

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- * * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- _____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [/] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as */Meeting appears to be breaking up/* or */Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./*

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in 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.

Dictabelt 17B

Item 17B.1

April 2, 1963¹

[Repeats end of item 17A.4 and continues.]

Shriver:² . . . fellows into the Peace Corps.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

Shriver: And, John McCone has told me on two or three occasions, and Dulles³ of course did, that they never would do that.

JFK: Right. Right.

Shriver: They sent out messages and the rest of it.

JFK: Right.

Shriver: But, uh, we've got a group in training now that looks suspicious, and I'd like, uh, to follow whatever you recommend, but I sure in hell want those guys, uh, . . .

JFK: Well, would you call Dick Helms⁴?

Shriver: Dick Helms?

JFK: Yeah. He's the operations officer over there under . . . And just say to him that you've talked to me and that I don't want anybody in there.

Shriver: Okay.

JFK: And if they are there, let's get them out now before we have it. And if there is any problem about it that Dick Helms ought to call the President about it. That . . .

¹ Date is as given on material received, but it is not confirmed.

² R. Sargent Shriver.

³ Allen W. Dulles.

⁴ Richard Helms.

Shriver: Okay.

JFK: . . . this is very . . . We are very, very anxious that there be no, uh, we don't want to discredit this whole idea.

Shriver: Okay. Fine.

JFK: And, uh, they . . . Christ, they're not gonna find out that much intelligence!

Shriver: That's right.

JFK: Now, the other thing is, I notice with these people coming back, can we do anything about seeing if we can get some of them to go into the Foreign Service?

Shriver: Yes. The Foreign Service has already changed their, uh, examination schedules, and the kind of exams they give, and the, uh, places that they are going to be given, uh, and done everything that they can this year to facilitate Peace Corps guys getting into the Foreign Service, and . . .

JFK: Yeah.

Shriver: . . . USIA⁵ has done the same thing, and AID⁶ is trying to do something.

JFK: Yeah. Yeah.

Shriver: Uh, I think we'll have to find out by one trial run to see whether it's successful.

JFK: Okay. Well, I just wanted to be sure. Uh, let me know if there's anything we can do, but these are the guys I'd like to get into the Foreign Service.

Shriver: Okay. Fine.

JFK: Okay.

Shriver: Thanks.

JFK: 'bye, Sarge.

⁵ United States Information Agency.

⁶ Agency for International Development.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 17B

Conversation #2: President Kennedy and Robert S. McNamara

April 3, 1963

President: Hello.

Sec. McNamara: Bob McNamara, sir.

President: Good morning. How are you?

Sec. McNamara: Fine, sir.

President: Did you talk to Gene Zuckert?

Sec. McNamara: I talked to him last night, after you.

President: Oh, fine. Well, I talked to, uh, I had Pierre [Salinger] call [Arthur] Sylvester because I was concerned about the stories. What is your judgment about what we ought to do now, because it may come up in my press conference this afternoon.

Sec. McNamara: I think that it ought to be said that the Committee, uh, the pressed us to determine the source of the leak and the Air Force was seeking to answer the Committee's interest in it.

President: Right.

Sec. McNamara: And drop it at that if you can. Now, if they say, is it customary to request people to take polygraph tests, I think the answer to that is that no such request has been made here. The specific . . . no such request has been made. The specific request, as I understand it, made by the Air Force Inspector General of the individuals he talked to was, "would you voluntarily take such a test if it was indicated that, uh . . . it was desirable."

President: Was that part of the routine?

Sec. McNamara: I am checking on that. And I am told that it is. As a matter of fact, I have had underway for about three or four weeks here an investigation of polygraphs. Bob [Robert] Lovett in 1952 investigated this and it hasn't been looked into since that time. And just as a normal routine here about four weeks ago, I had a general counsel's office start. And I have a partial report of their work to date and it has been quite customary, not only here but elsewhere in the government. To both apply the test, but more particularly to ask the individual . . .

President: I see.

Sec. McNamara: . . . if they would be willing to volunteer for the test.

