

John E. Nolan Oral History Interview – RFK#5, 11/11/1971
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Nolan was the administrative assistant to the Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy [RFK], from 1963 to 1964. In this interview Nolan discusses RFK right after John F. Kennedy's assassination; RFK's speeches and appearances in early 1964 and his plans to leave the Department of Justice; the trip to Europe in the summer of 1964; planning RFK's visit to Poland; RFK in Germany and Poland; and RFK's decision to run for Senate in New York in 1964 and his campaign, among other issues.

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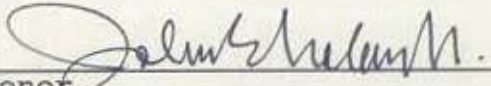
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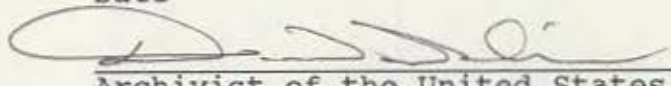
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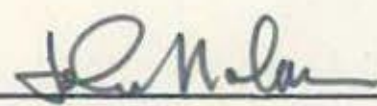
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Signed: 

John Nolan

Date: April 7, 1971

John E. Nolan – RFK #5
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Fifth Oral History Interview

with

JOHN NOLAN

November 11, 1971
Washington, DC

By Roberta W. Greene

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History ~~Project~~ ^{Program}
of the Kennedy Library

GREENE: I was going to start with the period after the assassination when he was debating what to do. I was going to ask you how much you saw of him, and what you remember about his state of mind and his thinking at the time.

NOLAN: Well, I saw a lot of him, of course, because I worked at the same place. I saw him every day. Very difficult period for him. Not particularly easy for anybody around him.

GREENE: Do you have any specific recollections of the way he functioned in the Justice Department, and how it changed from the earlier period?

NOLAN: Well, it changed radically, and he changed radically, drastically of course. His activities consisted of, I guess for the most part in the very early period, say December and January--December of '63, I guess, and January of '64, isn't it?--he went to National Security Council meetings; He was heavily engaged, of course, in the early plans for the ~~(John F.)~~ Kennedy Library. There were a lot of meetings in connection with that.

GREENE: Did you get involved in them?

NOLAN: Yeah, some of them. I left about the second or third of January,

I guess, to go to Latin America with Adam Yarmolinsky and [Jim Eckles. We were there for about three weeks in Panama, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia.

GREENE: Was this planned before the assassination?

NOLAN: Yeah. Yeah, we would have left in late November, within a week of the time of the assassination, So we didn't go then. Then, oh,

I guess sometime in December I talked to Bob about it and he said, "I think you should go." It was a question of, we were going as sort of scouts or agents for the Interagency Youth Committee. Some

question about change in direction and so on, then, and whether the of Interagency Youth Committee, which had been very much/a Kennedy

thing and really very much a Bob Kennedy thing, was going to function in ^{the} way that it had. Our purpose was to evaluate how it had func-

tioned over the course of the last year or so. He said, "yeah, I think you should go," So we talked about whether it would be a

different kind of a mission or something like that, and he said,

"well, just, you know, don't ask about it or don't take that into consideration, just go." He said, you know, "when you're ready, get

your travel vouchers and whatever it is, and go."

So I was gone most of January. Came back the latter part of that month. So then February and I guess March, I don't know. . . .

In February he made a speech at the graduation of the Interamerican [sic]

[International Police Academy] Police Academy, I remember, that I drafted. In March, we went to Africa, and India, the Far East.

International
Police Academy
(NYT 1'64)

GREENE: The Far East, I was going to say that, Japan, Indonesia . . .

NOLAN: Well, now there was another trip . . .

GREENE: Am I confusing it?

NOLAN: Yeah. No, there was another trip in there. While I was in Latin America, Lyndon B. Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] asked Bob to go to Indonesia.

GREENE: Yeah, ^{yes,} that's the one I'm thinking of.

NOLAN: I wasn't on that trip. Before they left Washington, I guess, I was in Mexico City on the way coming back. I talked to him on the phone, and there was a possibility that if I cut the Latin American thing off and flew to Los Angeles, I could pick it up or something like that, but it wasn't necessary and I didn't do it. So I guess, yeah, that's right. So then when I got back from Latin America they were still on that trip, because that was about a ten-day trip and I think they went around the world, and

GREENE: Right.

NOLAN: Came back from Europe. Well, then in March, I guess about the middle of March, we went to Africa, Roger Wilkins [Roger W. Wilkins] and Eckles and I. Before we left, I had at his request drafted a St. Patrick's Day speech for him. He accepted an invitation from the former mayor of Pittsburgh, David L. Lawrence [David L. Lawrence] Dave Lawrence, to go to Scranton, Pennsylvania on St. Patrick's Day, traditional St. Patrick's Day dinner. He was starting then to make a few speeches. I think the speech at the Interamerican Police Academy was the first, ^{and} that really wasn't a public speech. And then that went fairly well so he asked me to do this other one, which was really a lot of fun. I wrote the speech over the weekend before we left for Africa. I got the speeches that President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] had made over a period of

six or seven years on St. Patrick's Day at various dinners and so on, and from David F. ^[David F. Powers] Dave Powers, the speeches and statements from the trip to Ireland. They'd been in Ireland the previous June, I guess, summer of '63.

GREENE: You mean ^{with} the president?

NOLAN: Yeah.

