

John R. Reilly Oral History Interview – RFK#2, 10/29/1970
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

John R. Reilly was a campaign worker for John F. Kennedy for President, 1960; Assistant to the Deputy Attorney General and Chief for the Executive Office of United States Attorneys for Department of Justice, 1961 – 1964. This interview focuses on the transition period to the Kennedy Administration post-election, Robert F. Kennedy's [RFK] priorities as attorney general, and the Justice Department's involvement with the March on Washington in 1963, among other issues.

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John R. Reilly – RFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

with

JOHN RICHARD REILLY

October 29, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By James A. Oesterle

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

OESTERLE: In last week's session, you recounted your earliest associations with Robert Kennedy and your subsequent association with the [John F.] Kennedy-for-President organization. I have a few more questions that I'd like to ask about the early period before we pick up where we left off, talking about the Justice Department. Did you play a role in developing or participating in the **postelection or preinaugural task forces**?

REILLY: Yes, but it was very small. It was almost entirely involved with the Justice Department. I was not involved in what was then called the talent hunt for other positions in government. It was [R. Sargent, Jr.] Sarge Shriver and Adam Yarmolinsky and Harris Wofford and a few others, in addition to the ones you would expect like [Kenneth P.] O'Donnell and [**Lawrence F.**] O'Brien and people of that nature. But as far as the talent scouts, I was only involved in the Justice Department portion of it during the interregnum when Bob Kennedy was using the Justice Department as an office and at that point choosing his assistants.

OESTERLE: So the primary role of the task forces was that of a talent hunt rather than perhaps reorganization or reordering of priorities?

REILLY: Oh, excuse me, I wasn't making the distinction, I was misunderstanding you, I guess. There were task forces which

were making reports to the president. The one that automatically occurs to me was a task force studying regulatory agencies.

OESTERLE: Yes.

REILLY: Which was then headed up by former dean of . . . Landis, of the Harvard Law School. But no, I was not involved in any of those.

OESTERLE: Did these results, the recommendations of the task forces play a significant role as, uh, you began your work, and the attorney general began his work, in the Justice Department?

REILLY: Well, I can't specifically, or I can't think of any particular reports or activities of task forces which prepared or guided Bob Kennedy's immediate taking over of the Justice Department--at least that I was not aware of. Other than the, I suppose it was a loosely organized task force or group or whatever you want to call it, on organized crime, and also one on labor racketeering. I was not a party to any of those, nor did I participate in anything of that nature, although I do realize that they were doing some work which was instrumental in directions it would later take in the Justice Department.

OESTERLE: I know that I'm catching you in the middle of a hectic day. But I wondered if there was anything else--of course, we'll have other opportunities to go back to the, this earlier period--but is there anything else that you might comment on in regard to the preinaugural period? In fact, let me add to this chronology, and you might go down and just see if anything strikes you. Do you have any particular insight into how the attorney general prepared himself for the new role?

REILLY: Well, I was aware of the, as I mentioned I think the last time we talked, I was in the office which was being used by the attorney general in preparation for his taking over as attorney general at the date of inaugural. In addition to interviewing a number of people for key positions in the Justice Department, I was quite impressed with the way that he seemed to, he constantly attempting to absorb the information regarding the areas of the Justice Department with which he was not familiar. With obviously, he wasn't familiar with the lands section or the anti-trust section or pretty much the civil section or tax section, as opposed to those areas--criminal--that he had worked in. And he would be calling in, from time to time, an awful lot of personal friends, who either had a background in the Justice Department or had some knowledge of the workings of the various divisions and of the Justice Department generally. And there would be long conversations in which he would be very

OESTERLE: Do you have any comments about such a meeting?

REILLY: I don't see any meeting personally, nor do I recall any conversation. I'm not even sure there was one. I do recall that there was comment amongst the junior

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE THAT BILL DOUGLASS HAD THAT KIND OF BACKGROUND

quizzical as to how they operated: who was of the carry over type people, those people who remain through every administration, were good, and who worked hard and who were bad, and so on. I remember particularly he was, he used Jim McInerney, who's since dead, who at one time was in the criminal division--I believe he may have been chief of it under, in the Truman era. And he used him extensively. They were personal friends. And he got an awful lot of information with Jim. The thing which impressed me most at that point, and if you recall our earlier conversation, I was still, I still didn't know Bob Kennedy very well. But the thing that impressed me more than anything else was the fact that he would, was willing to work such long hours and so, in such a dedicated maison grande, but it's in a dedicated manner to get on top of what he was about to begin to do, and that is run the Justice Department. I mean, it was nothing for him to be at the Justice Department, during those days even, from seven, eight o'clock in the morning until at least, until midnight or longer. I can remember one fellow that I had asked to come in for an appointment at his suggestion and his appointment was at nine o'clock at night, and he couldn't quite figure out what he, why. . . He had never had an appointment at nine o'clock at night before. He said, "What's going to happen?" I said, "You're going to be interviewed for a job." That was just normal. And I think the people that worked with him at that time began to understand a little bit more about his, the way he went at things, the fact that he was constantly learning, that he never felt that he knew enough about anything. He never quit trying to get on top of whatever task he was supposed to perform.

At the same time that this was going on, of course he was involved with the president in the White House in selecting people for other roles in government, not just the Justice Department. So he was combining the two.

OESTERLE: Do you recall a meeting between the new attorney general and his predecessor?

OESTERLE: A transitional type of meeting?

REILLY: I'm sure. . .

OESTERLE: Or any comments about such a meeting?

REILLY: I don't any meeting personally, nor do I recall any conversation. I'm not even sure there was one. I do recall that there was comment amongst the junior members of the staff that Bill Rogers had just kind of picked up and left, almost immediately after the election.

OESTERLE: Was this. . .

REILLY: Larry Walsh, [Lawrence E. Walsh] I believe, was running the Justice Department during the period of time that

we were there, in the interregnum. We had full cooperation, no question about that. But I can't recall ever seeing Rogers or ever seeing Rogers with Bob Kennedy.

OESTERLE: Was this true also with the staff positions? For instance, did you have a meeting with your predecessor?

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OESTERLE: So, my predecessor had gone by the time I was there, by the time I was appointed. The first assistant was running the office, a fellow named [Phillip H.] Paul Mullin, who became my first assistant. Paul Mullin is still there. He's one of the dedicated type that remains no matter what party is in power. My predecessor, although I know his name, I received--I didn't even see him, let's put it that way. I think this happened in some cases, but I think there was full cooperation in others. Perry Morton, as I recall, was the head of the Lands Division, and I think he fully cooperated in the transition when Ramsey Clark took over Lands. Now there was one fellow whose name I can't remember now who even complained that we couldn't remove him as assistant attorney general and was fought it through court--I can't think of his name. There was little cooperation obviously in his department.

OESTERLE: You was that right?

MULLIN: Oh, naturally. I mean it just a--it was not a fraudulent suit; I couldn't call it fraudulent, but it was just a useless thing.

OESTERLE: You'd worked as a trial attorney with the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice in the Chicago office from 1955 to '60, and then you served as the midwestern representative of the Council of State Governments in Chicago from 1960 to '64, prior to the campaign election, and your subsequent appointment as assistant to the deputy attorney general and the chief of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys. You've described the circumstances of your appointment to this position. Do you recall any comments that the attorney general made in the early weeks or even months of his new administration in the new staffing of the Justice Department in regard to priorities? For instance, what captured the attorney general's particular interest? What of the repertoire of the time was to think that it was organized crime and James Hoffa. What else, or perhaps what were the particular areas about there, about Hoffa and other organized crime, that maintained his interest?

MULLIN: I think the reports are correct, insofar as the perhaps number one priority being . . . In his mind I would say the number one priority at the very beginning was in the staffing of the Justice Department. The one thing that he made very clear to me and to others who had similar responsibilities was

THE LAST THING HE TOLD ME BEFORE WE WERE GOING TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR

REILLY: No, my predecessor had gone by the time I was there, by the time I was appointed. The first assistant was running the office, a fellow named [Philip H.] Phil Modlin, who became my first assistant. Phil Modlin is still there. He's one of the dedicated type that remains no matter what party is in power. My predecessor, although I knew him, I received--I didn't even see him, let's put it that way. I think this happened in some cases, but I think there was full cooperation in others. Perry Morton, as I recall, was the head of the Lands Division, and I think he fully cooperated in the transition when Ramsey Clark took over Lands. Now there was one fellow whose name I can't remember now who even complained that we couldn't remove him as assistant attorney general and who fought it through court--I can't think of his name. There was little cooperation obviously in his department.