President: I tell you what I wonder if Sylvester or who would you suggest that we could get some details. Pierre thought that the Air Force ought to put out some statement this morning so that the story would be ended so that I wouldn't have to be the one to end it.

Sec. McNamara: I think that's wise. I'll work with Sylvester and we will get it out.

President: Perhaps Sylvester and Pierre could talk, uh.

Sec. McNamara: I will do that and I will get a copy of it over to you.

President: The other thing was whether, uh, do you think that this was an effort by the Air Force to embarrass everybody. That is why they put . . . a pushed it this hard, because, after all, uh.

Sec. McNamara: I don't think so, Mr. President.

President: You think they just . . . he's presses the button were pressed and they conducted what they consider the routine.

Sec. McNamara: That is right. I think also there has been so many claims and counter claims by the Committee and others on this question they honestly wanted to get at the bottom of it. And they went about it with an excessive zeal. If they would apply that much zeal to some of the others [laughter], they would solve them damn fast.

President: You mean the Air Force did an excessive zeal.

Sec. McNamara: Yea. This chap, you don't know the Inspector General, but I happened to serve with him during the war, he is a wonderful individual, but he is a combat pilot. He is a three star general now. He looks like a thug. He just went about it that way.

President: Ok, well, perhaps Pierre and Sylvester can work out something.

Sec. McNamara: And I will see that it is handled before your press conference that you have a note of what we have done.

President: Ok. Good. Thanks a lot, Bob.

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Dictabelt 17B

Conversation #3: President Kennedy and Louis Harris

President: Hello.

Mr. Harris: Mr. President.

President: Yea, Lou.

Mr. Harris: How are you, sir?

President: Good, how are you doing?

Mr. Harris: Well, just fine. I talked with those people up in Canada yesterday and also got a report from [Oliver] Ollie Quayle up there. He, uh, and on this BOMARC thing. Apparently it isn't . . . it isn't coming through very much at all. [inaudible] It's their strong feeling that if nothing is said about it, it would allow them to push their . . . their theme of the last week, which is give Canada strong government, a majority government, otherwise you are going to have weak, divided minority government.

President: Fine. Well, we won't . . . I will be asked at the press conference and I am just going to say nothing about it.

Mr. Harris: Their . . . their strong feeling was that if you said much about that they would have tough security issues in the last week. They are very confident. I must say, I don't know if they are just suffering from, you know, the last minute optimism, but they think that they will get the 145.

President: Do they. How does Quayle think?

Mr. Harris: Uh . . . oh, somewhere between 126 and 133, something like that.

President: That is not a majority, is it?

Mr. Harris: 133 is. It is going to be just right on the razor edge, I'd say. They'll probably be sweating it out Yukon district, you know.

President: What about a . . . They don't think that it will be [John] Diefenbaker.

Mr. Harris: Oh, no, not at all, not at all. He has not caught fire at all. These Social Credit fellows, as Nixon would say, have peaked too early. They are going down. I would say they got a real chance up to now to pull it off. They have, uh, it's Quebec province where this fellow [Jean] Lesage, the Premier, is finally out working for him. And he might be able to pull it off.

President: How are you doing?

Mr. Harris: Pretty good. This is totally between us. It won't be announced for three weeks, but I saw this mutual friend of ours, Phil Graham, yesterday, and we came to an agreement on the thing in Newsweek and the column.

President: Oh, is that right? For Newsweek or for a . . .

Mr. Harris: Yea, I will do a thing for Newsweek once a month and a . . .

President: . . . newspapers.

Mr. Harris: Newspapers once a week.

President: That's damn good, isn't it?

Mr. Harris: That'll begin in June and it is a good deal, because I will be able to do a poll a month, and then we will really have a lot of stuff. At least keep Gallup on it and make a lot of news.

President: Yea, I think that is a good thing for both of those reasons.

