

**David L. Hackett Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 07/22/1970**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** David L. Hackett  
**Interviewer:** John W. Douglas  
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**Biographical Note**

Hackett was a personal friend of Robert F. Kennedy [RFK]; a staff member of the John F. Kennedy [JFK] for President campaign in 1960; a Special Assistant to Attorney General RFK; the Executive Director of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime from 1961 to 1962; and a staff member of RFK's Senate campaign in 1964 and presidential campaign in 1968. In this interview Hackett discusses meeting RFK for the first time at Milton Academy and their continued friendship; working on JFK's 1960 presidential campaign, including observations of other members of the campaign staff; the lead up to and working on RFK's 1968 presidential campaign, including tensions between three different camps and Edward M. Kennedy's role in the campaign; how RFK changed over the course of his 1968 campaign; and why Hackett thought RFK would have been an unpopular President, among other issues.

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David L. Hackett – RFK #1  
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Brief introduction of Hackett
3	Meeting Robert F. Kennedy [RFK]
3	RFK at Milton Academy
6	Early impressions of RFK
10	RFK's start in Washington, D.C.
11	Hackett's time in Montreal
14	John F. Kennedy's [JFK] 1960 presidential campaign—getting a delegate count
17	Theodore C. Sorensen and friction within JFK's 1960 campaign
19	Division of work in JFK's 1960 campaign
22	RFK in 1960: completely focused on electing JFK
24	JFK's 1960 campaign after he secured the nomination
26	Surprises at the end of the 1960 presidential election
27	Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., and JFK's 1960 campaign
28	How RFK reached the decision to run for President in 1968
34	Hackett joins RFK's 1968 campaign
36	RFK's idea of what kind of campaign he wanted to run in 1968
38	Three distinct groups working on RFK's 1968 campaign
42	Edward M. Kennedy's [EMK] role in RFK's 1968 campaign
44	Campaign mechanics and decision making
46	EMK's group on RFK's 1968 campaign
47	Lyndon B. Johnson's withdrawal from the 1968 election
49	Working with the Eugene J. McCarthy staff on delegates
51	Conflict between supporters of "old politics" and those of "new politics"
53	The media in the 1968 primaries
54	The system for collecting information on the delegate count and making predictions
57	How RFK changed over the course of his 1968 campaign
61	Why Hackett thought RFK would be an unpopular President
64	RFK's unique ability to zero in on certain issues and problems

Oral History Interview

With

DAVID L. HACKETT

July 22, 1970  
Washington, D.C.

By John W. Douglas

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

DOUGLAS: Dave, do you want to state the conditions under which you're giving this interview?

HACKETT: The conditions are that the tape be destroyed; I have the right to edit my remarks; and that the remarks are published after my death and Mrs. Kennedy's [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] death.\*

DOUGLAS: Ethel Kennedy?

HACKETT: Ethel Kennedy.

DOUGLAS: Well, Dave, why don't you just give a brief biographical sketch of yourself—pertinent dates.

HACKETT: I was born in Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1927, November 12th. I attended Milton Academy

[-1-]

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\* These restrictions have been superseded by Mr. Hackett's 1991 legal agreement.

where I left in 1944 in my next to the last year to join the Army. I spent two years in the Army in the Eleventh Airborne Division in Japan and the Philippines.

On leaving the Army in 1946, I attended McGill University for four years in Montreal. I worked for one year for *Reader's Digest* in Montreal. Then I spent four years in Baltimore working for the Emerson Drug Company in their advertising department. I then spent four years back in Montreal where a group of us bought a publishing company and I was the editor of the magazines that we purchased.

I did that and then left Montreal to work on President Kennedy's [John F. Kennedy] pre-nomination campaign for a year and worked in the general election. I then became a Special Assistant to the Attorney General [Robert F. Kennedy] and became Executive Director of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime. Then, when the Attorney General left in 1964, I worked on his campaign in New York.

Following that I became a consultant, and then, ultimately, became president of a

[-2-]

company called Policy Management Systems [Inc.] which I set up, which was a subsidiary of a company called Computer Applications [Inc.]. I worked in the 1968 presidential campaign for Robert F. Kennedy, campaigning. Then, after 1968, I started my own companies, of which there were two: one called Hackett Housing and one called David L. Hackett Associates which deal in urban problems.

DOUGLAS: What was the first time you met Bob Kennedy?

HACKETT: Well, it was in my third class year at Milton Academy. He had attended Portsmouth Priory. He entered into the class above me, and I met him at that time.

DOUGLAS: How many years did you overlap at Milton?

HACKETT: Well, we spent two years together there at Milton.

DOUGLAS: Did you become a close friend of his almost right away?

HACKETT: I think we became, yes, close friends almost right away. We both had interest in athletics, and we both played football. I'd say, yes, we became friends right away.

DOUGLAS: What was your first impression of him at Milton?

[-3-]

HACKETT: Well, I can remember very distinctly that he wore a checkered coat. He used to wear rather loud ties and very light gray flannel pants and white

socks, white athletic socks. I think probably what set him apart a bit was his choice of neckties, which were a little bit flamboyant. I think maybe my first impression of him was that we were both, in a way, misfits. He was a misfit because he'd come in toward the end—I'd been there a long time, and he'd come in towards the end of the school. My interests were, at that time, primarily in athletics and not in academics; I think, therefore, I was a little bit of a misfit. I think he was a bit of a misfit because of coming in both late and also because of who he was, and so he didn't fit into Milton easily at that time.

DOUGLAS:       What did you mean by “who he was?”

HACKETT:       Well, because Milton Academy, of course, is in Boston, and his father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] was very well known. The Kennedy name was not as well known as it ultimately became, but it certainly was well known then, so he was a son of a famous person.

[ -4 - ]

DOUGLAS:       Why did that make him a misfit, Dave?

HACKETT:       Well, I think that because his name was Kennedy and he was an Irish Catholic and Milton Academy was basically an Anglo-Saxon, WASP [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] school. So, I think it was a combination of things: you transfer from another school; he had not been brought up as the rest of us had been brought up; and he had not attended Milton for a long period of time. I'd been there for ten years, ten or twelve years, as had a great many of the other people in my class; and people in his class had also been there a long time.

DOUGLAS:       Did he study hard at Milton, or how did he approach that side of school?

HACKETT:       I think he was an average student; he got average grades. I think he was obviously intelligent, but I don't think he was known, nor would any of the teachers remember him, as an outstanding student.

DOUGLAS:       What were some of the qualities that came through to you at the time?

HACKETT:       Well, I think the great quality that hit immedi-

[ -5 - ]

ately was his great determination at everything he did. And he didn't.... He was not gifted either academically or socially or athletically. But I think he wanted to excel and he had a great determination to do well at anything he tried. I guess I'd pick determination which perhaps was at that time his distinguishing characteristic.

DOUGLAS:       You left to go into the Army. Had he left before then to go into the Navy?

HACKETT: I think I left.... He joined the V-12 program at Harvard. I think we, I think I, we left at approximately the same time. I left with a year to go and he left in his senior year. And he joined the Harvard V-12 program, or the V-12, Navy V-12 program. I think he went to Bates. And I went into the Army.

