him in December of '66.

GREENE: Well, there was talk in December that he was really....

ELDRIDGE: Of '66 or '67?

GREENE: Oh, '66.

ELDRIDGE: Yeah. I remember telling people in December of '67 to write to him saying that I know when he goes skiing is the time when he makes all this big decisions. That's based on the fact that I know he did a lot of thinking in '66. I can't remember what that would have been about.

GREENE: Vietnam.

ELDRIDGE: Maybe it was about Vietnam. Yeah.

GREENE: He came back in.... Well, in six weeks or so after that he made his January speech.

ELDRIDGE: Right. So it must have been that, and we must have had

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discussions about it then. I remember this kid from Brown [University] called and he wanted to have lunch with me and told me that Robert Kennedy has to run. I kept telling everybody that you should write to him—I don't remember where he was skiing, Vail or Aspen—write him a letter and tell him because it's at these times when he's skiing and in the mountains and blah, blah, blah, that he makes all his big decisions. That was the same time hooked into the opening of the statewide Dump Johnson thing. The Coalition for a Democratic Alternative is what we called it in New York. Coalition for a Democratic Alternative was the New York group name, not the Concerned Democrats. And they had a press conference opening it and went out to lunch with Murray Kempton, and we were at this time having long talks. Murray had been a great admirer. I mean he really loved Bob. It was that great thing of Buffalo in '66 at the gubernatorial convention. Murray was always around that suite. He just could stand there and watch him. Every time we took trips, he'd frequently show up to meet him or something. It was at that state convention that he told Newfield—

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they were watching Kennedy make a speech and Kempton said to Newfield, "Let's face it, Jack. It's physical with us." [Laughter] He was really in love with Robert Kennedy. Anyway, we had lunch and I was saying that he was making his mind while he was skiing. Right after that Kempton wrote an article and in it it was really slamming Kennedy about making up his mind. That's when he said something about...

GREENE: Newfield quotes that doesn't he?

ELDRIDGE: I don't know whether he does or not. "A reformer usually known for steadfastness of mind," I remember that phrase. He was talking about me saying that he was making up his mind while skiing and what shit that is, that he's not really being swayed. So he obviously was thinking very seriously before he went, and I guess I must have seen him before that. We were just in constant contact. He always knew exactly what was happening on all these things. He was the one who really—I mean he suggested I go to Chicago and then later on other things. I mean we just always were in touch. He was not happy about the McCarthy thing. He agreed with us, though, that we should organize the Dump Johnson, that kind of stuff. We picketed. That's true we were into this much earlier

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because his speech in June of '67 when Johnson came up to address the state committee at all those dinners—Bobby was at those dinners and a few of us organized pickets across the street. We went to see Weisl [Edwin L. Weisl, Sr.] and we told Weisl that we wouldn't be able to support Johnson because we couldn't carry our districts. They were all anti-war and we couldn't even sponsor this dinner because our people were so upset. Then I went out and organized the pickets. That was all organized in my living room. Did you know that? We raised the money and we had the signs printed and we got all the people. None of us went to the picket line, but across the street from the Americana was a very large picket of dissenting Democrats and people picketing.

GREENE: Was this the one that?... [Interruption]

ELDRIDGE: That's right. Sorensen's [Theodore C. Sorensen] speech that he...

GREENE: This is the one that vanden Heuvel writes about?

ELDRIDGE: Right.

GREENE: And he mentions the fact that there were pickets outside and Robert Kennedy really felt that's where he belonged.

ELDRIDGE: That's right. Those were our pickets. Blumenthal and Kretchmer wouldn't go. Mary McGrory wrote some

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kind of a column about that. That was the first really, I think, official Democratic Party resistance to Johnson, was in June of '67. That was pretty early. We had before then had several conversations with Weisl, so obviously we had been in this with Kennedy long before that.

GREENE: Did you get a feeling for the development...

ELDRIDGE: And Burns [John J. Burns].

GREENE: ...of his thoughts on Vietnam specifically? Could you see the change taking place? Were there conversations about it on-- well, I don't like to say philosophical basis, but that's really what it amounts to.

