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Oral History Interview

with

RAY KING

by

Larry Hackman

April 12, 1970
San Francisco, California

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

HACKMAN: Let me just take off by asking you: before ‘68 did you have any contact with Robert Kennedy or any of his chief aides or associates?

KING: Yes, part of my duties as deputy director of OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] for the western region was to handle congressional relations. While the senator was from New York his interest in the war on poverty went nationwide and as a result considerable correspondence with him, with his office on specific projects and programs that he was interested in. He was interested in reports on what was happening, and that was the end of the contact.

HACKMAN: Yeah. How hard were they to please or how much feedback did you get on any of these reports that you sent in?

KING: Oh, I don’t ever recall any feedback. The interest, in part, was that of all the congressional people who wrote from within the district. Senator Kennedy always
wanted the most complete, comprehensive report on what was happening of any of them. As a result, there was rarely any trouble on feedback because he got all the information he wanted at the beginning.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Did you ever get any feel for whether that was really much of a concern on his part or whether there was just a particular staff guy that was wanting to keep on top of those things for some reason or the other?

KING: No. Over a period of almost two years, the volume of mail, we had more mail from Senator Kennedy’s office than we had from all fourteen of the U.S. senators in our states. I had to work on the assumption that they were interested. You know, the question would come on a minor program in the middle of Los Angeles where they had eighty programs. They were interested in an analysis of what it was doing, was there any other program that we knew of like it. They seemed to find pieces; I don’t know where they picked them up from, but they had the interest in finding out whether it was working. I always got the feeling that he was looking for that type of thing in terms of was it good for the program nationally, and is it something that should be pushed as a separate entity? But I could never tell whether it was staff or personal interest. I think when you saw that much mail over twenty months, you had to assume the senator knew what was happening.

HACKMAN: Yeah. But it was more a concern for substance rather than something that was probably coming out of complaints coming to his office from California programs.

KING: I think they were both. Yeah, I think the majority of them tended to be matters of substance, but I got the underlying feeling, at times, because there would be one question thrown in a series of four that said that somebody had written complaining. . . . But he was never willing to simply come in and ask us to give him a response to the complaint. They started gathering total information on what was happening, and then they responded to the complaint by picking that portion out of your total report. I have the feeling he was responding to complaints, but he was after substance.

HACKMAN: Okay. Anything else from those years?

KING: No.

HACKMAN: Any of the earlier Kennedy campaigns?

KING: No, I was not involved in the 1960 one except on the periphery in the county. I was working for the legislature then, supposedly a non-partisan position.

HACKMAN: Yeah. In late ‘67, can you remember then getting involved in discussions with Jess Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh] and with his other aides and associates about what he should do in ‘68 and what he should advise Robert Kennedy to do?
KING: No. As a matter of fact, I was not involved at all in any of the preplanning of the Kennedy campaign. I left OEO, I think I formally went off the payroll in about August of '67 and left the government. I had no intention of working the balance of the year, though I did run a campaign for about twelve weeks just south of San Francisco, in a small city. As a matter of fact, they hadn't gone to work directly on anything other than the citizen's conference work when I got a call from Jess's office what turned out to be, I guess, five days before Bobby announced. I was asked to come up the following day. The call came on the Tuesday before his announcement. I went up Wednesday and was told on Wednesday that there was a possibility that Bobby would enter the race. They had asked if I would volunteer and was I willing to spend a few days of volunteer time putting the delegation together on the assumption that Bobby might run, and that if he did run, would I be willing to meet with his people, be interviewed in terms of running the campaign in northern California. It was made very clear at that point, incidentally, that Jess was not doing any hiring. Presumably, he was just recommending. I agreed to do that, drove back Wednesday night, got on a plane Thursday morning, got down into Los Angeles and started to work on the delegation. I guess it was two o'clock that afternoon, the decision was made that he would run.

HACKMAN: Who was working on it with you?

KING: Frank Burns, Steve Smith [Steven E. Smith], who became the southern California manager--my counterpart--Art Seltzer [Arthur Seltzer], who was the statewide man. That's all I recall at the beginning. By the time we were through there were quite a few. I can remember Congressman Burton [Philip Burton] finding us in a room working on that delegation one day when nobody knew where we were. So, of course, then we really started in earnest. His speech, his press conference, his statement announcing his candidacy, was set for that Saturday. That was an interesting Saturday in my life because that was also the Saturday I was supposed to be with my fiancee to pick up her engagement ring. She got it a month later. Also, it was interesting because it broke her in right. After she got the ring she asked when we were getting married. I said, "Look at the calendar and you pick out election day and you pick any day after that." And so we were married the Saturday after the general election, as a matter of fact.

But, we were, you know, filtering through names, cross-checking against the Lynch [Thomas C. Lynch] delegation, which had already been prepared and trying to come up with potentials--both people who had been involved in the "Citizens for Kennedy" operation, most of whom were non-political--and weighing them against the political names we knew in counties. Trying to put a delegation together after a major delegation has already been put together is not easy. It is also not easy when you don't know where those people stand with your candidate. You just know they're not in the other delegation. And so that became rather time consuming. It really took considerable time before we were finally through. We were playing with names for, I guess, four days.

I came back on a Sunday to start trying to find a headquarters. By this time, the Kennedy people came out and interviewed me, Steve Smith, and, I presume, Art Seltzer, though I know they did with the two of us. We did separately and were hired and got up the next day and started
trying to find headquarters. So my start actually came four days before, one day before Bobby apparently decided and three days before the actual announcement was made.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Was there any feed-in that early from Robert Kennedy, let’s say from the Washington end on selection of that slate?

KING: None whatsoever.

HACKMAN: When does that happen?

KING: It didn’t.

HACKMAN: A fellow came in, John Nolan. Maybe that’s who you talked to early?

KING: He’s the one who I was first interviewed by and the one who hired me. I never saw him again. He was only here, as far as I know, one time, though Don Dell [Donald L. Dell] was here with him and did come back once or twice subsequently. There was no feedback at that point. There were some names that he brought out with him, as I recall, that were names that they wanted for a variety of reasons. Most of those names we already had documented. I don’t recall there being any shocks in that list that came out, you know, Elizabeth Rudel Smith, now Gatov; Bill Orrick [William H. Orrick, Jr.]; Warnecke [John C. Warnecke]; and Grace McClatchy, The names they brought were names that we presumed were available, and we had already listed. There may have been one or two missed, not that I recall.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Can you remember considering or actually making contacts with any of the people at that point who’d gone on the Lynch slate, who might be soft?

KING: Yes. We had that type of contact going with others calling in other rooms by that time. We started out with just names and about four people. By the time we were finished we had a suite of rooms and people phoning and asking and just feeding back to us what the response was. We were starting to know. We knew there were Kennedy people on the other slate. There was no question about it. They were on there because they had no idea Bobby was running. I’m trying to remember who it was that actually had written Bobby and said he would not go on that slate or had seen him in Washington. I guess it was a congressman and had gotten an answer back, “Go on the Lynch slate.”

HACKMAN: Norb Schle [Norbert A. Schlei] was one guy that happened to.