GREENE: Yeah. Yes.

Proper title =
The American Irish

NOLAN: William V. ^{Bill [William V. Shannon]} Shannon had just written a book called The Irish in America ^{[sic] [The American Irish]} which was just out ^{and} had a lot of anecdotes. You know, it was really a fun thing. So I did the speech and left on the trip. The speech was in a way interesting. There was a poem ^{the} name of which I think was "Owen Roe O'Neill," and it was sort of a lament to a departed brother or something ^{like that}: "Where have you gone . . ."

GREENE: "Why did you die, Owen, why did you . . ."

NOLAN: "Why did you die, Owen"

GREENE: Owen, ^{no 90}

NOLAN: "Where did you go?" or something like that.

GREENE: I guess that's his name too.

NOLAN: I ran across it someplace, and it was so poignant that I was really reluctant to use it but reluctant to pass it up also, so I put it in at the end of the speech. I gave him the draft before I left and I said, "some of this is sort of schmaltzy stuff and some of it you may not really want to get into, but you can look it over and see. It's easy enough to drop it if you don't want to ^{say} stand it." So on St. Patrick's Day we were in Tanganyika and I wondered where that was, how it was going. But he gave it that way. He gave it almost word for word as it was written, including all of this poem at the

end.

GREENE: He used that all ³ of the time later on.

NOLAN: So after I got back I asked him about it. Well, I saw the speech

on. . . . Well, there were a bunch of clippings on my desk when I got back. ³ Mary McGrory had done a story on it, and there ^{was} ~~were~~ other stuff from the news services. And there was the speech typed on Justice Department press release stationery, ~~and~~ I looked through ^{at the end} and I saw it, and I saw it quoted in the story. So I asked him about it and I said how did you, I said, "I see you gave that speech. I ⁰ said, "How did you do with that poem?" And he said, "well, it was all right. I got through it." And I said, "How did you happen to leave that thing in there?" And he said, "Well, I kind of wanted to see if I could do it, and I decided that I'd just do it, so I left it in."

GREENE: I'm trying to think if that was the same poem that I think William J ^{e [William J. vanden Heuvel]} vanden Heuvel uses in his book. He says Kennedy was practicing in front of a mirror, and it seems to me it was John Douglas or someone like that said to him, "you'll never get through that," and he said, "I've been practicing in front of a mirror and I think I can do it."

And I think it was the same thing. It was one of those early . . .

NOLAN: I think Edwin O ^[Edwin O. Guthman] Ed Guthman refers to this. Ed was there, and had done the rest of the preparation on the speech, and so on . . .

GREENE: It may have been Guthman, ^{had done this, yes.}

NOLAN: . . . AND was with him. I think that Ed has an anecdote or similar story about it . . .

GREENE: Maybe ^{that's what I'm thinking of, yes.} that sounds like it, yeah.

NOLAN: . . . IN his book.

GREENE: Yeah. But he used that very frequently after that. It seems to me that . . .

NOLAN: Are you sure?

GREENE: Oh, it seems to me I've read that on a number of occasions.

NOLAN: It's been quoted some since.

GREENE: Maybe that's it. It could be that.

NOLAN: ~~Now~~ There's another one that he used at the Democratic National Convention, 1964.

GREENE: From Romeo and Juliet.

NOLAN: Yes.

GREENE: Yeah, ^{Yes} No, I'm thinking of this one.

NOLAN: But . . .

GREENE: Do you think that was the only occasion he used it?

NOLAN: I think it was the only one, yeah. I think that . . .

GREENE: It may be ~~just~~ from having read that incident so many times.

NOLAN: I think he thought it was good that he got through. I don't think
he . . .

GREENE: He was relieved.

NOLAN: IT WAS like climbing that mountain or the fifty-mile hike or something else; you know, I think he figured he'd done it so that was that.

GREENE: Were you in a position to know about how the relationship with [J. Edgar Hoover] changed and I guess deteriorated after the assassination? Did you see very much of that?

NOLAN: Yeah, in a general way, but not really with the detail that it's been gone into. I really don't have anything to add to the stuff I've read about ^{it}.

GREENE: Did you ever discuss with him, or know through other means, whether they actually did plan to get rid of Hoover? I have heard recently that Robert Kennedy was pressing for it and that the president was somewhat reluctant to get that done. You don

NOLAN: I don't know.

GREENE: You don't know.

NOLAN: It would have been very understandable to me if he had been, by then but I don't know that he was.

GREENE: In this period did you talk to him at all about his plans? He announced fairly early that he would leave as ^{of} that he would not finish out, that he would just go until the election, or the end of the year. That was his initial announcement. Do you remember talking to him about what he would do after he left?

