

Earl Graves Oral History Interview- RFK #3, 8/28/1969
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Graves, Earl; administrative Assistant to Senator Robert F. Kennedy [RFK], New York (1965 - 1968). Graves discusses his role as a black member in RFK's presidential campaign (1968), the racism that existed within RFK's campaign, campaigning in Indiana, and the impact Martin Luther King Jr.'s death had on RFK and his campaign, among other issues.

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of EARL G. GRAVES**

Interviewed by: Roberta Greene

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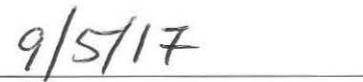
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Earl Graves- RFK #3

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Third Oral History Interview

with

^{G.}
EARL GRAVES
^A

August 28, 1969
New York, New York

By Roberta Greene

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

GREENE: Would you begin by explaining what you remember about the plans for the April ^{4th} ~~fourth~~ visit? As it turned out, that was the night Martin Luther King was killed, but what do you remember about planning for that first visit to Indianapolis?

GRAVES: Well, I'm not sure when you ask me what I remember about the April ^{4th} ~~fourth~~ visit in terms of planning ~~and~~ ^{and} in coming to Indianapolis, I assume that what you're talking about is what preparations went into the visit of Senator Kennedy to Indianapolis.

GREENE: Yes.

GRAVES: I was not directly involved in ~~in~~ ^S Since I was out on the road at that time in, I guess it was the

northern part of the state. . . . the western part of the state, excuse me, Fort Wayne, South Bend and on the road coming in with the Senator. I was not directly involved in the planning that went on for that visit. ¶ I knew that part of what we were going to do was to remain. . . . was to go into the ghetto of Indianapolis. And it was. . . . The plan was that I would go with him, as far as that stop was concerned, into the ghetto of Indianapolis that evening. We left Fort Wayne and flew on and when we left. . . . When we landed in. . . . I'm just trying to remember the sequence of events in terms of how we found out that King had been shot that night. ¶ I found out about it riding in a police car on the way back to the airport with a group of rather racist policemen who were laughing about it until they. . . . not remembering I was in the car, And then, remembering I was in the car, trying to cover it up, a bit anyway, in terms of some of the sly comments they were making about the fact that King had been shot. At that point it had not

been confirmed that he was dead yet. ⁹ When we all got on the plane to take off, leaving Fort Wayne -- and I was on the plane with the Senator, ¹ it still had not been confirmed that he had died. When we landed, as soon as we landed, we found ~~.....~~ ³ In fact, the reporter got. . . . I take that back. The pilot did get the word while we were in flight that King had died, and they came back, and the reporters all knew by this time. ³ And there was some discussion on the plane in terms of what this was going to mean, and the Senator was very distraught and very upset about the fact ^{that} this had happened. ² And I know I remember going back to try and speak to him about what I thought we should do or should not do, and he didn't want to speak to anybody. He ^{was} ~~was~~. . . . He didn't mince any words about the fact at that time with me that, you know, he didn't want to be bothered, that he would talk to me later.

When I got into Indianapolis, because of the problems that had arisen as far as the black

community was concerned, which I mentioned to you
in the previous interview, ^{Dames} Jim Tolan and
[Gerald J.] Jerry Bruno ^[Interruption] we were talking about the
Indianapolis thing, ^{in terms of} And I'm going to be completely
candid ~~and turn to~~ what happened that night. As
we got off that plane we got into a thing
with Jim Tolan, Jerry Bruno, ^{What was the name of}
the guy who was traveling with the Senator all
the ^{time?} [Frederick G.] Fred Dutton.

GREENE: Dutton.

GRAVES: Right. The Senator and myself. And Bruno and Jim
Tolan, because of the intrigue that they had gotten
themselves involved in as far as the black community
is concerned in Indianapolis, ^{tried to}
just cut me out of any of the decision making process
that went on, from the time the plane landed and
we were going to make up our minds what we were going
to do about going into the black community, until we
actually made the decision to go, which took about
ten minutes with a lot of running back and forth
and a lot of very secretive nonsense. It was just

^{the}
A very childish, kind of high school, *Bush league*
type of activities that went on with the three
of them, not meaning the Senator, and the Senator
was not aware of any of this. [¶] Now, I couldn't
figure out what was going on until John Lewis
told me, ^{be} because he came out to the airport and
said, "They're trying to play games with you."
And he said, "The best thing to do is just ride
it out until you get to the hotel," meaning [¶] just
till
let it go as it's going / you get to the hotel
and see what's going on." And he said, "And just go
ahead over to the rallies." [¶] I did get in the car
and go to the rally with the Senator. And at that
point the Senator really did not had no
indication of any kind of problems that supposedly
were going on as far as the black community was
concerned, [¶] Any dissatisfaction. [¶] We got to the
rally and it went very well, and the speech he made,
of course, is now part of history. When we got
back to the. . . . You know, there's not too much
more I can say about what happened that night in