KING: Norb Schlei was one guy that happened to. I’m trying to remember, Robert Leggett, as I recall, was the one that actually saw Bobby a week before he signed up with the Lynch delegation and was told. So we knew where they were. We also knew that, to a great extent, they had put their names on that list, they were qualified, and they couldn’t get off. That didn’t stop them, of course, from being extremely helpful even though
they couldn’t get off. And once the president dropped out, then it was a different ball game for them because they could now say, “Our commitment to that slate was because of the president.” They still couldn’t remove their names. Some of them did, in fact, as I recall, go on the Kennedy list as well. They ended up. . . . No, I guess they couldn’t, as I think back. I’m trying to remember, there was something in the law. . . . I don’t remember whether they went on or not. It made no difference to me. From an organizational standpoint, they were working for Bobby and that’s what I needed.

HACKMAN: That’s right. Well, the wives went on instead.

KING: That’s right, yeah, that happened. Former State Senator Virgil Sullivan did that. He was on one, his wife was on ours, and she was chairman for Bobby in one of the counties.

HACKMAN: Mrs. Warschaw [Carmen Warschaw].

KING: Yeah. While Lou Warschaw [Louis Warschaw] was on one, Carmen, from down in southern California, was on the other. I think that happened with State Senator Al Song [Alfred H. Song] and his wife [Florence E. Song] as well.

HACKMAN: That’s right. I think it did.

KING: He was already committed on the one, so his wife came on ours. And there were a couple of other state legislators who did that. There were only, as I recall, three congressmen who had stayed loose through the whole thing. Phil Burton of San Francisco was the only one in northern California. They didn’t have any dealings with. . . . They just plain didn’t get anywhere and just sat back and, I guess, were perfectly willing not to support anybody if Bobby didn’t run.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Can you remember in the discussion when you first came in, after Jess Unruh had called you, what the feeling was among the other people--Burns, Seltzer, Smith--about whether Robert Kennedy should go or not?

KING: Oh, yeah. There was no doubt in their minds that the political situation in California was such that Bobby could win here. There was no doubt in their minds that McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy], for all of his courage in starting at New Hampshire, just couldn’t cut that job. So they felt they had to have someone else. But, of course, none of those people were pragmatic enough to--or stupid enough, I should say, really--suggest that Bobby get in simply because there was no alternative. They felt that he could come in, that he could go into that convention with a fair shot against Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. I always felt that if you own the White House, it’s a little tough for you not to get your party’s nomination. There’s a little muscle you hold back there. So, I had some debate in my mind whether Bobby could ever get the nomination. That wasn’t my job. My job was does he carry northern California,
and Steve Smith, does he carry southern California. That’s what interested us and we thought we had a fair shot at it. It turned out we were right.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Can you remember at that point, either in your conversations with John Nolan when he comes out, or in you conversations with Unruh or Art Seltzer, whoever, in the very early days of the campaign, about how things were to operate? How much independence there was to be in an Unruh-run operation and how much direction was supposed to come from out of Washington?

KING: When we started, there wasn’t any worry or concern about any direction out of Washington for the very simple reason that Washington suddenly had fifty states to worry about, and we were the last one down the line. I was given complete freedom to start setting up an operation in northern California. I’d go to Art Seltzer and say I’d need ten employees. He’d say, “What for?” and I’d tell him and I’d get them or I’d get nine or I’d get eight. When they picked out a headquarters, we had a particularly miserable problem here with the BART [Bay Area Rapid Transit] construction on Market Street just making a normal campaign headquarters site impossible—no traffic. Normally you always have your headquarters in the downtown San Francisco area on the main street. We ended up clear up on Market Street, two blocks beyond the end of the BART construction, but still where there was two-way automobile traffic plus buses, plus streetcars. You got the same full impact. One block further down, the cars heading toward downtown turned off. A block further down from that on a one way street, they came up. That was where the McCarthy headquarters was situated. They got half the traffic, they got the homecoming. We got both. It was a lousy building for a campaign headquarters, and there was no time or money to do any fixing. The question was do we take it or don’t we. We took it. We didn’t even quibble.

Ironically enough, the building was owned by an agency of the state of California, and it was given to a realtor to rent. And, of course, when they found out what it was, there was much unhappiness. They had no option; they had put it out for rent and we rented it. We had no option; we could not negotiate anything in the way of money. We had to accept their deal or that was it. Because we did not know, of course, what the primary results would be, I had a very nice conditional lease which would let us out after the primary or keep us in till the general, and they couldn’t do anything about it. As it turned out unhappily, it served its purpose. It would not have. We would have stayed right there. . . . It was not a bad location given the problem.

I did work through Jess’s office in Sacramento with Jack Crose on selection of county chairmen. In most cases, you know, we would make contact with Leo Ryan in San Mateo County, whoever the local legislator was that knew his county, that was loose, that was working with Bobby. There was no question on those names. We were going with those names. Our pressman, Bill Thomas [William Thomas], would ship out the press releases as fast as we could line the names up. The mountain counties, we didn’t have time to work those counties. All we needed was a name to use, a body that became a vehicle for a press release in the county. Jess Unruh couldn’t have cared less who those people were. And in all our counties. . . .

We got down in the valley. Between Stanislaus and Fresno we discovered a particularly serious problem: because Cesar Chavez was on the delegation we couldn’t get anybody to be
chairman. We ended up with some brand new names who had never done anything before. And, contrary to our feeling that we would lose in the valley, we worked it anyway. Losing it doesn’t mean you don’t do your work, it just means that that’s going to be a horrible mistake in terms of. . . . Cesar would be a mistake for that area. Obviously, pluses far offset the minuses. We won all those counties. But we won them with some fellows who had never lifted a finger in politics before, like an Irishman whose name escapes me right now—Vincent Lavery, Merced County—who’d never been involved in a campaign before. He just worked his tail off down there. We were giving him direction for a couple of hours a day on the telephone, but he took direction well, and had a big victory in that, you know, comparatively small county for this state.

But in the meantime, the Kennedy people began to creep in. It happened in the first weekend of the schedule. He announced on a Saturday; the following weekend he was doing a sweep of California. This was the first insight I really had into the so-called Kennedy machine. One of their advance men came into Sacramento, I don’t remember his name.

HACKMAN: The two guys I’m thinking of could be Carmine Parisi or. . . .

KING: Carmine Parisi is exactly his name. I discovered that the Kennedy people had discovered that no state has a good political machine in it. Therefore, we come in and we’ll run the campaign in the state. Well, I think they discovered, by the time they were through in California, that in California when you put a chairman in on a volunteer basis in a county, he knows what he’s doing, he’s been there before. That’s not obviously the way it started. This was another Wisconsin; this was another primary state in which we had to come in and do all the work because there were no political animals.