NOLAN: No, not at all at that time, not in the winter and not in the early spring. The only time I remember talking to him about it early was, sometime in the spring David E. Bell ^{David E. Bell} Dave Bell, who was then at AID Agency for International Development, --a guy that I liked and admired a lot. There was a fellow over there who was the general counsel of AID who went out to teach at the law school at Berkeley, so Bell was looking for a general counsel. He called Bob Kennedy about me. I was in the room at the time when the call came, which was the first I had know^d of it. I had not talked to Bell about it at all. So I could tell from the conversation ^{what} the substance of it, what it was. So he said something like, he'd like to, like you to go over and talk to him about being general counsel at AID. I said something like, well, I really hadn't, really never thought of that job, and didn't have much idea about what I would do. He said

something to the effect that, he's a pretty good fellow, or, that might be a pretty good job, or, you might be interested in it or something and you ought to talk to him anyway." So I went over and talked to Dave Bell and some of the assistant administrators one day. At that time I didn't know what Bob was going to do, and I really hadn't thought about what I was going to do. I didn't know whether his reaction to the phone call was a way to sort of start dismantling his operation over there and whether he, you know, thought. . . . I really didn't know what he thought about my going to AID in the light of the way he ^{had} mentioned it when we first talked about it, so after talking with Bell, I asked him. He said, "I haven't really decided, you know, what I'm going to do yet, and if you would like to stay around for a while and see, I think you could probably do anything you wanted to do after that, if that's okay with you." I said, "sure, that's fine." So then I called Bell and told him that I wasn't interested, and I didn't know what I was going to do but I wasn't going to be available for a while. I suppose that was some time in the spring after the African trip. I think that probably this inquiry had started with Roger Wilkins, who was, we'd spent a lot of time together on the trip. He was a special assistant to Dave Bell at that time. So that was all we ever talked about it until, the, I guess, the prospect of New York came up some time.

GREENE: Had you talked to him about the vice presidency at all before New York became . . .

NOLAN: No.

GREENE: . . . A real question?

NOLAN: Not really.

GREENE: No.

NOLAN: There was an awful lot of talk about it, there was a lot in the papers about it, there were all kinds of people coming in and talking about it. I was in some of those conversations. But I, not really any meaningful talk, no.

GREENE: Okay. When do you first remember discussing New York, and how serious was it at ~~that~~ point, how serious a consideration?

NOLAN: Well, I think it was . . . We had a conversation about it, and I think that conversation was in July, you know, late in the summer after we got back from Europe. See, we were in Europe in June; I was in Europe most of June.

GREENE: You mean the Polish trip?

NOLAN: Yeah.

GREENE: Yeah, ^{Yes} I was going to ask you about that. I was pretty sure you had done the advancing on it.

NOLAN: I did the advancing on it and then . . .

GREENE: Went along also?

NOLAN: . . . ~~WENT~~ along also, yeah.
I guess

GREENE: There was a lot of talk, at the time--and there has also been a lot written since, particularly in this Milton ^[Milton Gwirtzman] ~~Gwirtzman~~-vanden Heuvel ^e book--that that trip was very directly related to his interest in the vice presidency. It was never put to you in those terms?

NOLAN: No.

GREENE: How was it defined, you know, his interest?

NOLAN: I don't remember exactly where it started, but at some point we talked about whether he should go to Europe or not, and if so, where he should go. At that time I think that . . . Before we talked

about it the first time, I think that he was considering it very seriously, or had decided really that he was going to do it. So our talk about it was in more the specific context of when it would be done and where he would go. I talked to him about it a few times before going over there, maybe a couple times or three or something like that, but I don't think I was ever in any meeting about it. I really didn't know. . . . I mean, he had a lot of ideas about it but I really didn't know where those ideas were coming from. I think people like Governor ^{we} ~~Averell M.~~ ^[W. Averell Harriman] Harriman, ~~Frederick S.~~ ^[Frederick G. Dutton] Fred Dutton, ~~Theodore M.~~ ^[Theodore C. Sorensen] Ted Sorensen, But the idea for the trip came out of some set of conversations like that, and by the time I got onto it, it was pretty much coming into focus, being. The immediate purpose of the trip was to make the speech at the Free University in Berlin on the first anniversary of President Kennedy's . . .

GREENE: Right. There was some kind of a plaque they dedicated.

NOLAN: . . . ~~Address~~. Yeah. So first it was just going to be a trip to Berlin, and then the rest of it was laid on later.

GREENE: The Polish part was very interesting as I remember, the meeting with ^{Wyszynski [H. E. Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski]} Cardinal ~~Stc~~ ^{Vashinsky} is that how you say it?

NOLAN: Yeah.

GREENE: Do you remember anything about that whole thing?

NOLAN: Yeah. There's a lot about it.

GREENE: Well? ^{For} ~~One~~ thing, I think there was a lot of resistance from the Polish government. They weren't very happy ~~awith~~ the whole thing, were they?

NOLAN: No, they were not happy with it at all.

GREENE: Yeah. Can you . . .

NOLAN: Well, it's a long story. They're all . . .

GREENE: Do you think it's worth telling? You're a better judge than I am, I don't really know.

NOLAN: Well, I don't. . . . Let me just go over the high points and you can ask questions about it.

GREENE: Okay.

NOLAN: The idea of going to Poland I think probably came from Governor Harriman. Later on, ^{when} we talked about it, Governor Harriman was really more interested in that aspect of it ^{than} ~~that~~ anybody else that I knew in Washington. It may have also come from Dutton. They were both at State ^{of State} ~~Department~~ at that time. ~~[Interruption]~~ I went to Europe and I went straight to Berlin, and from Berlin to Bonn, from Bonn to Heidelberg. And then there was a question of whether or not he would go to Poland, and whether or not he would go to Ireland. We talked about this on the phone from Bonn, where I guess I ended up after doing Germany. I juggled all the schedules and everything. So it got down to the point where if I was going to go to Ireland, I had to go there right then, and then go from there to Poland in order to cover both of those places before the trip was going to begin. So I did that. I guess while I was in Dublin, the plans for the trip cleared up to the point where I think Ireland was still in doubt, but he was definitely going to go to Poland. ^{So} So from Dublin, I called Ambassador ~~John M.~~ ^{John M. Cabot} Cabot and said, "I'm John Nolan, I'm the administrative assistant to the attorney general; I'd like to come over and see you." He said, "fine." So we talked about, you know, in a general sense about the prospects of the trip and so on, and he said, "Of course you have a visa." And I said, "No, Mr.