OESTERLE: You won that fight?

REILLY: Oh, naturally. I mean it just a--it was not a fraudulent suit; I couldn't call it fraudulent, but it was just a useless thing.

OESTERLE: You'd worked as a trial attorney with the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice in the Chicago office from 1955 to '58, and then you served as the midwestern representative of the Council of State Governments in Chicago from 1958 to '60, prior to the campaign, election, and your subsequent appointment as assistant to the deputy attorney general and the chief of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys. You've described the circumstances of your appointment to this position. Do you recall any comments that the attorney general made in the early weeks or even months of the new administration on the new staffing of the Justice Department in regard to priorities? For instance, what captured the attorney general's particular interest? Most of the reporters of the time seem to think that it was organized crime and James Hoffa. What else, or perhaps what were the particulars about these, about Hoffa and about organized crime, that maintained his interest?

REILLY: I think the reports are correct, insofar as the perhaps number one priority being. . . . In his mind I would say the number one priority at the every beginning was in the staffing of the Justice Department. The one thing that he made very clear to me and to others who had similar responsibilities was the fact that he felt the people whom we were going to be clearing for appointment were extremely important, particularly, let's say, in the U.S. attorneys' office where they would--as I explained before--be the only persons who would be identifiable with the Justice Department

in most of the areas of the country. As far as internal priorities within the Justice Department, I believe he began first of all to attempt to get a grasp of the organized crime problem and of the Criminal Division.

As far as Hoffa was concerned, I have always disagreed that this was a priority as far as he was concerned. I've disagreed with the vendetta theory, that when he became attorney general he immediately set out to get Jimmy Hoffa. I believe the fact that a number of things came up regarding Hoffa early in his administration were due to the fact that many of the people under him were dedicated themselves in going after Hoffa. I don't think it ever really took that much of Bob Kennedy's time. What I'm trying to describe is that he was more familiar with the labor racketeering and crime portions of the Justice Department duties. I think he had been dissatisfied as counsel with his liaison with the Justice Department when he was up on the Hill, so I think he made immediate attempts to make sure that those things which had dissatisfied him earlier, when he was looking at it from the other side, were taken care of within the Justice Department. I think because of his knowledge of labor racketeering perhaps there were more--there appeared to be more--interest, but I think it was mostly in the newspapers that he was out to get Jimmy Hoffa.

OESTERLE: He had, earlier, been most critical of the Justice Department. He said at one point that he wasn't going to refer any more cases to the Justice Department, I recall.

REILLY: Well, I'm not too familiar with that, but I think it had to do with some transcripts of testimony which were given up on the Hill and the fact that the normal procedures for the senatorial committees were to refer them to the Justice Department for examination for perjury, et cetera. And I think he felt that perhaps those things hadn't been reviewed in the manner in which he felt they should be reviewed.

OESTERLE: Were there any directives or guidelines that you were aware of that came down from the White House, in terms of ordering priorities in the Justice Department, especially in these early days?

REILLY: None that I know of. I think most of those things were done informally anyhow, between the president and his brother.

OESTERLE: Were your duties as assistant to the deputy attorney general and those as chief of the office for U.S. Attorneys

one and the same?

REILLY: Pretty much so. I never did understand the two titles, other than for the fact that it was done for table of organization purposes. I guess they figured that the head of the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys--which is kind of a strange name to begin with--should have another title which would identify him with the deputy, because, after all, it was part of the deputy's office.

OESTERLE: Were you primarily responsible to the deputy attorney general, Byron White [Byron R. "Whizzer" White] and later Nicholas Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach]?

REILLY: Yes, both were my primary responsibilities--my primary overseers, let's put it that way. As things functioned in the Justice Department, if Byron was gone--and he was at one point for a lengthy period of time when he had an ulcer problem--we functioned directly with the attorney general. After Byron went on the [Supreme] Court and Nick became deputy, I think my lines of communication were almost entirely with the attorney general rather than Nick, because we had almost completed the selection of U.S. attorneys at that point and their assistants and Nick was not familiar with the process. In addition, he was completely apolitical and, as I explained before, these were quasi-political appointments. So at that point I--I mean it wasn't a dedicated bypassing of the deputy; it was just the simplest way to do it. But I was directly responsible to them and received other assignments from them from time to time, mostly involved with legislation, recommended legislation at the Justice Department, and activities--I suppose you would call it lobbying activities--on the Hill with people that I knew, or with people who I was told to visit and attempt to explain what our bill meant, things of that nature. Those were the usual additional assignments.

OESTERLE: Relations were informal, though, for the most part?

REILLY: Yes.

OESTERLE: If anyone wanted to go in and see the attorney general, from your offices, they could do so? They had access?

REILLY: All you had to do was get by Angie [Angela M. Novello].

OESTERLE: Were you and the executive assistant to the attorney general included in the same conferences, or was there a prearranged division in your responsibilities?

REILLY: [Andrew F.] Andy Oehmann?

OESTERLE: Yes.

REILLY: Oh, there was a distinct, complete distinction of responsibilities there. Andy worked directly for the attorney general--if we're talking about him, Andy Oehmann as executive assistant, yes. He worked directly for the attorney general and had certain assigned tasks. For one thing he reviewed all activities of the pardon attorney, the Parole Board [Board of Parole]. Andy's background was primarily tax, so he did much review of tax cases recommended by the Tax Division, and the attorney general relied upon him heavily in those areas. And, of course, he assisted John Seigenthaler when John was the administrative assistant.

Again, it's the thing which I've always tried to point out about the Justice Department: everybody was kind of in the thing together. If something had to be done and Andy happened--if Bob Kennedy walked out of his office and Andy was sitting there and not John, Andy would be told to do it.

OESTERLE: How did this work in terms of high priority conferences, decisions, or problems that the attorney general all of a sudden was faced with?

REILLY: Well, my impression was that Andy was not always a party to them, but because of his previous experience with the Justice Department he would be called in many times for advice as to how the department operated or who we should get a hold of in such and such a division that might be able to handle a job, or something of that nature. I'm not sure that Andy was just automatically included in all high-level conferences.

OESTERLE: Did the attorney general tend to meet alone with the deputy attorney general on a regular or daily basis?

REILLY: I think it was probably not a regular basis. However, it was a normal thing. I mean it was . . .

OESTERLE: As needed, as required. . . .

REILLY: I know Byron White was up and down the elevator and in the back door, you know, ten, fifteen times a day.

OESTERLE: Did this working relationship remain constant, or did it change with the appointment of Nicholas Katzenbach?

REILLY: I don't think it was as close with Nick, although the relationship between deputy and attorney general did remain, although I think Byron White's relationship was a more personal and . . .

OESTERLE: One of longer standing.

REILLY: One of longer standing, and more personal, more advisory than was Nick's. But you must remember that by the time Nick came in, Bob Kennedy had a pretty firm grasp of the operation.

OESTERLE: Who played the primary role in handling the patronage appointments, and was there a difference again here between the role that White and Katzenbach played in this regard? Of course, most of the appointments had already been made in White's period, but there were more to be made later on, on an ongoing basis, under Katzenbach.

REILLY: Yes. I think at that point--well, Byron played a great role in the appointment process. It was very important to him. And as you pointed out, many of the appointments had been made by the time he went on the Court. Nick's role was not as great, and he tended to rely, let's say. . . . Well, judgeships is a good example, because judgeship appointments were a constantly ongoing thing, and, if you recall, we were given new judgeships by the Congress, and they had to be filled.

[Joseph F.] Joe Dolan, who was assistant deputy attorney general to both Byron and to Nick, was almost entirely responsible for judgeships, and handled not only the people who would recommend judges on a political basis, but he handled the American Bar Association references and checks, and he handled the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] checks and the final appointments up to the reference to the White House. Joe was constantly involved in that, and I'd say he had the major responsibility for that.

