

**Walter Sheridan Oral History Interview—RFK#6, 6/12/1970**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Walter Sheridan  
**Interviewer:** Roberta W. Greene  
**Date of Interview:** June 12, 1970  
**Place of Interview:** Washington D.C.  
**Length:** 53 pages

**Biographical Note**

Sheridan, a Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) campaign coordinator in 1968, and a government investigator, discusses RFK's staff during his Senate years, the Jimmy Hoffa jury tampering case, the Bobby Baker case, Jim Garrison's investigations in Louisiana of John F. Kennedy's assassination, and William G. Hundley and the Organized Crime Division of the Justice Department, among other issues.

**Access Restrictions**

Open.

**Usage Restrictions**

According to the deed of gift signed April 5, 2004, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

**Copyright**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview**

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

**Suggested Citation**

Walter Sheridan, recorded interview by Roberta W. Greene, June 12, 1970, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.



**ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT**

This will confirm my understanding and agreement with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) with respect to the use of the oral interviews conducted by the Oral History Program of the John F. Kennedy Library with Walter Sheridan.

1. The interview(s) will be taped and a transcript of the tapes will be made by the Library. A copy of the tape and a transcript (collectively called the "Work"), will be maintained by the Library and made available to the public in accordance with its rules and general policies for research and other scholarly purposes.
2. As soon as the transcription is complete, the Work will be made available to researchers as part of the John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.
3. I hereby grant, assign, and transfer to NARA all rights, title, and interest in the Work, including literary rights and the copyright.
4. This agreement contains our entire and complete understanding.

Name Nancy T. Sheridan

Address 17026 Catalpa Court  
Berwyn, Md 20855

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date 02-15-04

Signed: John W. Carlin  
JOHN W. CARLIN, Archivist of the United States

Date: 4-5-04

Walter Sheridan—RFK #6

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
101	Robert F. Kennedy's (RFK) Senate press secretaries
104	Jimmy Hoffa jury tampering case
110	Angela M. Novello
112	RFK's Senate staff
115	Paul B. "Red" Fay, Jr.'s book, <i>The Pleasure of his Company</i>
117	Jim Garrison's investigations of John F. Kennedy' (JFK) assassination
124	Affect of JFK's death on RFK
127	RFK's increased awareness of civil rights issues
128	William G. Hundley
133	Organized crime division of the Justice Department after RFK left
136, 149	Robert G. "Bobby" Baker case
141	Lyndon B. Johnson's influence on Ramsey Clark
146	Wiretapping and bugging

Sixth of Six Oral History Interviews

with

Walter Sheridan

June 12, 1970  
Washington D.C.

By Roberta W. Greene

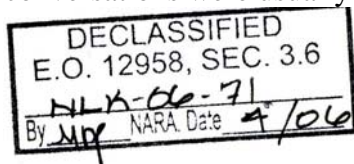
For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Project of the Kennedy Library

GREENE: I was going to start by asking you how frequently and on what kinds of occasions you usually saw Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] while he was in the Senate?

SHERIDAN: After I left?

GREENE: Yes.

SHERIDAN: I left on Washington's [George Washington] birthday in 1965, and I think we've been through that going to NBC [National Broadcasting Company] business. So in the year 1965 I was—the first year at NBC—I was kind of floundering around because I was new to them and they were new to me. They didn't have a producer, so I traveled a bit, but I was here quite a bit. So when I was here, I used to go over there probably once a week, and I'd just drop in and maybe talk to Frank Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz]. First it was Wesley Barthelmes [A. Wesley Barthelmes, Jr.] and then Frank. And if he was in and if he wasn't busy, I would stop in and just say hello and.... The conversations were usually pretty limited and he'd



[-101-]

want to know how I was doing, and I'd want to know how he was doing. I was impatient during that year because I didn't think my thing was moving fast enough. I know once he was having dinner with David Brinkley and he said he'd talk to him about it. And Frank Mankiewicz would give me ideas for what we could possibly do—that was '65, '66.

GREENE: What was your impression of his relationship with Barthelmes?

SHERIDAN: With who?

GREENE: With Wes Barthelmes.

SHERIDAN: Uh, well they were such entirely different kinds of people. Wes is so low-key. I was surprised when he hired him. As I got to know Wes, he was a very nice guy, but he just didn't seem to fit in with the pace of that office at all, whereas Frank Mankiewicz was perfect. And I wasn't surprised when Wes left because I just had the feeling all along he wasn't

[-102-]

right for the job—he wasn't nearly aggressive enough for that. I think they got along well, but I think Bob was probably very impatient with...

GREENE: Probably just as glad to see him go?

SHERIDAN: Yeah. And I'd drive to the airport with him. It was his usual thing—where you saw him mostly in motion. I'd walk over to the Capitol with him, and ride to the airport. When he had social things at the house he would invite us and then you'd see everybody again.

GREENE: Did you get much view on him in this period as to how he was enjoying or not enjoying the Senate in the first year or so?

SHERIDAN: Well, I think you have to keep putting things in the context of the times. He had already been through the vice presidency business. He used to ask often whether I had found anybody that liked Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. He was always kind of kidding about that. The main feeling that I got

[-103-]

was that he was impatient with the whole thing, that the Senate was just too slow moving a thing and not enough to do. Of course, during this whole period the Hoffa [Jimmy Hoffa] situation was moving toward the climax so this was another thing that I would keep him

informed on. I thought it was better and I think he thought it was better that he didn't get involved in it—like we got in it. Well, it was one thing after another really. The Senate Internal Security Subcommittee tried to subpoena Ed Partin [Edward G. Partin], the witness against Hoffa. Then Senator Russell Long [Russell B. Long] got his thing going and then he did get involved in that to the point where he went on and demanded to testify because.... I don't know how much detail you want to go into on all of this, but...

GREENE: Go ahead.