Ambassador, I don't have a visa. As a matter of fact, I'm going to have to rely on you, sir, to take care of that, because if I'm going to get there at all, I have to leave right now in order to get to London to get such-and-such a plane to get there"--~~or~~ it was two days or something like that. So, harumph, on the other end of the phone, and so on. ^Q So I left and I arrived in Warsaw that night or something like that, and was met at the airport by a fellow from the embassy and we went to the ambassador's residence, where I stayed. So the three of us sat down in the living room of the residence, and the first thing they told me was that the room was bugged, ^{[Inter-}ruption], which kind of surprised me. But we . . .

GREENE: The ambassador said the room in which you were then sitting was bugged?

NOLAN: The ambassador and his aide said that the room in which we were then sitting and speaking was ~~monitored~~ by an electronic listening device.

GREENE: They didn't do. . . . They just put up with it?

NOLAN: Well, I guess they didn't know where it was or. . . . ^[Interruption]
Either they didn't know where it was, or they didn't know how to get rid of it, or didn't know what to do about it or something. But their purpose in telling me was, ^{just} to make sure that I would be discreet about the arrangements that we ~~were~~ discussing, some of which of course were perfectly okay for the Polish government to know, but some of which might not be. ^Q There were really a lot of misunderstandings about that trip and what it involved and so on, like, they said, "now we understand that it will be just you and Mr. and Mrs. Ethel Skakel Kennedy, ^[Ethel Skakel Kennedy] or something like that. And I said, "Gee, I think that probably it's going to be a little bigger than that. There'll be,

Ed Guthman ^{will} be along and somebody else and, of course, the press."
"The press? What press?" So I said, "Well, the way it works usually on these things usually is that there are a number of reporters who accompany the attorney general wherever he goes, and there really isn't anything that any of us can do about that." They said, "A number of reporters. [?] How many reporters?" I said, "Well, I don't know, you know, ten, fifteen, twenty, something like that."

GREENE: Forty.

NOLAN: Forty. ^{Well!} ~~But~~ that was the greatest. They said that they didn't think that would work, and there might be a couple of aides and perhaps one representative of the press or a pool or something like that, but they just didn't think the Polish government would stand for a big press entourage flying in. So we sort of let that sit. They really didn't know what to do about it or how to deal with it, and I regarded it as kind of a given, anyway, ^{the} ~~it~~ was going to happen, so I wasn't interested in prolonging/discussion about that. Then we spent a fair amount of time talking about protocol: who would sit, when the ambassador could host a dinner for the attorney general, which officials of the Polish government would be there, what kind of a seating arrangement would be involved, who would be where, and so on.

GREENE: Was this a particularly complicated thing because it was Poland, or is this the type of thing that you always had to be very concerned with in planning ^{these} ~~the~~ strips?

NOLAN: Well, it had certain complications because it was Poland, as an anecdote will disclose. One of the people that I identified as being a good possibility for the travelling party was Lee Radziw^{ell}. ^{Lee Bouvier Radziw^{ell}} They were very interested in that and they said, "That will be just Mrs.

Radziwell[?]. She will not be accompanied by her husband, will she?"
 And I said, "I don't know. I hadn't^{ve} heard any, really, suggestion that she will but I honestly don't know." They said, "Well, you have to understand that if she is accompanied by her husband, that could present some very, very serious protocol problems." I said, "What are they?" He said, "Her husband is a member of the old Polish nobility. ^{in Poland} That government and that way of life is no more. The nobility/now are the bureaucrats, the fellows who would be coming to the dinner that the ambassador would be having for the attorney general. Now, when you get to things like the seating arrangement, you have to understand that it's very, very difficult to take someone who is out of another order and put them into the proper order, and this sort of thing, at the table." Well, on my scale of values that was pretty far down, but that was one of the kinds of problems that the embassy staff was concerned with in connection with the trip. That particular kind of problem I don't think we had run into anyplace else.

The other thing generally was that it was ^avery, very tight cold-war type atmosphere. There was a lot of surveillance of all the Americans in Warsaw.

GREENE: And there was nothing in the press. Had you expected that?

NOLAN: Well, there was. . . . Yeah, there was nothing in the press. Radio Free Europe or Voice of America, or somebody like that, put out some announcements before they arrived but. . . .

GREENE: Had you expected that there would be no press coverage, or at least announcements of ^{the} ~~the~~ schedule?

NOLAN: I think so. I think we had expected that generally and then as the visit ballooned, as it were, way past the point that either the

Americans or the Poles on the governmental side thought that it would be, it was apparent that they were just going to pull on their helmets and tighten their seatbelts and hang on till it was all over. Everybody of that group of Americans and Poles alike were very scared about the thing. The Americans thought it would get the Poles all riled^{up} and the Poles thought it might start a revolution or something.

Well, that was the beginning of the visit. I stayed with the ambassador for a day or so. Flew down to Krakow. ~~ONE~~ of those days.

GREENE: Is that how you say it, with that "w" at the end, Krakow? I never knew that.