OESTERLE: How would you characterize your first impressions of Robert Kennedy, going back to the days when you were in the Council [Council of State Governments] and this later period? You've said that you were impressed with the amount of time and the energy that he put into shaping the new role and in staffing the Justice Department. Do you recall. . . .

REILLY: Well, even from the beginning I was impressed with the seemingly unceasing energy of the man. It just kind of sits on my mind, the constant energy. Secondly, the

ability to absorb such a wide variety of things. Naturally everybody had their own personal matters which they wanted to get to the attorney general. It amazed me that you could walk into his office after someone else, where he would have to shift gears almost immediately, and he'd make a quick decision on what your question was. Each of us, I think, in talking together over the years has always mentioned the fact that we were a little disappointed perhaps that we didn't sit down and discuss a matter for forty minutes or something, but it didn't take that long with Bob Kennedy. You presented the thing in the right way to him: What was the decision? The decision was made, and you may be out in five minutes. Then we all began to realize that he had just so many things he had to think about that he really couldn't concentrate on any person, individual as opposed to problem, much longer than when he was before his eyes. And I think there were some people hurt by it--not hurt on a continuing basis, but who felt that perhaps they were . . .

OESTERLE: Slighted.

REILLY: Slighted. I think is a good word, because there were some who never quite understood that when Bob Kennedy thought of something, if you happened to be standing before him, he'd tell you to go do it, and maybe it was somebody else's job. But that didn't take long for everybody to get pretty cooperative on that basis, because everybody understood what was happening.

OESTERLE: Were there any major problems left from the [Dwight D.] Eisenhower years that had to be dealt with?

REILLY: Again, we have to think of my role. In my role there were none, other than a continuing effort to upgrade the staffing, pay, et cetera of offices. There was a problem left over of the fact that Justice Department employees generally were underpaid. There was the leftover problem of the lack of blacks in responsible positions. There was the leftover problem of the General Aniline [and Film Corporation] case, which I never quite understood, but I know it was a hot potato because of all the conversation regarding it around the department, General Aniline finally being settled during the Kennedy administration. But I can't think of anything else that I really. . . . I'm sure there were others.

OESTERLE: Was there a different focus in any way between the way your predecessor handled his role and the way you handled yours?

REILLY: Oh, I think yes, in one way only. You must remember that he had the job after the appointments had been made in

most of the offices. I'm talking about U.S. attorneys plus assistant U.S. attorneys. So his primary role was to make them more efficient and to oversee their workload, et cetera.

I think it changed when I went in. I was fortunate in that everyone that was appointed, I knew. So the relationship of the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys changed completely in that it was a much more personal relationship than it had been in the past. I think because of this personal relationship the office was used as a buffer between the department--by that I mean by the various divisions--and the U.S. attorney's office, and vice versa. I think my predecessor was not a middleman, which was the role that I took and the way which I envisioned the office should operate. He was the Justice Department's liaison to the field, and the field's liaison with the Justice Department. So I think it changed in that manner, but probably because of the circumstances.

My predecessor was a U.S. attorney. In fact he was the U.S. attorney in Tulsa, and a very good one, and he knew the problems of the U.S. attorneys but came into the office at a different period than I did. I came in at the beginning of an administration and he came in at the end of an administration.

OESTERLE: Did you find very early or as time passed that your views on policy questions, your philosophy towards them, was different than your predecessor's in any way? Or perhaps even on specific . . .

REILLY: Well, I think a little bit different in that I found myself being an advocate for the U.S. attorneys with the Justice Department people more so than he had. I think he probably was fearful that he was identified as a U.S. attorney and therefore would always lean on . . .

OESTERLE: Overcompensate a little bit.

REILLY: That's right. So I think he backed off a little bit. But I felt my role was more to fight for their views than what he had done.

OESTERLE: Do you recall any specific example that would illustrate this?

REILLY: Well, I can recall one particularly where [Louis F.] Lou Oberdorfer, when he took over the Tax Division, decided that the Justice Department, the Tax Division

people in Washington, were going to try all criminal tax appeals, no matter where they came up. [Robert M.] Bob Morgenthau took over New York Southern [District]--which is Manhattan--which has always been a pretty autonomous office. They always operated much like they weren't part of the Justice Department. And Morgenthau said, "No, you're not. My men are going to try criminal tax appeals because it's one of the things I can tell them when I try to hire, that they're going to be appealing tax cases. If I have to tell them they can't, that every time an important matter comes up, whether. . . ."

And this carried over from the tax field. It was a problem that the U.S. attorneys constantly had, and that was that the heads of the divisions in the Justice Department would want their men to get experience out in the field trying cases. The U.S. attorneys said, "Well, why should we sit out here where we know the judges, where we know the people, where we know the court procedures, where we know everything, and then all of a sudden have some big deal come in from Washington to try our cases?" This specifically happened in the New York Southern and this argument began between Morgenthau and Oberdorfer.

Eventually I had to take the argument to the deputy and state my position, which was that the U.S. attorneys should try almost everything in their districts and not be bothered with people wandering in and out from Washington. He agreed with me and the problem was solved, although we constantly had problems with Organized Crime [and Racketeering Section] people from Washington who would all of a sudden turn up in a district. And then I'd get a call from the U.S. attorney and say, "Who is so-and-so? He's in town, and I've heard from somebody else that he's here, and he's a Justice Department man. Why didn't I know he was coming?" Organized Crime was an altogether different operation. They had to operate on a national basis and had to coordinate pretty much what they were doing through Washington. So they did go into towns from time to time without the U.S. attorney knowing it, but this was a mistake.

Once we solved that very simply by just saying, "Look, when you go into Kansas City, call the U.S. attorney before you do anything else, and tell him you're there, or you're coming, and that you'd like to use his office and that you have a specific responsibility and you're not cutting into him or anything of that nature. And don't make any press releases, don't talk to the press, and so on." Now that solved that, as far as everybody was concerned. But there were always incidents arising where someone would forget and talk to the press and tell them, for instance, what they were doing in Kansas City. Then the press would go to the U.S. attorney and he may not even have

heard of it which was a problem.

OESTERLE: Were there any instances of problems between divisions in the Justice Department that you're aware of? Not necessarily conflicts of jurisdiction. . . .

REILLY: No, I think that there were arguments from time to time, as lawyers would do, as to the relative merits of a case, whether or not it should be brought or shouldn't be brought, or whether or not we would win it or had a chance of winning it or didn't. And I . . .

OESTERLE: This would be on an informal basis?

REILLY: Informal. And I mean there were always those arguments, but it's just like a law firm. I mean, my law firm lawyers argue about whether or not it's a good case or a bad case, but nothing which ever caused any morale or any problems of any nature that I can think of.

OESTERLE: [Do you recall any instances when the attorney general got involved in any differences between your office or other departments, divisions, or even agencies?

REILLY: None, particularly in my office. I do recall one situation which occurred early in our administration, which caused great consternation, and that involved a judge in New York, a Supreme Court judge. A supreme court judge in New York is not the court of last resort, it's an appeals court, so it's not like the Supreme Court of the United States or the Supreme Court of Illinois or something of that nature. But still he's a man that's very high up in judicial circles in the state. And this man was Vincent Keogh. His brother [Eugene J. Keogh] was a congressman--had been for twenty some odd years at that time--was quite a powerful man, was very active in New York State politics, was very close to Joseph Kennedy, the ambassador, and was probably one of the one or two men most responsible for the New York delegation--or New York politicians or whatever you want to call it--backing Jack Kennedy at the time of the [Democratic National] Convention, and had played a very, very important role in those early days where backing was necessary.

New York at that time was a fairly well organized Democratic operation. The Liberal party was not as great as it is today. There were splinter groups, but it was still better organized. If you had 104 delegates at the convention, the 104 delegates usually went one way. Keogh was close to the president, as I say, close to Joseph P. Kennedy, and through a grand jury investigation in New York, there was

testimony given that involved Vincent Keogh--the Supreme Court justice or judge--with a labor racketeer and other people, and involved a payoff on a state court matter. The grand jury recommended indictment.