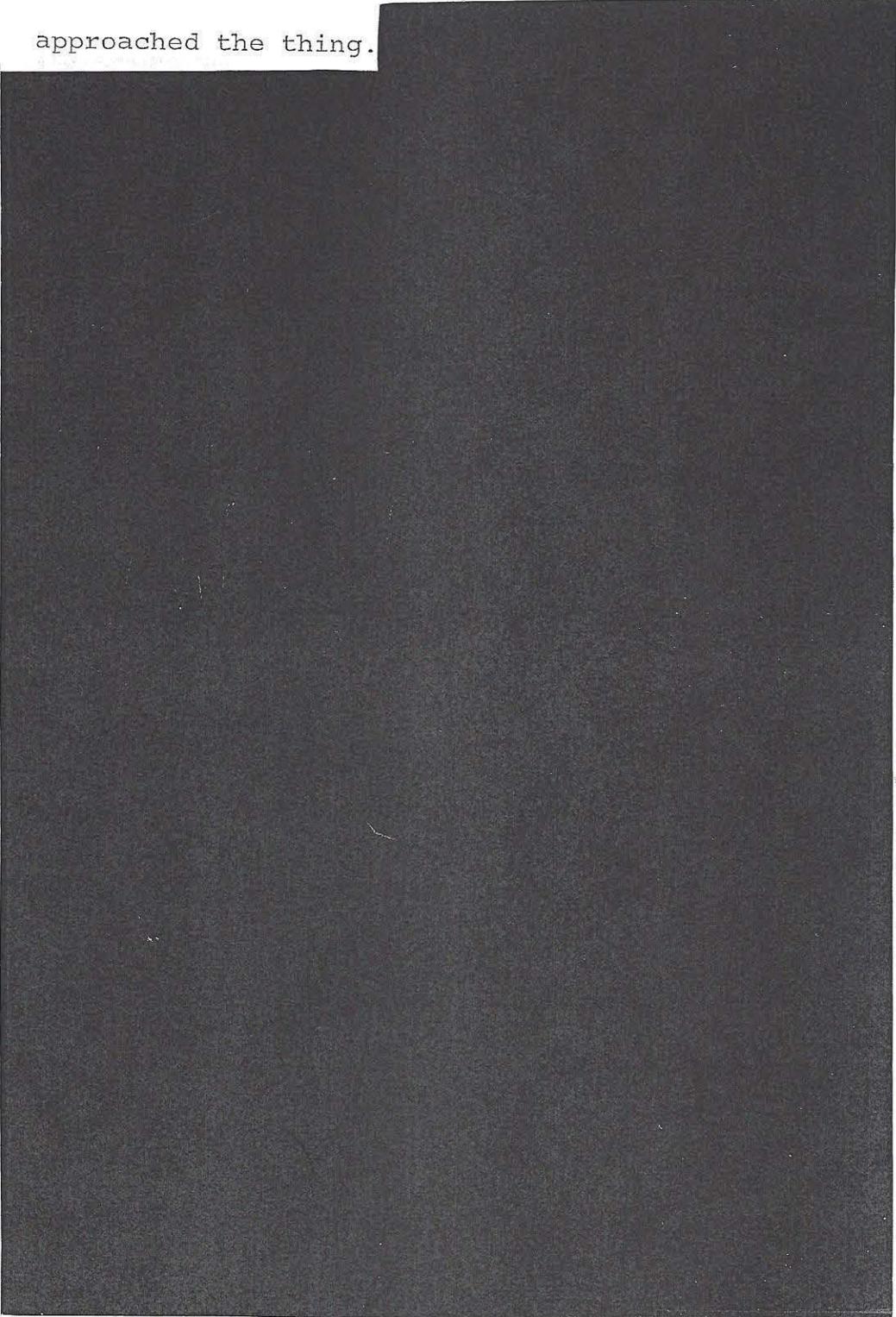
Indianapolis other than the fact that, you know, the Senator was well received, ²and I'm sure that the statement he made had a lot to do with there not being any riots or disturbances there that night. ²And I remember indicating to him that I thought it was a fine statement he made. ⁹When we got back to the hotel, I was, at that point I think, that I was able to figure out by that time that what had happened was that [Franklin W.] Holgate, ²he decided--and I mentioned his name before; He's the assistant minority leader in Massachusetts, Black guy--²had decided to make some moves that ^{were} ~~was~~ going to make Frank Holgate look rather good at the expense of whatever work ³that I had been doing in the black community, not necessarily at the expense of Earl Graves, ^{be}cause I think what we're talking about is a little bit bigger than Earl Graves, at least what I was talking about then in terms of my concern as to how we handle the black community. ⁹It turns out that Tolan ³and . . . had put together a meeting vis-a-vis Holgate. Or I should

say Holgate and Tolan had got together and put together a meeting of the same black people who had asked me for moneys, and I had indicated to them we were not going to just give away fifteen or twenty thousand dollars. They talked Holgate and Tolan into having "a private meeting," in quotes, with the Senator. And they did have their meeting.

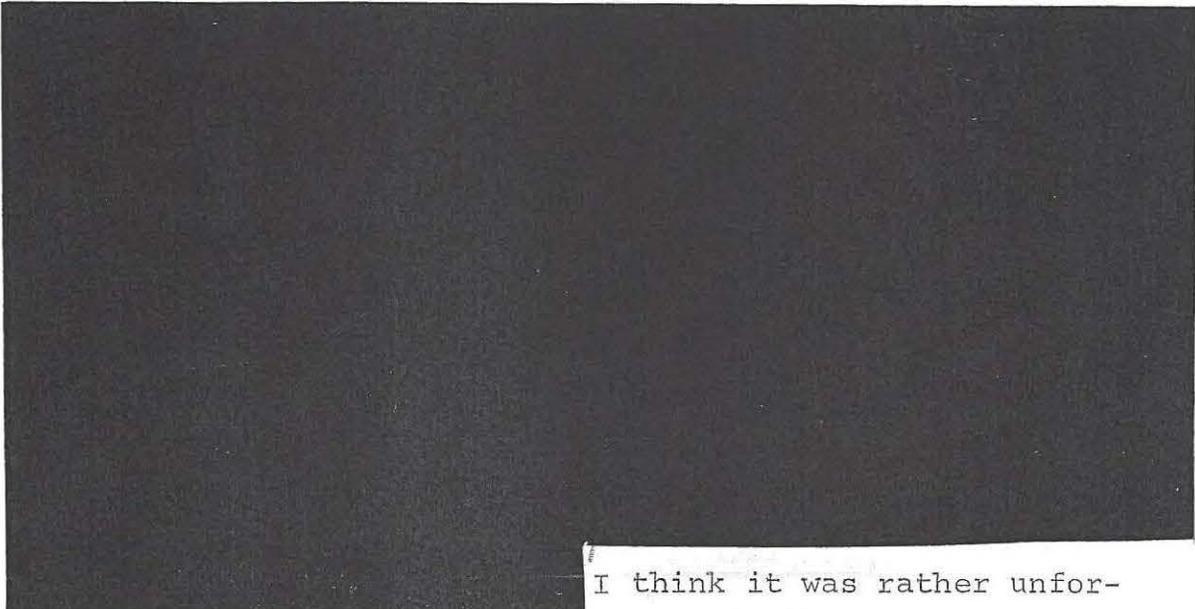
4) I found out the meeting was going on and entered the meeting, and it caused some concern on the part of Tolan and the, supposedly, the black guys. And Tolan called me over, kind of angry, and asked that I not stay at the meeting because the thing that they were supposedly angry about was the fact that I was the one that had precipitated this whole thing. And not wanting to compound the thing, I left the meeting as soon as the. . . . You know, if, in fact, Jim Tolan, who was nothing more than an advance^{man} but a guy who the Senator respected, and a Jerry Bruno and a Frank Holgate were going to be able to turn off all the work that I had done in the past, then it was. . . . This was as good a

time as any to find out about it. ²⁹ And fortunately, of course, ^{" " "} again I come back to the point that the Senator was not really aware of all of the intrigue that was involved and only wanted to do what he thought was right. What came out of the meeting, basically, was that ~~they were. . . .~~ These guys were going to get some money, much against my objections. And, as I said before, these same guys ~~that we. . . .~~ that literally just shook the group down, shook us down, are all in jail now. They're all under indictment for various offenses in Indianapolis. ^H When that meeting was over, as I said before, John Lewis and I had a conversation with the Senator, and John Lewis made the point ¹ in his own grief, because he was so close to Martin Luther King, ¹ to take time to go over and say to the Senator--and he and John talked about it--that there were some things that were less than correct in terms of how the black community was being handled in Indianapolis, ~~and likewise. . . .~~ meaning the way that Holgate and Jim Tolan and Jerry Bruno had

approached the thing.