NOLAN: Yeah, Krakow. I don't think I went out to ^{Częstochowa,} ~~Chestahowa~~, where the cardinal was. But I did go to Krakow, spent some time with the mayor there. And then because of the plane schedule--it was about I guess 150 miles away or something ^{maybe} or 200 kilometers or something--the ambassador sent his car down, so when I got through at the end of the day in Krakow, ^{the} car and driver were there so I had a way to get back to Warsaw. In that sense, he was very cooperative. He really was cooperative within the confines of what he thought the situation would stand, and what he thought was right and so on.

Then later, when the party was there and we got to the real question of whether to go out to see the cardinal or not, the ambassador stood up like a reall man. He said, "I think it's pretty tough, ^{and} / I don't think it's really going to tee him off, but I think it's basically a good thing to do and I think you ought to do it"--which was more than anybody on his staff was willing to say. They were just shakings like aspen leaves at the thought of going out there.

So then I finished up there and flew back to someplace in Germany where they came in. What's the big . . .

GREENE: Oh, you never went back?

NOLAN: Frankfurt.

GREENE: You didn't go back to the United States between your . . .

NOLAN: No, No, I never went back. No, I went out to Berlin, I guess, and then from Berlin to Frankfurt and met them when they came in. Then we went over. . . . Then We had a schedule for Germany. I think we went someplace in the morning. Wait a minute. Well, I don't remember the exact order. but . . .

GREENE: I had it all, I must admit, but I didn't bring it today because I didn't think we'd talk about it.

NOLAN: We went to wherever General ~~Creighton W. Abrams~~ [Creighton W. Abrams, Jr.] Abrams was. General Abrams was over there then. As a matter of fact, on that day, the that day/they came into Frankfurt, General Abrams was named deputy chief of staff for the United States Army.

GREENE: And I remember that Robert Kennedy, I think, was very impressed with him, wasn't he?

NOLAN: Well, see, we had known him very well from before, from here in Washington, from the stuff down South. He was . . .

GREENE: ^{Yes} That's what I'm thinking of.

NOLAN: He was . . . Yeah, he was.

GREENE: He was very impressed with ^{him then, yes.} the man, yeah.

NOLAN: He's a very impressive guy--was and is. Really outstanding guy. So he wanted, in the course of the trip in Germany, he wanted to go someplace where the troops were, Americans were. So I got in touch

with General Abrams with regard to that. So ^{WE} ~~he~~ did something in the morning; There was a luncheon in Bonn given by Minister ^[Gerhard Schroeder] ~~[Gerhard]~~ Schroeder, I think, foreign minister or something, and some other stuff in Bonn. I don't remember whether. . . . I think this was the day before getting to Berlin. / ^{Then} we went into Berlin in ^{the} a day of events through there, ending up in the appearance in the Rathaus, that plaza downtown.

GREENE: Right.

NOLAN: Bob was very interested in how that went because he had been there before, two years earlier, to a thunderous, tumultuous reception, ~~innovation~~, and then President Kennedy of course had been there for the "Ich bin ein Berliner" speche. Then there was something there that evening, reception, dinner, some kind of a protocol thing. Then we went to Heidelberg the next morning, speech at the University of Heidelberg. Great. Just really one of the best student speeches that Robert Kennedy ever gave. A large student body, almost every-one understanding English. A fair number of Americans, maybe ^{ten} 10 or ^{fifteen} 15 percent of the university ^{there} were Americans. This was 1964 ^[Barry M. Goldwater] a lot of questions about ~~[Barry]~~ Goldwater, presidential race, all that. You see, just a few days before this, while I was in Ireland, ^[Edward M. Kennedy] ~~[Edward M.]~~ Ted Kennedy had flown into the apple orchard up in Northampton. ^[Mass.] After that Bob had announced that he would not, I think, ^[United States] run for the Senate from New York or something, ~~announced~~ that he would not do something.

GREENE: Yeah. Well, he did make an announcement which followed Ted Kennedy's plane crash, so I don't. . . . Oh, when you said, "ran into the apple orchard," I know what you mean now. I didn't think . . .

NOLAN: Yeah, that was his plane crash.

GREENE: ^{Yes,} Yeah, it was right after that, two days later, that he made the speech that he would not run for New York. I never got that.

NOLAN: This was just before they left for the trip.

GREENE: ^{That's right.} Right. In fact, that was a very convenient way of just getting out of town.

NOLAN: Yeah. So there were questions about him, what he was going to do and so on, great apprehension in Europe about the spectre of a Goldwater candidacy and all that sort of thing. But a very, very-- maybe lasted two hours with the questions or something--very lively, animated, tough questions. He was very, very good. So then we got on the plane and flew to Warsaw, were there for about five days, stayed at the Europski Hotel. We had a schedule of, say, three days in Warsaw, a day for the trip to Krakow, a day for the trip to Czestochowa,

Chestahova. At the airport, they were very sensitive about Life magazine, which had done an article on Gomulka ^[Wladislaw Gomulka] shortly before that; very sensitive about NBC ^[National Broadcasting Corp.]. ^{Wells} ^{ge} Hanyon was the NBC correspondent. They wouldn't let him in, Didn't give him a visa at the airport, sent him back out. But everybody else got in, and there was a press party of maybe fifteen to twenty:

[Joseph] Joe Kraft ^[Joseph Kraft] . . .