ELDRIDGE: Well, I think that's what it... Yeah. Yes. I mean I think you could sense it. It's gotten so telescoped that it's so hard to remember. I told you, I think, once about driving in the car with Breslin [James Breslin]. That was way back. That was Christmas party time. Did we do Christmas parties in '66? Yeah. No. So could that have been December of '65? I got a call one day to please get up to-- yes, it must have been December of '65 because he was still living at the Carlyl-- that he wanted me to drive out to the airport with him. So up to the Carlyle I went. I got up to the Carlyle in the lobby and Breslin was

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there pacing up and down. I had never seen Jimmy Breslin before. I didn't know him at all. We sort of nodded to each other and that was all. The two of us got in the car. Why I had to go I don't know. I always got carsick when I sat in the back with him. I hated driving out to the airport besides. I sat in the car while Breslin and Kennedy argued the whole trip out there. Breslin was doing a book on Vietnam at that time. He was asking Kennedy about the trip that he had made with Jack Kennedy and about Johnson. And Bobby was saying, "I won't tell you because you always write it." And Breslin was saying, "I won't write it. I give you my word of honor." And Bobby said, "Your word's no good. You lie." And this fighting back and forth and reminiscing and talking about it. And then too they were talking really-- and that was what most concerned him, Johnson's own personal reaction to any statement that Kennedy would make. And Breslin was pushing him saying, "Why don't you say something?" He would say, "Any time I say something, Johnson overreacts." So that was very early. It must have been '65.

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GREENE: Don't you think he was already opposed to the war at that time...

ELDRIDGE: Yes.

GREENE: ...because he wasn't making statements...

ELDRIDGE: And then I think the more he could begin to get out with the students, and the kids and the more he saw of the stuff, he really wanted to be there. There's no doubt about that.

GREENE: And his opinion on McCarthy as a candidate never changed really?

ELDRIDGE: Oh, no. I don't think so. I don't think he ever took it seriously. You know, he didn't at the beginning, and he really never liked him, and he really just couldn't believe that people would vote for him. He, I think, really at one point directed people to McGovern [George S. McGovern].

GREENE: I think he directed Lowenstein to McGovern.

ELDRIDGE: And McGovern, you know, they had a more... McGovern went to see him at one point. I can't remember who told me that, whether he did. He did. This was in February, I guess, or so. McGovern really did come to see him and asked him if he would give him an assurance that he wouldn't run. January or February. He really

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wouldn't do that-- Bobby.

GREENE: Would give McGovern assurance? Is that it?

ELDRIDGE: McGovern wanted to know if he was to announce his candidacy—oh, it must have been earlier—he wanted a flat assurance from Kennedy that he'd never run. Kennedy just never gave it to him. I think that was one of the reasons, you know.

GREENE: Did you ever discuss with him if it were a McGovern who became the candidate whether he would stay out and support him? Would that have made a big difference?

ELDRIDGE: Oh, I don't know think would have made any difference. No. He was not looking for another candidate. I don't think there's any doubt about that. That's why he was caught, I think, whether to encourage McGovern or not because I think he knew he would go in.

GREENE: I think it must have been Newfield that writes that when Lowenstein first approached him or at least wanted these approaches, he said, “Go to McGovern. And see if you can get him, you’ve really got something going.”

ELDRIDGE: Right, right. But then McGovern came to him and said, “Is there any chance that you can conceivably see that you would ever become a candidate, whether at the Convention or not?” At one point....He just never

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could say, “No, there’s no chance.” I think it was mostly likely one of the reasons McGovern....

GREENE: Anyway, your involvement and Newfield’s in the Coalition, did you see that largely as a holding action for Robert Kennedy?

ELDRIDGE: Oh yeah. I did. It got a little out of hand.

GREENE: Were there other people like that?

ELDRIDGE: All of us who started it were basically Kennedy people. Newfield, you know, Jack was writing the book and Jack was also very shy. I don’t really know what....Jack loved to see Kennedy with me. So I would find.... Jack’s a social butterfly in his own very unsocial way. I mean he has none of the social graces but he loves to put together parties and groups. So whenever he wanted to see him, he’d call up Hogan and Carter or whoever, Phil Ryan—I don’t think he was in when Ryan just about was still there; I think that was a little earlier—he’d say, “You know, Ronnie wants to see the Senator.” That kind of stuff. And we’d always have that. Lowenstein always called me up and said, “I want to see the Senator.” Blumenthal always did. I was always the one who had to, you know, broker all their appointments. And they were always very nice, I mean, any time we wanted to see him or meet him

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someplace. Jack was a participant, I guess. He really was. It’s hard to really put it down. Bella Abzug really had a tremendous role in that, too, in putting us together here. Lowenstein was friendly, very friendly with Jack at the time. They just sort of made up again at the memorial service last week. They have been very bitter enemies. But Allard...