Mr. Harris: I will be able to, Mr. President, be able to talk to you a good deal. I cleared this with Phil and he said, uh, and I know it is alright with CBS people, you know we can talk about all this well before it ever comes out. Got to keep it very, you know, quiet, so that no other press people will pick it up.

President: This is a better deal than a . . . than a, your other one, it seems to me. But, I mean, this would then combine with your commercial stuff at CBS. This will give you a pretty good deal, won't it?

Mr. Harris: Yes, it will. Yes, it will. It will about make up for all the private stuff and, frankly, you see, you know, I could have gotten involved with some people in Chicago. We are talking about a primary against [Richard] Daley and in California they wanted me to get in against [Jesse] Unruh, and, frankly, I saw no future to that.

President: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Harris: I don't know if you do, but I don't, do you?

President: No, I think that was uh . . . I think you're . . .

Mr. Harris: I mean, if I wanted, you know, to hold, uh, or run for office, it would be one thing, but I think just in the end I would end up in some ash can in an alley, you know.

President: You haven't gotten any polls lately, have you.

Mr. Harris: No, sir, but we will have . . . Quayle is doing something in Kentucky now, and I will have something on Cuba next week.

President: How does it look, like Happy [A.B. "Happy" Chandler]/?

Mr. Harris: Well, no, it's pretty close. We got a hold of one of his polls and he is only ahead 53 to 47. And [Edward T.] Breathitt, his opponent, is unknown, you know. So I think it might be pretty close.

President: Well, what does Quayle think about his poll? Who are you two polling for, the other fellow?

Mr. Harris: For Breathitt, yeah. [Bert] Combs, you see, uh, Combs has always been our client until Earl Clemons shifted and he wanted, uh, I know he talked to me about that last fall, and I said I just couldn't do that.

President: What does Breathitt, uh . . .

Mr. Harris: He is a young fellow, about 37.

President: You say that he is at 53 to 47.

Mr. Harris: He is behind 53-47.

President: That's all. Is that according to Chandler's poll or yours?

Mr. Harris: By Chandler's.

President: How about yours? You haven't taken one yet?

Mr. Harris: I will have the results on that next week.

President: Oh, yea, give me a call.

Mr. Harris: I sure will.

President: Ok, good, thanks, Lou.

Mr. Harris: Right, Mr. President, thank you.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 17B

Conversation #4: President Kennedy and Unidentified Person

President: Hello.

Voice: Mr. President?

President: Yes, sir.

/belt needle skips/

Voice: . . . back in town last night.

President: Yeah.

Voice: I spoke to him. He's got the message. He's gonna work that thing out.

President: He's gonna do it?

Voice: Yeah. See . . .

President: Or is he just gonna work it out?

Voice: Well, he's--he's gonna work it out. Uh, apparently there's some little thing, you know it isn't just, uh . . . uh, signing a paper. He--he just feels that the--he wants to do it correctly. But he's got the message. And it will be done.

President: Yeah. Would you have him let you know when he does it?

Voice: Right.

President: O.K.

Voice: N--Number two . . .

President: Yeah.

Voice: . . . uh, Tim, as you may know, has applied for Harvard.

President: Yeah.

Voice: I've been in touch up there with some people, and I get the word that it's about, you know, it's, uh, just about fifty-fifty.

President: Yeah.

Voice: And, uh, I didn't know whether or not you'd be willing to, say, have [Fred] Holborn . . . I can . . .

President: Forget Holborn, why don't you talk to McGeorge Bundy?

Voice: And have him call somebody up there?

President: Yeah. I mean, I'd start with him. Holborn won't, uh, do you any good, but just . . .

Voice: Well, would you--would you be willing to have Bundy tell somebody up there that you know Tim and that you'd recommend . . .

President: Oh, yeah; oh, definitely. If you want a letter or anything, I'd be delighted. It seems to me that, uh, if you will speak to Bundy, then I'll talk to Bundy.

Voice: O.K.

President: Find out what we ought to do about it.

Voice: That's terrific.

President: Tell Bundy to speak to me about it.

Voice: Thanks very much. Bye.

President: Bye.

[disconnect]