GREENE: Yeah, he's the one that wrote the autobiography. led the . . .

NOLAN: John--the labor columnist. for the . . .

GREENE: Lewis.

NOLAN: No.

GREENE: I don't mean Lewis, no.

NOLAN: Tony Lewis ^[Anthony Lewis] was. . .

GREENE: Tony Lewis. . .

✓ NOLAN: Yeah, but he wasn't ^{there} in Hurley. John Hurley. The crowds built up around the hotel. You know, like a handful of people the first time in, then every time in and out, more people. At the end of the trip, maybe five, ten thousand people around that hotel every time ^{he} ~~we~~ came in or left. I don't remember the days exactly, but one of the days was Sunday. We went to mass at the cathedral, like five blocks away from the hotel. Fifty people outside the hotel when we left, and then they just followed him along the street, more people gathering all the time. Literally thousands by the time we got to the cathedral.

✓ GREENE: Isn't that when ~~Robert Cavett~~ ^{Cavett} said, "would you tell the attorney general . . ."

NOLAN: Yeah. . . "The roof is falling in." I have ^{the} picture of that, ^{day}

GREENE: There's a little plaque, too.

NOLAN: Is there?

GREENE: Mrs. Kennedy has a cigarette box that says . . .

NOLAN: Oh, yeah.

GREENE: Engraved with it.

NOLAN: Yeah. Oh, that's right, yeah. Well, that was a fantastic experience. Maybe that was like the second day in Warsaw or something. And then after that the crowds were just enormous everyplace. The crowds in Krakow were bigger and stronger and more raucous, and, you know, more vibrant than the crowds in Warsaw. So if you like crowds, it was a hell of a trip. Well, I don't know, ~~what more.~~

GREENE: It's interesting that ~~you never made,~~ ^{you} /don't seem to have made this connection between this trip and an interest in the vice presidency, because a number of people have, including Joe Kraft, who just saw

the whole thing as a setup, as a means of, you know, just showing how strong he was and how wide his reputation was.

NOLAN: Well, I think this was really the first. . . . No, it wasn't actually the first time. The first time Bob Kennedy ever did anything like this was the 1962 trip around the world. But that, along with President Kennedy's foreign trips, I think had served to indicate to him, give him some inkling, of what was out there. I found that in the course of the trips to Africa and South America and so on, this incredible recognition of President Kennedy primarily, but the Kennedys as such and the United States sort of personified by the Kennedys, all over the world, ^{to} remote mountain villages far from any visible communication with the world of, you know, communications and ideas and so on, pictures of President Kennedy.

GREENE: That's funny. We found that constantly in Africa. We lived in a really remote part of Kenya, and every now and then you'd hear a mother who doesn't speak a word of English calling her kids, "Kennedy, Kennedy," and the kid would come running.

Yeah.

NOLAN: Oh, you did? When did you live in Kenya?

GREENE: With the Peace Corps, '65 to '67. And also you'd go into houses . . .

NOLAN: Did you tell me that before?

GREENE: Probably somewhere along the way. You'd go into some little grass hut and they'd have a picture of President Kennedy, and a picture of ^{+ [Jomo Kenyatta],} [Jomo] Kenyatta, and a picture of Robert Kennedy, and this was their world.

NOLAN: Yeah. Well, you know it then. But I think that he had become aware of that phenomenon, and aware of the fact that he was a part of it and was capable of making it work, producing ^{that.} it. So I think

that, I don't know to what extent his ideas became defined as he went along, you know, I think he was interested in the vice presidency, obviously. But this. . . . I think that's an acceptable explanation of it. He may have spelled that all out/to other people, but I never talked about it with him in those terms. He was in public life, he was probably going to run for political office, or was seriously considering running for some political office. Some aspects of this have the ingredients that are relevant to political office: certainly Poland is, and Ireland, and foreign trips generally where you are received that way, are translated through the media into political capital back in the United States. He understood that very well. ^{I mean,} And then there are some quirks of it. Your reception is always greater in ^{the} little towns than it is in a big city. So if somebody's taking pictures, the pictures are better, the people are more animated, and that's where you. . . .

GREENE: Can you remember discussions with him prior to this about the New York thing? There was . . .

NOLAN: I don't think so.

GREENE: . . . quite a lot of talk about it, then he dropped ^{out} after the accident.

NOLAN: Yeah. I don't think so.

GREENE: No. Well, when do you first remember discussing it?

NOLAN: After the ^{1st} was it July 31, ~~or . . .~~

GREENE: What?

NOLAN: After the meeting with Johnson.

GREENE: That was the twenty-ninth.

NOLAN: Of July?

GREENE: (Yeah) ¹⁹⁶⁵ Did you get any feedback on that, other than what's been written?

NOLAN: Well, no. I was there, you know, before and after and all that, and it's been written a lot and I think the stories are all generally accurate. We went to the White House, Johnson went through his act and everything. Bob was very disappointed, really hurt.

GREENE: That he was eliminated, or the way that it was done?

NOLAN: That he was eliminated. He wasn't interested in the details of it. I think by that time he had gotten to the point where he had decided that this was what he really wanted to do. I think that that decision formed itself and evolved over a period of time in the preceding months, but then, in July, he was there. And then, of course, the way it was done was just comic, actually.

GREENE: Do you remember the telephone call^s the next day from (McGeorge Bundy) Bundy, trying to get Robert Kennedy to withdraw voluntarily?