SHERIDAN: ...but they staged that Russell Long committee thing very cleverly. They started out with the postal workers and the idea of the Post Office depart-

[-104-]

ment having—what do you call it—a mail watch on somebody's mail. Then that led into the Roy Cohn case, and Roy Cohn came down and complained about a mail watch on his mail. That allowed him to inject a memorandum that Hank Suydam of *Life* magazine had written, wherein Bob Kennedy, they alleged, had set up an article by Sam Baron in *Life* magazine which was anti-Hoffa.

What had happened was that *Life* magazine attorneys stupidly had let Roy Cohn's attorneys go through their files in connection with a suit Roy Cohn had against *Life*, and in doing so they found this memo on Hoffa, stole it, gave it to the Hoffa people. Then Sid Zagri [Sidney Zagri], who was Hoffa's legislative representative, used this extensively around the Hill to show how Bob Kennedy was trying to generate bad publicity against Jimmy Hoffa. They had it at both of the conventions in '64.

GREENE: Yeah, I remember that.

[-105-]

SHERIDAN: But the Senator Edward Long [Edward Vaughn Long] committee was a real problem, and I did keep him advised and did try to keep him out of it. Then the Hoffa case came up to the Supreme Court, and finally the arguments before the Supreme Court. And we all felt strongly that Nat Lewin [Nathan Lewin] who was down here should have argued the case, but Fred Vinson [Fred M. Vinson, Jr.] who was then the head of the Criminal Division, decided to do it himself and didn't really do a very good job. And Nat had to get up in the last ten minutes before the Supreme Court and rescue it. So afterwards we went over to the Senator's office and complained about it. He was very upset and called Nick Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach] and really kind of bawled him out, because he thought maybe ten years of work had gone down the drain. But it turned out that the Supreme Court upheld the case.

GREENE: Yeah. What was his relationship with Katzenbach?

[-106-]

SHERIDAN: Very close and very friendly but I think a little disappointed at times that Katzenbach wasn't tougher and didn't stand up more, like in this situation. It was embarrassing for me because I would find out what was going on. I'd go tell him and he'd call Nick. One time I walked smack into Nick Katzenbach as I was trying to get out of the office before he came in because he had been called by Bob and was coming over to talk to him. He was very aware that I was letting the Senator know everything that was going on, but I didn't care. Then Ramsey Clark succeeded him, and there I think at first he was disappointed in Ramsey because he seemed to be very, kind of, I don't know, soft or wishy-washy or whatever. But as time went on Ramsey got tougher and in the end was standing up pretty good.

During the same period he got into the Hoover [J. Edgar Hoover] wiretapping debates. I think all of these things, as they'd come up, we'd talk about them.

[-107-]

GREENE: I want to go back just one moment while talking about Hoffa. Was there any real debate on whether or not Hoffa should be—you should pursue an indictment for jury tampering in Nashville?

SHERIDAN: There wasn't a debate, but there was a meeting in the Attorney General's office. We had several of these meetings during those two years. He would bring in other assistant attorney generals and usually it was the same group: Ramsey Clark, Lou Oberdorfer [Louis F. Oberdorfer], Jack Miller [Herbert J. Miller, Jr.], Archibald Cox.

GREENE: Did John Douglas [John W. Douglas] get involved?

SHERIDAN: John Douglas, always, myself and the prosecutor involved, Carmine Bellino [Carmine S. Bellino] and a couple others. We'd kick it around and then he'd ask these people for their opinion. On that occasion, where we really were at that meeting deciding whether to go forward or not, he did ask for opinions, so I suppose you could say it was put to a vote. They expressed opinions, so I suppose

[-108-]

there was some debate because it wasn't a unanimous agreement, but Ramsey Clark was one of the ones against it and Bill Hundley [William G. Hundley] was another one.

GREENE: On what grounds?

SHERIDAN: Ramsey Clark, I think, on the sixth amendment ground. And Bill Hundley, I think, he just didn't think we could win it. But Archibald Cox, who was the solicitor general, voted for it and said he'd be happy to argue it before the Supreme Court.



GREENE: So that was kind of a deciding factor?

SHERIDAN: No. I think there were only two, maybe three, dissenters, because half had already been tried three times in federal court—four times—three under Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and one under us. I think there was a pretty strong feeling that if you win again, it had to be something strong and heinous, and this was both. But there were problems with it. One witness against

[-109-]

Hoffa, Ed Partin was, you know, the only one who could really tie him into it. And there were problems of sixth amendment nature, whether he'd been planted in the Hoffa camp and....

GREENE: Let's see. In the course of your visits with him at the Senate, was there ever any discussion of colleagues and how he felt about the various members?

SHERIDAN: Not too much. He was aware that there was some bickering among the girls, and that Angie [Angela M. Novello] was kind of a mother hen and was overly protective of him, and that people had trouble getting through to him because of that, and that some people who should get through weren't getting through. He knew all this, but he also.... He knew that the morale would go down sometimes, but all he had to do was walk through

[-110-]

and give them all a pat on the head and morale was great for another six months.

GREENE: There was nothing significant done about Angie?

SHERIDAN: No. No, because there was really very little you could do about Angie. I mean, she had been with him for a long, long time. She'd do anything in the world for him and I don't think she's unique. I think that type person in that type job tends to get that way and I don't think it's that bad. You know, when I'd come in, it'd depend on what mood she was in. She might be very glad to see me and tell me to go on right in, or she might say, "Oh, you again. Why didn't you call me and tell me you were coming?" I'd just smile at her. But I never had any trouble with her, but there were people who did.

GREENE: Was there particular conflict between her and Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan]?

SHERIDAN: Between Angie and Dolan? I'd be surprised if there wasn't but I don't know. I never

[-111-]

really got into that crossfire. I don't really think it was ever that serious, more than any other office.

GREENE: Actually, when I said colleagues I meant colleagues within the Senate.