I think it was rather unfortunate, and I don't know quite where it would have all led to, as far as the campaign is concerned, as we had gone along, because I think as things got more lined up, meaning the campaign, and positions got a little bit more straight and everybody kind of ~~of. . . .~~ was kind of beating out their own position in the campaign, hammering out their own position, I think it would have. . . . We'd have had a head-on collision somewhere down the road, or, to use one of my favorite terms, somewhere down the pike.

91 The only thing that probably would have avoided that and made it possible for me not to have any real problems was the fact that [Lawrence F.] Larry

O'Brien recognized the job that I was doing in the Negro community. But, again, the reason that something like that was able to go on and that we could have that kind of nonsense was that, in the final analysis, there was no one black person or group of black persons that anybody in that campaign at the highest level, or otherwise, felt enough confidence in to be able to let that person make a judgment, even when it came to the black community. We always had to turn to the white experts in the black community. And, you know, so we keep coming right back to the fact that there's smacks of. . . . You know, a black guy is not even good enough to make a judgment as far as his own black community is concerned, much less to make some decisions in terms of what happens in the white community; And ^{this} just smacks of racism. It's a matter that we're going to give the black guy ^A which is what our society is all about in 1969. You know, a black guy's a good guy, but he's not quite as good as a white guy; and that's what you're talking about.

That's what you're talking about in business and that's what you're talking about in the very business that I'm in. You know, with all the credentials I can come with as far as having worked for the Senator and the work that I've done and my own expertise, whatever that might be, you know, it. . . . You still have that same problem that

Q no matter how people relate to you, whether or not you're talking about the community I live in. . . .

I consider myself probably head and shoulders above many of the individuals that. . . . in the community that I live, which unfortunately and I say unfortunately because I'd rather it be a integrated community, head and shoulders above many of the individuals who live and surround me

in the surrounding community where my home is and yet I. . . . You know, there's no doubt in my mind that they consider me. . . . They feel happy about the fact that, you know, that they can at least say that they have some kind of person who has some position publicly, or had some position

publicly. So that kind of justifies it in their mind, / But I'm sure that they recog. . . . They look upon the thing as being not just another neighbor, but a black neighbor. And, you know, I don't think we're going to see that change in my lifetime, / Probably won't see a change in my children's lifetime. And ³ if the present Administration and the direction it's going is any indication of what we can look to, then I would say that we have a very, very long road still to go.

Of course, I don't know whether or not that answers what happened on April ^{4th} fourth, but anyway I think that it kind of. . . . What that. . . . What we've said in the last ten minutes I think kind of sets the tone for how I feel the campaign was going at that point and how I think, as I look back on it, it would have probably come out. There would not have been any black persons that have had. . . . ³ would have made major input. I don't mean guys who got on the bandstand and played a guitar or guys who could run very fast and were

good athletes. I'm talking about persons who have made a major contribution, who were black, to the campaign. That was a problem they had; those persons were non-existent. And we were pretty well into the campaign at the time of the Senator's death; we were in the California primaries. And I know it would not have been any different if you'd have brought Louis Martin in, if you'd have. . . .

9 There's nobody I know of politically that they would talk about bringing in, or persons who would have come in, that would have had any greater credentials or input into that campaign than I did.

and I had no problem with Louis Martin coming in with all his credentials, but Louis Martin would have been coming in only as still to be the black guy, and I had an opportunity to see Louis Martin who was formerly. . . . When I talk about Louis Martin I'm talking about the former deputy chairman of the Democratic National party, who's a first-rate guy, and I had an opportunity to see Louis Martin operate within the framework of what supposedly

was supposed to be his "deputy chairmanship" and Louis Martin had less authority than some of those guys who were, you know, who had come on as advance men in the [Hubert H.] Humphrey campaign. I mean, I sat in on those meetings, and Louis Martin practically had to raise his hand and ask permission to speak. You know, and I mean I'm talking about a top level meetings; I attended those meetings, and Louis Martin was the black guy, and then when Larry O'Brien took over for the Humphrey campaign, he asked me to come in, and I was privy to these meetings, and we sat around that table with six Cabinet-level officers and the rest of the supernumeraries who were involved in that thing, and Louis Martin, you know, was a guy who made some input as far as what he thought about the black community, but it was always a uphill struggle; and he was recognized as being a black guy and not a leader, just a black leader.

GREENE: Tell me, did you ever get a feeling that maybe Robert Kennedy or his top people were not that

interested in the black support, that they felt they had it and they'd rather keep it kind of at a distance and go after support where they weren't so strong?

GRAVES: No. I didn't get that feeling. ~~I...~~ If anything, it was the contrary. ~~In the primaries...~~ Someone asked me that question yesterday; I don't remember exactly how it went. I read an article yesterday that said ~~that in the...~~ in the Negro reference book, ~~it said~~ the most important part, ~~...~~ The place where Negroes can make the greatest influence ~~are~~, as far as the electoral process is concerned, or the political process is concerned, is in the primaries; and this is accurate. ~~Because~~ it's in the primaries that they can swing, really swing, a vote for a couple of reasons. One is, in a primary, particularly a Democratic primary, you've got to court that vote because it's not guaranteed. The second point ~~is...~~ is that normally the black vote is not a

heavy turnout. There's a lot of apathy, just in general with primaries, and certainly more so in the black community. And if you can get a person who can challenge the ~~the~~ this apathy to turn it around, such as Robert Kennedy was able to do, then you're going to win that vote. And, as I pointed out, in Nebraska the black vote was the difference; in California it was definitely the difference. I mean, you know, Kennedy died and never came out, but I mean I think the final vote was forty-eight to forty-five or something like that in terms of percentages or forty-five. It was very close. There were three or four percentage points apart, where in the beginning they were talking about them being ten percentage points ahead. Well, we weren't, and the difference, in terms of Robert Kennedy winning in California was the black community. So he never approached it with the idea that he didn't need that black community. He was the first one to recognize he needed that black and Puerto Rican community. That's why we spent. . . .