NOLAN: Yeah.

GREENE: Can you remember his reaction to that and the whole effect on his relationship with Bundy?

NOLAN: No, not really. I remember the statement that he put out. I remember working on the statement with Ed Guthman and Bob, reading him different variations and so on. Oh, that's right. There was a delay of twenty-four hours, I guess, between the meeting and then the story about no member of the cabinet or anyone who sits with the cabinet.

GREENE: Oh, there was at least twenty-four hours because I think they tried on two occasions in two different ways to get him to withdraw rather than take the whole crew down with him.

NOLAN: Yeah. "I don't care about myself, but I hate to take all those good fellows over the side."

GREENE: Yeah, over the side. Anyway, when did the New York thing begin to

NOLAN: form as far as you know?

i Well, I think then. I think within that week or within the week after that, or a few days after that or something like that.

GREENE: Was it kind of the sort of thing, he just didn't know where else he could go, or do you think he really had some enthusiasm for it? That seems to be a question.

NOLAN: Well, I remember he asked me what I thought of it and I thought it was a pretty good idea. I think I always thought that it was a better idea than being vice president, but I didn't, I really wasn't in, I didn't express that a lot. I mean, it just didn't come up. Nobody ever said to me, or he never said to me in those terms, "What should I do?" I think that I thought that being vice president was not really right, that it was not a very good job, that it only had one advantage and that wasn't worth all the rest of the disadvantages that were associated with it. Then, of course, any alternative became very much more alive after the meeting at the White House. There weren't any other alternatives. I never really thought that Bob Kennedy could go into private life. I mean, I never heard him say he was going to go teach or anything. I ^{didn't hear a word} ~~would have heard~~ about it. I think he probably said that, I think he probably thought about it, but it never seemed to me to be very realistic. But when we talked about it, I had thought about the New York thing and I did think that it was a good idea and it made sense. So we talked about it for a while like that, and he said, "If I go up there, will you come up with

me?" and I said, "sure." And he said, "Well, all right. We'll probably do that, or we'll try to, you know, we'll work something out on it."

So then, well, then, we just, there were a lot of things happening then. There was the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City.

GREENE: Did you go to that with him?

NOLAN: Well, I went there, I guess I went there a couple of times during the course of the week, either to meet somebody from New York or to meet him. I came back from there one time with him on the Caroline to Washington. I don't remember exactly where I was. I mean, I was

back and forth between Washington and New York with a couple of shots at Atlantic City along the way. I met people in New York: John F. English, Stephen E. Smith, Steve Smith.

GREENE: Had you had any contact with these people--well, Steve Smith probably, but with English or some of the other New York politicians?

NOLAN: Some, but not real . . .

GREENE: Much?

NOLAN: Not much, not before then.

GREENE: Well, was this sort of laying the groundwork, these meetings that you were having then?

NOLAN: Oh, yeah. There's an awful lot of work to do in a political, in any political campaign, particularly when the decision ^{is in} and which is arrived at so late. And surprisingly enough, even with somebody like Bob Kennedy who ^{was} a public figure and had been for four or five years and, you know, had made all kinds of speeches and public appearances and everything, there's just a hell of a lot of work that has to be done in order to find the candidate, you know: what he is in terms of how he's presented, what his themes are--and not just substantive

I think
themes but what he's really supposed to do. A lot of the stuff/you
kind of have to think through yourself, you know, like what am I
doing in New York?

GREENE: You know, I think that . . .

NOLAN: Where is the East River? *[Laughter]*

GREENE: A number of people ^{I think,} would say that this was the major weakness of the
campaign, that this sort of thing was not done initially, either be-
cause of the quickness with which it was all put together, and also
because maybe Robert Kennedy himself wasn't thinking in those broad
terms, of themes, and how he wanted ^{sk} to come across, and that that was
what was wrong with the early part of the campaign, that he was sort
of, "I'm Robert Kennedy, my brother was John Kennedy," and you know.

NOLAN: Yeah. Well, yeah. I think that that's probably a fair statement.
It's a very difficult thing, and ^{there are} an awful lot of pieces to put to-
gether.

GREENE: Do you remember doing that sort of thing? Could you describe what
you did do in that way?

NOLAN: Well, what I did first of all was to try to figure out where New
York was--where the votes were, where they had been in 1960, who
represented what element of political relevance in New York State.
And then there was an awful lot with the agency people, although I
was really only tangentially involved in that.

GREENE: You mean ~~Frederick S. Papert~~ *[Frederick S. Papert]*?

NOLAN: Yeah. There was an awful lot of substantive work: position papers,
meeting with people who know about things like housing in New York;
meetings at Hickory Hill, you know, breakfast meetings, luncheon
meetings.

GREENE: Now, you're talking still about the period, let's say, prior to the actual nominating convention or are you going beyond that?

NOLAN: No, I'm talking about the period prior to the actual nominating convention, which I think was around September ^{first fifth} 1 or 2 or something like that.

GREENE: It was right after Atlantic City, ~~yeah~~. ^{yes}

NOLAN: Yeah. So we're talking about August 1964.

GREENE: ~~Yeah~~, ^{yes} the nominating convention was the first.

NOLAN: And ~~I don't~~, I really don't remember these things other than in a kind of a mosaic.

GREENE: Who was working on that kind of thing with you?