SHERIDAN: Oh, you mean his Senate colleagues. I do remember going with him to the State Department for something. I don't remember what it was. I remember he ran into Dean Rusk there, and he came away shaking his head because Rusk had told him that, outside of Vietnam, everything was going just great. He was amazed that Rusk could think that, because everything was really going pretty badly.

GREENE: This was somewhat later then?

SHERIDAN: Yeah. It would have been in '67 probably, even maybe into '68. No, it would have been '67 sometime. I don't remember him really talking much about other senators.

GREENE: Did you have much contact with his staff other than passing through?

[-112-]

SHERIDAN: No, just on those occasions or at social gatherings. We always kept in touch, or I always did, but there was enough of these social things—I mean there weren't that many but there were enough—that everybody maintained not only contact, but I guess you'd call it camaraderie.

GREENE: Did he lean as heavily on Adam Walinsky, do you think, as it's been reported he did? Do you think he had much of an impact on his thinking?

SHERIDAN: I think Adam had an increasing influence because I think—it was just a kind of coincidence—I think that because of the way the war was going and the way Lyndon Johnson was going that Bob started moving towards the way that Adam was and that they just kind of had a mutual joining of forces. I thought it blended very well. I think there were a lot of people who thought Adam was much too much of a bomb thrower and much too liberal. But Peter [Peter B. Edelman], I think, was a conditioning force there. I thought it worked pretty well, particularly after Frank got on the scene, because Frank was

[-113-]

a hard-nosed, realistic guy who had all the same basic feelings but was much more realistic. So between the three of them, plus Bob's great instincts of his own, I thought it worked pretty good.

GREENE: Did you get involved at all in Senate matters on his behalf? I know you sort of helped scout out Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno] for the upstate office.

SHERIDAN: Yeah. No, not really.

GREENE: You didn't offer suggestions?

SHERIDAN: Well, if he asked me, or sometimes I would but not really that much, I don't think.

GREENE: All right. What about personal or family matters, particularly things related to the President. Did you get involved in any of those things?

SHERIDAN: You mean President Johnson?

GREENE: No. President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. Memorials and things of that kind.

SHERIDAN: Uh, let's see, the first memorial was in '64 and I was an usher at that. That was at

[-114-]

St. Patrick's [St. Patrick's Cathedral] and was really the last one. They only had the one. The next year, I remember, we all went over to Holy Trinity to a mass. But that was kind of on our own.

GREENE: I was thinking more in terms of projects, the library and that kind of thing.

SHERIDAN: No, not really. We microfilmed everything at the Justice Department. I did not do this kind of thing for the President. Not really, no.

GREENE: What about books? Did you ever discuss with him the books that were coming out, particularly those written by insiders.

SHERIDAN: No, you mean his books or other peoples' books?

GREENE: Other peoples' books about the President.

SHERIDAN: I know Red Fay's [Paul B. Fay, Jr.] book caused quite a stir, but I don't

think I ever talked to him about it. I talked to Red Fay about it. Red was really quite upset because he thought that the reaction had been way out of proportion.

[-115-]

The breach there lasted until Bob went out to California in '68 and Red offered to help. Then they got together and kind of buried the hatchet.

GREENE: Do you think that was his own reaction or more Mrs. Kennedy's, Jacqueline Kennedy's [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy]?

SHERIDAN: I don't know. At that time he felt very protective towards Jackie and I think any reaction she had, he tended to react with her. So I think it was probably more hers and then he took up the cause. I think he would react least of anybody. Even now, I think Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] would react maybe more than he would because I think he understood a little more. But they did have this kind of feeling that they had a right to review.

GREENE: Well, were they offered the right to review and didn't—I'm not certain of what happened with the Fay book.

SHERIDAN: In the case of Red Fay I think Red did let them review it, but I think maybe he didn't change

[-116-]

what they wanted changed. Pierre [Pierre E.G. Salinger], I don't know. Pierre didn't ever seem to have any trouble with them about his book. The Manchester [William Manchester] thing, of course, was a whole other thing.

GREENE: Did you get involved in that at all?

SHERIDAN: No. Not at all, except I remember talking to Ed Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman]—this was before it came out—and he thought everything was going to be fine, and then the next thing I knew, all hell broke loose.

GREENE: What about the Warren Commission report? Was there any conversation about that?

SHERIDAN: Not until I got involved in the Garrison [Jim Garrison] thing. That was the first time I think I ever discussed it with him, and even then I didn't discuss it. I just told him I was bringing Bill Gurvich [William H. Gurvich] up to see him and that Gurvich would tell him that Garrison was full of baloney.

GREENE: How did you get involved in this, by the way?

[-117-]

Was it on his behalf? Had he asked you to look into the Garrison thing?

SHERIDAN: Oh, no, no. Garrison would have people think so, but he had nothing to do with it. I just went down for NBC and got involved. Then once I got involved I saw that Garrison had nothing, and I'm sure I told him that somewhere along the line when I was back here. Then I just told him when I got Gurvich who was on the inside and who knew what Garrison had. I just wanted—both from Gurvich's standpoint and from Bob's standpoint—I thought they should talk about it. And they did.

GREENE: Was he satisfied at the end of it?

SHERIDAN: Was Bob satisfied?

GREENE: Yeah.

SHERIDAN: I think he was. I think he believed Gurvich that Garrison had nothing. I don't know what he himself really thought about the whole thing. I was always reluctant to talk to him

[-118-]

about it. I think his basic feeling was that John Kennedy was dead and it didn't really matter. But one thing he said that was interesting was sometime during the Garrison thing, and I think it was about this time when I was bringing Gurvich up, because of course Garrison kept getting into the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] involvement. One time he said to me, he said, "You know, at the time I asked Dulles [Allen W. Dulles] if he killed my brother, or if they had killed my brother and I asked him in a way that he couldn't lie to me, and they hadn't." It wasn't quite that blunt but it was pretty blunt. What he was saying was that he had looked into that possibility and was satisfied himself that they weren't involved.

GREENE: Do you think he was satisfied with the general conclusions of the Warren Report, or he just didn't even care enough to think about it?