GREENE: Why was that?

ELDRIDGE: Well, because of Lowenstein’s position on the campus violence this past year or two. Peter Edelman doesn’t talk to Lowenstein. He says he never will.

GREENE: They felt he didn’t do enough?

ELDRIDGE: No. They didn't like his position. Right. Well, Allard's very funny. He's very complicated and very manipulative and he always has friends in waves. When people get to know him they know.... But this past year, last year, he was very strong against student violence, and they felt, over-strong. Evidently there were some very bad fights with some of the peace groups and everything else about it. Sam Brown and he and everybody had a terrible time.

What did I start to say about the "Dump Johnson" thing? Allard was convinced that he could turn this country against the

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war. He and Curtis Gans really started out by.... I first met Curtis in the Hyde Park Restaurant which his family owns. There were two meeting places, Gransons and the Hyde Park Restaurant. Curtis came in and then this dean from Stanford, I can't remember his name. We would just periodically sit down. I got to know Allard because I ran his political campaign and he thinks I'm one of the best politicians in the world, or some such thing. So I was sort of a political brain. Allard happens to be the best politician. He really excels at this whole thing of creating and making movements. He's terribly manipulative so that he's not good because he gets caught sometimes, I mean if never found out.

We just really created this whole thing. He traveled around and spoke to different places and picked up people. And we were able to make it much larger. I remember the day he came back having found Peterson in Wisconsin. It's very hard to find somebody holding party office. That was the point that we wanted to do. We wanted to bring it within the party into the primary fights. Bella and I thought

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up the idea of running state committee fights based on what your position within the party is and using that as a position. And Allard was searching through the country to find people who held party office. And there, lo and behold, was Don Peterson who was a Congressional district leader. We have nothing comparable in New York. But there weren't that many of them in Wisconsin and it was a great help. He called up or was here in New York—by that time he had also been in touch with Robert Vaughn, who had really put together the Dissenting Democrats in California. The Vaughn group had done these pages and pages of names in the *Los Angeles Times* and we decided we would do that in New York. And we were sort of working, and Vaughn would fly in and go crazy, more than all of us ever. He sort of had some kind of relationship with the Kennedys, he could go down to Hickory Hill. And I think they all thought he was a little crazy, too.

And so you had Vaughn in California and then you picked up some those people from the Dissenting Democrats. Peterson listened to Al and agreed with him about forming this big organization nationwide. We flew Peterson into New York to have a press conference. I told you this, I think. We de-

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cided we had to entertain him on a grand scale or he'd know what this operation really was, which was really quite two-bit. I'm skipping ahead. To form the Coalition for Democratic Alternative in New York—which became important because we saw it forming on state levels and then combining into a national thing—the meeting started in our living room and we just called a lot of people together, a lot of political people. We've very lucky in New York because the west side of Manhattan, a lot of people are against the war.... And we called it a coalition because we really didn't bring the peace groups in who are nonpolitical but who were registered Democrats or attempt to get them. We had a whole series of meetings and then we finally called a large organizational meeting where we invited people from Nassau, Westchester.

Through the Peace Movement I think we found some of the political people. It was the first time we really had touch with each other. We met at the home of a friend of mine named Jerry Rowe [Gerald E. Rowe], who was kind of active in our local club whom I had met, who had the good fortune or has the good fortune of being a vice president of advertising and promotion, NBC Television Network.

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So it immediately made him a little more prestigious in the public mind. I was very friendly with Dick Witkin [Richard Witkin] on the *Times* who was covering the political stuff at the time. He had been through the picketing kind of stuff that we had done in June, and we had carefully educated him and taken him through all these steps. So when we had this organizational meeting and Jerry Rowe's, we gave the story to Witkin and it made the front page of the *Times*. It was said it was held at the home of Gerald Rowe, vice president of advertising and promotion, NBC Television Network. Jerry almost lost his job at NBC. (He didn't really. They offered to put him on leave of absence if he wanted to work it full-time.) But it was just the kind of thing where you really needed to get the word out. From then on we were just inundated with phone calls. It was just incredible.