NOLAN: Well, everybody who was involved in the campaign. There were people who were working primarily on issues stuff, substantive stuff. Bill vanden Heuvel, ^{who} was sort of New York adviser to Robert Kennedy at the outset anyway, during this period when we were all down here. I don't know whether ~~Milton~~ Milt Gwirtzman was in at that time or not, but he either was or he was in very shortly after that, also on the substantive side. Maybe about that time Peter Edelman, ^{Peter B. Edelman} and Adam

[Adam ^{Walinsky}]

GREENE: Maybe a little later.

NOLAN: ~~...~~ maybe a little later, yeah, Steve Smith, Jack English, I guess to some extent Paul Corbin . . .

GREENE: ^{with his} ~~had an~~ apartment in New Jersey?

NOLAN: That was later, too. ^{Bill} ~~William F.~~ Haddad; ^[William F. Haddad] I mean all the sort of New York types came out of wherever they were and had advice about New York. And then a part of that was meetings with people who were just substantive as distinguished from political, although some of

too
them were partly political. But Edward J. Logue, some gal who was

Hortie Gable [Hortense Gable]

GREENE: ~~Peidy~~

NOLAN: No, that's Mary Bailey Peidy Gimbel [Mary Bailey Gimbel]

greene: Gimble. Gable. You're right.

NOLAN: Hortie Gable is a woman maybe forty, fifty, something like that, New York City housing expert. Well, that's sort of . . .

GREENE: How did you finally work into the scheduling spot, and do you think it was a logical place for you?

NOLAN: Well, I didn't think about it too much in the beginning, and we didn't talk about it initially, so I just did these . . . I mean, and there was plenty to do.

GREENE: Yeah. 4 yrs.

NOLAN: There wasn't any question of sitting back and wondering, you know, what should I do now, or what's a good place for me, or anything like that. I mean, you just keep just handling the balls that get hit to your part of the infield. Then one day at the Carlyle Hotel, I think, in the bathroom, we were talking about something and he said, "What do you think you should do, John, or what do you think you should," "right place for you," or something like that. And I said, "I don't know. I really haven't thought about it, it just doesn't make a lot of difference." He said, "Who's going to do the scheduling?" or something like that, and I said, "I don't know. I talked to somebody, about Jack English, about that, or something." So he said, "Well, would you handle that, or, do you think you could handle that?" or something," so I said, "Well, I'll be glad to start it or do it or whatever." So that was the beginning.

Now, before that I had talked to people there in a general sense of, if he's nominated, all right; then ^{it's} on September 5, what should he do then, and where should he go, and how many, where is ^C Kayuga County, or whatever it is; how many votes are out there? So I had some sense of that, albeit a very academic one; you know, I'd read the statistics and I'd looked at the map, ^I knew which end of the state was west, that sort of thing. I was really startled, very impressed, by how many votes are in places like Brooklyn. You know, there are more votes in Brooklyn than there are in all but a very few states in the United States, and a great Democratic vote there, too.

GREENE: In fact, I read that very statistic, I think, just the other day.

NOLAN: Yeah.

GREENE: That the population of Brooklyn is . . .

NOLAN: Yeah. I forget what it is now. But then the Democratic vote in Brooklyn is a much higher. . . . Well, let's say that Brooklyn has two and a half million people, and ^{sixty} percent of the registered voters voted Democratic in 1960 or something like that. Well, then if you're looking for X number of votes to win a statewide election in New York, . . .

GREENE: ^{It becomes} Brooklyn's even more important, right.

NOLAN: . . . A hell of a big chunk of them are right there, so if you're going to do it on a one-man, one-vote allocation of personal appearance time, you know, you'd spend every third day in Brooklyn or something. It's really, ^{it's} very far out in proportion to what you think it would be or what I thought it was before I ^{looked at} worked on it. So I had some sense of that, and I knew how to schedule and how the schedule ran and so on, so I guess I just started doing it.

GREENE: How did Justin Feldman get involved?

NOLAN: ^W He needed somebody who knew where New York was.

GREENE: ^{Yes,} ~~Yeah.~~ It seems to have been ^a kind of a logical combination to have an outsider to serve as the "no-man" who can slip out of the state quietly the day after elections, and have someone like Feldman who knows the politicians. Do you think it worked out pretty well?

NOLAN: Yeah, I think it worked out all right. I liked Justin, got along with him well. ^{But} Knowledge, background in New York politics, or some background like that was absolutely essential. ^{It} There's a basic principle of political operation, at least the way the Kennedys worked it, was having someone who is an outsider in an area come in. In the national campaign on a statewide basis it's called a coordinator. The idea of having someone like that is that they're free of local ties, both good and bad. They have neither friends nor enemies, and if they're objective about what they do, they can function with a degree of freedom which is not shared by someone who has worked in that political area. Somebody who lives there, but hasn't worked in ^{the} a political area, is not much good really. So you need that kind of a combination.

Well, then, ~~I don't know,~~ at some point, ~~...~~ I'm not sure whether Justin. . . . I know ~~we,~~ Justin and I got together in Washington first, but ~~I don't know whether that was,~~ I guess that was probably before we sort of moved up to New York and the Chatham Hotel. We just set up an office there and started scheduling.

GREENE: We're not going to have too much more on this tape. ^{we} ~~Well,~~ probably ~~you~~ don't have too much time.

NOLAN: Yeah, I probably better catch this fellow before he leaves.

GREENE: Okay, then maybe we ought to stop. This is kind of a logical spot anyway.