Well, the first thing we were told was Bobby was coming out the following Saturday. So I had worked as an advance man for Pat Brown [Edmund G. Brown] against Dick Nixon [Richard M. Nixon], and I knew a little of what advancing a tour was. I proceeded to get hold of my Sacramento man, the first stop, and he’d been around before, and say, “Bobby Kennedy, Saturday, at your county. You tell me where and what you’re going to do.” And I did this with Dr. Bowersox [Robert Bowersox] in Monterey. As I recall that was Bobby’s second stop. His first one ended up being Stockton, then Sacramento, then Monterey.

HACKMAN: On where the stops were, that was fed to you from them or what?

KING: Yeah, they fed me the stops only. What we do became our problem. Get a crowd, obviously; short notice, obviously; don’t spend any money, obviously, because nobody brought any with them. So my Sacramento guy called back and he said, “There’s a hell of a shopping center out here. I talked to the owner of it. He doesn’t like it, but he owes me a favor; we’re going to do it there. Perfect timing, Saturday at noon, the place will be jammed. We don’t have to worry about building a crowd because there’ll be one to start with. I’ve already lined up a band, free. I lined up the cars free; I’ve lined up the public address system free. We have a platform for the VIPs.” Then in comes Carmine Parisi, and the next day we’ve paid for all that stuff, and we now have two sets of them. On top of which it’s my name and my credit that he’s using in Sacramento. It just tears up the local people who have already started to
work to come in and now find out somebody else has walked in, hasn't even gone to talk to them, just went. . . . So, when it was all over I just called Art Seltzer and said, "I don't want that guy in northern California again." Well, they let him in once more, in northern California, and unfortunately it was a nationwide story when he told the chief of police in Fresno to get the fuzz out of there. Well, at any rate, that was my first knowledge of an advance man. On the same tour, though, another fellow. . . . Who's the second name you were thinking about?

HACKMAN: I think it's Richardson, John Richardson.

KING: Oh, no, John I knew. No, this was a guy., I think Allen, Jim Allen, something like that. At any rate. . . .

HACKMAN: Tolan [James Tolan]? Jim Tolan? There is a guy named Jim Tolan.

KING: Jim Tolan, who calls me from Los Angeles and said--now, Carmen Parisi doesn't call me, you understand--Tolan calls, "I am advancing the Monterey stop. Who should I talk to and what kind of a guy is he?"

HACKMAN: That's the same first trip you're talking about?

KING: Same first trip. This was the stop after Sacramento. "You go see Dr. Robert Bowersox. What you want done you tell him, and he'll do it. What he wants you to do, you do, because he will have that thing operating." And Dr. Bowersox reported to me after he left that was perhaps the best all-time advance man he had ever seen for anybody. And they ended up with--it was an airport stop between Salinas and Monterey--people sitting on the roof. It was jammed, everything was perfect. So, you know, it shows you two different ways, two different styles, but both of them ended up being very effective. It cost us eight hundred bucks more than we had to spend in one place, and it caused a lot of trauma among the volunteer workers. The other place there was both no trauma and equal success, and no expenditure of money.

HACKMAN: How was money supposed to work in the campaign in terms of what was supposed to come in from Washington, from Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] (east) or whatever? [Note: There were two Steve Smith's in the campaign: Stephen E. Smith was on the east coast and Steven E. Smith was on the west coast.]

KING: Nothing. We had no commitment when we started. We were just going with the campaign. Ultimately, a fellow named Ted Evans [William J. Evans] came out. He used to work for Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy], was his AA [administrative assistant], is now in New York in a law firm. He came out, lived here. The first money we got in northern California was from him back, not to Steve Smith, but somebody in Boston whose name I don't recall. And it was all. . . .
HACKMAN: Helen Keyes?

KING: It was through Helen Keyes's operation. It wasn't Helen Keyes. This was an older man who had been through this game apparently many, many times starting with the old man.

HACKMAN: James Lavin?

KING: No. He signed the check, too, for twenty-five grand that came out. It was a straight loan. He worked for Joseph P. Kennedy in Boston.

HACKMAN: Oh, I know who you mean.

KING: He apparently had been their money man for a long time.

HACKMAN: I know who you mean.

KING: So, Ted got us twenty-five thousand dollars. We didn't have penny one. The only thing we did have an arrangement on was the payroll of the hired people in our office would be handled by the south. There was just no sense in two separate payrolls. There were two separate jobs to do and whatever money we raised we had to pay our share. We never raised very much money unfortunately. We blew the only good fundraising thing we had, but that's at the end of the campaign. So that was the money that got us started.

We used Morris Bernstein, who was our treasurer. I hope you are going to see Mo because he's a delightful guy. Mo is worth umpteen million dollars so Mo used his credit all over the place. I used my credit to get phones in through the phone company because I had been consultant to the public utilities committee of the assembly. I signed guarantees for more damn telephones around northern California than you could shake a stick at because we had no money. Since I knew their lobbyists I was able to make arrangements so that we got our phones in. But that's hectic when it's your name on the line. Particularly it was on the line in our headquarters where the bill ultimately was running around fifteen to twenty thousand dollars a month. The first thing you make sure of is that that bill gets paid first every month. But that's how we got our phones in. We got furniture rental on Mo's name in our headquarters and in several others. So we really were running with no money. Whatever commitments may have been made between Steve Smith (east) and Jess I didn't know about. But we were supposed to raise our own for the northern California campaign.

My first recommendation was that we don't have a northern California campaign structure, that there be no northern California chairman, there be none of the baloney that had preceded for years of in-fighting over who's going to be what in this arbitrary structure. It's worth nothing anyway because every county hopefully functions unto itself with its own chairman.

I can't remember whether it was ... I said I only saw Joe Nolan once, John Nolan. That's not true. He was in San Francisco a couple of days after I saw him in L.A., it suddenly dawns on me. I flew up Sunday to set up the headquarters. I think he came around Tuesday or Wednesday.
He had, still had stayed down there. That’s when we started losing that war over the northern California chairmanship. Jess’s office really didn’t care whether there was or not, but the people who wanted it got to John Nolan, and we ended up having a northern California chairman. That’s ironic ‘cause Jess Unruh has no northern California campaign now. Every governor has always had one, and I assume that’s because what I was saying then made some sense. The same people who were fighting for it then, that wanted it with Nolan, are fighting Jess to have it now. Thus far, he’s kept clear of it. There’s no need of one.

HACKMAN: What kinds of people and why?

KING: Well, the prestige of the positions, obviously. You have northern California co-chairmen for Jess Unruh for governor, you have two top people, supposedly, that are close to Jess. Then a northern California finance committee, you have a northern California steering committee, you have a northern California women’s chairman. Ours was a woman named Diane Feinstein, who is now the chairman of the board of supervisors here, having won first in an election on her first time running.

And the question was, what did you have in, for instance, a northern California women’s group except women who lived in all the counties where there was going to be a women’s committee anyway? Hopefully, what did you have in finance except guys living in counties where there was going to be a finance chairman? So all you were doing was adding a layer of campaign structure. You needed some paid staff people and some field people to get out and work in those counties. You needed a press guy. You needed a campaign manager, but you don’t need all that layer of people because they don’t serve any function, except it gives some ego gratification to those people.