SHERIDAN: I don't know. I just don't know, because we never talked about it.

[-119-]

GREENE: Was there any concern that he'd be subpoenaed if he went to Louisiana?

SHERIDAN: Yeah. He was scheduled to go there.

GREENE: In '68, wasn't it?

SHERIDAN: In '68, just right after Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.] died. In fact, the reason he didn't go was because of the Martin Luther King killing. I had encouraged it and worked on it to the extent that I knew some people in Louisiana who had started working the thing out. That fear was expressed, so I called the Governor [John J. McKeithen] because I had gotten to know the Governor through the Garrison and Hoffa things. The Governor assured me that he could come in and that nothing would happen. He called Garrison and got some kind of a commitment from Garrison that nothing would happen. But I think that the Governor at the time was wanting very much to be anybody's vice president and at that point thought maybe he could be Bob Kennedy's vice president. Then when he

[-120-]

didn't go down, and Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] did go down and then the next thing you know, McKeithen and Humphrey were very friendly.

GREENE: But the reason for the cancellation of the trip was not fear of subpoena?

SHERIDAN: No, no. The reason was absolutely the King assassination. I was disappointed because it would have been a very successful trip and he would have beaten Humphrey to the punch.

GREENE: I'm not sure exactly how long Garrison was in office in Louisiana. Did he have any reputation at the time of the administration? Did Robert Kennedy have any contacts with him in that period?

SHERIDAN: I don't know if he had any contacts with him, but I do know that in 1960 Garrison was one of the first people to come out for John Kennedy. Because of that there did develop a relationship between Garrison and Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] though Chuck—I can't think of Chuck's name;

[-121-]

I just saw him a few weeks about. But when I was down looking into the Garrison thing, I ran into Chuck and he was one of the ways I got close to Garrison. He thinks Garrison is the greatest thing since peanut butter, and still does. And so we've had many arguments and we've...

GREENE: Kenny O'Donnell?

SHERIDAN: No, no. Kenny's friend...

GREENE: Chuck, whatever his name is.

SHERIDAN: Chuck, from Binghamton, who has some business interests down there. I've talked to Kenny about it and I don't know what Kenny really thinks. He knows what I think. I think he's probably convinced that there's something wrong with the whole Garrison thing. Politically, Garrison was for Kennedy in '60, and I think came out for Kennedy in '68.

GREENE: In your own investigations down there, did you get any clear impression of what his motives were?

[-122-]

SHERIDAN: Garrison's?

GREENE: Yeah.

SHERIDAN: Oh, yeah. He wants to be pope or king or emperor—he's nuts! I mean, that's the thing, he's nuts. He's absolutely psycho, very bright, very smart. He's a liberal demagogue and just tremendously ambitious and very dangerous.

GREENE: Then he had nothing?

SHERIDAN: Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. I don't mean just a little bit. He has absolutely nothing—never did have—and that's what we said and that's why he charged me. It's a very corrupt state.

GREENE: It's starting to come into the open now, I think.

SHERIDAN: Yeah, we're going to make it more so, I hope.

GREENE: The last couple of weeks, there's been a lot.

SHERIDAN: You mean Russell Long and...

GREENE: And the whole, well, the whole thing now with

[-123-]

the government having to stand up and lie...

SHERIDAN: Oh yeah. The *Life* magazine thing.

GREENE: Cleanest—what did they say? One of the cleanest states in this country.

SHERIDAN: McKeithen said that? No, it's absolutely—that and New Jersey are the two most corrupt states in the country.

GREENE: I know, just from our other interviews, but I had to ask.

SHERIDAN: But Garrison was reelected and ad nauseam might be reelected, because of the racial thing.

GREENE: O.K. Then I don't have anything else, I don't think, in that period unless you do, except maybe some general observations on changes you saw taking place in him [RFK] after the President's death.

SHERIDAN: His hair got longer. It was funny at first because everybody would tell everybody they thought had the nerve to tell him, you know,

[-124-]

to tell him to get his hair cut. So I would tell him that so-and-so said you ought to get your hair cut [inaudible] he never really took it that funny, because he knew what he was doing. He was really building an image in a way, and.... But it did get awfully long.

GREENE: I liked it like that.

SHERIDAN: I did, too. I liked it the way it was at the end, which was a modified thing. There was a point there where it was just hanging down here and hanging down here.

GREENE: Somebody brought in a campaign button about that big to the office yesterday—Kennedy in 1968, with a picture of him. And he said, "Gee, I bet those buttons must be worth a fortune. A '68 campaign button and I only paid fifty cents for it." And I said, "Well, judging by that picture, I would guarantee you that it's no later than 1964 because he had

[-125-]

practically a crew cut." He thought, you know, they were selling real Bobby Kennedy '68 campaign buttons.

SHERIDAN: That was probably New York State.

GREENE: Yeah, or just an old picture that they made into a button for street sale. Do you think he did change in this period, or it's just that people began to see him more...



SHERIDAN: Well, I think it's more the latter, but I think he did change. I think he, after the President died, was more soul-searching, inward than he.... He always had the basic compassions and feelings but his manner was always much more reflex and outgoing. I think it did turn him inward in the maturing process. It's there with everybody, but I don't buy it to the extent that he became something that he wasn't. I think he was always what he was.

I think the racial problem became more evident to him because I don't think he understood it in

[-126-]

the beginning, except that there was something wrong with blacks being treated unequally. There was a right and wrong thing and then I think the more he became exposed to it, the more it became a thing of compassion with him in addition to being right, to where he actually felt it, and felt identified with them. I think this was the change. But I can remember being over in his swimming pool with Rafer Johnson, a long, long time ago. You know, you open the pool to the black kids from the district every—I don't know how many times a week it was. Most of this was, I think, after he became senator.

GREENE: Just for a final topic, something that we didn't discuss earlier: during the McClellan committee, what were his relations with Bill Hundley, over at the Organized Crime Division of the Justice Department?