I think I can't recall any incident involving a criminal matter which caused more consternation than that early one in the administration, and Bob Kennedy always told me later that. . . . Short story: We ended up indicting Vince Keogh; he was convicted and sent away, put in jail. He's out now, back in civilian life, or whatever you want to call it. I don't think Eugene Keogh ever really forgave Bob Kennedy for indicting him. I don't think Bob Kennedy ever really recovered from what he had to do, but he had to make a decision early in his administration as to whether or not he was going to be a political attorney general or attorney general of the United States and true to his oath. There was pressure, I'm sure, I know of from the White House that this thing should not have happened.

OESTERLE: Was it indirect pressure or was it directly from the president?

REILLY: I doubt if it was from the president directly. I don't know, and I can't say that. I mean I know of people in the White House who felt. . . . You see, what was involved here in this case was a man who was the presumed go-between between the man who gave the money to Keogh and Keogh, and he was of a bum reputation. The argument always was: This man's a liar; this is probably not so; Vince Keogh wouldn't do it; you're basing a case upon testimony of a man of poor reputation and a known liar. There's just too much at stake here to be going ahead. There were people in the Justice Department who of course felt that we had to go ahead. There were people in the White House that felt that the implications were such that we shouldn't go ahead on that basis. That's where the problems came in.

It wasn't a--I don't mean to give the impression that it was a cut-and-dried case, that somebody had a picture of somebody handing money to Vince Keogh, but don't indict him. It was a questionable thing, and Bob Kennedy could have killed the case, and done so with probably a clear conscience on the basis of the fact that the evidence is not good enough, but he didn't.

OESTERLE: Did he assign anyone to study the details of the case?

REILLY: Oh yes, [Herbert J., Jr.] Jack Miller, who was head of the Criminal Division, and Byron White was very much involved in it. The matter was examined as thoroughly as

any matter that would ever come up. I do recall one incident involving that matter which has always been very interesting to me--I wish I could have been a fly on the wall. Jack Kennedy resumed a tradition, and that was a reception at the White House for Supreme Court justices and Justice Department personnel. I think it was in '61, and that was our first visit to the White House as members of the Justice Department. It was a gay party. Drinks were served, and everybody drank quite a bit and had a good time, and Mrs. [Jacqueline Bouvier] Kennedy and the president mixed throughout the crowd the entire night.

In the front hall of the White House there's a winding stairs, and at one point I remember looking up on the landing. Standing on the landing were the president, Bob Kennedy, Jack Miller, and Byron White. It was a very animated conversation. Only the noise below kept the actual conversation from being heard, but the noise of the conversation was evident, and it was obvious that there was an argument taking place--much gesticulating, et cetera. I asked Jack Miller after that what was going on, and he said, "Well, it was the Keogh matter." I only point this out--I don't know who took what role--to show that it was an extremely touchy and a tough matter, I'm sure, for the attorney general to decide in the very beginning. I would suspect that the president would have preferred that he hadn't done it, but he had no choice.]

I forget our original question even, now what we were talking about. You asked me, I think, about conflict or something of that nature. I'd point that out, the conflict between the White House and the Justice Department. The straight political people at the White House felt that nothing should be done because there was a legitimate reason for failing to indict Vince Keogh.

I would say that if the matter came up under a Republican administration, it may not have happened. But this was such an eye-catcher, plus the fact that it involved [Antonio] "Ducks" Corallo, who was a notorious labor racketeer and was involved in the conspiracy, it would have been very difficult to kill everything.

I've often felt that it was just one of those terrible accidents of timing. I was always sympathetic. Keogh--Gene Keogh--was a very close friend of mine, and I think it caused a problem between the two of them, Bob Kennedy and Gene Keogh, which I've never been quite sure was solved, although Gene Keogh fully supported Bob Kennedy in '68.)

OESTERLE: Oh, he did?

REILLY: Yes.

OESTERLE: Do you recall any problems with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, under Raymond Farrell as well as under Joe Irving?

REILLY: No, I didn't. Who's Irving? General [J. M.] Swing was prior to Ray Farrell.

OESTERLE: The [Patrick V.] Pat McNamara complaint.

REILLY: No, I'm not familiar with that. No, I'm only familiar with the fact that, I think, one of the few requests made by Eisenhower was that we keep General Swing on as head of Immigration until such time as he reached his full retirement age, which Bob Kennedy granted. So while we were in the early months of the Justice Department nobody could figure out why General Swing was still in charge of Immigration, as here he was this close friend of Eisenhower's, and Ray Farrell being a close friend of John Rooney [John J. Rooney] was sitting there waiting to take the job over at any given moment. I asked Bob one day why it was, and he said, "Because that's one of the few things Eisenhower asked the president."

OESTERLE: John Douglas followed [William H., Jr.] Bill Orrick as assistant attorney general in charge of the Civil Division. Orrick had instituted daily reports to the attorney general. Was this policy continued?

REILLY: As far as I know that was done by almost all divisions-- I'm not sure about daily, but weekly I'm sure. I don't know whether John continued it or not; I presume he did.

Sometime as we get along here, when you start talking about the March on Washington in '63, you'll get a little insight on John. John Douglas and I handled that thing, which was probably one of the greatest experiences.

OESTERLE: What . . .

REILLY: No, it wasn't funny but so many funny things happened. [Interruption] I mentioned to you the fact that your mentioning John Douglas to me reminded me of the--I jumped ahead and it reminded me of the March on Washington in August of '63. My first awareness of that was one time I got a call from [Richard] Dick Donahue--who was then at the White House as legislative liaison working for Larry O'Brien--and he said, "What are your plans for the rest of the summer?" This was in late July. And I said, "Well, we're going to take a little vacation, we hope, at the end of August." He said, "Well, I may have just done something which is going to ruin

your vacation." So I asked him what it was, and he said, "We had a meeting regarding the civil rights bill at the White House the other night, and the attorney general was there." He said the president brought up the fact that there was supposed to be some march on Washington coming, going to take place in August, and what was the government doing to make sure that it was peaceful and well done and didn't cause any incidents, and so on. Bob Kennedy answered, "Nothing," and the president said, "Well, how the hell do you expect to get a civil rights bill passed if these people come down here without any control or guidance," and used a rather earthy expression about what they might do to the Washington Monument in regard with relieving themselves thereabouts.

He said Bob explained to him--this is through Dick Donahue I'm getting this now--that this was something which was being done by the blacks and that there should not be any government role in it because he didn't want it to appear we were sponsoring it, for one thing, or supporting it, other than just in general support, and we didn't want it to appear to the blacks that we were trying to run it. And the president said, "Well, something's going to have to be done," and gave the assignment to the attorney general. So in conversation with Dick Donahue, Dick Donahue recommended that Reilly be given the role of working with the march people.

So, with that warning, I knew what was about to happen. I got called up to Bob's office, and he asked me if I--if John Douglas and I--would take over the responsibility for the March on Washington, about which we knew absolutely nothing other than what we read in the newspapers. To try to make sure that it was done in an orderly manner, with a minimum of confusion, and that they accomplish what they intended to accomplish and weren't attacked or didn't have any internal strife.

I can't recall the exact date, but John Douglas and I then put together a task force which was primarily two of us plus [James J. P.] Jim McShane, who was then chief marshal of the United States. And we began meeting every night at five-thirty and assigning various roles to one another as to arranging for this particular matter. It involved, of course, getting together with the local police, the [U.S.] Park Police, the administration of government within the District [of Columbia], the army, everybody imaginable, just to make contingent plans--and with the March on Washington people. That was being headed pretty much at that time by Bayard Rustin. [Walter E.] Fauntroy, here in the District, was very much involved, and of course [Martin Luther, Jr.] King, and [John] Lewis, the head of SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], and [A. Philip] Randolph and the other black

leaders who were organizing the matter. So we first held a meeting with the black leaders, and they were quite upset about thinking that we were going to try to take it over. We finally convinced them, after a series of meetings, that this isn't what we were doing at all. As a matter of fact we were just--publicly we weren't doing a thing, but we wanted to make sure that they had the right protection, that the thing was orderly, that there be such things as outdoor toilets available--which they hadn't even thought of--that there would be food available for a great number of people coming to town, that there would be . . .