GREENE: After a while when Kennedy didn't come out, did you have problems with people who were not in it for the same purpose you were.

ELDRIDGE: Well, right. We were all in it because we were against the war and we really wanted to get rid of Johnson.

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That was basic. [Interruption]

ELDRIDGE: The group was all against the war. Some of us were very political against Johnson. So you had the peace people who were against the war, then you had the political peace people who were against Johnson, and the political peace people broke down then into those who were for anybody who'd run against Johnson and those of us who really had a great thing for Kennedy.

GREENE: Were there also people in there who had a great thing for McCarthy?

ELDRIDGE: No, not at that time. Not when we started. This was in September. I don't really think there was any great McCarthy thing. There were people who were anti-Kennedy. Yeah. I remember we worked with Norman Frankel, a poor young psychiatrist who eventually died, he had a heart attack and died. He had written

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to Robert Vaughn and he had gotten the franchise—he gave us so much exasperation—for Dissenting Democrats in New York. This group that we put together decided they'd like to use that as a handle in New York. We started circulating petitions in, I guess, September, to put ads in the paper around October or November. We used as the thing the whole Dissenting Democrats. Norman wanted to say we're Democrats and Republicans or we're people opposed to the war but finally, after much negotiation, made it that we're Democrats opposed to the war and unless we get out of Vietnam, blah, blah, blah—we weren't even thinking along the line of withdrawal at that time—we just would not vote for Lyndon Johnson for President. We eventually got it to read “the Democrats,” and we circulated that petition. And I think eventually we bought seven pages in the *New York Times* where we ran these names. Coupons. They all paid for themselves. That really became the basis for the Coalition for a Democratic Alternative.

We had a big public meeting at the Community Church at 35th and Park. A lot of people. Tremendous interest. We had headquarters in the Ansonia Demo-

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cratic Club on 72nd Street. And a few of us worked out of there. We did the Dissenting Democrats, you know, mailed out the petitions, handed them out. We just spread through the state, met people from Rochester. Then people kept writing in and wanting to hear about it. In the middle of this is when Don Peterson arrived and we all contributed money and rented him a room at the Hilton Hotel. Then we put together a dinner group for him at the Hyde Park Restaurant which Al partially owned. I don't remember who we had. We had Jerry Rowe again because he was our vice president of NBC, and I think we had Ellie French [Eleanor Clark French]. She would not agree at that time to becoming chairman or co-chairman of this group but she would at least come and talk to us. Anyway, we just put on a real show for Peterson to make him think that it was much bigger than it was. I guess they announced, the national group, announced they were having a conference or something in Chicago. That's really how it all worked.

Al would go from one place to another and sort of exaggerate each place, come back and tell us about the thousands of people who were opposed to Johnson. Nobody really ever

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knew whether to believe him or not. I think on a large scale he was right about the different meetings he went to.

GREENE: How closely would Kennedy follow this or have someone from his office follow this?

ELDRIDGE: Well, really it was me—and that kind of stuff we really talked about on and off-- and through Newfield. But we used to meet periodically and give him reports. I'm trying to think back. I think I told you this before, but back in September of '67, Joe Dolan called me one day. We were talking about a judicial nomination for Justin Feldman [Justin Newton Feldman]. That's when he had said, "Don't worry; we're better at conventions." I mean he made no bones about the fact that he was working on it and that he wanted to see him run for President. But again we were aiming at Convention delegates already elected. We really developed that concept of trying to elect delegates to a convention that were opposed to Johnson. That really was the kind of thing that we started with.

GREENE: But he recognized that this whole thing was really, as far as you were concerned, a holding action for him? They didn't do anything to discourage this?