[-127-]

SHERIDAN: Well, it was.... We were generally all kinds of things at the committee, and they were being sent over to Justice and it was mainly his impatience that they weren't doing anything about it. So we'd have meetings with the Justice people, like Hundley, where he'd bring it up, only it was also Malcolm Wilkey [Malcolm R. Wilkey]. His whole point was, you know, these are obvious violations and you aren't prosecuting. On Hundley's side of the picture, he didn't understand, which he did after he got to Justice, that it isn't that easy and that it takes time. But at the same time, there were higher-ups in Justice who were not that anxious to prosecute these kinds of cases, and there was an actual deal on it in 1960, that I mentioned to you before. I think Hundley.... Then there was—you know, after we get over there I think there was one memo in the Justice files where Hundley had recommended subpoenaing Robert Kennedy, which Carmine Bellino found after we

[-128-]

got to Justice. I think it probably bothered Carmine more than it bothered Bob because I think he tended to treat it as humor, as a funny. But I think he felt that because he had been so critical, he had to move Hundley out of there. I was opposed to it, but he did it and brought in Silberling [Edwyn Silberling].

GREENE: You were opposed?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, because I thought, I knew Hundley was a good guy and was doing a good job, and had the respect of all the guys in the section and they were very opposed to him leaving.

GREENE: Was there anybody else who was, that came in with you, that was opposed?

SHERIDAN: Well, I was the only one really that had been involved in the thing, relationship-wise. But he had just made that decision that he was going to. I think he thought he had to, because in *The Enemy Within* he had criticized Hundley,

[-129-]

too. So he kind of kicked him upstairs, made him a special assistant, and he handled special cases and did an excellent job, and then when Silberling obviously wasn't the guy....

GREENE: What was wrong with him?

SHERIDAN: Well, first, it was a personality clash. And second, I never completely trusted him and he didn't get along with the guys in the section. He wanted to do things his way. He was an opportunist and I think he looked at this as a stepping-stone to something great. It just didn't work out, and he didn't work out.

GREENE: When you say personality clash, with the Attorney General?

SHERIDAN: Yeah. Also with me, but not that much. One of his underlings, I had more of a clash with, but.... And the guy he brought in was abrasive, too. He was abrasive is what he was

[-130-]

and.... So when he left, Hundley went back in the job, and Hundley's...

GREENE: Was that your doing?

SHERIDAN: Well, it was my suggestion. I don't know how much effect it had. But, I mean, Hundley today is a very, very strong Kennedy fan. You ought to talk to Hundley if you haven't.

GREENE: Yeah. We have just decided that. We'll add him and Silberling, I think. Was it ever confirmed that it was efforts from above that kept Hundley

from cooperating earlier? I know at the time of the election in '60 you explained that it was.

SHERIDAN: Yeah, well, I think Hundley would admit that there were certain restraints on the one hand, and lack of pushing them on the other hand to do something about it. I think everybody, of course, realized that the 1960 election was coming up and that John Kennedy was going to be a candidate for president, and so there was a political

[-131-]

ingredient on both sides, I'm sure.

GREENE: Would you trace the reluctance to do anything about it to Rogers [William P. Rogers] or...

SHERIDAN: Well, if you're talking about Hoffa, I'd trace it to whatever deal there was. If you're talking about the broader organized crime and labor things, I'd say it was probably Rogers. Whoever was making the political decisions for the Republicans didn't want the Kennedy brothers getting undue credit. I suppose the Kennedy brothers, on the other hand, were not averse to getting credit, and when they didn't get the action, were not adverse to criticizing the Republican administration for not doing anything. So I'm sure that was a big factor on both sides. But from the right and wrong standpoint, they were good cases and they should have been doing something about it and they weren't doing enough. When you

[-132-]

take the statistics of indictments and convictions prior to Kennedy and after Kennedy got there, there's just no comparison.

GREENE: As I understand it, after Robert Kennedy had already left Justice, you urged Hundley to go on television to.... My understanding is that it was to give an explanation to the American people on the dangers of organized crime. Is that accurate? Doesn't ring a bell?

SHERIDAN: No. We were all on a program that.... Huntley-Brinkley [Chester Robert Huntley] did a program on the Attorney General's organized crime program while he was there. There was a roundtable discussion in his office in which both Bill Hundley and myself participated along with him. But that's the only thing like what you're talking about that I remember.

GREENE: Hmm. Well, his came at least secondhand.

SHERIDAN: That I or just Bill Hundley had been on television?

[-133-]

GREENE: Yeah, and that he was reluctant because he was still at the Justice Department and he thought it would jeopardize his own relationships there, and that eventually Robert Kennedy.... His fear was that Robert Kennedy would urge him to do it and then he would feel compelled to. Then actually, eventually Kennedy called and said, "Don't. I don't think it's a good idea, because you will..."

SHERIDAN: This was after Kennedy left Justice?

GREENE: Yeah.

SHERIDAN: Well, now you're close because, you know, after he left, things just started going to pot and...

GREENE: Yeah, that's right.

SHERIDAN: But I don't remember asking him to go on television. Maybe it was asking him to make some kind of a public statement, but I don't remember what it was specifically in relation to.

[-134-]

GREENE: When you say things were going to pot, do you attribute that to Katzenbach and Clark?

SHERIDAN: And Johnson. They just weren't doing anything because they didn't have the backing to do anything. There was something like that and I can't pin it down as to what the occasion was or what...

GREENE: Yeah, my impression was that it was to...

SHERIDAN: Hundley might remember.

GREENE: ...that it was to spark some enthusiasm either at the Katzenbach-Clark level or higher up, to sort of force their hand.

SHERIDAN: I just don't remember. There was something but I don't remember just what it was.

GREENE: That's all I have to ask you.

SHERIDAN: O.K.

GREENE: Do you have anything to stick on?