DOUGLAS: Did you see him during the war years at all?

HACKETT: No. Well, no, 'cause I went into basic training, and then went overseas. And he.... But we corresponded and we stayed in touch during that period.

DOUGLAS: What was your impression of his war years?

HACKETT: Well, I think he was, certainly like the great

[-6-]

many of us, he wanted to.... I think he was perhaps disappointed that he was unable to serve overseas. I think there was some reluctance on the part of his family and the Navy, too, since one of his brothers had been killed [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.] and one of his brothers [John F. Kennedy] had been wounded and he served in combat. I think he was disappointed he wasn't able to, but I think, again, he took this in good humor—a great many jokes about not getting beyond the two-mile limit. I don't think he went farther than Cuba; Cuba was the farthest he went.

DOUGLAS: Later on in his life it was apparent that he was very sympathetic with the underprivileged and less fortunate. Were there any traces of that in the early days that you knew him, Dave?

HACKETT: No, not really. As I think, again, we lived in an environment—this was a private school. This is where he spent a good amount of his time, and then, I think in the summers he spent them at Hyannis Port, so I don't think that he or I were exposed to poverty or those problems.

[-7-]

I think what he did have was always compassion for other people who had problems. I think part of this was that he did not find anything easy, things did not come easy to him, so he was very sympathetic to other people who did not have it easy. So, I think that, when he came upon these problems later on, it was a natural thing that he had compassion and some understanding for them. I think what he never had understanding or compassion for was arrogance, or wealth that was not used properly by the privileged; he had very little compassion for that. But to answer directly to your question: we were not exposed at that time to these other problems.

DOUGLAS: At Milton and those other occasions when you saw him or were visiting him or he visiting you, did you have political talks in those early years about politics or political questions?

HACKETT: I can't think.... I'm sure we did, but I don't think they were anything special. I think the majority of the students were Republican as my family

[ -8- ]

was. I can't recall that there was any excessive talk, particularly at school, about politics. I think the conversations we had and the things that we did were fairly normal. As I say, I think he had a real interest in things that were action oriented, particularly athletics.

DOUGLAS: Did you have any clues in those early years as to what kind of career he'd ultimately select?

HACKETT: Well, I think you always had a sense, particularly when you visited the family at Hyannis Port, that he would do something in public service. I feel there was never any question of that, but I would think that if you talked to most people who knew him at that time, or had been exposed to him, that there would be very few people who would have said that he'd be a remarkable person.

I think some of those basic characteristics which made him remarkable in the eyes of a great many of us were certainly there at that time, but I would think that there were many more students who do things a great deal better, many more students who get higher marks and

[ -9- ]

etcetera. But I think that his basic character and the characteristics were there that made him what he was later on.

DOUGLAS: Then after the war, how did the relationship reform?

HACKETT: Well, after the war I went to McGill and, again, I would see him during the summer. We would stay in touch, but we didn't have any sustained relationship at that time while I was at McGill and he was at Harvard. I was an usher at his wedding when he got married and when I worked in Baltimore, during that period, I saw him almost every weekend or every week. I traveled from Baltimore to Washington to see Bob and Ethel during that time. So, we stayed in touch pretty much, even though we were geographically separated. Then when we were at all close geographically we saw a good deal of each other.

DOUGLAS: Well, how were his ideas about things in general and about his own career developing during that time when you saw him on a fairly regular basis?

HACKETT: Well, I think that's just when he had begun to

[-10-]

start in Washington. I think again of his great determination to do things, and again, that is not unlike what he was like in school. There was a determination in working for the Hoover [Herbert Hoover] Commission and then working for the McClellan [John L. McClellan] Committee [Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations] to accomplish things and change things, do things. I think he was frustrated perhaps with the Hoover Commission, but I think that when he started in the McClellan Committee he began to do things that he liked. I think what he liked to do was to find those opportunities where he could accomplish something and change things.

DOUGLAS: Was the experience on the McClellan Committee mixed from his point of view? I mean, were there things he enjoyed and things he didn't like about it? How would you size it up?

HACKETT: Well, I was never.... It never worked on a day-to-day basis. I would just see him on weekends and listen to him talk about it, but I think he was only happy when he was involved in doing things. I think that he was

[-11-]

basically unhappy and frustrated when he wasn't doing things. During that period he was certainly in the hurricane, the eye of the hurricane, particularly in the Army-McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] hearings and where the McClellan Committee went.

DOUGLAS: Well, Dave, you left Baltimore. What was that, what year, 1950?

HACKETT: About 1956.

DOUGLAS: Went up to Montreal?

HACKETT: Went up to Montreal and then....

DOUGLAS: And then?

HACKETT: I stayed there until 19—well, I came to Washington in 1959.

DOUGLAS: Did you work in...?

HACKETT: I worked in the Esso Building near the Capitol where the headquarters of the Kennedy campaign was. It was Bob Kennedy and Ken O'Donnell

[Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and a handful of girls from Senator Kennedy's [John F. Kennedy] office.

DOUGLAS: Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien]?

HACKETT: And Larry O'Brien joined soon after I did. Four men joined and were there when I was there.

[-12-]

DOUGLAS: Did you work in the 1958 Senate campaign...

HACKETT: No.

DOUGLAS: ...for Senator Kennedy?

HACKETT: No.

DOUGLAS: Did you see him [Robert F. Kennedy] during the summer when you were up in Montreal, or did you get together?

HACKETT: We would, at least, spend one weekend a summer on the Cape [Cod], sometimes more during that period we were in Montreal. We went to Palm Beach a couple times. So, I think, during that period I'd see him four or five times a year, either in Washington or in Florida on occasion.

DOUGLAS: Anything you recall about that period in terms of his interests?

HACKETT: Which period?

DOUGLAS: The period when you were in Montreal.

HACKETT: No, because at that time I was very concerned about what I was doing in Canada, had lost almost complete touch with the United States, and was considering becoming a Canadian; so most of my thoughts were in Canada and certainly not in the United States.

DOUGLAS: How did you come to work in John Kennedy's

[-13-]

presidential campaign?

HACKETT: Well, I got a call from Bob one day just saying that I'd done so well in English at Milton that he knew I was the perfect person to handle the

President's correspondence. Would I come down and do that?

DOUGLAS: This was in '59?

HACKETT: This was in '59. So, I said, "Yes," and so my wife and two children came down. I began to handle really two things: all the correspondence, plus we had to do a delegate count.

DOUGLAS: How did that effort go in terms of the kind of management or supervision that Bob gave?

HACKETT: Well, it was a very exciting time. I think that, from my personal point of view, I had been out of the country for a long time and felt rather awed by the United States. Canadians at that time were rather awed by it. I certainly was awed by the competition and the opposition and the job that was before this group.

The group consisted, not of highly experience.... Bob was young, and there was no question that he was the leader. The experience that he'd had

[-14-]

and the experience that Ken O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien had had, and Bob Wallace [Robert A. Wallace], who was handling the Midwest, had had was certainly not, at least in my initial judgment, anything close to the experience of Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], Rayburn [Samuel Rayburn], Senator Symington [Stuart Symington, II], those people. But it proved perhaps the single most interesting thing—that this group, in effect, was smarter and had better political instincts in ours than in the opposition.