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ELDRIDGE: Oh, absolutely not. I mean, you know, he didn't discourage it. He just knew it was a way of making a movement and trying to get more people aware of the fact that you're a) against the war, and b) against Johnson, or a) against Johnson, and b) against the war. I had my first falling out with Lowenstein, really, as he got more serious about McCarthy. I really didn't think we needed a candidate. That was the beginning of the split. I really felt we could run it and elect delegates (I still think we could) committed against Johnson. They didn't have to be committed for somebody. So our discussions.... I mean we really had some fights in November, October, when he was getting with McCarthy. That was at that time when we had the conversation with Bobby. And Bobby kept saying, "Can't you get them to delay? Why do they have to rush into this for McCarthy?" And we really lost out then. We really couldn't get them to delay.

GREENE: Then you withdrew?

ELDRIDGE: Well, that came a little later. I really sort of stayed with it. I withdrew in spirit. I mean I certainly didn't put the effort into it as they

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came closer to McCarthy.

Then in November when Al finally got McCarthy and we knew about it, he then decided to throw together this convention that would nominate McCarthy or something out in

Chicago. We had a big fight about that. I think they invited people to participate in it just any way. They just sent out as many things as they could. It's really what helped screw up the New York situation because they invited people and then people thought they were going as delegates. That, in a way, formalized the formation in New York. I know there were a lot of anti-Kennedy people there, a lot of McCarthy people, a lot of peace people who were really just so opposed to the war and so glad to have any candidate. We had a big argument about that. I did not plan to go. It was only at the last minute that I really decided to go.

I remember meeting with Al at Schraft's one day just before. We talked about it. He was going to meet the press that Sunday of that weekend in Chicago. I gave him the idea that he should get blank glasses. His glasses were very thick, the lenses—that was Lowenstein—and it always looked awful on television when he had glasses

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on. He looked terrible without any glass on. I said, "For goodness sake"-- and I found that he had contact lenses—"go in and get a pair of glasses with plain glass." Because he looked good with the glasses, you know. Anyway, I just remembered that thing. By this time our relationship was strained because I really felt that he was really screwing Kennedy or an effort to get Kennedy out of pushing the McCarthy thing. I think he pushed the MacCarthy thing. I think he really needed it to prod him.

GREENE: Do you think he did this because he was completely convinced that Kennedy was not going to run or because he was just impatient?

ELDRIDGE: I think he was pretty convinced. I think he must have been pretty convinced that Kennedy was not going to run. Also he just felt that he needed.... The meeting in Chicago was interesting. A lot of people. Al gave a very fiery speech, and McCarthy got very angry at Al, you know. It was terrible. Their relationship was always strained after that time. Very peculiar kind of thing. He spoke to Kennedy that weekend, as a matter of fact,

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after his "Meet the Press" thing.

Then we came back to New York and we moved to 59th Street. By this time my heart was not in it and I was pulling out because I was really not for McCarthy and because I was really saying all along that Kennedy was going to run. Sarah Kovner, I really got her to come in, and Harold Ickes was there. There were a lot of people working and they really didn't need me. I took on a few jobs but I really didn't do very much. I went to meetings and I chaired the meetings up until around December and then decided I didn't want to. I went to the opening of the headquarters and then I guess I really dropped out. It was Christmas time and the kids were home from school so it was a very good excuse.

GREENE: What about Feldman? How active a role did he play?

ELDRIDGE: Justin?

GREENE: Yeah.

ELDRIDGE: Not really that active.

GREENE: But his purpose was sort of the same as yours.

ELDRIDGE: Yeah. Right. Well, he was one of the names and bodies we needed. We needed, you know, sort of respectable names in the Democratic Party and we got them all in there. Then in January

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I mean I guess I sort of hung.... I was there a little bit but I really wasn't working and Sarah was furious at me and the whole thing. That day, January 18th or 19th, whatever that day was, we went out to Westchester. I don't remember where I met him. I guess I met him—the first time I saw him after her had been skiing was at the *Newsweek* party. He told me that wonderful story about Kathleen [Kathleen Hartington Kennedy]. *Newsweek* has an annual party in January, I think. I guess that was the first time I saw him after his skiing vacation. His hair was longer and he was really...he was very...you know he wanted to know about this stuff with McCarthy, and you could tell he was just so....I saw him before at the office that day. I can't remember this whole thing. Anyway, at the party he told.... [Interruption]

GREENE: ...subject of Lowenstein even temporarily. What do you remember about your interest or Kennedy's interest in Lowenstein's running for Congress?