SHERIDAN: No. We did get into the Bobby Baker [Robert G. Baker] case, didn't we?

[-135-]

GREENE: No.

SHERIDAN: At all?

GREENE: I don't think so. You know, that's something I think you mentioned to me a year ago and I forgot about it.

SHERIDAN: Well it's interesting and I'll just go through it very quickly. Let's see, the Bobby Baker case came to light through a congressional hearing, then Jack Anderson and I don't.... I'm not clear yet on the beginning, but it was right about, just before the elections in 1968—no, in '64. I think Lyndon Johnson always felt that Bob Kennedy was the one who triggered this to embarrass him, which really wasn't the case. Once the investigation started...

GREENE: Didn't it start during the Kennedy administration and Johnson felt it was a Robert Kennedy effort to dump him from the ticket? Or didn't it start that early?

[-136-]

SHERIDAN: Well, it did start that early. It did start around '64. It seems to me the grand jury started in '65, but anyway, when Robert Kennedy left in—when did he leave? No, see, he left in '64, so it probably started just before he left, and then he did leave. Jack Miller was still there. This was the saving factor. So Jack Miller assigned Bill Bittman [William O. Bittman] to the case, which was the other saving factor. Then they started the grand jury, and the grand jury went for a year. They didn't really meddle with that, but once they were ready to bring an indictment of Baker, that's when they started trying to put the fix in.

GREENE: 'They' being Johnson?

SHERIDAN: Lyndon Johnson, through Ramsey Clark, who was then deputy attorney general, who was, I'm sure, just a conveyor—I want to do a book on that too—but it was just one thing

[-137-]

after another of efforts to get rid of Bittman. They held up his raise, and then they tried to transfer him to Chicago and tried to get him to take the Chicago job. They took one of them, Don Moore [Donald Page Moore], who was working with them; they get him out of there. Then when it really came down to the indictment, they tried to take half the indictment out. First, they did take some of it out when Bittman was in Chicago and he decided not to fight over that. Then the last—just before—the day before the indictment was coming down they tried to take the guts of the indictment out. Bittman threatened to resign if they did.

GREENE: Through legal maneuvers or...

SHERIDAN: Well, within the department, you know. They're framing the indictment and it goes up for approval and comes back with, you know, half of it gone. And this led to a showdown between Bittman and Fred Vinson, who was then head of

[-138-]

the criminal division, in which Bittman threatened to resign if they didn't put it back in. They backed down and the indictment went ahead.

Then he was finally tried and convicted. Of course, during the trial, the fact of all of these government wiretaps and Fred Black [Fred B. Black, Jr.] came out. Then Lyndon Johnson, who was in the hospital—the Bethesda Naval Hospital—had all these things rushed out to him because I'm sure he was scared to death he was in them. But he was finally convicted. Bittman tried the case, Edward Bennett Williams defended Baker. But he was only given a year and a half sentence. This was three years ago and, of course, he still hasn't gone to prison. The last time it came up to the Court of Appeals, they, on their own, took it off the docket pending the case before the Supreme Court which the Supreme Court then took off their docket and it's.... I'm just personally convinced it's a very high level conspiracy

[-139-]

to keep Bobby Baker from going to jail. I think Lyndon Johnson still has his hand in that court of appeals.

GREENE: To protect Johnson more than Baker?

SHERIDAN: Well, I suppose you could look at it that way, but I think it's just as much Johnson protecting Baker and his image. I'm sure he'd also worried about what Baker may be turning on him, but I don't think that would ever happen.

GREENE: What did Robert Kennedy's part amount to in this?

SHERIDAN: Really very little, because once he was out.... I do know that there were

conversations where he gave encouragement to Bill Bittman to hang in there and things like that. I know he had conversations with Nick Katzenbach who was trying to keep it on track, although he was being undercut from the White House. I think that's one of the reasons Katzenbach went to the State Department was

[-140-]

to get him out of there because Ramsey Clark apparently was more pliable by the White House, which nobody would like to hear these days, because he's kind of St. Ramsey right now. But the Baker case is not a good tribute to Ramsey Clark.

GREENE: Did Clark have a relationship with Baker?

SHERIDAN: No. He had a relationship with Lyndon Johnson from the time.... It's obvious to people who were there that when Ramsey was made head of the Lands Division [Land and Natural Resources Division], he was Lyndon Johnson's guy in the Justice Department, and he continued to be.

GREENE: Was he always viewed that way within the Department?

SHERIDAN: Not by most people, but by people who—well, like Jack Miller—people who saw things. Inquiries came from the Land Division that ordinarily wouldn't come from the Land Division just because they involved somebody that Lyndon Johnson was interested in. It was this type of thing, where you wondered well, and then you

[-141-]

figured out, because they're both from Texas. But it was very obvious in the Baker case that Ramsey Clark was Lyndon Johnson's agent to kill that case if he could.

GREENE: Did Kennedy ever go to him directly?

SHERIDAN: To who?

GREENE: To Clark, that you know of.

SHERIDAN: I don't know. I just don't know.

GREENE: What do you mean when you say cases came up from the Lands Division that you wouldn't ordinarily expect?

SHERIDAN: Well, Jack Miller mentioned one where he got an inquiry from Clark's office about a criminal case in Texas, which Clark as head of the Lands

Division would have no interest in whatsoever. It was obvious to Jack that he was really asking on behalf of Lyndon Johnson.

GREENE: What was the name of this case?

SHERIDAN: I don't remember. He would. Jack Miller would remember.

[-142-]

GREENE: Larry is going to interview Clark next week.

SHERIDAN: Oh, is he really? I wouldn't want to. I don't know if you ought to get into this kind of thing. I mean...

GREENE: No one ever has to know where it came from.

SHERIDAN: No, but I wouldn't—I'd just as soon, you know, that Clark wasn't asked in a way, in an accusatory way. I mean, I think he should be asked about the Baker case and what his role was, but I don't think....