What we basically did was go state by state to 1) figure out how the delegates were elected and by whom and 2) figure out who the most influential people in the state were and how this influence might affect delegates. We campaigned state by state. We, for example, had a card file of 50,000 3 by 5 cards which listed, with basic information on those cards, what the candidate called the person, when he'd met him, how important the person was; we gave number ranking to each person. These cards ultimately were narrowed down to approximately 5,000 who were delegates and alternates.

[-15-]

DOUGLAS: What did the ranking indicate there? Disposition toward a candidate?

HACKETT: Well, we had numbers one through eleven. A ten, for example, was a person who, there was no question, was a Kennedy man. To get a ten we'd require that at least two people designated him as a ten. We'd never rely on one person's judgment.

DOUGLAS: When you say "one person" you mean one of your...

HACKETT: One of our people, either the candidate himself, one of the members of the campaign staff, or someone who was a ten to start with. Then we gave governors a certain number, Senators, congressmen, mayors, grass roots supporters, etc.—they all had a number. This is just an example of the level of detail which, at that time certainly, was not done in our judgment by the other people. This was the basic information system that allowed us to know exactly where we stood; the point being, I think, Lyndon Johnson just worked with the Senators.

Bob Kennedy with his basic political interest did the hard, difficult,

[-16-]

boring work, and that was the state-by-state count and just figuring out how each state operated then go to those people to ask for support.

DOUGLAS: When you joined that group was it clearly understood that Senator Kennedy was going to run for the presidency?

HACKETT: Yes, yes, we had stationery. There was no question about it.

DOUGLAS: And how long?

HACKETT: That was about a year prior to the Convention [Democratic National Convention] in Los Angeles. They had been working certainly since three years prior to that. This is where this card file came from, out of the basic information from trips he had taken into states throughout the country.

DOUGLAS: How did Senator Kennedy's own office staff fit in with that aspect of the effort? What was Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] doing in this field?

HACKETT: Well, he and Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman] had a lot of people working. He managed the Senator's staff. I think Ted Sorensen felt, which was his normal

[-17-]

feeling, that he had done all this work and he knew more than anybody else and he would travel with the candidate. So, I think, there was a little bit of friction when this new operation was set up. I feel there was just absolutely no question who the campaign manager was and where the candidate went for advice.

I think that both Bob Kennedy and Senator Kennedy, by bringing a variety of people into the operation, encouraged, in a way, disagreements. They did not set up a military type of operation where the responsibility for certain things was given. I think they set up operations where there was conflict and they knew this. I think it was how they really arrived

at basic decisions—by getting the various ideas from various groups. I think Ted Sorensen always represented certain ideas and I think people like Kenny O’Donnell would represent opposite ideas—and Larry O’Brien.

I guess always Ted Sorensen had difficulty separating the issue-oriented part of the campaign with the political part of the campaign. I think he thought

[-18-]

that he could handle both. I think that Larry O’Brien and Kenny O’Donnell thought they could handle the political and Ted Sorensen would stay with the issues. I think, again, both Bob Kennedy and Senator Kennedy knew all this and would allow it to happen and actually would encourage it.

DOUGLAS: Did people who worked in the Esso building have access to Senator Kennedy, or did they give their ideas solely to Bob?

HACKETT: Well, I think that would vary. Well, I think anybody who felt they were talking to Bob were talking to the Senator. I think Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith], of course, was there.

DOUGLAS: How was that division of work between Steve and you and Larry O’Brien and Kenny O’Donnell? How did that split up?

HACKETT: I was not a major part of it. I handled all the correspondence. One thing that Bob Kennedy would allow to happen is that you could really do as much as you could get away with and wanted to, as long as you did it well. So I, otherwise, set up the whole correspondence

[-19-]

section. I, really, in a way set up, myself, the whole delegate count calculation, but that was my only information collecting job. Larry O’Brien was in charge of field operations. There was some overlap on Kenny O’Donnell. Ted Sorensen, basically, and Mike Feldman were in charge of issues. And then Bob.... Steve was in charge of.... This is where some of the conflicts would probably be: what is the thin line between who ultimately made decisions? Ultimately, decisions were made by Bob Kennedy—certainly the good ones.

DOUGLAS: Was Steve married to Jean Kennedy [Jean Kennedy Smith] then?

HACKETT: Yes.

DOUGLAS: Well, did Larry and Ken split up the states or did they deal within geographical areas?

HACKETT: Well, of course, there were the key primaries, Wisconsin and West

Virginia; and this took a good deal of the time. Initially, when we started, Bob Wallace had the Midwest. Looking backwards, when we arrived in Los Angeles, what we did have is one person assigned to every single state. We arrived in Los Angeles

[-20-]

two weeks before the Convention and we set up my operation in a locked room in the hotel where we had eight girls and about twelve phones. For some of the biggest states we'd have two people assigned to the state just to stay with that delegation and to call in day and night any change in the delegate count. We had delegate count prior to going to Los Angeles, and that worked, perfectly. Now, to say who was on top of that, or who the people who knew Pennsylvania or California or Illinois.... On paper, I'd say Larry O'Brien was in charge of the whole operation; in actuality, I think it was sort of a combination of Bob Kennedy, Kenny O'Donnell, and Larry who would be on top.

DOUGLAS: Was there a kind of a game plan, so to speak, when you started out in 1959, as to how the nomination could be secured?

HACKETT: Yeah, I think there's no question that it was no real choice. Senator Kennedy was an underdog and he'd have to enter and convince Pennsylvania and the big states and the leaders of the Democratic Party that he could win.

[-21-]

He had to demonstrate this by winning. The approach to the campaign was very simple in that—to demonstrate his vote-getting ability, his popularity in those primaries, and then continue to work with the David Lawrences [David Leo Lawrence] and the Daleys [Richard J. Daley] in the big states, where those blocks of delegates were controlled. That was the basic approach to it. I think there were some crucial turning points, certainly West Virginia and certainly the religious issue, but I think the basic approach was to demonstrate popularity, vote-getting ability.

DOUGLAS: Did Bob Kennedy indicate to you, while this process was going on, the kind of Administration he'd like to be a part of or the kinds of things that he was interested in, that he'd like to help accomplish?

HACKETT: Again, on hindsight, I think that he was devoted to just one simple thing, and he wouldn't let anything stand in its way. That was to elect his brother, and that's what he was totally dedicated to doing. During this period

[-22-]

certainly.... A few years later on, some of his real feelings—and I think his real feelings, really, basically were to come from experience. I don't think that it was as much experience, but by doing. But I think that certainly during this campaign his actions were controlled by one overriding objective, and that was to elect his brother. I think, again, this is part of where the ruthlessness—because he upset a lot of people. He was the person who would have to do the tough things and say the tough things.

DOUGLAS:       What kind of things?