ELDRIDGE: Well, it really started with the Senate, you know. That's another conversation we had for years. I remember always saying, "Well, if you're not going to run for President in '68 and if we're going to have

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Lyndon Johnson up there then at least we have to have a decent Senate race in New York." We kept going through lists of candidates. Morris Abrams—I can't even remember who else. I would keep putting Lowenstein's name in and eventually Kennedy really said he thought Lowenstein.... Burns was in a lot of these things. These conversations about the Senate went on for a long time. He said Lowenstein would be the most interesting candidate. This was very early, way before he announced. Burns, I think every time he said that, he would die. John just couldn't see them running Al Lowenstein as a candidate. So that's where we fade. I mean he was always interested, you know, about Lowenstein.

GREENE: Did he ever tell you to do anything about it?

ELDRIDGE: Well, he told me screw it up, the candidacy up, in March. The day he announced, the statewide Coalition for a Democratic Alternative had a nominating convention in New York, in Albany, and he asked me to go up there and try to delay it, "Screw it up as only a West Side Reformer could do." I had a big fight with my husband and I went up. That was when they had been through these horrible machinations. We can't go through that today. That was

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so horrendous. It's really what started it with....Steve's first call to me before Bobby announced was about the Senate race and whether I thought—who would be a good candidate? I can't even remember any more. I don't know. We got on the subject of Ottinger [Richard Lawrence Ottinger] and this one or that one. What they were trying to do was to stop having a McCarthy candidate. Resnick [Joseph Yale Resnick] was running—another big fear—and a McCarthy candidate, and we wanted somebody really who would support both of them. This was before Bobby was running. It was just somebody not for McCarthy so that he wouldn't have a candidate. What we were trying to aim at was that we could have a candidate that would be opposed to Johnson, opposed to the war. We went through all these discussions with the people from the NDC [New Democratic Coalition] who acted very busy interviewing candidates to run. They interviewed Percy Sutton and Herman Badillo and this one and that one. And Lowenstein would always say he'd not run, that his candidate was John Dow [John Goodchild Dow], "That that's going to be the best candidate. Go find John Dow." And I think basically in his mind

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he thought a) that John Dow would never agree to it so that then they'd come back to him. I mean he was really manipulating. O'Dwyer [Peter Paul O'Dwyer] was running. O'Dwyer kept saying he was not a candidate. O'Dwyer was the big cheese of the NDC—that was what it eventually became, it was called the CDA, then. And he said we had to have a candidate for McCarthy but it would never be Paul O'Dwyer. He wanted Lowenstein to run. So you found you had yourself in this thing where Lowenstein said, "Oh, I won't run. John Dow's my candidate." And O'Dwyer would say, "If John Dow runs, I'm going to run. Al Lowenstein's my candidate." And Lowenstein would say, "Well, I would only run if John Dow won't run." So they narrowed the field down of McCarthy people to these three candidates. And I remember Steve and Burns—we set up a meeting with the CDA (which is what we called it) executive committee, which was also meeting as a nominating committee, at the Dryden East Hotel to discuss the fact, couldn't we get together and run somebody like Ottinger. We set it for 4 o'clock in the afternoon and Steve went and Bobby spoke to O'Dwyer and

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O'Dwyer would say, "Ugh, I agree with you. I don't want to split the party, I don't want to do this, I don't want to do that. I'll do everything I can, but I can't hold my people." Then

he'd go to the meeting and he'd say "We've got to do this. It will kill our movement if we don't run somebody for McCarthy." So he was so duplicit and the whole thing it was incredible.

Everybody agreed to this meeting in Burns' office. Lowenstein was going, Dow was going, O'Dwyer was going, the whole NDC group. And there was something—at the last minute we find that Izzy Sipser [I. Philip Sipser] (who later became O'Dwyer's campaign manager), and other people could not go to that meeting at all because they were having this executive committee meeting out at LaGuardia Airport and suddenly, for some reason, they decided they couldn't keep the people waiting. They had known this when they scheduled the meeting to begin with. So there was this wild scene. I remember being at Steve's—an absolutely wild scene with Steve on his way down to Burns, half of the coalition people there, Lowenstein already in Burns' office, Sipser on his way out