HACKMAN: Well, in ’68, the people who got to Nolan, would those have been people who wanted to be involved so that they would be close to Jess Unruh? Would those have been people who wanted to get involved because they would have been close to Robert Kennedy? I mean are they people who were basically anti-Unruh or pro-Unruh? How does that work?

KING: Well, at that time they were anti-Unruh. They are not now. As a matter of fact, they were very anti-Unruh, and they now are, I find, co-chairmen for Jess’s campaign. But at that time my biggest problem with them was that I was supposedly an Unruh man. I shocked the hell out of one of them one day by telling him I was hired by Kennedy and not by Unruh. But they assumed that since Kennedy had, you know, really accepted what Jess recommended that. . . . I don’t know that that’s necessarily true. I think he was somewhat limited to the fact that the Johnson campaign had picked off all the rest of the pros, including my former boss, Tom Saunders, who was the northern California campaign coordinator for the Lynch delegation, who I haven’t gotten along with ever since we worked together in Pat Brown’s campaign. He’s a nice enough guy, but I don’t want to run a campaign under him. I think he runs it the way it was run twenty years ago, fifteen years ago, even ten years ago. This is not that type of campaign any more. To me a political campaign means that if you
aren't smart enough to run your campaign according to the times, then you'd better get out of the business. Every election changes a little bit, and particularly here because I think California tends to be the forerunner of ways of running campaigns. I find as I go around the rest of the country that we’ve been using techniques for fifteen years they don’t know about.

HACKMAN: Missouri, yeah.

KING: Yes. Iowa and Utah, where I ran campaigns after Bobby died in ‘68. There is no Ray King or Steve Smith, Steve Smith (west) or Art Seltzer or Tom Saunders in that whole state. There is no such person. And so you’ve got to do the rudiments when you go back there. But there was a group here that was formed immediately after Pat’s defeat for the purpose of electing a Democratic governor in 1970.

HACKMAN: “For a better California,” or whatever.

KING: Yeah. And it was Vic Palmieri [Victor H. Palmieri] and Byron Leydecker and Bob Harmon [Robert L. Harmon]. It was quite a substantial group. These names I just mentioned are the leaders. I don’t know how Vic Palmieri stood with Jess, but the rest of the ones up here--Leydecker, Cameron Baker, Alan Becker, or Mel Ury--were all anti-Jess Unruh then. And they were close to Libby, to Bill Orrick and I think that that influenced Dolan on that fact that they had to have it this way.

HACKMAN: Nolan.

KING: Nolan, rather. At any rate they did have it that way. That same group took over control of the finance committee and the fund-raising and flopped on the gala held here on the first or second of June because the guy who was in charge of the tickets forgot to even send them out to our county chairmen. We flooded that house with free tickets for what should have raised at least a hundred thousand dollars. It was a beautiful show.

HACKMAN: This was Orrick who was in charge of it?

KING: No, no, this was Leydecker, Baker, Bob Harmon--what I call the Young Turk group--who went to Harmon and went to Libby and who expressed their feelings about this and won their war that way. They ultimately also took the finance committee over our objections. So, really, Jess Unruh was not running this campaign. I guess that’s the end analysis I’m making. He got Bobby into it. Bobby relied on Jess to set it up, but his people were here. They were not in contact, I’m sure, with Jess. Ted Evans was on occasion. I don’t think Chuck Spalding [Charles Spalding] was very much, and Chuck was here quite a bit of the time.

It was pretty much havoc. I guess there was some recognition of that because all of a sudden out comes a guy named John Seigenthaler. John Seigenthaler set up a desk right outside of my office. John Seigenthaler was a politician, and he knew how to run campaigns. John just
really kind of took it over because at that point it was a divided kind of mess, except we had accomplished very quickly what we had to. Organizationally we were sound. We had campaign committees set up, but we had this tremendous in-fighting between this Young Turk group who was going to take the whole thing over. So Seigenthaler moved in as a third party and that was the end of the in-fighting.

John and I had some serious problems. Some of John’s advance men would go into the county and the county chairman would call me screaming. I’d go to John, and we’d sit down and work it out. Then we’d both call our guys. We had this type of thing going on, particularly in the last week after Oregon, everybody in the world descended on California. We figured there were times when we must have had ten advance guys out for each county chairman. So they had to stumble all over each other.

But organizationally we were sound; we had good people in almost every county. We had the unknown Vincent Laverys of Merced in some counties, because there was no one else. We had one or two advance guys who at least could get out and were concentrating mostly on the unknown quantities. We had a sound structure in San Francisco under Phil Burton. We had a sound structure in Alameda County under Bill Lockyer [William W. Lockyer], who was chairman of the county central committee over there and administrative assistant to assemblyman Robert Crown. We had a sound structure down in Santa Clara County under assemblyman John Vasconcellos and Dick Wylie [Richard J. Wylie] who was the county central committee chairman. We were strong in Monterey under Bowersox, strong in San Mateo County under Leo Ryan, though there was early a bad split in that county. There was a bad split over Leo Ryan that very quickly got healed for Bobby. That county, that we thought we’d lose badly, we lost by twelve hundred votes. That county really turned out. What I’m saying is in the major counties where the structure had to be sound it was sound. And we carried those counties.

HACKMAN: On the selection of those people on that first go around, when you were making those selections. . .

KING: Well, now you have two go arounds. You have a delegation and you have county chairmen, they were not the same.

HACKMAN: Yeah, okay. On the county chairmen, how is that cleared? Who does that go through from you? Is that primarily . . .

KING: Jack Crose in Jess’s office.

HACKMAN: Yeah, okay.

KING: I don’t ever remember any guy being said “no” to. Some of the assembly guys went through Jess to me—Leo Ryan, John Vasconcellos, Bob Crown—these fellows started, obviously, to Jess because they had the entre to Jess sitting up in Sacramento. I worked with all of those guys. John Vasconcellos and I worked for Pat Brown together. Leo Ryan ran for the assembly the first time in ’62, and I had covered his county for
Pat's campaign. I had no problem with rapport and was in constant contact with them. But, obviously, they made their first contact where they could make it easiest and the best, Jess himself. From there they came to me. I then worked with them, worked out names with them. In effect, I’d say to Jack, “Okay, in Leo’s case do we accept his names in San Mateo County?” and he’d say yes or no. And if we did, then Jess got the list of names from me as to who the chairmen were. County by county it operated differently depending on who we were talking to in those counties.

HACKMAN: Was it traditional in Northern California to organize a primary campaign county by county?

KING: Always. You organized it just as Jess had organized it before Sam Yorty [Samuel W. Yorty] got in. You organized it toward the general. Now, in this case there had already been two campaigns organized. They were much looser, much looser. But you always named a county chairman in every county. Even Alpine, with 368 registered voters, you had a chairman out there. You’d never get anything else in the county but that was one shot in the local weekly newspaper that Bobby’s name made the paper. It was probably the only time it made it. You always organized it.