HACKETT:       Just for example, after the nomination, immediately after the nomination, the next day, he forced everybody into the ballroom of the Biltmore Hotel, all the Democratic Party; he got a number of them. There was this young, relatively young person, very slight physical makeup up on a chair telling everybody exactly what they had to do, and that was to start right away on registration. I think, coming from him, this type of thing and talking very, very tough, may be arrogant.

[-23-]

That's just a very, perhaps, superficial example. I think that in a campaign or in the political process there have to be people who have to bargain and do things that are unpleasant, and I think he did all those unpleasant things. I think he was a lightning rod, which he perfectly well knew and accepted.

DOUGLAS:       Dave, what did you do during the campaign itself, after the nomination?

HACKETT:       Well, after the nomination then I handled, again, all the correspondence; I continued in that. I was just basically sent all the direct mail and all the materials and actually played a much lesser role in the major campaign than in the nominating process. My role in that was much more significant in just keeping track of the delegates, and when we finally had the delegates down we were only ten votes off. That was.... We had a reputation, the Kennedys had a reputation for running a very efficient operation, a lot of which was overrated, but the nominating process, in my judgment, was extremely well done. We did, as I say, know exactly

[-24-]

where everything was during the last two weeks. That came from four years of effort and a year of hard effort. We were ten to twelve off by the time Wyoming swung it. In the general, it was very chaotic; there was a switch from a very small staff to a huge one. My role in that was basically very minor.

DOUGLAS:       Did you participate in any of the discussions as to what issues should be stressed in the general election?

HACKETT:       No. In my sort of role as both a friend and a worker I did my work, and

my work did not entail that; but then, socially, I was a good friend of the family's and I would always try to be very careful not to separate the two. I never really participated in issue development.

DOUGLAS: Do you know what role Bob played in that fall election?

HACKETT: Well, I think major. I think he, without question, during both parts of the campaign—the nomination and the general elections—was a key person.

DOUGLAS: I mean, do you know what issues he was urging Senator Kennedy to stress or what kinds of

[-25-]

approaches to take?

HACKETT: No, I just can't.... I don't know the details of that, but I do know that there was no major decision made, right or wrong, that he was not involved in or didn't make himself.

DOUGLAS: Were there any surprises towards the end of the general election in '60? Did you expect to win?

HACKETT: Well, I think the closeness was a big surprise. I think that we expected to win, and I think we expected to win by a very much larger majority than the final vote. So I think that was a surprise.

DOUGLAS: Well, did you sense any kind of a swing away the last week or so?

HACKETT: No, I don't think there was a sense of that.

DOUGLAS: I sort of sensed a rise of anti-Catholic feeling in downstate Illinois, I remember, that last week.

HACKETT: Well, I think again most of us in the.... I was on the Cape during the election returns, at Bob's house there. I think everybody was optimistic from the very beginning. Then I think around 11 or 12 o'clock there was sort of a not a shock, but

[-26-]

everybody was a little bit surprised at the turn it began to take.

DOUGLAS: After the election was over, did Bob indicate what role he would like to

play in the Administration? Did he ever talk to you about that?

HACKETT: I can't remember. I can't remember.

DOUGLAS: Do you know whether he wanted to Attorney General or was opposed to the...

HACKETT: No. Well, I remember when he was appointed Attorney General. I was at the President's house when they made the announcement on the steps, but I just can't recall. I'm sure there was, but I just can't recall any conversations during that period of what he would like. I think, to a great extent, my recollection would be that the President wanted him in the Cabinet. I think maybe Bob, at some points, discussed the possibility that he might be handicapped and might should not be. In this case I think the President probably made the decision.

DOUGLAS: Did Ambassador Kennedy play any role?

HACKETT: I don't think so. He, again, was a controversial figure and was very helpful in the nominating process

[-27-]

without any question. He played a behind-the-scenes role. He was a friend of a good many of those, a number of people in the Democratic Party. I think he played, after that, a lesser role. I think they would listen to him, but I think they were making their own decisions. And I think, obviously, what happens when a person becomes President, he begins to make his own decisions. I may be completely wrong, but my feeling was one day he was Senator Kennedy, the next day it's Mr. President. He began to assume that, I think, and he wanted Bob in the.... Obviously, he was going to play a key role, be close, but I don't really recall those conversations.

DOUGLAS: Well, let's skip over to the '67-'68 period. Did you have any talks with Bob about the possibility of running for President in those years?

HACKETT: No. If the question is, "Did I?" again, after President Kennedy was assassinated and during those years till Bob finally decided to run for President, I was very aware, again, as a friend, of the ups and downs and difficulties

[-28-]

that he faced. I never directly discussed this, nor did I try to avoid discussing those types of questions, because there was again the difficulty of being a friend and also working. So, I always tried to avoid that, but, again, as a friend, you'd enter into those discussions in non-working situations where these things obviously were brought up. I was fairly familiar with,

sort of, that process and the pulling, what great difficulties he really faced, but I never directly entered into those discussions, either pro or con.

I was certainly aware of a good many of them, and I sat through some of them—people who were persuading him to run, people who were persuading him not to run. I think that, basically, his great difficulty was that he wanted to run—I think there was no question of that—but I think he felt if he did run that he would be more destructive than he would be constructive. I think this was the thing that tore at him, made it very difficult for him.

DOUGLAS:       When he started turning over in his mind, very

[-29-]

seriously, the possibility of running, was it in the fall of '67 or really not until around the first of the year in '68?

HACKETT:       I think that's when he came out of that period after the President's assassination and that maybe was a year, year and a half after he ran in New York.... Once he won in New York I think there was no question that he was not going to be satisfied in being a United States Senator. I think that, we, pretty much, sort of understood that he was going to run at some time for the presidency. I think that was always understood by everybody.

I think when he came to the decision in '68, the early '68 campaign, the difficulty there was his relationship with the President of the United States and what would really happen to the country. He thought he was going to split it. I think a lot of people would argue that he didn't want to do it because he couldn't win. It's always been my judgment of what he said, that his problem was one of splitting the country in two.

[-30-]

DOUGLAS:       Well, were you aware, Dave, after the first of the year in '68 of any buildup in this feeling in favor of the race?

HACKETT:       Yeah, I think he always wanted to run and I think he knew he should run, and I think the thing that tore him apart was—again this is my judgment—that.... I'm not talking about the timing or that part. I'm just talking about what I think was the prevailing thing that he discussed over and over again—tearing the country apart. Whether he should speak out, if he ran if it really wouldn't split, again, as I say, cause more harm than good.

DOUGLAS:       What persuaded him that that wouldn't happen?

HACKETT:       Well, I think he probably became convinced that it was worth the risk. Perhaps circumstances, as time went on, would split it apart anyway; it

wouldn't be him necessarily that would cause it. I think a lot of people forget that he had a tremendous following. Whatever he did or said, he'd get tremendous world-wide coverage; he was a major world figure. I think he was very conscious of this, but I think as

[-31-]

things such as the Vietnam problem across the country began to.... That problem became so bad. Of course, at that time, again, he was, I think, one of the most knowledgeable people with regard to domestic problems, which I was more concerned with and more knowledgeable about. I saw much more danger in what was happening internally in the country than because of the Vietnam situation.