Larry O'Brien took a personal look at what was going on in each state, through my efforts, to see what was going on. I mean, we just had to win those areas. ¹In Oregon, as I told you before, although we lost Oregon we certainly won; ²and we turned out more people than had ever, ever voted in probably three primaries, if you added them all up together. ~~The three~~. The three previous Presidential primaries, if you added up the total vote of the black community, it was greater in the last one, which is the one that Robert Kennedy was in. So that's the kind of turnout and effort we made and we needed.

GREENE: And you think this was generally agreed upon among the other aids^e?

GRAVES: Oh, yeah. You know, the person^s ^{who were in} ~~to him~~ close to it at the top recognized it immediately. I mean there was no question that [Theodore C.] Sorensen when he asked me to come out to Indiana, and Larry O'Brien, in terms of getting me on top of things in Nebraska and Oregon, ¹ likewise going over to

California recognized we just had to pull that off. ~~I mean~~ there was a great concern about nailing that black vote down. We just had to get the best turnout possible, and we made a real effort.

GREENE: Now, you mentioned last time that you spent primary day with Mayor [Richard G.] Hatcher and you had been working fairly closely with him. Do you remember any discussion, regarding this April ^{4th} ~~fourth~~ visit, about whether or not he should go to Gary and how Mayor Hatcher felt about this?

GRAVES: Whether or not. . . .

GREENE: Mayor Hatcher thought he ^{ought} ~~out~~ to come to Gary at this time. I read a memo which indicated that he felt it would be bad for Robert Kennedy to go there, because it was too early and a number of other reasons. Remember that discussion?

GRAVES: Yeah, I remember. Yeah. Let's see, how did that go? ~~We were going to end. . . .~~ He was going to end up in Gary, you know, ^b because I helped put that together while I was there. ~~And~~ he wasn't going to go on April ^{4th} ~~fourth~~, but he was going to

come to Gary on that Friday or Saturday. King was killed on a Thursday, I think it was.

GREENE: Right.

GRAVES: ~~And~~ we were coming into Gary. You know, it had been resolved ~~that~~. There had been some question as to what was the best time to come, but I know for a fact that we were going to go, because I'd briefed all of the city officials for Hatcher in terms of the visit, what we expected, and what was necessary, and security precautions and the like. ~~And~~ we were going into Gary, Indiana. ~~Excuse me~~. We were going into Gary, Indiana, either that Friday or that Saturday; I mean that had already been set up. So I don't remember the problems we got in the. . . . Of course, I don't know what memorandum you're talking about, obviously, but in terms of the problems involved there, there was some question about what was the best time for him to come in, but he definitely was going in that same week, so I don't think that it was a matter of we had to put it off for a month or something.

GREENE: How did you and John Lewis get involved in helping
[Coretta Scott]
Mrs. King? Was this at Robert Kennedy's request?

GRAVES: After the . . .

GREENE: Yeah, after he had spoken to her.

GRAVES: Well, no. John Lewis didn't really come as a
representative. John Lewis was working for us
in the campaign. I'd gotten John Lewis to come
on board and help us going around the country,
because he was excellent and he was well identified,
and going into the synagogues and so forth he
was fantastic. In California we didn't send
either he or Charles Evers, into the, as I said
before, into the black community. We did at times,
but, you know, when the Senator was gone, but
where we really sent them was into the synagogues
where we could turn around that [Eugene J.] McCarthy
vote and just say to McCarthy, now, what is this,
all of this liberalism that people keep talking
about that McCarthy has? It's just not there.
And John and Charlie Evers and Senator [Leroy R.]
Johnson from Atlanta were able to do this. But

John Lewis was going..... John Lewis lives in Atlanta, and so after, when King died, John automatically wanted to go back home, and, in addition, he certainly wanted to be where what was going on. He was a member of the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference] board, which is Dr. King's organization, and, you know, he had..... All his ties were there; That's where he lived. So it just made sense that we were going back to Atlanta together. ¶ In terms of how I ended up doing the work for Mrs. King, the Senator spoke to Mrs. King on the phone from my room that evening and told her that he would provide the plane, and he said he didn't want any publicity about it. And that was..... And I know he was unhappy when it did come out in the way it did, That he would give her the plane, or provide the plane, to go pick up Dr. King's body. And he said..... And he told her then that he would send me down, and that he would, obviously, come down for the funeral. Anything he could do, he'd..... and he would do, in terms of assisting her, and that

also I would be available to her for the duration of the crisis that was there.

GREENE: Had you made ~~...~~ suggested he make the call, or did he make it on his own?

GRAVES: I think I remember suggesting ^{it} to him as we left the rally. I said, "Well, I guess we should try and reach Mrs. King," And he said, "Yes, let's do that." ~~And he said,~~ "I think we should call her." ~~And then we got into the whole discussion,~~ prior to calling her, about whether or not we should ~~start~~ ^{stop} campaigning. That was another discussion that evening. Jack Paar was there and any number of persons.

GREENE: How was opinion divided on that? Was there anyone in favor of going ahead with the campaigning?

GRAVES: No, I think most of it was. . . . It's kind of not very clear in my mind, but it seems to me that most of the persons ^{were} just not interested ⁱⁿ continue ^{ing} with the campaign, ~~not continue with the campaign.~~
Excuse me.

GREENE: Was there any discussion before you left to go to

Atlanta about what Robert Kennedy would be doing in terms of the funeral and what gestures he might make and suggestions for. . . .