We tried to organize it more effectively because we recognized the three-way split. I know McCarthy did not have anything, but names that they’d used in counties were never used for a campaign. We did not do that. Well, let me put it this way. We would accept a name from Virgil Sullivan in Colusa County and leave it to Virge to keep the needle stuck in the guy. And Virge did keep the needle stuck. We would not have appointed him just to have a name of somebody who never did anything. We had campaign headquarters in every major county. We had two and three of them in big ones like Alameda County. They were well organized; they had to be well organized.

HACKMAN: Now, when Kennedy people came in, I guess, particularly after Seigenthaler got here, did you continue to handle the contact with those people or did they try to then do something different than what you’d been doing vis-a-vis those people?

KING: No. John put field people out as we needed to put field people out. Now he brought in. . . . You see the further it got toward the end of the campaign the more people were available, which was great. They were in on the expense-only game where you paid their expenses only. They were available. We did not have those kind of people on payroll available. So John had those people out. We went over the list of our people and John gave those names to his people with instructions for them to contact them. So we at least had communication, if not rapport.

HACKMAN: Would they go in on a county then and at that late date try to change things?

KING: Oh, yes, when they first came in. You recognized that these are the guys that have been running Bobby Kennedy’s campaign since the first state. They are a young,
energetic group. I ran into one name I looked at that almost shocked me out of my skin when I saw it on a gas bill. I looked at that name, and I said, “Well, it’s junior, so it sure as hell isn’t the publisher of the Salt Lake City Tribune.” [J. W. Gallivan], who I had been working with and was on the board of trustees of the citizens conference that I was working with in Utah on the campaign for legislative reform. His son was in my area of northern California, and his father didn’t even know it. When I talked to him afterward, he said, “Hell, I didn’t know where he was. He was all over hell and gone.” But they had these young people who were willing to come in for expense money. I presume they were paid. I never asked, but I presume they were given the maximum they could be given without Internal Revenue [Service] checking on them, so much per day and so much per mile travel. If the employer accepted that as expenses, then the Internal Revenue wouldn’t argue. This was fifteen cents a mile and twenty-five bucks a day that they would come work for. So, you had the horde of them. But as individuals they had been in the areas where they were doing everything. Now they were coming in and they were going to do the same thing. Why should they think any differently? This is just one more state. But I think that is because that is exactly the way the Kennedy people thought.

HACKMAN: You said in the very early going on Carmine Parisi that you called up Art Seltzer and said, “I don’t want him back.” Now, how many things are there then as the campaign goes on that you talked to Seltzer about or you talked to Unruh about? Particularly Unruh, how much on a day-to-day basis does he hear about?

KING: Almost none, almost none. The organizational part of it, Jess wouldn’t have recommended Steve Smith and Ray King to do, unless he had confidence that we could do it. Therefore, on the organizational effort, when we started, Jess was out. He said, you know, “It’s going to be done and that’s it.” Jess, I’m sure, had the very serious problems of policy commitments that Bobby should or shouldn’t be making in terms of how they’re made in California, money, which is always a campaign problem. The bulk of the radio and TV advertising, billboards, etc., were all being done out of the south. Therefore that was primarily Jess’s area and problem. I was not involved in that at all, except to comment on it on request, which I did very strongly on some areas like billboards. There are some counties you don’t put billboards up in northern California.

HACKMAN: Why is that? Because of . . .

KING: They hate billboards. Putting them up is only going to hurt the campaigners.

HACKMAN: Did the Kennedy people understand that then?

KING: Well, yes. Those corrections, to the extent I had any, were made. Billboards was the only one. The coverage, obviously, was put together by an advertising agency who knew what they were doing except for the billboard piece, which is presumably why you have local people because they have local knowledge. You can’t run billboards between here and the Oregon border up through the redwood country. There are some,
but don't put anything on it because the local people will do exactly the opposite of what the billboard says. And there are areas where you use them only in the cities, but you don't use them out in the open space areas.

HACKMAN: You talked about the twenty-five thousand dollars coming through. How much of a problem then is money for your operation?

KING: Constant. Constant.

HACKMAN: What kind of efforts then are made through Bernstein or otherwise to get money?

KING: Well, you get into a multiple problem at this point. You have a lot of people with money and the level at which they operate starts creating the problem for you. They may live in your area but they're not going to give money to Mo Bernstein, they're going to give it to Jess. Or they're not going to give it to Jess, but they're going to give it to somebody from Bobby's operation. Or they're not going to give it to them, they're going to give it to Bobby. You go round and round. It's the little games. You know, if the guy wants the recognition and he's paying for it, he's entitled to it. That's not the question. But where is the recognition? We collected quite a bit. I don't remember any check for more than a thousand dollars, but we had quite a few thousand dollar checks that just came in. We went after them, and they came back. But I don't ever remember seeing a Swig [Benjamin H. Swig] or a Magnin [Cyril Magnin] or a Malone [William M. Malone] or Rebner [?] or an Adolph Schuman's name on that list. They were giving to the candidate or, at the very least, to Unruh where they were goddamned sure the candidate knew and knew how much. When Adolph Schuman finally signed a note for a hundred thousand dollars, as I recall, or two hundred thousand--it was two hundred thousand, he co-signed it with somebody--you had better believe that the candidate knew about it. This is, as I say, an expected part of the game. Everyone of these people... You do business with them, you do business with the Adolph Schumans. But you know that the money is not going to come to you. He does things for a candidate. He'll put money up. He'll throw a party at the Fairmont [Fairmont Hotel]. He did, a finance party in which he picked up the tab for the whole thing and to which Bobby came.

[Begin Tape One, Side Two] ...

HACKMAN: Can you, from where you are in the campaign, get a feel for how much of that is going on? And how many problems are there then in getting some of it back where you need it?

KING: We'd scream at southern California when we'd run out.

HACKMAN: Which is mainly Seltzer then or the finance...

KING: We'd put a budget together. We had a budget for get-out-the-vote, incidentally.
When the time came I would pick up the phone and call him. That was the one place where I had an account. They sent the get-out-the-vote money up in my name and I opened an account and parcelled it out. I think I had seventeen, eighteen thousand dollars. I don't know where it is, but it suddenly dawns on me that nobody ever picked up the books. I still have them all. I still have some checks. I remembered some time ago that nobody ever audited them. I didn't afterwards.

HACKMAN: I should take these back and put them in the Kennedy Library.

KING: You're welcome to them if you'd like. They are all the checks that were out for the get-out-the-vote efforts in counties, for setting up phones, or planning, for cars and carpools. Yeah. I still have the big checkbook and all the checks. Nobody ever. . . . When we closed the office, we forwarded the mail to L.A. The last two bank statements went to L.A. I remember telling them, "Well, now listen. It is like a joint account, the same with the bank statements. I can't break these accounts off unless I have the rest of those canceled checks." I never got them. So I'm still sitting on them. I still have the rubber stamp for depositing the checks. I'm sure I do.

Oh, I have got some funny things that came out of the campaign, some funny ideas that never got used. I have got a box of aspirin tablets in yellow and foil capped with a lapel thing, "Solve your problems, vote for Bobby," and various varieties. "When the bloom goes off. . . . " Some were very cute. Some guy had an original idea, and he brought them over or called us on the phone. I have still got them.