DOUGLAS: How affected was he by the opinions of some of his friends and advisors?

HACKETT: Generally, he would listen to them. I think he had a good deal of respect for a lot of people's opinions, but I think that when he'd make a final decision it wouldn't be necessarily.... I can remember when he finally told me he was going to run. I think it was a great relief to him because I think underneath he knew he should. And I think he...

DOUGLAS: When did he tell you that?

HACKETT: Oh, I can remember he told me that this, let me—I can't remember the exact date.

DOUGLAS: It was several days before he announced it?

[-32-]

HACKETT: Before he announced it, he said, "Well, I'm going to do it," and I think it was a relief to him. This was before they had the meeting in New York. It was a relief to him. I think underneath he knew he'd wavered a bit, and I think he was dissatisfied with himself for wavering because this was the type of thing that he didn't do. It's examining right and wrong and sort of those black and white issues that he'd always sort of put things in. This wasn't one of those. I think Ethel was for it instinctively. But, I think when he did decide that he thought it was the right thing, he thought of it alone.

DOUGLAS: Well, you mean he told you in his house that he was going to...

HACKETT : ...going to do it.

DOUGLAS: Was that before New Hampshire?

HACKETT: Yes, that was before New Hampshire.

DOUGLAS: I had lunch with him the day of the New Hampshire primary, and my impression was that, although he didn't say it to me....

[-33-]

HACKETT: If you get the day when the meeting was in New York, which I purposely did not go to in Steve's apartment, because I knew.... That's when he was still mulling around; this was prior to that meeting. That meeting, I can't remember whether that was before or after, but I think there was no question that he'd made his decision prior to New Hampshire. And I think he knew perfectly well that he was going to be highly criticized for announcing after New Hampshire.

DOUGLAS: After he announced, did he ask you to join the campaign? He obviously did; somebody did.

HACKETT: No, those kind of things were understood. We had a.... I just did what.... I went to New York and began to go to work because we'd all worked together before, so there was nothing in any of that.

DOUGLAS: Well, how did you sort of work your personal and professional life, if you had this other business at that time?

HACKETT: Well, there was one thing that I knew that I could do, which I'd done in 1960, so it was actually the same type of

[-34-]

job. It was to begin to put together about the whole delegate counting operation. Fortunately, I was much more experienced in 1968 than I was in 1960, so I was able to moonlight; and, actually, since I ran my own company, was able to determine how much time I'd spend on that and how much time I'd spend on the campaign. But I was helped by—I knew everybody and I knew exactly what I could get away with and how everybody interacted. One thing you learn is you don't wait around to be maybe asked, you just go and do, if you know what do; and if it makes sense, then it works out.

DOUGLAS: You mean nobody asked you to do the delegate process?

HACKETT: Not, certainly, formally. I knew how to set up an office, so I helped Steve set up the office and set up the administrative structure, such as it was. Basically, in the campaign, this became the very interesting one because you had Teddy's [Edward M. Kennedy] group, which was a significant group; and you had President Kennedy's group, who were all a bit older; then you had Bobby's group that came out of this, a whole new,

[-35-]

young, aggressive bunch of young people. Everybody has egos; fortunately, we'd had enough experience to know that certain things had to be done to make some sense of it. One thing, again, was a lot of mass confusion; and certainly in this campaign there was the mass confusion because it was started so late, but there are some things which begin to hold it together. One of them is you have to have an office; you have to have a payroll; you have to a.... The whole point of it is the delegate count. So I went to work on those kind of administrative, noncontroversial, un-ego things.

DOUGLAS: Did Bob indicate to you before he announced what kind of a campaign he'd run if he did decide to run?

HACKETT: No, I think what I came to is very similar to 1960 in that he had to again prove that he had the popular support and again agitate for the primary route. Again, the delegate counting thing, where you could take a look at the whole operation. It was setting up the primaries certainly. Indiana was the first one. He was right there

[-36-]

to set up the primary organizations and that campaign staff for the primaries. Again, getting people to talk to the bosses—and there were fewer bosses than there were in 1960—and then beginning to work each one of the other states. But I think, again, the basic strategy of the '68 campaign was to improve.

DOUGLAS: How about the issues that you wanted to stress?

HACKETT: Well, I think what was the major issue was that he was the only candidate that could pull together the country, and the only candidate that—besides Vietnam which, of course, was an overriding issue. The second issue was that he could bring together the blue collar and the black, or the poor, the young. He could talk to these people. This is what was essential to the continuance of the country. I think that was the second end to that. In fact, I think it was the overriding....

DOUGLAS: Did he indicate to you in this period what he'd like to do with the presidency if he won?

HACKETT: No, I very seldom saw him and he was on the road

[-37-]

all the time. Whenever I did seem him he was so tired he could hardly

move. Our conversations were inclined to what I knew about the various personalities and how they were all working or not working together and what the delegate count looked like.

Again I was always kind of privileged to be able to listen to a lot of conversations. I can remember one very distinctly. My interest, of course, was in the underprivileged or the poor. I think somebody asked him how he would handle the riots and how he would handle the.... I can remember very distinctly his saying he would day after day just bring into each city the key....

[TAPE I SIDE II]

DOUGLAS: Dave, why don't you talk about the problems as they developed in the campaign, what you thought were difficult problems, both in terms of organization and issues, and the actual primaries, and non-primary states?

HACKETT: I think—again from my viewpoint—in one way it was the most interesting campaign I've ever been in because of the various groups that I spoke

[-38-]

of before. There were really three distinct forces, and their ideas come out of people and the actions come from people. There were three distinct forces, one being the President Kennedy people: Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.], Ted Sorensen, Kenny O'Donnell, Larry O'Brien, all those people who had been in power and who were used to great power.

Then the second group, which was a completely separate one, was Senator Edward Kennedy's people who had their own aspirations and their own concepts of what the future held. This was David Burke [David W. Burke]. There'd be five or six key people from his office who he ran and then people throughout the country that had an allegiance to him. And we have to remember that Teddy was very, very popular. In fact, of all the Kennedys, he was probably the most popular with politicians and political people around the country. I think there's no question that his staff had their own ambitions for their boss.

Then I think Bob Kennedy, when he became a Senator, attracted to him a

[-39-]

wholly different group of people: Adam Walinsky, Pete Edelman [Peter B. Edelman], a much younger group that thought completely differently than the other two groups. I think there was perhaps a fourth group that was less ambitious for themselves. I would put in that group John Douglas [John W. Douglas], maybe myself, I think Steve Smith, people who were interested—I think everybody was interested in getting the candidate elected, but I think maybe this fourth group had less egos. That ego is the thing that is exposed rather quickly in campaigns, and I think everybody's basic views are.