GRAVES: No, not really. I remember that as ^I, you know, the time came for me to leave ^{that} he called me back down to his suite and said he thought that it was going to be helpful, that he was going to ask Burke Marshall to meet me in Tennessee, ^{because} he didn't want Mrs. King to feel because Dr. King was a black man that he'd assigned somebody black to work on the thing. ⁹ I thought that was unreal because the Senator had never ^{had} really treated me as being the black guy on his staff, with the exception of the campaign. I had always done things as the guy on his staff; and so for him to feel concerned at that point about me going down and being recognized as a black guy because it was Dr. King, when it would not have mattered to those people down there ^{because} they knew me, ^{too} it just smacked ^{at} the fact that he was getting some more advice from some of these guard house liberals, ^{that} had decided

that, you know, or guys who decided they could make some real prudent judgments, or at least in their mind, prudent judgments, about what was good as far as the black people were concerned and how they feel. And there had to be. . . . The people who sat in on that meeting when they made the decision about my going initially, made the decision about not campaigning any further, and then likewise made the decision about contacting Burke Marshall, were all white. The only person who was privy to any of that, to any of those meetings who was black was myself.

GREENE: Who else was there?

GRAVES: Oh, Pierre Salinger was there, and Fred Dutton was there, and Jim Tolan was around. He wasn't involved in the policy making decision of that particular thing. I think [William J.] Bill vanden Heuvel was in Indiana at the time. I don't remember if vanden Heuvel was there; Maybe he wasn't there. Jack Paar was there. I can't remember all the people. There were several other people

who were of some significance as far as the campaign was concerned who were around. I just can't remember the other names of people sitting in the meeting. It was a small room, too; The room wasn't much more than ^a twelve-by-twelve ^{room} with a couple of adjoining bedrooms. In fact, Ethel [Skakel Kennedy] was in it. She was there.

GREENE: What do you remember about Robert Kennedy at the Martin Luther King funeral?

GRAVES: Well, first of all, there's more to it than just the funeral as far as our role was concerned. We had ~~had~~. It just seemed to me a rather good time with all those black leaders in town to have a meeting with some of the black leaders who were in town to say, "Where are we going next?" And I was able to put together a meeting ^{with} ~~Two~~ different groups. And I'm not going to be able to remember all of the people, But we had persons like Sammy Davis and Alan King and Nancy Wilson. What's the singer's name? Eartha Kitt. Bill Cosby. What's Bill Cosby's partner's name? Culp ^{Robert} Culp.

GREENE: Yes. Robert Culp.

GRAVES: Ben Gazzara. Oh, you know, I mean, I could go on.

There was a room with about thirty or forty people we had invited to come over and talk about ["]where are we going from here, and ["]what are we going to do. ["]

And [<]they weren't all entertainers. John ~~.....~~

Was John Doar there at the time? No. Peter

Edelman was in the meeting. I was there. My wife

[<]was even came down for that meeting. [>] Was my wife

there? Yeah, my wife had come down for the funeral

so she was there at that meeting. ^π And [<]then we had

another meeting with some of the heavies as far as

SCLC was concerned. We had [Ralph D.] Abernathy;

[>]He came over. We separated the meetings. We had

Harry Belafonte who was very, very intense and very,

very tough to get along with, and, ~~you know,~~ he was

angry. He was more than angry; [>]He was outraged

by the thing of Dr. King and he, ~~you know,~~ ^{was} he very. . . .

Cynicism as far as he was concerned, [>]Because Kennedy

wanted to talk and, ["]what was there to talk about. ["]

Bevel [>] James Bevel [>] came over and Jose

Jose
who
?

came over, ^{and} I guess in the course of the evening we must have had many of the leaders of the civil rights movement in and out of that hotel. We had various meetings with them, just talking and mentioning his concern. And I think for the most part it was reasonably well accepted.

¶ I think that Harry Belafonte and John Conyers, the Congressman, ^{they} were kind of tough and very, very hard, rough. They thought it was some kind of political move. They questioned the sincerity of his wanting to know why, ^{what} what he could do, where they could go, or, you know, where we could go now that this had happened. In addition to that, ~~we went over~~ when he arrived that night ^{we went} over and visited Mrs. King. ✓ He and Ethel and myself. I think John Doar was with us that night.

[Interruption] ¶ Here's what I'm saying is we had. . . .

~~The funeral~~ ^{it} was more than just coming down for the funeral. ~~He kind of. . . .~~ ^{I mean} the Senator had an opportunity to meet with several of the civil rights leaders and various groups and various persons

and have discussions, and, obviously, it was not all done out of social conscience. It was ~~in a~~ ^{the} part that added the dimension, *down the pike,* to what we were doing as far as the campaign was concerned. And it would be unreal to say anything other than that.

The next day [Jacqueline B.] Jackie Kennedy came and ~~Jackie Kennedy~~ made a visit to the King house. Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] came and he did not get to the King house.

~~And,~~ oh, I know. One of the things I wanted to make is that most of the politicians who had come, the political leaders--I think you have a better connotation if I say "political leaders"--had decided they were only going to go to the funeral, ~~and the Senator made it. . . .~~ ^{made a point} of telling me that he was not ~~even~~ ^{just} going to go to the funeral. ^{If there was} ~~He was just~~ going to to be a march, ~~He was going to march, and he was going to march the full length of the thing. And not only did he march, but Ethel marched, and, of course, Ethel was~~

pregnant at this time. And he went the full way, and they went all the way up to the ~~the~~ to Morehouse College and stayed through a good part of the funeral service at Morehouse, and then we left and went on back out to the airport. Excuse me. [Interruption] He left me in Atlanta. I think I stayed in Atlanta another day to kind of get things together, And I don't remember what I did after Atlanta. I think I might have come back to New York, or I don't know if I went from Atlanta to another state to continue to campaign or I came back. No, I think I went back to Indiana. ~~funeral.~~

GREENE: Did anything substantive come out of these meetings or was it just kind of a way for people to vent their anger?

GRAVES: No, nothing substantive. Nothing at all substantive came out of the meetings, other than the fact that it gave us a chance for people who were in the movement to see Kennedy, and see the kind of guy he was, and to have some discussions, and just for people to kind of vent their feelings. That's all. Nothing

substantive came out of the meetings, then, although there were some ideas and proposals tossed out about having a big show and raising some money, which I don't know exactly what that would have done. I mean nothing meaningful came out, and that was not one of Kennedy's suggestions, nor one of his ideas. It's just that I think I remember Sammy Davis being particularly hopped on the idea with Alan King of having some kind of show to do something to raise money to keep Dr. King's movement going. As has since been proven, Dr. King's movement is in real ~~problem~~ ^{trouble} right now, both politically and financially.

GREENE: How did you feel about Robert Kennedy's performance, to use a poor word, on occasions like this? Did ~~he~~ ^{he} come off well? Was he. . . .