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to the airport, people flying in. Crazy. And having O'Dwyer say, "I'm going to announce my candidacy today unless Al Lowenstein agrees," Lowenstein still saying, "Well, I can't run, get John Dow." John Dow by this time is getting angry because he's realizing, I think, finally that he's getting screwed but doesn't realize it. I think Lowenstein thought he'd never consider it. He began to consider it and that became a nightmare for Allard. He just didn't know what to do. So Steve called Lowenstein and he called Dow and he said, "Get right out to the airport and go before that committee and tell them you want to run." Anyway, then Blumenthal and I went for a Chinese dinner someplace and I remember getting a call that the committee interviewed both.... O'Dwyer would not be interviewed because he wasn't a candidate since he would only run if Dow ran and not Al Lowenstein. So they interviewed both Lowenstein and Dow, Lowenstein saying, I think John Dow should run," and John Dow saying, "Yes, I would like to be your candidate." At 11 o'clock that night they come to the decision, or 2 o'clock in the morning, that they want Lowenstein to run. This is, I guess,

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due to O'Dwyer. They called John Dow in the middle of the night to tell him that thank you very much but they don't want to support him. And there's really Lowenstein in this position of really having screwed Dow and always having to protest publicly and of O'Dwyer lying to Kennedy and saying, "Oh, I'm going to try and hold my people back but I don't know if I can," when all the time he's really over there pushing to get a candidacy. My feeling about O'Dwyer was that he really all along felt that Lowenstein wouldn't eventually run and that he would run. So I don't remember that date. That's where we landed up with that. And Kennedy announced and then he asked, you know.... That was the morning, oh God.... Lowenstein came down from New Hampshire—I can't remember what happened. In New Hampshire I remember we had a pool. Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno] thought that McCarthy would get something like 17 percent of the vote. Jerry Bruno always thought we were all crazy. He just thought this was the craziest operation and the whole thing. I think I said 37 percent and I think Dolan said 43 percent which I think it was.

GREENE: Just about, right.

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ELDRIDGE: Anyway, that night at my house, Newfield was there, a lot of people were there, and that's when the phone rang, I told you that story, Steve was calling me about something, and the phone rings. Newfield picks the phone up and says, "Kennedy for President headquarters." And there was dead silence. This is the night of the New Hampshire primary. Dead silence. And the phone gets hung up. And the phone rings a little while later and Newfield picks it up, or I pick it up this time, anyway it was Jack English [John F. English]. It seems that Pauline Fluett had been calling me on the phone for Steve and dialed this number and gets "Kennedy for President." She just got so flustered she didn't know what to do, so she hung up. Then we started getting calls from all the McCarthy people in New Hampshire, incensed, Sandy Friuecher—I've never had such an abusive phone call in my life. I can't remember who was the other person.

GREENE: And what was said?

ELDRIDGE: Harold Ickes was furious that Kennedy was going to run.

GREENE: Oh, this is not the night of the primary?

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ELDRIDGE: This was the night of the primary but Kennedy had been interviewed and said he was reassessing his position.

GREENE: Or the next day.

ELDRIDGE: Or the next day. Yeah.

GREENE: This was at Steve Smith's house?

ELDRIDGE: No, this was at my house that night. I had been asked to get Lowenstein down to see Steve. I think I called him in New Hampshire and he arrived the next day. Friday. When was that? What date was that?

GREENE: 15th. That was the night before he announced. He announced on Saturday, the 16th.

ELDRIDGE: Right. I spoke to Al earlier.

GREENE: Well, the statement with Cronkite [Walter Cronkite] was the one I imagine you're thinking of.

ELDRIDGE: Yeah. Yeah.

GREENE: Where he said, "I'm reassessing my...." That was the 13th.

ELDRIDGE: That was the day after. The day after?

GREENE: Right.