So I think in viewing, trying to put together and have an operation that made any sense was extremely difficult because of basically these three groups, which I think a great

many times were in conflict one with the other. Then I think the candidate, regardless of the candidate, as I said earlier, would encourage anybody to work. I mean, if he'd meet somebody, he would give them a job, tell them to do something; that added to the confusion. Also I think it was

[-40-]

because of the very, very late start. Even though everybody'd been experienced, it was extremely interesting to watch how these various forces operated. And I think critical to that was the question of who was the campaign manager. I think what would have had to happen happened in the '64 campaign, that Bob ultimately would make decisions and be forced to become both the campaign manager and the candidate. I think Teddy was a campaign manager, I think Steve Smith was a campaign manager, I think Ted Sorensen was a campaign manager. Kenny O'Donnell operated in his own areas which was handling certain states. So I think you had a very interesting, also, perhaps, fairly confused question, as related to strategy and tactics.

DOUGLAS: Did Bob Kennedy want it that way because it meant that ultimately he had to make the major decisions, or was it a situation which he was unhappy with?

HACKETT: Well, I think probably both. I think it just

[-41-]

grew up because of his late decision. I think he had to throw something together very, very quickly, so, I think, part of it was it just grew. But I think also this is the type of operation he, in some way, encouraged both knowingly and unknowingly. I think knowingly he, as I said before, likes to have access to a variety of opinion. I think knowingly he likes to utilize—in fact, one of his greatest assets was that he inspired people to do things, to get people to work. I think he encouraged that.

It was good in one sense, but administratively it was harmful. I don't think he encouraged it to that point so he could make major decisions. I think he was always in favor of efficiency and people really doing a good job. So I think that he was reluctant to be forced; I think he was forced to come in at some points to get the key people around him to redefine what the objectives were, etc. This is certainly what happened in 1964.

DOUGLAS: Why didn't he have Senator Edward Kennedy as

[-42-]

his campaign manager, as he'd been the campaign manager for John Kennedy?

HACKETT: That's a good question. I think that Steve Smith really filled that function

because I think that Teddy was a Senator and had all those responsibilities in the Senate. He couldn't really devote 100 percent of his time to it, one. I think that Steve Smith replaced the relationship that President Kennedy had to Bob. I think Steve Smith filled that role to a great extent, although he was reluctant to really assert himself. I think he did, again, all the difficult jobs of raising money. I think basically Teddy was not it because, 1) he had a different nature than Bob; and, 2) he had other responsibilities, which were basically the Senate.

DOUGLAS: Well, did Ted want to be the campaign manager, or did he not?

HACKETT: Well, I think in a sense he was. I think that in the office in Washington, which is where part of the operation is run from, Ted Kennedy would run the meetings that were held and he would share those views. So, figuratively

[-43-]

speaking, he was assuming that role. I think Steve Smith was in California and...

DOUGLAS: What were some of the important decisions that had to be made in that campaign?

HACKETT: Well, that's a difficult question.

DOUGLAS: Well, for example, what primary states to enter.

HACKETT: He entered every one, did he not? I don't...

DOUGLAS: I guess that's right. .

HACKETT: I think that the mechanics, the question, once the decision was made to enter and that decision was.... It's hard to know who made that decision to go into Indiana. It was a question of Jerry Doherty [Gerard F. Doherty] being sent out there and putting that together. I think the basic decisions were pretty much forced on the campaign, that, again, like President Kennedy, he had to enter every primary, which is what I think he did with very few exceptions. Obviously, there were tremendous decisions that had to be made, but I don't know what they were.

DOUGLAS: You talked about the different groups. Is it possible to generalize about their view, as to how

[-44-]

the campaign should be conducted or within each group were there a lot of different opinions?

HACKETT: I think you could generalize on it. I think that what was interesting is that the President Kennedy people generally were very conservative, I think that since they had dealt with the Dick Daleys and Tates [James H.J. Tate] and the Jess Unruhs [Jesse M. Unruh]—before, that they.... This was sort of, maybe, the Kenny O'Donnell school. What became of using him is sort of the old politics: you have to cater to those people and those people who could deliver delegations.

I think the other extreme was the Adam Walinsky, whatever you want to call it—“new politics” or whatever—which would be in sort of direct conflict with the older school. I think the President Kennedy people, while they were still relatively young, were considered by the Adam Walinskys and the Edelmans as being old hat, really part of the establishment. And I think Teddy's people fell right smack between the two.

[-45-]

DOUGLAS: You mentioned that some of Teddy's people had their own ambitions and their own aspirations. What were you thinking about?

HACKETT: I think there's no question that a lot of them felt this was going to hurt their candidate, and I say “their candidate” because I think they had ambitions for him to be also President of the United States. They were a different type of people than Bob attracted. I think they were more....

DOUGLAS: How did they think it would hurt their...

HACKETT: Bob was going all out, and I think they thought he was going to upset things, ripple the waters. They were sort of schizophrenic about it because there was no question they had to do it, but on the other hand I think they kind of wished it wasn't happening.

DOUGLAS: Was that true of all of those people?

HACKETT: No, but I think it was generally true because I think again that Bob Kennedy was more apt to attract people who were 100 percent, who were more interested in issues and more interested in work and, I think, less interested in

[-46-]

themselves. I think some of the people around Teddy, as maybe some of the people around President Kennedy—although there was an overlap between President Kennedy and Bob, of course—were just different people. Therefore they thought differently.

DOUGLAS: As the campaign developed, what were some of major problems or crises that unfolded?

HACKETT: The money was the major problem. I think, actually.... Again, I was not on the road and I was not with the candidate and didn't tour, but again from the central headquarters' point of view I think one of the major problems was money. Because of the extremely expensive operation and, again, because of the late start, more money was spent than originally would have been.

I think all the other problems.... The withdrawal of Lyndon Johnson, the attempt to work with the McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] people, may be two, big, dramatic parts of it. Certainly the withdrawal of Lyndon Johnson was the first big one.

DOUGLAS: Was that a surprise to you?

[-47-]

HACKETT: Well, that was a surprise, I think, to everybody, and I think that was an immediate buoyancy. Later we came to realize it really didn't have any impact at all. Actually it could be another way to just—I think a lot of people felt that the ball game was all over, and it certainly was not.

DOUGLAS: Did you have that feeling, Dave?

HACKETT: No, the only thing I'd learned in 1960, was that the whole name of the battle was to collect delegates, so it was really a question of what impact the withdrawal had on the delegates—you needed x number to win. So what we did, to keep the sanity, is just call into our states and find out exactly what impact it had; and it didn't have that much of an impact. So, I never trusted my emotions, what my feelings are. It's really a question, in that type of situation, of what the facts were. The impact on the delegates was not that great.

DOUGLAS: How long after the withdrawal did you realize that that was...

HACKETT: About a week. I think what they were trying

[-48-]

to do that evening was to—everybody rushed to the office. It was a very emotional scene, calling leaders all over the country and into the states. After that exercise there wasn't any great commitment or any great swing, certainly with the very high level people. But again, as soon as we called, I guess, the next day or within the next two days, we had a new delegate count. From the feeling from people within the states, there wasn't that dramatic a shift in anything.

DOUGLAS: You mentioned the money problem. Do you know how that was dealt with?

HACKETT: Well, that was Steve Smith's area. We tried to set up an effective control on the money, and we were really not very successful in doing that. I knew that money was certainly going out, and a good deal of it was coming from Bob himself.

DOUGLAS: How about the efforts to work with the McCarthy people to enlist their support?