GRAVES: I thought he came off extremely well, because. . . . And he did it out of a sense of really feeling the emotion of the moment, ~~that he~~ ^{that he}. . . . You know, he had a capacity for being very humble at these times, and any ruthlessness that supposedly was there,

as far as his personality was concerned, never came out at those moments. ⁹¹ At those moments he always was looking out for Charles Evers or looking out for Mrs. Medgar Evers, being sure she had a drink of water. I remember that as we marched we had one cup of water and we shared it between about six of us. And at those times I think Kennedy was, you know, the real Kennedy. When he was talking with poor kids in the ghetto -- that he understood, you know; he knew what their problems were ^{or} he was watching a touch football game, that's when Kennedy, the real human part of Kennedy, came out. ⁹¹ And the toughness which was Kennedy was not toughness. I always considered Kennedy not ruthless, but a guy who demanded the very best in the people who surrounded him, and had a right to do so because he pushed himself; ^{he} pushed us no harder than he pushed himself. And if he had the talent he had, he had the right to demand that the people who surrounded him should have an equally that amount of talent. And when

they didn't, for the most part, they usually were gone, so if you want to call that ruthless, you go ahead.

GREENE: You mentioned off the tape last time that you'd had some conversations with Martin Luther King before the assassination as far as what position he would be taking in the presidential race. Could you elaborate on that a bit?

GRAVES: Well, I wasn't able to get any commitment out of Dr. King. At best, Dr. King said that he was impressed with Senator Kennedy and that. . . . I take that back; I got a commitment of sorts from him that he was, in fact, going to support the Senator. He just did not want to do it that early, but that he was very happy about the fact he was in it, and that he had never made a commitment to any candidate before, because of circumstances being what they were and his being so opposed to the war, that he was going to definitely come out and endorse the candidate, as an individual, and not in the name of SCLC. And I talked to any number of aids to Dr. King and he would definitely have ^{endorsed} us, Senator Kennedy.

GREENE: Did you speak to Abernathy or other leaders in the SCLC after King's death? *about it?*

GRAVES: Yes, I did, but the . . . Well, that's what we accomplished, you know, by those meetings, meeting with some of those people. I just think it would not have been a problem to get the basic, ~~basic~~ leaders or the top persons, really, in the civil rights movement, vis-a-vis Whitney Young and Roy Wilkins and so forth, to ultimately come out and support the Senator. And, you know, ^I felt reasonably confident we had accomplished that.

GREENE: Well, when you went back to Indiana where were you working out of? I know you said you didn't go back to Indianapolis. Were you just traveling around?

GRAVES: No, I went back to Gary. I worked Gary. I worked Gary and then I went and did some work with [Richard] Dick Wade from out of Chicago, the University of Chicago. He was in Gary, and there was a lot to be done in those areas and in that surrounding community. ^{And} I just basically worked Gary and then, of course,

^{you}
we have to keep in mind that I was also trying to operate four or five other situations in other states, in addition to the national headquarters, vis-a-vis telephones. It's not too easy, as I said before, to run a national operation out of the Marriott Hotel or the Sheraton Hotel, ⁱⁿ Gary, as opposed to being right there on the scene. So that's what I had going on; ~~So~~ there was more than enough to do, ~~And~~ it was not that far away from the. . . . What was the date? I ~~never knew what~~ ^{don't remember. What} was the date of the Indiana primary?

GREENE: May ^{7th} seventh.

GRAVES: Then I did go back to New York a couple of times in between there, too, because if you're saying from the time that King died until the time of the primary, I was back in New York and I went out to California for the first time and took a look at what was going on out there and made a report to Larry O'Brien in terms of what I thought the priorities and needs were. ~~And~~ ^{And} I did that, and then I. . . . I don't remember the complete continuity of how I did it,

but I know I was in and out of Nebraska a couple of times, in and out of Indiana and so forth.

GREENE: What was the gist of your report? What did you feel the job was?

GRAVES: That there was going to be a lot of jostling for positions in California as ^{far as} ~~for~~ who was going to be actually the top dog in the black community, which is what I was looking at. Of course, there was the problems of dealing with [Jesse M.] Jess Unruh and who he. . . . He wanted to have his guys, ^{as far as} the black community's ^{was} concern ^{and} and there were leaders in the black community who did not get along with Jess Unruh, ^{and} ~~and that~~ Jess Unruh wanted to have his own operation going ^{and} on which he did set up, ^{and} and Larry O'Brien subsequently put another operation over the top of that to be sure that it happened right, and that operation was the operation that I ran out of the Sheraton-Wilshire Hotel in California.

GREENE: Where is that? In San Francisco?

GRAVES: No. In LA. ^[Los Angeles]

GREENE: In LA?

GRAVES: Right. I also went all the way ~~.....~~ You know, ~~I~~ went into Oakland and San Francisco and so forth and met with those guys there, and that was the first trip through California. And again, I come back to the thing that when you ask me what my memorandum said, basically, my memorandum said that guys wanted to know where the titles were going to go on the door, you know, because the titles on the doors also meant that, you know, where was the money going to come from, and there were guys. ~~.....~~ there was definitely, I don't want to mention names, but there were definitely guys, black guys out there, who were leaders who ultimately ^{we} had some real problems with, who were interested in being the guys who were going to be in charge. The guys being in charge knew that they were going to be the guys who would be divvying up the money, so they knew there was going to be a lot. They thought there was going to be a lot of money to be put around out there, which there ultimately was, and they wanted to be the guys who were going to be there to help split it up and that wasn't. . . .

Those weren't black guys thinking. Those were just guys who happened to be black.

GREENE: Was there any difference in the way it was handled on the Kennedy side from the way it had been done in Indiana? Was it a little more tight fisted and cautious?

GRAVES: That's not clear to me, what you're saying. Excuse me.

GREENE: Well, in Indianapolis you said they kind of gave into the demands of the blacks for money.

GRAVES: Oh. Okay.

GREENE: Was it the same thing in California?

GRAVES: Well, I got it. Okay. well I... Let me just back up. In Indiana, one, they wanted to win their battle there and, two, things had... You know, we had... Things hadn't ^{distillated} ~~dissolated~~ out to the point that you could really see who was on first and what was on second. By the time we got to California we had kind of identified the players who were calling the shots and then I didn't have to go through a lot of nonsense and aggravation. When I... If I... When I made a judgment in

California we had to spend five thousand dollars,
or we didn't have to spend it, that ^{was} kind
of like ~~... That was ...~~ We were doing it.
When we ^{were} ~~went~~ out in Indiana that was, you know,
~~that was~~ a problem.