OESTERLE: Press relations would be handled properly.

REILLY: That there would be organization to it, which would make it much easier and that we wanted to cooperate with them. We were hoping that we--we didn't want to impose restrictions, but we wanted to make suggestions which would be helpful. So we worked very closely with the police--the local police--as to routes of march, areas which would be blocked off for traffic, et cetera, parking, where the buses that brought these people in would go, where we would get Sani-Kans and Johnny On The Spots and things of that nature.

We'd meet every night and go over these things, but Jim McShane, thank heaven, was the balancing force of this whole thing, because it was a rather touchy thing. We were working completely undercover, I guess you might say. I mean, we weren't talking to the press. We didn't want the press to really know that we were involved here, because, you know, a big story saying, "Government Organizing March on Washington" was just exactly what we didn't want to happen. Obviously that would be the first headline, and then the explanations would come later, and it would be too late.

OESTERLE: It would be the break, too, with the civil rights movement.

REILLY: Oh yes. So this was a touchy thing. We'd be going through this day after day, and Jim McShane would always come up with some remark which would straighten everybody out. Of course every time I think of Jim McShane I have to smile, because I think he's one of the most entertaining men I ever met, and one of the most dedicated to Bob Kennedy that I ever met. For instance, one night we had a big meeting about how many--McShane was assigned the task of getting the outdoor portable toilets. We asked Jim, "Well, what have you done today, Jim?" And he says, "Well, I've had a terrible problem. I can't decide." He says, "Sani-Kan has a forty-gallon capacity and Johnny On The Spot has a fifty-gallon capacity. I just can't make up my mind which to get." You know, this was involved in little dinky things like this, and here we are, we've got a hundred thousand people coming down here. He said, "So I've decided I'm going to get the

Sani-Kan, and they're going to. . . ." What he was leading up to was the fact that he had already arranged to have these things contributed by people, and that nobody was paying for them or anything. We said, "Well, how many are you going to have, Jim?" And he says, "Well, two." We said, "Two? What are you talking about?" He said, "That's simple. One for blacks and one for whites." But it was just. . . .

We started talking about food, and Jim said, "I don't care how much we handle the food, but I do want the pork chop concession myself." These things may sound disrespectful to black people, but they were not in the . . .

OESTERLE: Not in the context of what was trying to be done.

REILLY: Yes. But he kept us very loose because of this. At any rate, we had full cooperation of the Park Police and the Department of the Interior, the local people, the Department of the Army--because we were fearful that. . . . We knew with a crowd of that size, given the--even in those days. Today it would be much more worrisome, but even in those days, I mean, what would happen if you had a crowd of a hundred thousand people and somebody threw a firecracker in the middle of them? Or if there was an incident where a white patrolman arrested some wild black, or something, or black, vice versa. So there was a great fear--not fear, but an awareness of all these things that must be done.

Constantly Bob Kennedy would be either dropping into one of our meetings or calling John Douglas or myself and saying, "What are you doing about this?" or, "What are you doing about that?" Luckily we were normally well enough prepared or had gone far enough ahead that we could answer his questions.

The army was very cooperative in that they established communications for us between various spots on the line of march and the [Lincoln] Memorial and the Washington Monument and the Justice Department and the White House, and the Union Station. I mean, we had outposts and phones connected, and we were in constant communication during the entire matter. They were exceptionally cooperative with this. All of this was done, all of this was set up without real knowledge on the part of the press, let's say, as to the government involvement in it.

I remember we decided that one of the vantage points. . . . We finally got the black people to agree that they would meet on the Washington Monument grounds, that the march itself would be to the

Lincoln Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial would be the site of the speeches, and that they would be limited to that. They had started with the idea of marching in from the city limits, and it would have been completely uncontrollable. They finally came back to all of these things that we suggested, fortunately. They began to realize, as we pointed out to them the different problems, the necessity that their march come off exactly the way they wanted it to and that there be no incidents.

As a result, quite frankly, I think it was one of the great--I mean I think you can almost date the black coming of age in American politics and the political scene almost from that date. It was such an impressive thing, totally, to the entire people, the country, and Washington. I really think that it started them with some organization, that obviously fell apart. King went down in some people's estimation, SNCC became a mess after that, and you know, there were little splits in their own organization, but at that time they were all together and it worked.

I guess what I was saying is Bob Kennedy, although he trusted us and let us have free rein constantly as to how we were arranging this, was constantly inquisitive as to how we were arranging it. Oh, a couple things I think we did get clearance on them. I had decided that one of the best things we could do that day would be to close the bars in Washington, and that is a pretty serious matter. It had to be done by the proclamation of--I guess the chief of the council [Board of Commissioners] then was [Walter N.] Tobriner. It was a difficult decision because it worked both ways. I mean, it was saying, "We're closing the bars because we think you're going to come down here and get drunk," and still it was saying, "We're closing the bars because, you know, we'd rather have everybody at the monument instead of partying. We're closing the bars because we think whites might get drunk and get together and come down with clubs," something of that nature. But it was a touchy thing, and no matter what you did it was going to appear wrong to somebody.

OESTERLE: And the businessmen, of course, don't like that, the bar owners, the clubs.

REILLY: Oh, yes. [David G.] Duke Zeibert was just out of his mind that day. You know, "What the hell are you doing to me?" Duke and I are old friends. That was the first time I ever really got to know Jimmy Breslin. Jimmy had to agree. . . . We only closed them--we did get an agreement out of the blacks that they would be out by sundown, which caused tremendous problems to them. But the fact was that they made this a one-day thing and would

not be here overnight. That would have brought up problems of lodging, problems--simply nighttime problems--of people roaming the streets during the night. They had agreed that they would come, say, from Philadelphia and leave and go back to Philadelphia that day, or come from New York, or come from wherever they were coming, and leave that day.

This was suggested merely because of the security problems involved, plus the housing problem. Where were you going to put up that number of people in this town? I mean, churches were opening anyhow for food and for organization spots and so on, you know, and homes, but you couldn't put up that many people. So we didn't have to close the bars all day. We closed them from--I forget what it was--ten in the morning or whenever they can open. Maybe they can't open till noon, but noon till 8 p.m. or something of that nature. We did go to Bob Kennedy with that question, and he approved our decision that we would ask Tobriner to close them. Tobriner completely cooperated and they were closed. There was no liquor sold during the March on Washington.

I was going through a pile of records in my house the other night and I found a record of Mahalia Jackson which was unopened. I was trying to remember, "Why do I have this record which is unopened?" Then it dawned on me. At the Lincoln Memorial Mahalia Jackson appeared and sang that day, and just had the--she sang "I've Got the Whole World in My Hands," remember?

OESTERLE: Yes, I was there.

REILLY: It was just a fantastic thing. We had our outpost at the Washington Monument, and one of the questions arose. What if some goofy guy gets up and gets that microphone-- I mean, out of the normal program--and arouses these people in some manner? Once aroused, that entire crowd would have been unmanageable. Even though the black people brought their own marshals, who did a fantastic job--most of them were off-duty cops and so on from New York who came down here and just did an unbelievable job with the crowd. But still, what would happen? So we arrived at the--we had the Signal Corps [White House Army Signal Agency] set up an operation where we could cut the microphone at any time and cut the loudspeaker. Then we wondered, what do we do then? I mean, all of a sudden you've got everything dead and these people perhaps aroused or perhaps angry, angry because they can't hear, or something of that nature.

So, I went out and bought the Mahalia Jackson record and we set up a little turntable. The plan was that if we had to cut the

thing off I was immediately going to slap the Mahalia Jackson record on, and God knows whether it would have worked or not. Thank heaven it didn't have to be given a chance. Then, as I said, but the thing was unopened. What was I thinking of that day? It would have taken me ten minutes fumbling around trying to open the thing and get it on the turntable. Why didn't I have it just sitting there?

But well, as you recall if you were there, it was one of the most stirring things that I have ever seen in my life. We were in constant communication with a phone in the attorney general's office, and he remained in his office for the most part that day. We were in constant communication with the White House, and we had set up-- in fact the president had agreed to meet the leaders of the march and converse with them.