HACKETT: I think, again, that was on two levels. I think that was on the level of like Teddy visiting McCarthy and making overtures on that level. I think the second level was through

[-49-]

Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] and through the youth people. What I thought was the most effective level, again, was within the states. Maybe the best example of where this really worked, without the knowledge of the leaders, was in Colorado where the Kennedy people and the McCarthy people joined to defeat the regular Democrats and came out with two-thirds of the delegates. They just came to a very quick realization that the Kennedy people by themselves couldn't win and the McCarthy people by themselves couldn't win, so they agreed to join and to share the delegates.

The end result of that—and that was through the precinct caucuses to the county caucuses, all the way to the state convention—came as a great surprise to the regular Democratic forces within Colorado. It was an example of solution of that problem which was, again, in the best self-interest of, and without the knowledge really of, either Bob Kennedy or McCarthy. And that took place in a number of other states.

I think when it came to our delegate counter

[-50-]

we figured the majority of the McCarthy delegates were Kennedy delegates. Again, in our delegate count, which was pessimistic, we would require two say-sos if it was a McCarthy delegate. We figured on a projected swing, but we had an actual count and a projected count of what would happen. We had to have two people that would say that Mr. Johns, although he has pledged McCarthy, would when released, become a Kennedy delegate.

DOUGLAS: You mentioned differences of opinion and some conflict between the people you described as sort of supporting the "old politics" and those heralding a so-called "new politics." How did this difference of opinion manifest itself? In tactics, or issues, or what?

HACKETT: I think, say, you take two states: you could take Illinois and take Pennsylvania. I think, in Illinois, it was obvious that the old politics

controlled there; and I think the great many people, and particularly the younger people, wanted to go to confrontation and wanted to go into Illinois and demonstrate the

[-51-]

tremendous support that Bob Kennedy would have in Illinois, which he obviously would have. You do that in two ways, by actually scheduling him into Chicago and downstate Illinois, as well as forming citizens' groups. That would be one school.

The second school would be "Just don't touch Illinois. Leave it to us and leave it to the mayor." I think these would be two really opposite approaches to a particular problem. I think the same thing took place in Pennsylvania where Mayor Tate and Mayor Barr [Joseph M. Barr] controlled, really, the state—and in New Jersey.

DOUGLAS: How was the difference resolved?

HACKETT: Well, in Illinois it was resolved to not do anything, to wait, which I think probably in the last analysis was the correct decision to make, or on hindsight it was the correct decision to make. I think in New Jersey the decision there was to do exactly the same thing, which was a big mistake. I think that we could have won New Jersey.

[-52-]

And again.... So you just have how these decisions were made. I think basically that was Kenny O'Donnell's recommendation for New Jersey, and I think that was a wrong recommendation or a wrong decision, but that illustrates really the two.

DOUGLAS: Well, what was decided in Pennsylvania?

HACKETT: Well, Pennsylvania was sort of half way between. There was really not an awful lot you could do, something in between, but you couldn't do very much in Philadelphia or in Pittsburgh. He did not campaign really in Pennsylvania.

DOUGLAS: How about on the media side of the primary contests, Dave? Did you get into discussions about that aspect at all?

HACKETT: No, no, not really.

DOUGLAS: Who decided those questions? Did Bob?

HACKETT: Oh, I think Steve Smith and Don Wilson [Donald M. Wilson], Don Wilson worked in the '60 campaign. I think Steve basically was the....

And that was always a great difficulty for Bob—how TV was handled—because the '64 campaign was very difficult. I think

[-53-]

everybody kind of gets into that, but I think that basically Steve became the expert in television.

DOUGLAS: Did the differences between these groups moderate or did it become more intense as time went on?

HACKETT: Well, I think it had a tendency to moderate. You know, by June 4<sup>th</sup> I think that we began following the system of the delegate count, that we—I don't think Bob ever saw it; it was never really in any detail discussed with him—we had enough evidence there. One way to moderate the differences of opinion would be state by state. Probably we would argue with three or four or five or six different opinions that would come in from that state on what the situation was as it related to delegates and what their leanings were. But I think it was a question of allowing everybody, and this would be an outlet for everybody, of what should be done in that state.

That was what was going to be discussed

[-54-]

in California after the primary. We had a delegate count, and we had some of the various groups make their views known on what the strategies would be until we'd drawn up the policy statement. I think it was fairly clear what had to be done.

The next step was New York, which was really the next primary. At that time all fifty states would have been reviewed and then the decision made, again, based on the facts of the situations in those states. I think those two or three guys, and, ultimately Bob, would have made the decision on it.

DOUGLAS: You had a delegate count at the time of the California primary election, didn't you?

HACKETT: Yeah.

DOUGLAS: And I guess—did you have any predictions at that time, or was it a little too early to make predictions?

HACKETT: No, we had basically a system where we have everybody involved in the campaign, other than the traveling party and including the traveling party. We had a sealed off room again. We had one girl who'd handle about five states. We'd set up a system

[-55-]

which was fully operative where we knew when the state conventions were to take place and exactly when the precinct caucuses and county caucuses—what the method of electing the delegates were.

Then we had our own people in the field traveling in those states. Then we had people within the states from them. On a daily basis we would collect information, but certainly by June 4<sup>th</sup> we had a hard delegate count, and we had a hard projected. The question we would ask was, “If the election was held today, what would be the vote?” Then we’d ask the second question, “By Convention time, what do you think the situation is going to be?” By June 4<sup>th</sup> we were behind, but I think the projections, which they were, were that we would win, that Bob could have won at the Convention [Democratic National Convention].

DOUGLAS: Well, generally speaking, how did you split the states up? What did you do with the South in your projections?

HACKETT: Well, I’d have to go back and get that for the next time.

[-56-]

DOUGLAS: That’s okay.

HACKETT: But I think the South we gave.... I think we had a strategy in the South certainly, again, state by state, and I think we could have done better in the South than we had projected. We projected the South almost solely for Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey].

DOUGLAS: What did you do with the McCarthy delegates?

HACKETT: McCarthy delegates we—again, going back to the system of asking the question where those delegates would go: were they basically second choice Kennedy delegates or Humphrey? So we applied the thing on that information.

DOUGLAS: And how did it break down?

HACKETT: Broke down mostly, I think, to us.

DOUGLAS: You saw Bob off and on during the campaign. You said that he was tired. Did you notice any evolution in his thinking, or any qualities that came through, particularly, during that time?

HACKETT: No. You see, where I’m at a disadvantage at a question like that is that I think, going back to when I first met him to the last time I saw him, there was no great change in him, really. He was basically the

[-57-]

same type of person, although where he did change, he changed just sort of gradually. He became aware of certain things that he wasn't aware of before. He became more tolerant towards people who couldn't solve a problem overnight, etc., but basically there was no great change in him. This was something he felt was crucial and he threw everything that he had into it; but any job he'd ever taken on before, he'd done exactly the same thing. So I think that he, without question, was the man four years before—he was much more understanding of the problems of the country, much more understanding of the blacks, blue collar workers, much more aware, through experience much more compassionate and tolerant—but no basic change.