GREENE: That's interesting. I certainly never realized—you know, in all the reading I've done about that case, I never remember even seeing his name come up.

SHERIDAN: Well, he was deputy attorney general and he was.... It if hadn't been for Bill Bittman that case, Bobby Baker never would have been indicted, at least for nothing worth anything.

GREENE: But you can't remember any connection with this case on Robert Kennedy's

[-143-]

part earlier, while John Kennedy was alive, can you? I thought that was Anderson's original contention that Robert Kennedy took his whole thing up to force Lyndon Johnson...

SHERIDAN: I just don't remember. See, one thing, I was in Tennessee and I just wasn't that close, so I don't.... Again, Jack Miller should remember that better than I do. But I think that story's got to be written. I have reservations because I have no particular desire to have Ramsey fired at this point because he is kind of a good guy right now. I didn't know all these things until within the last year because I've started looking into it.

GREENE: Most of it come from Miller?



SHERIDAN: No, most of it didn't come up from Miller. In fact, really, none of it other than that one. It came more from people who were directly involved. I really originally hesitated to get into it because I didn't

[-144-]

want to hurt Nick, but it looks like Nick really comes out kind of a hero because he's the one that really kind of kept it in line. I'm sure it didn't do himself any good with the White House.

GREENE: Did Oberdorfer get involved in the Baker case?

SHERIDAN: In the Baker case? Not that I know of. His only famous case was the stolen horse case when Ethel stole the horse.

GREENE: Right.

SHERIDAN: Lou was a good fellow.

GREENE: Did Robert Kennedy view Ramsey Clark as Lyndon Johnson's Justice Department representative?

SHERIDAN: I can't believe that he didn't because he must have known much more than I did about those kinds of things and who was whose man. But, you know, Ramsey ended up being gutsy on the Hoover issue, standing up to Hoover, and has been very laudatory of Robert Kennedy, particularly since he died. He gave a great

[-145-]

speech over at Justice when they had that bust unveiled, a great speech. And he spoke down at the reformatory—I guess it's the reformatory—down in West Virginia. We went down to that. Ramsey was principal speaker and he's just been very good.

GREENE: Yeah, on the D.C. legislation, too.

SHERIDAN: So, that's....

GREENE: I just thought of one other thing and that's left in my mind.

SHERIDAN: So I must admit then, I wonder why Ramsey Clark was so down on wiretapping and bugging and all that. You can certainly justify it in his own liberal convictions, but it could also be Lyndon Johnson telling him, "Don't you dare." I just don't know.

GREENE: As I remember it at the time of the.... I guess it was in '66 when the wiretapping thing emerged again, Clark was very defensive about the Kennedys...

[-146-]

SHERIDAN: Oh, very much so. He really stood up.

GREENE: ...and Katzenbach was not.

SHERIDAN: Well, he did, but not as much. Katzenbach was a little more wishy-washy about it, but Clark really did stand up. So I don't know. I just don't know. I do know he tried to fix the Baker case for Lyndon Johnson.

GREENE: How did Katzenbach's lack of firmness on the wiretapping thing affect Robert Kennedy's relationship with him? Did he resent the fact that Katzenbach didn't come out and wasn't strongly for him?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, I think so. But I don't think it was a bitter resentment. I think it was a sad resentment.

GREENE: Do you have any knowledge of why Katzenbach...

SHERIDAN: I think he's this kind of a guy. He isn't really a—he's a standup guy but not a standup guy.... I don't know how you'd make the distinction. He makes it complicated for all. He's a very nice guy

[-147-]

but there's a weakness there when it comes to standing up publicly. I guess that's it. And he was taking on J. Edgar Hoover. There aren't many people who are willing to do that, but Ramsey was. That's pretty gutsy.

GREENE: Yeah. Did Robert Kennedy, do you think, change his views at all from the earlier period to the period in which he was in the Senate, on investigative procedures, and particularly on wiretapping and bugging? Did you ever discuss that with him?

SHERIDAN: Well, I don't think he changed on the need for aggressive law enforcement, particularly in relation to organized crime. He introduced a bill while he was in the Senate to legalize wiretapping—which finally has become law—with court restraints and making it much like a search warrant. I think he was against Hoover's use of it without any restraints and I think he resented the fact

[-148-]

that Hoover did it while he was attorney general without him knowing and then tried to say he did know.

GREENE: What about the subject of bugging?

SHERIDAN: Well, sometimes it's hard to distinguish them. I think he was against bugging where trespass was involved. I think he was for bugging in major cases with court order. So am I.

GREENE: I usually get the impression you're on the same wavelength.

SHERIDAN: Yeah.

GREENE: Anything to add?

SHERIDAN: I don't think so. I don't think so. [Interruption] The Bobby Baker case involved one hundred thousand dollars in cash that was contributed by several savings and loan companies on the West Coast who were seeking legislation which would be favorable to them. They gave a hundred thousand dollars in cash to Bobby Baker

[-149-]

and Baker was supposed to pay off certain political leaders to get this legislation. In fact, he kept most of the money and put it into his motel. But from all indications, he did give some of it to Senator Robert Kerr [Robert S. Kerr] and probably to Senator Everett Dirksen [Everett M. Dirksen]. The yet untold story is that there was a second hundred thousand dollars in cash and that Bill Bittman was specifically told not to go into it.

GREENE: By whom?

SHERIDAN: By either Fred Vinson or Nick Katzenbach or Ramsey Clark, and I think Vinson because he dealt mainly with Vinson. But Vinson was really just kind of following orders. The second hundred thousand dollars was delivered in cash on the White House lawn, and it was supposed to be paid directly to Lyndon Johnson but it was the morning that Jenkins [Walter W. Jenkins] had

[-150-]

gotten picked up in the men's room. So Lyndon Johnson—he was there. I don't know what the occasion on the White House lawn was—what the ceremony was—but Johnson walked away. The money was given to somebody else who brought it to their office, and then I suppose it eventually got to Johnson. The other fifty thousand was put into the campaign in California. This was in '64, and...