OESTERLE: Who acted as the president's liaison with you at that point, when you were in touch with the . . .

REILLY: [James J.] Jim Rowley, I think, was doing it that time, the head of Secret Service. I think he was pretty much--and Pierre [E. G. Salinger]. Pierre was handling the arrangements for the meeting and so on.

OESTERLE: Was [Edwin O.] Ed Guthman involved in any way?

REILLY: Oh, Ed was involved, as he always was, but he wasn't involved in the arrangements. I mean I know that while there were many times when I talked from one station or another to the attorney general's office, Ed was there and was listening in and was asking questions about what was happening, whether it was peaceful.

OESTERLE: Was there any specific advice from Katzenbach or [Burke] Marshall or Oberdorfer?

REILLY: Particularly from Burke, about the--we were inundated at that point with FBI reports as to who was coming and their tremendous connection with the Communist Party and so and and so forth. But we did know that there were people coming who didn't have the greatest reputation in the world. There were obviously going to be people coming to those things. But the Bureau didn't even trust Bayard Rustin. I mean, they wouldn't--and Bayard Rustin was the one real cool head in this thing that just made that march work. I just gained the greatest respect that I could have for any man for him during that period of time. We used to get reports about, you know, "You were talking to Bayard Rustin yesterday,

and Bayard Rustin is known to be friendly with so-and-so." You know, just the type of thing you read in the Atlantic Monthly article on him, that vague. . . .

We have stacks of reports. The FBI report from Philadelphia: the report is that such-and-such bus line has been--"Fourteen buses have been rented, and five thousand are coming from here," and you know. We asked for it on that part. We asked the FBI to attempt to determine ahead of time how many people we could expect that day. So many of these reports were at our request, asking them to make determinations through their contacts, et cetera, as to how many people were coming. We tried to put this all together to try to judge the crowd. We misjudged it completely. I mean, where they'd say that fourteen buses had been rented in Philadelphia, my God, we must have had fifteen thousand people from Philadelphia.

We set up, but we had them--we suggested, for instance, to the leadership that they set up booths out on all the major highways, with signs saying, you know, "Information," to direct the people coming in private cars. They really organized the thing well. But I guess the thing I was about to say was I'll never forget--the plan of march was from the Monument up Constitution [Avenue] and left under those trees there to the Memorial. It was supposed to have been led by King and the leadership in a row. I went out to Detroit and talked to the police out there about how they had handled a similar thing, and I talked to the people in Chicago about how they had handled a similar thing. I got a lot of good advice from them, and a lot which we put into use regarding police tactics and so on.

OESTERLE: And handling of the parking problem or the buses.

RESILLY: And handling crowds, and how we should make sure that the leadership of the march was there in front, because normally people wouldn't. . . .

But anyhow, as you recall, the most stirring sight that I've ever seen is when they left the monument and came to the Memorial. The major line was curb to curb up Constitution Avenue, but then there was the overflow which came up both sides of the reflecting pool, and this singing, "We Shall Overcome," and this tremendous crowd. And there we were, standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, seeing this happening. I can't ever remember being as stirred as I was at that particular point.

Right at that point--Walter Reuther [Walter P. Reuther] was involved in this thing too, and we had them in a kind of a little

back room behind Lincoln's statue and they were discussing. It became apparent that John Lewis was going to give rather a rabble-rousing speech very critical of the president and very critical of the administration's activities in civil rights, which was not in keeping with the whole thing. King was trying to talk him out of it, and Reuther was trying to talk him out of it, and he remained adamant.

Now, the invocation was to be given by then, I don't think he was [Patrick A.] Cardinal O'Boyle yet; he was Bishop O'Boyle, as I recall. All of a sudden a phone call came through from somebody-- I think somebody in Bob Kennedy's office; Douglas, I think it was-- and said, "Cardinal O'Boyle has just refused to give the invocation unless he's assured that Lewis will not be critical, will go according to the tone of the entire thing. Now, this is as this crowd is approaching; you knew very well they were going to get there, and the program was supposed to start immediately. O'Boyle had just said, "If Lewis is going to give this kind of a speech I'm not coming down there."

So, you know, it's just one of those panic situations: Well, what are you going to do? I got Reuther, and said, "Have you solved this matter with Lewis yet?" And he says, "Yes, we have. Lewis has just promised us that he's going to be critical, but that he will not do it in a manner which is liable to arouse ire amongst the crowd." And he said, "I think the tone of everybody else will be such that there's not much possibility."

I can't even recall how it was done, but I can recall calling O'Boyle's hotel--he was at the Mayflower for some reason--getting him in his suite, saying, "It's solved." Now he had to take--"I'm Reilly"; he doesn't know who Reilly is. You know, I'm telling him, "The whole problem's solved, Mr. Cardinal. Come on down, give your invocation." And then the question: How do we get him in? I can remember running up this street that goes directly--it must be 20-somethingth--to get the cardinal, to make sure he got through the police lines up there, running and finding him almost immediately. As I ran up to the police lines, here I find the cardinal sitting there in his car with his entourage with him, got them, ran back down in front of them to the Lincoln Memorial, brought them up the back way, walked in front, he got up and gave the invocation. It was just like nothing had ever happened. All of a sudden, a half hour before this, was a complete crisis. I can remember picking up the phone and calling Bob Kennedy and saying, "I've got the cardinal here. Everything's going to go just like it was planned," and huffing and puffing, and you know, expecting like, "Well, I guess we're going to have to give you the Legion of Honor medal,

Reilly," or something. He said, "Well, that's fine, John. Now look, just keep in touch." And I was so proud.

But as you know, the thing did go off beautifully, and it was one of the major highlights of those early years, and went off without incident. It was a beautiful day. King gave one of his greatest speeches. That was the "I have a dream" speech. And they left town, and that was the end of it. But it all began simply because of a-- and I'm convinced that if the government had not involved themselves in the planning of the whole matter unobtrusively that there could have been problems. I mean, just the sanitary problems were just almost unbelievable; just the food problems, the parking, the police control. As a result of this, I think we--we of course kept all the records of the plans that we'd gone through, and so on and so forth. And as a result of this--in fact [Richard G.] Dick Kleindienst told me this just recently--that plan that was used at the time of that first March on Washington has been the basic plan for almost all the . . .

OESTERLE: March on Poverty and . . .

REILLY: The Mobe [Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam], everything since that time.

OESTERLE: The Mobe.

REILLY: And this only began because of this conference in the White House saying, "How are we going to get the civil rights bill through?" The president saying, "Well, if all of those blacks come down here and screw up the Washington Monument, we're not going to get anything through now. We'd better get in this thing, whether we like it or not."

OESTERLE: Did anyone from Justice work with the congressmen to see that there would be some congressmen that would be available to meet with the leaders, and to try to coordinate and organize?

REILLY: Yes, Douglas handled that particular portion of it. That really--for some reason or other the whole March on Washington thing [Reilly's account] didn't come out the way I would have liked it to have come out. I'd like to point out, in a way, the attorney general's more personal involvement in it. I mean, although it sounded like it was all handled by McShane, Reilly, and Douglas, we obviously could only do it because it was fully backed by the attorney general. And when we called the Park Police, we got entire cooperation out of them immediately . . .

OESTERLE: Because you were calling from the attorney general's office.

REILLY: . . . because we were calling--Bob Kennedy wanted this done. You mentioned about liaison with the Hill. Yes, Douglas handled all of that, and with the leadership. His father [Paul Douglas] was still active then. And the leadership cooperated fully so that they would be available for delegations from various areas to come and discuss with them the problems.

OESTERLE: Was there any specific advice from Lee White [Lee C. White] or [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen, Louis Martin, the vice-president [Lyndon B. Johnson]?

REILLY: Louis helped, of course, because Louis helped identify so many of the people who we didn't know. Louie was familiar with so many of the names that we didn't have any idea on. "Mr. [John] Johnson from Chicago's coming." At that point I didn't know that Johnson was Ebony magazine. Louis would be very helpful on all matters of that nature. But Lee and Ted, they really didn't get involved in it. It was assigned to Bob Kennedy, and that's all there was to it. Bob Kennedy had the responsibility, and our responsibility was: This thing has to go right; get them in and out of town and no incidents.