HACKMAN: You mentioned Chuck Spalding earlier. What was he doing? What was he supposed to be doing, or could you tell?

KING: Well, I don't know except that I do know he created some extreme havoc in saying that the Kennedy campaign will do this and this with other groups, totally contrary to what we were trying to do. I think it was odd that I never knew what he really was given in the way of authority or what, except that, you know, there is one more person to try to work through early in the campaign when we were to get things going. We still were [interruption] I don't know what the security checks were. In fact, he was one of these people who. . . . So many came out, it is some times difficult to tell which. The most effective guy I met out of the Kennedy operation without question was John Seigenthaler.

HACKMAN: Why?

KING: Experience and he knows all the people, he knows what has to be done in a campaign, and he does it. All the rest of the people run around worrying because Adolph Schuman's on the phone and he is new at it. John just doesn't get thrown into that kind of bullshit. You know they forgot where they are running to. As a result, boldness is the way we are going to do it. Most of all, he came in armed with Kennedy authority which really
was kind of lacking because of the internal problems of the California politicians: the likes and dislikes of Jess Unruh, the old Pat Brown crew who hated Jess, and the infighting because there wasn’t going to be a northern California campaign and they wanted one.

So this created a lot of divisiveness. In terms of my job it was a butt ache. It didn’t stop the organization that had to be done on the lower county levels, which is where I was concerned. As far as I’m concerned, you don’t really campaign with the top structure of people. You work down at the bottom, right down at the county. Because as I went out and got around the county headquarters and walked in and watched people making precinct maps. Some thirty volunteers and they’re working their butt off. That’s the way you run a campaign. I don’t care who’s going to head the finance committee except to the extent that I have to be involved in finances. To me the organization was what makes a campaign function. It takes money to get your organization. But who were the northern California co-chairmen, I couldn’t care less, because they rarely were people whose names are identifiable and mean something and whose knowledge of campaigns may not be either identified or mean anything. So it’s nice to have.

Except Jess Unruh from this because Jess Unruh does know organizations and organizational function. I think Libby Smith probably—Libby Gatov—understands organizational campaigning as well as anyone from the volunteer side. No one else does. No one else, in my judgment, understands—now talking about volunteers—the sense of timing with which you do something or why you do something. Most of all, most of them don’t understand that politics is a very gut reaction thing and sometimes there’s a very, very sound gut reaction against something which you can’t identify. It just says, “Don’t do it. It’s going to backfire.” You many not be able to figure out how or why but it’s inevitable as hell it is going to backfire. You cannot put your finger on what says that’s dangerous, but there’s just that political sense that says it is.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any things on the ‘68 campaign that the Kennedy people wanted to do that you felt that way about?

KING: Not really because nothing was of that vital importance. We organized. We made sure that Bobby was well covered with people when he was in the area. I would say if it was in anything it was turning over that one gala to the Young Turk group who made a perfect mess of it. The proof was that it bombed. It didn’t bring in a thousand dollars when it should have brought in a minimum of a hundred thousand.

HACKMAN: How would that decision get made to go with that group?

KING: The decision was made by the Kennedy people and they didn’t find out until it was over. It was still Kennedy’s campaign. You can’t forget that. You may be working for them and you can raise your arguments, but it’s their campaign. He is the candidate, you are not. So you go along with their decisions or don’t take a campaign job.

HACKMAN: About how far into the campaign was that decision made? Do you remember? Is that after Seigenthaler comes out or before?
KING: Before.

HACKMAN: That’s before.

KING: I’m going to change that. I would suppose that that program raised twenty-five thousand dollars. But the two galas, north and south, were really looked at as the item in which we were going to be able to take care of all of the top ones. The south produced big dollars. We didn’t produce at all.

HACKMAN: What about registration in ’68? How much was going to be done in the early going and how did that work?

KING: We handled registration just about on the basis you would anticipate it would have been for a Kennedy campaign. We went heavily into the minority communities. We were pretty much together in those. We used Cesar Chavez to appear at registration rallies, get-out-the-vote rallies very carefully because of the south. We registered in the communities where they never even had two delegates in the sense that. . . . You haven’t McCarthy or Kennedy, you’ve got a Lynch delegation that presumably represents the president. You can’t just go register Democrats because you don’t know who they’re for. So you try to pick out the area where you’re pretty sure where they’re going to fall and that became the minority community in terms of Bobby, very clearly. And so we worked heavily in San Francisco and L.A. and in the north and to some degree in some other areas like in Stockton, in the Mexican-American community, and in Sacramento in the very small minority community, down into Fresno and Bakersfield in the Mexican-American communities. Forget the rest of it because you can’t predict it. You can’t tell what they’re going to do. To the extent you can register and get out the vote and influence an election, we wouldn’t influence it with those votes. They were the toughest to register and they were the toughest to pull out.

HACKMAN: Are the people, Orrick, Gatov and the other bunch of Young Turks, do they feel differently about that? Do they want to get out and register the liberal community that was not registered?

KING: They’re not interested in that phase of it. I think that they certainly would quarrel with it, but they are not interested. That’s not their bag. Their bag is being in positions of recognition. Libby recognizes. . . . Again, Libby is probably the most pragmatic of the volunteers. You know, she has been a volunteer for a long, long time which makes it easier.

Bill Orrick is a very fine guy. He’s a lawyer; he practices law, that is his business. I’m sure it took a lot of pulling and tugging to get him back to Washington when President Kennedy got him back there, because it had to be a financial hardship, a very strong financial hardship on Bill. He was willing to identify with the Kennedy campaign, the use of his name, contributed money, but that’s the extent of Bill Orrick. You know, to talk to key people, when you run into a problem with Bill Roth [William M. Roth] or somebody else, Bill Orrick could pick up the phone and call
them. He's a good man to have around. He's not going to get into the day-to-day nitty-gritty of the operation because he's got to practice law for a while. The Young Turks, I guess—although this is not Bill; Bill is not in that crew—got to Bill for advice and help. But they saw this as an opportunity to take over the whole campaign.

HACKMAN: During the campaign, how much talk is there between you and Seltzer and Smith and Unruh, possibly about organizing in terms of a 1970 Jess Unruh . . .

KING: None, nothing. There never was from beginning to end.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

KING: I was never involved in any conversation that had any meaning other than 1968, and specifically the primary at that point. Even after Bobby’s death, though, I'm sure that that delegation, the alternates at that time were put together, those who resigned, the Kennedy people who resigned after his death and were replaced principally with McCarthy people . . . I am sure that that was a very carefully calculated thing on Jess’s part. But the times that I was involved in conversations on that did not include any reference to that. I think, you know, that if it was an opportunity for Jess to do something meaningful in terms of the campaign for '70, I’m sure he did. I’m sure it was somewhat calculated along those lines, but it wasn’t done that deliberately that it became a source of conversation like, “Should we put this guy in because I can use him in 1970?” I think the attempt to form a coalition of the liberals at that time was accomplished by the delegation, but whether Jess has any way to control that coalition still remained to be seen after the convention. He didn’t put it together in order to control it. He put it together in order to hopefully be able to use it if things went right in the next two years.