To answer your question, in California we
spent money. I just think we probably in California
~~we~~ were doing it in a more sophisticated manner.
It wasn't a matter ^{that} we would not have spent x number
of dollars if we thought it would ^{have bought} afford us the
same thing it would ^{have bought} afford us in Indiana. We
would just probably ^{have} taken a harder look at it.

GREENE: Who was handling the money for the black community
in California?

GRAVES: Who did I have to get the money from?

GREENE: Yeah.

GRAVES: I got the money directly from [Stephen E.] Steve
Smith and once I told Larry O'Brien, you know,
that there was something I thought we had to do,
he would just tell Steve, and we'd do it.

GREENE: You mentioned last time that at times when they

didn't want the fact ^{known} that they were contributing money here and there, they were doing it surreptitiously instead of by check. Who would handle this money? Who would make the decisions on it? And where would the money come from?

GRAVES: Well, number one, I don't know whether or not this should be off the record or not. Realistically, you know, well, why don't we just talk about this?

GREENE: Well, you know, the whole thing's off the record, so. . . .

GRAVES: Well, the point is, I mean, there are no campaigns, you know, going back a hundred years when campaigns were not paid for. . . . a lot of the expense in the campaigns were not paid for vis-a-vis cash, as opposed to checks being exchanged, whether or not you were paying off political favors or you're paying people to walk the streets handing out fliers or you're paying a guy to operate the sound truck. A lot of it was done through cash. So, therefore, there was no difference in. . . . You know, there was nothing. . . . We weren't doing anything new in that campaign in

terms of operating ~~or~~ paying people by cash.

Your question again was. . . .

GREENE: Well, you said when they do not want to use checks because they don't want it revealed where the money came from, who made the decision on it, where did the money come from, and how was it. . . . ?

GRAVES: Well, I think it was just a pretty standard procedure that for the most part, a lot of what went on in the black community was done by cash rather than by. . . . When they were, when these politicians in the black community and I said to you that they were, they were somewhat concerned as to who was going to run the show. They assumed that that money was not going to be handed out in cash, that it was going to be. . . . It was going to be handed out in cash and not going to be in check. Then if there was going to be a payroll or an operation that cost ten thousand dollars a week, that ten thousand dollars would be passed out in cash.

GREENE: Would that come from Helen Keyes? Was it the same source originally, it was just in a different form?

GRAVES: Helen Keyes worked out of the national office and I think that that probably came right out of the funding that was in ^{the} southern California headquarters. Now, ~~there was~~ There were moneys that I received for expenses. I had a separate fund that I operated out ^{of} through Helen Keyes. She paid me directly, and there was never any quibbling about the money that I spent, but, of course, ~~I~~ They knew me and I knew what I was doing, and the moneys I spent was. . . . You know, if I had to go ^{somewhere and} drop five hundred or a thousand dollars, those moneys were always available. And they used to pay me back. They'd give me the money by check and I'd get it cashed, ~~or~~ it didn't matter because there was always some way of justifying, or I had some kind of receipted way of knowing where the money had gone.

GREENE: How many people do you think knew exactly what you were doing?

GRAVES: You mean in numbers or in stature?

GREENE: Well, I don't mean. . . . But ~~I mean was it. . . .~~
You know, ² were people aware of the kinds of things

that you were doing? I don't really mean just you. I mean, in general, how much knowledge did people have of what other people were doing, even those they might be working fairly closely with?

GRAVES: Well, I guess probably more people had an idea of what I was doing as opposed to ~~what~~ my having an idea what they were doing, because I was working in the area that was rather ~~rather~~ an easy thing to identify, work^{ing} in the black community. And ~~that's~~ always ~~always~~ has a lot of intrigue attached to it. So, therefore, I would think that a lot, ~~Many~~ Many people understood what I was doing, what I was doing. How I was doing it is something else again.

GREENE: That's really what I mean.

GRAVES: Yeah. How I was doing it was. . . . ~~There were~~ That was ^{limited to} ~~one of the terms~~ of how ^{well} it was accomplished. You know, what had to be done and my going ~~to~~ my sitting down and getting out telegrams to all the leading ministers in southern California the Sunday before election day and my ~~having~~ ^{lining}

up ten of us and going out and actually preaching at the black churches on the Sunday before election day. Not a lot of people close to that, O'Brien knew about it, Burke Marshall, or somebody like that, somebody who would have appreciated the need for what we were doing. But other than that there weren't, you know, they just knew we were winning, and how we were winning, that was left up to me. And I don't think there were a lot of people, actually, who were anxious to come into the black community to find out, whether or not we're talking about Indiana or you're talking about Nebraska. They'd just as well read about it in the paper, as come over.

GREENE: Well, getting back to Indiana, when you went out to Gary and wherever else you were before the end of it, the primary, was there much of a difference in the kinds of people you had to deal with and the way it was handled from the Indianapolis situation, or was that a fairly standard set up?

GRAVES: You mean, how I... how things went for me in Gary as opposed to Indianapolis?

GREENE: Yeah.

GRAVES: Indianapolis was ^{an} atypical campaign. Indianapolis. Even [Gerald F.] Gerry Doherty who I know had a very suspicious opinion of me because of what had happened in Indianapolis, we met again when I was doing some things for the Humphrey campaign at ~~the very~~ towards the end, around October, and by that time he had gotten the word that, you know, things were not as he had read it or had been told in the very beginning. And his. I'm sure that his esteem for me, if you want to call it that, was certainly greater than it was when I left Indianapolis. I'm not ^{altogether} all together sure we could say that the feeling was reciprocal.

GREENE: How much of a factor were McCarthy and [Roger D.] Branigan in the black areas? Were they competition at all?

GRAVES: No. Their identity in the black area was greatly overstated and ~~greatly~~. It was greatly overreacted to. I, you know, I think in California I think I mentioned to you the thing about the McCarthy records

and all the nonsense that went on with that ~~just~~ just a complete overreaction to the thing. It was just complete panic. Twenty people trying to make judgments and all kinds of strange calls coming in in the middle of the night. And were it not for the fact that I could call up a Burke Marshall and just say, "Look, you know, this is what I think should happen. I think ~~you're~~ they're overreacting in this thing about bringing in Dr. King's father and flying him in and putting him up on a" I mean, absolutely unbelievable some of these judgments and, ~~you know~~, it's just a matter that fortunately the cool minds prevailed. But. . . .