I think he'd become much more philosophical and much more.... If there was any real change I would think it was due to the assassination of President Kennedy, that he became less definite perhaps about it or more resigned to things than perhaps he was. He didn't know how he would

[-58-]

come out of these various things he went into and thus was more fatalistic perhaps. I think that was all understandable. I think basically he didn't change. I think he was a very complex person in 1943 and 1944 and I think he was a very complex person in 1968.

DOUGLAS:        You think he expected to win the nomination as it progressed?

HACKETT:        Well, I saw him that night in California and I think that it's hard to know. I was convinced that, although he had his own source of information, I knew he didn't have all the information we had; there's no way he could have it. I knew he had access to very little information that we didn't have or people that we hadn't talked to. I think he would have been convinced; I think he was convinced that he could have won. Well, I think certainly this evidence showed that he could have won.

Everybody always asks that question about, "Did he change?" and, "What is he really like?" I think that what he was

[-59-]

really like in 1968, what he was really.... He just got better in a lot of ways. He had certain qualities which none of the rest of us ever had, which I'd never seen, really, in anybody else, nor have I seen it today in anybody else. I think what happened as each year went on, each thing that really happened, or happened to him, or things that he got involved in, he became more impressive and more effective because he became, perhaps, more tolerant and more compassionate. But he did not lose the essential qualities which made him remarkable and which is very hard to describe, but it's maybe worth the effort.

He was able to attract someone like Paul Corbin and someone like Burke Marshall and that takes rather a.... He was able to bring the best out of people, and I think the reason

was that he would have the respect of both Burke Marshall and Paul Corbin who were, let's say, at the opposite ends of some sort of a spectrum.

I think he was able to do that because he

[-60-]

would do things that nobody else would. He had the courage to do what was right in almost every circumstance. I think that's the quality that everybody respected.

DOUGLAS: Did he talk about the war in '68 when you saw him during the campaign?

HACKETT: Well, he'd been involved in that war for an awful long time, certainly, with almost everybody. He used to have anybody that had been in Vietnam out at Hickory Hill. I think that was a great preoccupation with him. There was just no question. And, again, like most problems, he was into them before other people or other leaders were into them. I think he was as much into that and had crystallized his thinking on that way before a good many other people had been.

It was just like almost every other problem. I think he was one of the first to realize the depth of the black problem, which is what part of this campaign was about. I think he was also one of the first ones to really realize the polarization between the blue

[-61-]

collar worker—that you couldn't do everything for the black and it was a real problem there. Not to say that other people weren't aware of those problems, but certainly the leaders were not aware of those problems. I think he could always get into those; he was able to put his finger on them.

I think, I guess, you're really questioning about the issues in the campaign. I think that was certainly one of the biggest assets he brought to it. The real issue was that he was the man for this four-year period which was going to be the most difficult period in the United States, and he was the only person who could do it.

I always felt that he'd never be reelected because I think of things that had to be done. He knew what they were, certainly knew the problems better than anybody else, and to rectify them or to change the course of the country would be extremely unpopular. He'd be a very unpopular, or could be a very

[-62-]

unpopular President. I think he was best in times of crisis and I think this would have become the overriding issue in the general election; he knew what the problems were and he could really do something about them.

He could attract not just one group, but was the only politician that could attract the essential groups that could have elected him. Perhaps more important than that, he had the trust of the two opposing forces, the white and the black, which has been, and is, and will continue to be, the major test of the country—and I think he was the only person. That was

the basic issue, and I think he felt that really strongly. He wasn't a liberal in this sense. I think he had not a great deal of respect for "liberals" because he certainly wasn't one, but I think he was action oriented and he was as liberal as anybody.

He was also very practical and had the uncanny ability to be able to learn and pull the various groups together, or have the trust of the various groups.

[-63-]

DOUGLAS: You mentioned that you felt that he was the first or one of the very first national leaders to zero in on some of these basic problems. What was there in his makeup which enabled him to do that?

HACKETT: Well, I think, again, it goes back to the very early days. Part of it was he was slight and small and was way down in a huge family. His brothers were very successful. He never really himself.... Things were not easy for him, so I think he had just a natural connection to the underdog. I think when he got exposed, which he did in the 1960s when he became Attorney General—this was really the first real touch with it, other than maybe the campaign in West Virginia where he saw the problems there—to the problems all over the country, it was just natural that he would have compassion, and that this was unfair. I think he just saw, very simply, that it was unfair, that something had to be done about it.

[-64-]

But like a lot of other people he saw much broader problems; a lot of us just saw the black problem. That was the thing that was unfair and it was hypocritical. He also saw the black problem, but he also saw the white problems. It wasn't just a question of getting the blacks in the mainstream; it was a question of the other side. But I think that it was just natural; they were underdogs.

To a great extent he was an underdog, also, and I think there was just a natural.... I think they felt it, and I think he felt it, and I think that was a genuine communication between them. I think he basically was an underdog, or I initially said he was a misfit. I think he was a misfit at school, and I think he was a misfit all the way through his whole career, in a way, in the best sense of the word.

DOUGLAS: Well, we'll stop there.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-65-]

David L. Hackett Oral History Transcript – RFK #1  
Name List

**B**

Barr, Joseph M., 52  
Burke, David W., 39

**C**

Corbin, Paul, 60

**D**

Daley, Richard J., 22, 45  
Doherty, Gerard F., 44  
Douglas, John W., 40

**E**

Edelman, Peter B., 40, 45

**F**

Feldman, Myer, 17, 20

**G**

Goodwin, Richard N., 50

**H**

Hoover, Herbert, 11  
Humphrey, Hubert H., 57

**J**

Johnson, Lyndon B., 15, 16, 47

**K**

Kennedy, Edward M., 35, 39, 41-43, 45-47, 49  
Kennedy, Ethel Skakel, 1, 10, 33  
Kennedy, John F., 2, 7, 12-14, 16-19, 21-23, 25,  
27, 28, 30, 35, 39, 43-45, 47, 58  
Kennedy, Joseph P., Jr., 7  
Kennedy, Joseph P., Sr., 4, 27, 28  
Kennedy, Robert F., 2-14, 16-44, 46, 47, 49-65

**L**

Lawrence, David Leo, 22

**M**

Marshall, Burke, 60  
McCarthy, Eugene J., 47, 49-51, 57  
McCarthy, Joseph R., 12  
McClellan, John L., 11, 12

**O**

O'Brien, Lawrence F., 12, 15, 18-21, 39  
O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 12, 15, 18-21, 39, 41, 45,  
53

**R**

Rayburn, Samuel, 15

**S**

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., 39  
Smith, Jean Kennedy, 20  
Smith, Stephen E., 19, 20, 34, 35, 40, 41, 43, 44,  
49, 53, 54  
Sorensen, Theodore C., 17-20, 39, 41  
Symington, Stuart, II, 15

**T**

Tate, James H.J., 45, 52

**U**

Unruh, Jesse M., 45

**W**

Walinsky, Adam, 40, 45  
Wallace, Robert A., 15, 20  
Wilson, Donald M., 53