But there was no conversation during the campaign. Of course, you must remember now, we’re talking about March to June. We are not talking about much time for much conversation. Art Seltzer only got to northern California twice as I recall. We were much more on our own than southern California was because Jess feels very strongly, and certainly very logically, that you win where the votes are. The votes are not in northern California, and where they are, they are fairly well spread. We may have half the population of the state, but you’ve got to cover nine hundred miles from the border to the line to get the half of the population. The other half is all concentrated. So that was where the heavy emphasis was. That’s where Art Seltzer spent most of his time, and I’m sure where Jess spent much of his time. Jess also had a little thing to worry about—he was speaker.

HACKMAN: That’s right, there was a session on.

KING: There was a session on. So this I think was Jess’s limitation. I don’t think Jess was heavily involved in the Kennedy campaign at all. I think Jack Crose from the south, Frank Burns in L.A., and Seltzer, Smith and King were really the ones engrossed in that portion of it. Jess had his neck out, he had his name out, so he had a responsibility to make
sure it was done, to be sure it was successful, to make sure it didn’t detract from Jess Unruh’s previous contacts and acceptance by the Kennedys.

HACKMAN: Supposedly at one point Steve Smith (east) came out and has a meeting of some kind with Unruh where these things are all discussed. Can you see change, then, in the directions that come to you or the kind of response you would get from L.A. After that?

KING: No. Steve did come out. As a matter of fact, he moved out.

HACKMAN: Yeah, right.

KING: He came out. He moved to an estate he had out here [inaudible] Well, I think that was primarily financial. I think that was primarily the advertising end of it, less concern, I think, in the organization. I didn’t see any difference.

HACKMAN: You mentioned . . .

KING: But Seigenthaler probably appeared about that same time.

HACKMAN: That’s right. You mentioned Cesar Chavez. What kind of discussions are there or differences are there on how closely you identify with Chavez or how you use Chavez or how you use the Mexican-American Political Association, the MAPA people?

KING: There was none. Our major thrust with the Mexican-American community, the use of Cesar, the crew from MAPA, etc., was strictly the registration to get out the vote. Cesar was on the delegation because Cesar was Cesar Chavez and Bobby’s close friend, Teddy’s friend. They were very interested in what he was doing. Our use of Cesar was limited by his health, very limited by his health. And my conversations on when we wanted Cesar were with Jim Drake exclusively. The question of whether he could make it was something Jim told me. It was inevitably health. He made every one of them that was a key one that I had.

HACKMAN: What about in terms, then, of the voter registration thing with blacks, on what blacks you deal with? Are there problems there?

KING: No. Our primary efforts in the black communities obviously go to only two counties, and that’s Alameda and San Francisco in northern California. Phil Burton has a long-standing relationship with the Negro community here. As a result, we relied very heavily on Phil. We had one of his administrative assistants, Joe Beeman [Josiah H. Beeman], actually quartered with our campaign headquarters. In terms of San Francisco, it was Joe’s primary responsibility.

You always have the problem in both of those minorities of too many chiefs, sometimes
not enough Indians. We did have that problem. Usually that was a group from the people we were working with that were trying to lead into it. Sometimes we would take them in for a piece of the action, sometimes we wouldn’t. Primarily we stayed with the decisions that were made by the Kennedy people. Bill Lockyer determined who he worked with in Alameda in the Mexican-American and Negro community, and that’s who the Kennedy campaign worked with. In San Francisco, Phil Burton made that decision where the Mexican-American community and we got is a little bit different. In Santa Clara county, which was the other large Mexican-American contingent, Dick Wylie and John Vasconcellas told us who we were to work with and those were the names the Kennedy campaign worked with. We relied on our county chairman. Now when you talk about the Mexican-American community, then Bert Corona and Cesar Chavez, yes, they were. . . . You know, we went to the leadership we thought was effective. That type of leadership doesn’t exist in the Negro community. It doesn’t really exist very well in the Mexican-American community.

HACKMAN: My understanding in the south is that there are differences on how you get out the black vote.

KING: Yes. The south is totally . . . . We do not have that kind of a problem in the north, in either the Mexican-American or the Negro. They have their own world that they’re in down there in L.A. County. There are tremendous differences and tremendous in-fighting between individuals. We don’t really have that kind of a problem.

HACKMAN: Well, from listening to it from the Kennedy . . . . One of the differences is whether, you do a big organizational thing in terms of get-out-the-vote or whether you do it by sending out written materials. Does that kind of difference develop at the northern end as well as the southern?

KING: No, we do it by organization. We don’t do it by sending anything out in writing.

HACKMAN: Okay.

KING: Ours is totally and solely a block-by-block organizational effort, in the same way that when you needed names for the delegation--affidavits to quality the delegation when Bobby decided to run--you went where you were going to get the most names per house and per block. You went to the minority community and you passed those petitions and got those signatures because that’s where you could get the volume. The same thing, you’re not going to pull out the Mexican-American and Negro vote by sending literature. You’re not going to register them that way. You’re going to register them by going door-to-door and you’re going to get them out on election day by starting at three in the afternoon and calling up everybody who hasn’t had their name checked at the polls. That’s the only way you do it. There’s no other effective way.

HACKMAN: From your understanding of and contacts in that particular period with the south,
with Seltzer, Smith, etc., is that different in the south in the sense that they don’t want to concentrate as much on the blacks or the Mexican-Americans down there, and they’re more concerned with the suburban vote? That’s the way it’s been explained to me, that there’s that kind of . . . .

KING: I don’t know. I really can’t say. I’m not knowledgeable about that type of an organizational effort in Southern California. I don’t recall being in conversations with either Art or Steve where this ever came up. From what I know of the geographical area in L.A., it would seem to me that you would have to do both, that you need to go after suburbia. Sure, you don’t need to run a registration, get-out-the-vote campaign for Democrats in Marin County, because I’ll guarantee that every Democrat who lives in that county is going to vote unless he’s sick or away, whether you go over there or not. There’s so few of them that they band together, and they march to the polls together. You know, that makes them . . . except for a pocket in Palo Alto which was primarily Negro. To pick those few as a movement, you don’t worry about those people being registered.

Now in Los Angeles, every two years the movement of people down there is really short of fantastic. I don’t mean movement out of L.A. I mean movement from Redondo Beach to Laguna Beach, movement from Inglewood over to Gardena. There’s just a fantastic amount of turmoil and turnover, and every one of those is a new registered voter to get. So they have different problems, to create some dissension. The median person around here doesn’t move that much.

HACKMAN: I understand that in the early part of the campaign--I’m not sure how early, really--that there’s some debate, and I don’t know who it involves, as to whether you set up a separate “Citizens for Robert Kennedy” organization. Can you remember that debate? Was that something that you had to try to deal with?

KING: Yeah, that was something I not only had to deal with but strongly recommended that it not be set up. That is the type of thing you put together when you’re in a campaign in the general election. That is the type of thing when you want to influence Republicans and Democrats and independents. All we cared about were D-E-Ms on June 2nd, or whenever that primary date was. We did not care at all about the Repubs. So having a broad-based “Citizens for Robert Kennedy” served no purpose, and I opposed it for that reason. If he had got the nomination and started throwing Repubs in who really work under the Democratic framework, then that became the best line that would work.