GREENE: What about McCarthy's use of students in the ghetto? How was this? ~~How~~ How did the blacks react to it?

GRAVES: It just didn't work. It just didn't, you know. I just went into these areas, and it just turned out that McCarthy was using all white students because he had no other volunteers, and ~~it~~ it was not any real competition for him, because what I did, I used to go onto these campuses and go to these black student

unions, and it wasn't easy, but I used to get the kids from the black student unions to, where possible, to run headquarters for me and let it be their own operation, their thing, and we used to call it "our thing" in every state we went ⁱⁿ. In fact, Carter Burden's little campaign we've got going here now, we call that "our thing." So that it's something ^{they're} their doing and it's their operation. ~~that's~~. You know, because the credibility of politicians, at best, in the white community leaves a lot to be desired, and I just felt that if we were going to have something going on, if we were going to have any credibility to it, we should certainly ~~have~~. let them for the most part, with guidance, do it the way they wanted to do it in order to make it work. And so therefore, we had black students, you know, ^{and} in a whole black community who went to school in that particular town, let's say Omaha, Nebraska, going up against, you know, carpetbagging white students for McCarthy which just, you know, there was just no competition. And then, of

course, ~~you know,~~ you had my own experience to lean on and you had names you were bringing in, such as John Lewis, and I had [John] Johnny Ford running ^{that particular} ~~up to go~~ place and the same thing right across the country, not just Indiana or not just Nebraska.

GREENE: Can you remember specific occasions when Robert Kennedy came to Gary, or wherever it was that you were when you traveled with him, and helped prepare an area for a visit? Would you get involved in the advance preparations?

GRAVES: Yeah, I did, but then, again, you had the same thing that by the time that. . . . If Kennedy was coming in they'd send a half a dozen white advance men roaring into the community, and I'd pick up the phone and call Larry O'Brien and tell him he had ten minutes to get them out or I was leaving, and he'd call up the advance crew and get them out of the area, because I'd advance it. If I was going to advance it, I just would do the whole thing. I wasn't going to have somebody coming in and fouling

it up or trying to tell me how to do it. And the
guys, for the most part, who were, you know, the
advance men ^{it} just was ^{an} aggravating thing to, at the
meeting, have some guy. . . . I mean Lee French, as
bright a guy as he is ^{and} he's a lawyer and every-
thing ^{couldn't} shine my shoes, as far as I was con-
cerned, when it came to doing advance work. I'd
forgotten more than he'd known. Hell, in the army
I ran a battalion, and he's going to come in and tell
me how to get a group of people together. ^{It}
was bad ^{enough} if he's going to tell me how to get a group
of people together if we're on white advance, but
here we are in the black community and I've got ^{to go}
^{out} to listen to Lee French who just first heard what
advance was two weeks prior, coming in trying to tell
me what to do. I'd just ^{found that unacceptable.} ~~rather not accept it.~~

GREENE: Well, what kind of response would you get from Larry
O'Brien?

GRAVES: He got them out of there. That's what the response
was.

GREENE: And you would do the advancing?

GRAVES: Uh huh.

GREENE: Was there anyone among the advance men that you thought was better at handling arrangements in the black communities?

GRAVES: No. They all treated it like there was some intrigue involved in it. There's no more intrigue in doing the black community, other than the fact the people happen to have black faces and it wasn't Whitey.

GREENE: Did you get involved in preparations for that last northern Indiana motorcade?

GRAVES: No.

GREENE: No?

GRAVES: By that time I was on my way. No, because I still was not enjoying any . . . I still was not enjoying any great credibility where it was happening from and that was in Indianapolis, because you have to understand that the people who were involved in Indianapolis were Walter Sheridan and Gerry Doherty, and you still had Holgate in Ind. . . in Indianapolis. Excuse me. And those were already three where I had

problems, and it just only straightened itself out when I got out of Indiana. ~~You know,~~ Kennedy said, "You know, we're not going to have this, and Graves is going to do it." ~~And~~ Larry O'Brien said it, and then it was no problem.

GREENE: What kinds of things were you doing for Mayor Hatcher on primary day? Was that get-out-the-vote?

GRAVES: Yeah. Well, he had a problem that had to be resolved and being kind of, you know, liaison in terms of being sure the moneys were gotten out. I mean I remember sitting in Mayor Hatcher's ~~office~~ Gary Schropshrier's, rather [^] home in Gary, Indiana [^] which is Mayor Hatcher's law partner [^] counting out, ~~you~~ know, probably fifty thousand dollars in ten dollar bills, going into little envelopes, ^o and ⁼ watching girls do it right out on the floor of that living room so he could hand it out on election day to his poll watchers and election day captains. So we did that and it was just a matter of his knowing. . . .
2 91 And Hatcher had great respect for me and my ability to get things done for him, and he felt that he

wanted to have me there because he had a direct link to Kennedy when I was there. So it served a two^ofold purpose.

GREENE: What did Kennedy think of Hatcher, do you know?

GRAVES: He had great respect for Mayor Hatcher.

GREENE: Yeah.

GRAVES: I've got to be down at . . .

GREENE: I'm just about through. Is there anything else on Indiana that we ought to talk about? Would you agree, by the way, with those who say that if the election had been held earlier he probably would have done better? Did you get that feeling in the black areas that maybe the Branigan charges were catching on or the . . .

GRAVES: No.

GREENE: No?

GRAVES: Kenn^o. The mystique of Robert Kennedy in the black areas could not have been hurt by anything. I'm convinced of that now, whether it was a Martin Luther. . . . I think if you had a real all-out effort like in California to show that Kennedy had

tapped Martin Luther King's phone. I mean you'd have to have pictures of Kennedy. I mean you'd have to really ^{have} done an ~~assass.~~ a character assassination to have even made an inroad. That might be, could have hurt if they'd kept dwelling on that for a long period of time and he'd had a real operation to put that together, maybe, ~~he~~ just maybe, he could have done something with that, but other than that, when you start talking about places like Indiana and so forth, couldn't have touched him.

GREENE: Anything else on Indiana?

GRAVES: No, I think I've kind of dwelled on Indiana. I was happy to leave Indiana.