OESTERLE: Did you get involved in discussions just before or after the president's press conference of July 17, 1963, in which he voiced support for the events directly leading to this?

REILLY: Was that the press conference--I'm thinking . . . Was it a press conference?

OESTERLE: Yes.

REILLY: No, I did not, other than discussing with Pierre, and Pierre saying, "The president is going to say that we fully offer our cooperation, fully back it, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Peaceful demonstration. . . ."

OESTERLE: Public reaction was building to this, and there was some editorial . . .

REILLY: Yes. Well, there was a terrible feeling here in government. I mean, we had requests from government officials to let the employees out that day because they were

afraid to come downtown, and things of that nature, which we completely . . .

OESTERLE: Because of the crowds.

REILLY: And we pooh-poohed it completely. I mean, we just said, "Ridiculous. Nothing's going to happen. If you'd let them out to go to the march, that's what you should do. It's going to be something you'll never believe." Which is eventually . . .

OESTERLE: And a lot of employees were going to go anyway.

REILLY: Oh yes. But I mean there was this strange feeling which we really didn't realize was happening. For instance, I'd meet neighbors, and they'd say, "What are you going to do tomorrow?" And I'd say, "I'm going down to the Washington Monument." And they'd say, "You mean you're going downtown?" You know, they couldn't believe--they were going to leave town.

OESTERLE: I understand that the whole subject of the march was brought up at a cabinet meeting that the president attended. You don't have any recollection

REILLY: I wasn't there. No, none at all, other than I know that he told them that he expected all of them to fully cooperate in anything that was requested of them.

OESTERLE: How was Rustin and his staff to work with? I think initially they were cool . . .

REILLY: Initially they were not only cool, they were nasty. You know, like, "You dummies, you don't really realize what we're doing here and what we want out of this thing," and . . .

OESTERLE: We don't want a honky march . . .

REILLY: That's right. "And we don't want you in it, and we don't want you to have anything to do with it. We don't want you to tell us where we can go or what we can't do or can do." But as he--and John Douglas is primarily responsible for this. I'm not capable of dealing in that manner, but John is, and he patiently, patiently, patiently explained everything always.

OESTERLE: And ended up with their respect.

REILLY: It ended up just complete exchange of information. Just simple little things. You know, they said, "I hear you're going to have a control center in the city hall," and we said, "Yes, we are. It's necessary, and one of the things it's going to be is a rumor center. Now we'd like to have some of your people there." Well, you know, that's kind of a shocking thing to them. Here we are saying, "We want your people down there helping us. We're not doing it to hurt you."

OESTERLE: Was there any legal interpretation at Justice on rules for demonstrations at the Capitol that came up at that point?

REILLY: Well, we didn't ask for any. We didn't ask for any research to be done as to whether or not parade permits were necessary, et cetera, because we'd been told what our responsibility was, and that is, "They're to come here, do a job and leave, and no incidents."

OESTERLE: Were there any problems in keeping out certain groups or individuals?

REILLY: No. Only that they had some internally. The leadership of the march had some internally, I know, where there were some groups that they didn't want involved, and I think were successful. And then there was also people who we knew through reports were of an element that was dangerous. But for the most part we had--they didn't know it--somebody standing beside them all the time, I mean, the identifiable people, and I would guess that there couldn't have been many more than fifty to seventy-five of them. There were people assigned to them, and this was all. Maybe some of them became aware that the same guy kept standing beside them, but they had people assigned to them.

OESTERLE: So actually there was quite a bit of help from the FBI, and I imagine that Courtney Evans played a role as liaison between your office and the director's office?

REILLY: Oh, yes. The FBI fully cooperated, and we could have had any number of people we wanted.

OESTERLE: Do you recall any contacts with or problems that centered around the Black Muslims or the American Nazi party?

REILLY: Yes, the Nazi party demonstrated, but we kept them over-- we let them demonstrate at seven o'clock in the morning, as I recall--in the theater, the outdoor theater behind

the Washington Monument. They were fully contained. Muslims, we didn't have any real threat of problems from them. The leadership handled that pretty much themselves.

OESTERLE: Were any changes made along the way in your plans, or did you have to placate individuals to satisfy congressional concern? Perhaps most of the members of Congress probably did not know about the role that you were . . .

REILLY: No, I don't think more than five did, let's say, and they kept an entire hands-off policy. The only thing that they did was make their own arrangements for security up on the Hill--which we let them just go ahead with, like they would do normally, without ever advising or telling them that they didn't have any problems. But as far as plans being changed, they were changed every night. And we met, as I say, for at least a month.

OESTERLE: Was there ever a possibility of a presidential address?

REILLY: None that I knew of. It might have been considered. Burke talked about it at one point and advised that, or told me that he had advised--now, who he had advised I don't know, whether it was just Bob or whether it was the president--that the government stay completely out of it, that the black leaders wanted to run it and wanted it to be their own.

OESTERLE: And then the decision came out of this for the president to meet with the leaders?

REILLY: Yes, that was the solution to the whole thing, that the president would be available for meetings with the leaders. And, as a matter of fact, I think there were two meetings during the day.

OESTERLE: Were there any particular problems with the press, especially a few days before the march or immediately afterwards? Did any members of the press respond to a leak and call Justice Department to find out anything about the role that you were playing?

REILLY: No, not to my knowledge. We had arranged press tents and so on, and press badges, and the whole rigamarole that normally is connected with something like that. The story was the success of the march. I don't think there was any real story in whether or not anybody else was involved, in government. I don't think they really cared. I think they must

have been aware--hell, they saw me, they saw Douglas, they saw a telephone, they saw everything else. And I think it was just more or less assumed by them that we would have been doing something.

OESTERLE: Did Chief [Robert V.] Murray work out of that little booth, that little office, or was he . . .

REILLY: He worked out of the control center in the police department. No, we kept the police out of evidence in everything--outside of the barricades and the parking and so on.

OESTERLE: Was there anyone at DOD [Department of Defense] or DA [Department of the Army] that was helpful or a problem?

REILLY: No, nobody was a problem. [Joseph A., Jr.] Joe Califano, we worked closely with him. We worked closely with--I think [Creighton W., Jr.] Abrams was still over there at the time. We had contingencies which we planned at that time, which were never really known. I mean, we had troops available within ten minutes in one instance, twenty minutes in another. We had surveillance.

OESTERLE: Was there any concern that you're aware of that was expressed on the part of the White House or perhaps the attorney general in regard to the federal cost of the march?

REILLY: No.

OESTERLE: Number of police involved . . .

REILLY: No, other than the fact that, you know, let's not spend any money. I mean, everything was contributed, other than the normal pay of the extra police and soldiers and so on, that were available--and the time of all of us who were involved, but I don't think that means anything. I don't think there was a--I don't think there was any great expense involved, really.

OESTERLE: Was there any subsequent involvement on your part with civil rights groups or leaders that grew out of this entire experience?

REILLY: No, only that we knew one another, we were friendly. . . . No, nothing specific that I can think of.

OESTERLE: You mentioned before, off the record, that you had some insight into the events in Mississippi. Can you switch

horses here and go into that?

REILLY: Yes, I was not too much involved in the Mississippi matter. It was one of those funny situations when a group was put together--I think it was late one Saturday afternoon--to get down to Mississippi, and I was called, and happened to be playing golf. So, I wasn't in the group that went to Mississippi, so I got all the duties here at the--not all the duties, but I mean I was back here in Washington involved in the attorney general's office on that night, doing a variety of dog work--you know, answering phones, monitoring phone calls.

I do have a minute-by-minute synopsis of monitoring of the open line between the Lyceum [Building] in Mississippi and the Justice Department and the White House, which I'll give to you for your use--I don't have it with me--which is extremely interesting in that it shows a number of things that happened that night. For instance, the fact, oh, one, that the president refused authority to the marshals to fire, which it seems to me there was some question about that at one time. Two, the terrible amount of time it took to get the troops from Memphis down there, which I could never figure out--I mean, why it took so long. And they went on the direct order from the commander in chief, as a matter of fact, as it turned out. "Get them down there," you know. "This is the commander. . . ."