HACKMAN: Any Kennedy people who were for that kind of thing?

KING: There were some discussions. I don’t recall anyone who was strongly for it. There were some people, I think, who may have expressed the feelings of others in the room.

HACKMAN: What about labor and trying to get support from labor in northern California?
KING: Well, we took it where we could get it. There was no question where George Meany was and that's where the top level of the AF of L-CIO [American Federation of Labor--Congress of Industrial Organizations] had to be. There was no question where the Teamsters [International Brotherhood of Teamsters] were. So that didn't move us very much. So we took it where we could get it. We got UAW [United Auto Workers], we got Sy Connor[?], the executive director of the Af of L-CIO Central Labor Council of Contra Costa County, ? Dick Grew in Alameda County. [inaudible] We got what help we could get locally, wherever we could get. And we did.

HACKMAN: Somebody told me that late in the campaign there was some big meeting planned of Robert Kennedy with a whole series of labor leaders that then fell through. Do you remember being involved in that at all?

KING: Well, it was a very mixed-up thing. An appearance by Bobby had been set before the San Francisco Labor Council at which they had written to Bobby at our headquarters asking him to appear. We had written back and said, "Sorry." We checked with, it was Helen Keyes. It was her operation.

HACKMAN: Joe Dolan and John Nolan were the two schedulers.

KING: Out of Dolan's office we got a "No." Frankly, we weren't at all happy with it. We wrote back and said, "No." Then, somehow, Phil Burton got at it. I guess they went to Phil and Phil invited and left the impression that Bobby would appear and they announced it. We then countered by having Teddy Kennedy show up. Bobby said he might be there. [inaudible] But actually, I think their going to Phil created the problem. That is the only type of meeting I recall. Bobby couldn't have been at that meeting. No labor leader was going to go against George Meany.

HACKMAN: Talking about problems in raising funds, in terms of using state legislators as county chairmen, doesn't that create a problem in terms of raising funds because funds coming out of those areas will go to the state legislator who's running that year? This is something that the Kennedy people...

KING: I don't recall that we ever had a county chairman who was a state legislator. If we did, at best he was a co-chairman, because he was in Sacramento in the session. It was idiocy to have him as chairman of your campaign. He may have acted as co-chairman. But I don't recall, in fact I am positive, if he was, he turned it over to one with whom I did business all the time.

In terms of the funds, the answer is no. The money that was collected all came into our office because they had no separate bank accounts in their county. We tried to hold them responsible for it. There wasn't enough money to pay their bills. A couple of large counties, I guess Santa Clara or San Mateo was one, they did have their own accounts. The large counties, you know, created a problem that really warrants a local account.
As far as the others go, the legislators tried to be as helpful as possible. I think that in response to that you have to view this legislative body in context to others. California is no more a machine state. It’s no Tammany Hall or Prendergast machine. The state is not partisan. If it was, Earl Warren never would have been elected, Ronald Reagan never would have been elected. Here is a very, very “we are going to pick whoever we have” type of state. There was a time when legislators were not wealthy and then votes could be bought. In the election of ’58, the change in that legislature—I went to work for it in ’59—as the image of the bowler-hatted, cigar-smoking politician with money coming out of every pocket disappeared. More and more young, intelligent, energetic guys starting running for public office. It was all over but for the three guys left in Sacramento whose vote could be bought. They’re left over from a day that’s gone and will never come back, I don’t think, in this state. You’re talking about guys who make twenty-five thousand a year, including their little extras from being legislators and who raise fifty or sixty thousand for their campaigns for re-election. What you were talking about them collecting for a Kennedy campaign at their level was peanuts. You just don’t have to worry, you don’t have that type of person. I could understand Kennedy people coming in having that worry. I could understand it from other states I’ve worked in. I understand exactly what their worry is. But again this is the state of California.

HACKMAN: Can you see other things about California, just off the top of your head, that they didn’t understand or couldn’t cope with? That’s an awfully broad...

KING: Not really. You know, the problems were such that you really... I don’t ever remember having a long conversation with a Kennedy guy. They were all very short, except John Seigenthaler who was always short. He might cover fifty subjects in two hours of dinner and spend four minutes on each. No, I just think that... He was certainly not the only... by a long shot. I don’t know who was, probably William Orrick, more highly professional in politics than we are. I am certainly proud of the achievements that the governor and lieutenant governor are fighting each on one side and the state senator and the... are fighting on the other. But they’re all highly organized and well-organized campaigns. We should have the types of campaign and public relations firms, some here and some in the east—Whitaker and Baxter, the Spencer-Roberts [Spencer-Roberts & Associates]... It seems to me that we do have more political efforts coming out of here.

I think that people fail to realize that, you know, the governor here has three hundred and sixty-three appointments to make when he gets elected. He’s not the governor of Pennsylvania. He has too few, as a matter of fact, in my judgment. He gets the department heads but not the deputies. He doesn’t get all the policy-makers. I think that’s wrong. But he doesn’t have that kind of handout to give for people who worked for him or have given him money or raised money. As a result you have people here who play politics for the fun of politics, and not for any personal gain. That’s why even the county chairmen, who will kill themselves for the fun of it. Here’s a leading Democrat who gets a certain ego gratification out of doing it. It isn’t someone who is planning on getting on the roles of the judges, they hope, and a lot of them are. But a lot of them are just people who are involved and they end up on the local county fair board and have fun with it. That is really their ambition in life. They aren’t the political animal that you get elsewhere, so
we handle them differently and you work with them differently. But you have expertise at their level that the Kennedy people didn’t realize was available. They thought that was only from paid people. We had volunteers who were that way.

HACKMAN: One of the things in that Kennedy campaign in ’68 is a number of the people who are involved at fairly high levels have backgrounds in California politics: Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton], Salinger [Pierre Salinger], Mankiewicz [Frank Mankiewicz]. What kinds of problems does that create? Any for you?

KING: None, none whatsoever. As a matter of fact, it was easier. When you talked to Frank Mankiewicz or you talked to Fred Dutton or you talked to Pierre they knew exactly what you were talking about when numbers of the players. They knew exactly what the weakness and strength was. It didn’t take very long, you didn’t have to explain for fifteen minutes before you got to the problem.

HACKMAN: Robert Kennedy at one point went over to Oakland and had a meeting with some black militants. Can you remember that and did that create any problems?

KING: No, no. I remember it. I was not involved directly in the decision to do it, except to indicate that I felt it should be done. Really we weren’t going to lose anything. At least when it was all through, nothing we ever did for Bobby was so it had that plus it had no other. They wanted the whole campaign, just a forerunner of what we are seeing now. Over near Candlestick Park, we had thirty thousand people, spectators. It wasn’t a full house, but it was close. There were kids in the streets on every approach to that park, because they didn’t have the concession for the janitorial work or the concession for the parking.

[Inaudible]