ELDRIDGE: Right, so it must have been that night. I don't remember. Anyway, I was the one who called Al and asked him to come down. By this time he was distraught. You know, in January, I'm skipping a little bit at the

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beginning—he was distraught in January, thought McCarthy was running a terrible campaign and he was having nothing to do with it. McCarthy wasn't talking to him after the Concerned Democrats thing. You know McCarthy wasn't campaigning. Everybody was very upset. So in January, I guess, he came back and saw Kennedy, didn't he, or something started again in February. But by the time the primary came he had been up in New Hampshire and, of course, the victory. And he's now torn because he really hated McCarthy, he really didn't like him at all. He came down and I remember going down to the Pam Am Building and he looked like death warmed over when I walked into Steve's office. He said, "I have to talk to you. Come with me right away." We walked off and I said.... Oh I know that was the morning that Kennedy called me and said, "Do you love me in March the way you did in December?" and I said that he'd like....

GREENE: That was the night of the 13th. I read that just yesterday.

ELDRIDGE: And talked about whether I was going to go out to California for him and he wanted to call Blumenthal,

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and Kretchmer and he wanted all of us to campaign for him in California and what's he going to do and this and that. And he wanted to know if I'd go down to Virginia and also would he see him that day. And he was going to call back – he was out in Nassau – he was going to call back and we would meet someplace. Newfield was with him. I went down to the office and they were going to call at the office. I meet Allard, and Allard's looking distraught and he makes me walk around, and then we walk downstairs and we went in the Pan Am office and we sat there. And Allard's giving me this whole theory about how he's worked it out and they're going to split the primary states, that Kennedy will run in some, McCarthy will run in others and that we have to help him some places and we can't go into California and...

GREENE: Where did Lowenstein get that from?

ELDRIDGE: I think he thought that up himself. Maybe Goodwin. I'm not sure.

GREENE: Well, because that's more or less the proposition that Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] finally took up to Wisconsin.

ELDRIDGE: Right, right. We had refined it and talked and he had gone down there. But he was very unhappy about the whole thing. He was happy and unhappy. Just looked

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like – when Al wants to look sad he can look awful. I remember saying, “Let's not go downstairs because we're waiting for the call.” He said he was also going to see the Senator and so forth. He knew I was waiting for the call. Anyway, we went upstairs and I was sitting at Pauline's desk out where the secretaries were and all of a sudden I see Allard... He said, no, he's not going to call yet and we'll go out to the airport together. I don't know. I see Allard racing out and he says, “I'll see you later; I'm going to Washington.” And I thought, well, I guess they have called him and he's going to Washington, and after all I'm not essential here and I'm not, you know, going to do anything. And Johnny Mirand took him out, drove him out to the airport, I later discovered. A little while later I get this frantic phone call from Jack English about where am I. Why aren't I out at the airport? And I said, well, Al went and he never said that... It turned out that Al was supposed to tell me and Al... It was a Friday afternoon, terrible traffic. Dall took me down and put me in a cab, and I had to borrow some money as usual. I went out to the airport.

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Lowenstein was nowhere to be seen. I guess he had taken the earlier shuttle or something. Kennedy was there, Gabe Pressman, and a lot of the newsmen were standing around, and Jack and he came. I think he came after I came. I don't know where he had been. Anyways, we walked around and around and around. Bobby was just talking to me constantly. I don't really even remember what he was saying. It was a whole justification that I was to give to my liberal friends and that group about why he finally made up his mind to run then. He was just so intense. The two of us kept walking round and round in the shuttle waiting room, which is nothing anyway. And I said we should stand on line and the stewardess came and said, “Do you want to go on the plane?” He said, “No, I want to stand on line.” He was talking to everybody. There was a bunch of kids. I said, “Go and shake their hands”, and he went over and shook their hands. And he came back and said, “They didn't hit me.” It was that kind of thing. I did not go to Washington. First of all I said I wouldn't have thought of doing it and then also I was afraid of flying and the whole thing was

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too wild. He asked me also to go up to Albany the next day to try and forestall their

nominating Lowenstein or anybody for the Senate. He said, "At least wait a week. Try and postpone it."

GREENE: Why was that?

ELDRIDGE: Well, because he didn't want to have somebody running for McCarthy. It meant we would have had Resnick, somebody running for McCarthy and then the state committee would have had to find somebody else. It would have been a three way fight and they were afraid Resnick would win. And also the thought of Lowenstein running for McCarthy, it's very difficult. So I put him on the plane. I walked....

GREENE: He never thought of the state committee supporting Lowenstein?

ELDRIDGE: Well, that came later.

GREENE: Let me stop it for a second so I can make a....

[END OF INTERVIEW #3]

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