OESTERLE: The president kept getting conflicting advice on how long it would take to move the troops from the various points where they had been collected.

REILLY: Yes, primarily from Memphis. The problem was that they weren't moving during all this time. And when they got there it was so late that the damage had been done. That, and the worry of the people down there, and they're almost on the--comments on the general. [What was that nut's name?

OESTERLE: Oh, [Edwin A.] Walker.]

REILLY: Yes. The only other thing I wanted to mention is I do think it has some indication as to the feeling of those on the scene at the time about the activities of General Walker, and the fact that he actually was leading charges, et cetera. He was identified by the people who were down there, which was Jim McShane and Nick, [Harold F.] Reis, and others. It was such a tragic thing that it's--I mean the whole tragedy was felt that evening by everyone. It was the fact that it did explode, and the killings, and it just seemed to be that all of these things just became a part of

a way of life, almost, for us. What we learned from that and what we learned from the activities of the March on Washington, it seemed like it was just a week later that you'd have to be putting them into effect on something else. And it just got to be such a snowball that it became very discouraging and upsetting to everybody that was involved. I mean, the fact that these things were exploding constantly, and we were on a track that we couldn't get off of, or didn't want to get off of, I guess. Oh, I just hate to think that the--I don't think any of us have ever been convinced we didn't do the right thing.

OESTERLE: Were you in touch with the White House at all, from the vantage point of your desk, since you were not in Mississippi?

REILLY: I was in the attorney general's office.

OESTERLE: Yes. So were you in touch at all with the White House' during this . . . ?

REILLY: Constantly. Open line, yes.

OESTERLE: Were there any . . .

REILLY: Burke was over at the White House. [William A.] Bill Geoghegan would be a good man on this thing, because he recalls. . . . In fact he was talking directly to Burke Marshall at one time when the president broke in, and he found that he didn't believe it, but he was talking directly to the president at the time, giving instructions on another line about what should be done.

OESTERLE: You'd also mentioned informally with me that you had some comments on the visit to [George C.] Wallace, in Alabama.

REILLY: Oh yes, which was billed as the great confrontation between Bob Kennedy and Wallace. I'd mentioned, sometime in the past, about the fact that the attorney general did visit as many of the U.S. attorneys as he could.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

REILLY: I think I was saying the attorney general became aware that he wasn't being scheduled into the South and told me that he did want to visit with those U.S. attorneys

as well as everybody else. I explained to him the problems that it presented, namely one, which was a simple problem in that we didn't know where we'd stay when we went down to many of these cities because the hotels were still segregated and many of the areas were segregated. It just wouldn't look good for the attorney general to be staying in a segregated hotel or motel; or then if he went in a private home it would be so obvious.

So, we decided that we'd go South and meet with four or five of the U.S. attorneys in Montgomery, and that we'd stay at Maxwell Air Force Base, which was a simple thing. We could fly in there and we'd stay right there. That was no problem. So this plan took effect, and we held a conference. We flew down there, got there in the evening, had a dinner with the U.S. attorneys and the local people, but at Maxwell Air Force Base. We stayed in the BOQs [Bachelor Officers Quarters].

Traditionally when the senator went into the home town or a state capital or something of that nature, he would pay his respects to the governor or whoever wanted to see him, or at least he offered to say hello or something of that nature. So I'm not exactly sure how it happened--Ed Guthman really handled the details on this thing--but it became apparent that when we went to Montgomery, Wallace was going to be there, and that we were expected to go to see Wallace. Wallace wanted to meet with Bob Kennedy, and I think Bob Kennedy wanted to meet with Wallace. I think the two of them really wanted to confront one another, not for the purposes of anything other than a social confrontation, but to be able to take the measure of one another. So a meeting was set up for the time that we were down there.

We began to worry about the security problem. The FBI began to worry very seriously about security problems because of the fact that here was Bob Kennedy going into this place where many, many people disliked him seriously. So Courtney handled that portion of it. I don't think he put on many more agents down there or anything of that nature, but the local offices were alerted. The cooperation with the local police was very good. The morning that we were to go over to see the governor we got a report that there was a tremendous crowd gathering, because this had been publicized that Bob Kennedy and Wallace were going to meet.

We were aware of the security problem, but Bob seemed to have no worry, fear, or anything of that nature about it. As a matter of fact, we walked from an office building where we'd been meeting with some local law enforcement people, to the state capitol--I would guess it was a distance of five or six blocks--just walking up the street like somebody would walk to lunch or something of that nature, rounded the corner, and here was this tremendous crowd--not tremendous, I shouldn't

say that: there were a thousand people perhaps on the steps of the capitol. We walked down, and as we got closer somebody recognized him and this kind of a murmur or something, kind of an ominous sound . . .

OESTERLE: Restlessness of the crowd.

REILLY: . . . began to take place. I frankly was a little bit frightened myself, walking beside him, as to what the hell was going to happen here. As we drew closer there a couple people started clapping, and as we drew closer and started walking up the steps the crowd very politely started to applaud. I was just taken aback. I couldn't believe it. I looked through the crowd, and here were blacks and whites and people standing there, and they were there really to see the attorney general, to see Bob Kennedy, the president's brother, just like they were in Kansas City or Minneapolis. It wasn't a crowd that was after you or anything. It wasn't hostile at all; it was a friendly crowd.

The only incident that happened is as we walked up the steps, some woman rushed up and threw her coat over the Confederate emblem on the steps there, where the Confederacy was born--I don't even recall my history well enough to know what it commemorated--and screamed at the top of her lungs, "There will be no Kennedy ever walk on this spot," or something of that nature, which everybody kind of laughed about. We went on in. We walked into the anteroom and the secretary walked out and said, "Mr. Attorney General, the governor's waiting to see you." We walked in, and there was three or four of us, and the governor was just the governor and his press man and another one or two fellows in there, in the governor's office. We were introduced around and it became apparent that the governor just wanted to talk to Bob Kennedy and that's all there was to it. So Bob just said, "Well, why don't you guys just wait outside?" The governor said the same thing.

The two of them really just had a short twenty minute social visit, in which I think they both sized one another up as to--you know, Bob's looking at him. . . . And he explained--he said this later, actually--"I was wondering how tough he was. He seemed like a pretty nice fellow." And the governor, I'm sure, was saying, "I wonder, is this little, ruthless Bob Kennedy? What's going to happen? Are we going to have a fight or what's going to. . . ." It was a perfectly social thing. I think they both. . . . Again, Bob Kennedy told me later, he told him, "Governor, you know that we do have troubles in your state, and I hope that you will do what you can to solve them in a nice way." The governor said, "Well, I understand that, and I have my own personal problems, political problems. I represent these people. I'll do things

the way I think they should be done." Bob Kennedy said, "Well, I'll do things the way I think they should be done." Both understood it, very friendly meeting.

We left, the crowd claps again, we get in the car and drive away. I mean, this was "the major confrontation between Bob Kennedy and Governor Wallace" which was supposed to turn into a fist fight or something. It turned into just one of the simplest little. . . . But I think as a result of that Bob Kennedy did size Wallace up, and I think Wallace sized Bob Kennedy up. And as a result of that, I think that's the real reason that the confrontation at the University of Alabama never reached proportions greater than the governor standing in the doorway and then standing aside, knowing full well he was doing what he had to do, and us, the Justice Department, doing what we had to do. And I think it was because they both sized each other up as two pretty feisty guys, and that each was going to do exactly what they said they were going to do. I think Bob Kennedy knew the governor was going to make a show and back down. I think the governor knew that eventually Bob Kennedy was going to put somebody into the school. Those things seem to pale so much now, don't they, when you stop to think that here you know, you turn on the television, the Saturday afternoon football game, and you get blacks playing in every school in the South.

OESTERLE: A great deal of progress has been made since then.

REILLY: But at that time it was just so different. Can you imagine, at that time going into the South and wondering where you were going to put the attorney general up because he couldn't stay in a segregated hotel? The problem doesn't even present itself--not even thought of. So I guess if that's progress, there has been something.