GREENE: Which campaign? For whom?

SHERIDAN: It was the presidential campaign in 1964, because the Jenkins incident, you remember, happened just before the election. So that second hundred thousand dollars nobody has ever investigated. And Bittman just felt at the time, I know, that he would rather go with what he had and get an indictment than to go with what was obviously going to be blocked, and not be able to do anything.

[-151-]

GREENE: Do you think Bittman would be available for an interview?

SHERIDAN: I would think so. You're going to have to convince him that nobody's going to see this.

GREENE: Well, we've got all your stuff locked up in top security buildings.

SHERIDAN: I talked to Bittman that I wanted to do this story. It's really his story if he wants to do it, but he's reluctant to do it and I still might. I just have to figure out in my own mind about Ramsey Clark.

GREENE: How involved did Miller get in this, because he's already agreed to be interviewed.

SHERIDAN: Well, Miller was the one who put Bittman in the spot to make sure they wouldn't fix it because he knew they would try. He was aware, I think, of most things that went on thereafter from a counseling standpoint.

GREENE: I don't recall what you said about what happened to Bittman eventually. They tried to force him out. Did they finally succeed?

[-152-]

SHERIDAN: No. He stayed until after the indictment. Then he left with the understanding that he'd come back and try the case. No, he stayed and tried the case and then came back and handled the appeal. So he stayed until the job was done. Austin Mitler was his cohort and now they're both over at the—what's the law firm—Hogan and Hartson. Their third man was Donald Page Moore from Chicago and they did succeed finally in getting him out of there.

GREENE: Why, or rather how, do you think Baker's been kept out of jail since Johnson left the administration?

SHERIDAN: I just think there are people on the court of appeals here in the District

over whom he has enough influence that they've managed to stall the case. I'm not convinced he'll ever go to jail.

GREENE: Who is it on the court of appeals?

[-153-]

SHERIDAN: I think Bazelon [David L. Bazelon] would be one.

GREENE: Was Robert Kennedy aware of most of this, if not all of it?

SHERIDAN: Oh, I think so.

GREENE: Through Bittman?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, I think so. I think Bittman kept him advised, and through Miller.

GREENE: He remained fairly in close contact with them?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, but he remained in the background because I'm sure he didn't want to add to the fuels of the rumors that this was all his doing to somehow embarrass Lyndon Johnson, which it wasn't at all.

[END OF INTERVIEW #6]

[-154-]

Walter Sheridan Oral History Transcript – RFK #6  
Name Index

**A**

Anderson, Jack, 136, 144  
Andrews, Bill, 67

**B**

Baker, Robert G. “Bobby”, 135, 136, 139, 140,  
141, 142, 143, 145, 147, 149, 150, 153  
Baron, Sam, 105  
Barthelmes, A. Wesley, Jr., 101, 102  
Bazelon, David L., 154  
Bellino, Carmine S., 108, 128, 129  
Bittman, William O., 137, 138, 139, 140, 143, 150,  
151, 152, 154  
Black, Fred B., Jr., 139  
Brinkley, David, 102, 133  
Bruno, Gerald J., 114

**C**

Chuck, 121, 122  
Clark, Ramsey, 107, 108, 109, 135, 137, 141, 142,  
143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 150, 152  
Cohn, Roy, 105  
Cox, Archiblad, 108, 109

**D**

Dirksen, Everett M., 150  
Dolan, Joseph F., 111  
Douglas, John W., 108  
Dulles, Allen W., 119

**E**

Edelman, Peter B., 113  
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 109

**F**

Fay, Paul B. “Red”, Jr., 115, 116

**G**

Garrison, Jim, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123,  
124  
Gurvich, William H., 117, 118, 119

Guthman, Edwin O., 117

**H**

Hoffa, Jimmy, 104, 105, 106, 108, 110, 120, 132  
Hoover, J. Edgar, 107, 145, 148, 149  
Humphrey, Hubert H., 121  
Hundley, William G., 109, 127, 128, 129, 131, 133,  
135  
Huntley, Chester Robert “Chet”, 133

**J**

Jenkins, Walter W., 150, 151  
Johnson, Lyndon B., 103, 113, 114, 135, 136, 137,  
139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 145, 146, 147,  
150, 151, 153, 154  
Johnson, Rafer, 127

**K**

Katzenbach, Nicholas deB., 106, 107, 135, 140,  
145, 147, 150  
Kennedy, Ethel Skakel, 116  
Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 116  
Kennedy, John F., 114, 115, 119, 121, 122, 124,  
126, 131, 132, 144  
Kennedy, Robert F., 101, 103, 105, 106, 107, 114,  
116, 118, 120, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126,  
128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136,  
137, 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148,  
154  
Kerr, Robert S., 150  
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 120, 121

**L**

Lewin, Nathan, 106  
Long, Edward Vaughn, 106  
Long, Russell B., 104, 123

**M**

Manchester, William, 117  
Mankiewicz, Frank F., 101, 102, 113  
McKeithen, John J., 120, 121, 124  
Miller, Herbert J. “Jack”, Jr., 108, 137, 141, 142,  
144, 152, 154  
Mitler, Austin, 153  
Moore, Donald Page, 138, 153

## **N**

Novello, Angela M., 110, 111

## **O**

Oberdorfer, Louis F., 108, 145  
O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 121, 122

## **P**

Partin, Edward G., 104, 110

## **R**

Rogers, William P., 132  
Rusk, Dean, 112

## **S**

Salinger, Pierre E.G., 117  
Silberling, Edwyn, 129, 130, 131  
Suydam, Hank, 105

## **V**

Vinson, Fred M., Jr., 106, 138, 150

## **W**

Walinsky, Adam, 113  
Washington, George, 101  
Wilkey, Malcolm R., 128  
Williams, Edward Bennett, 139

## **Z**

Zagri, Sidney, 105