

Frank Mankiewicz Oral History Interview – RFK #2, 7/10/1969
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Mankiewicz was director of the Peace Corps in Lima, Peru from 1962 to 1964, Latin America regional director from 1964 to 1966 and then press secretary to Senator Robert F. Kennedy from 1966 to 1968. In the interview Mankiewicz discusses his relationship with the Senator, the role of the press, the staff, functionality and physical set up of the senate office, among other issues.

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FRANK MANKIEWICZ
RFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

With

FRANK MANKIEWICZ

July 10, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By Larry J. Hackman

HACKMAN: One thing you said last time--and then go on and talk about office procedures and staff.

MANKIEWICZ: Yes.

HACKMAN: You said, concluded, that it was an advantage that you came to the office without having a background as a press guy, you know, the routine. Why was that so?

MANKIEWICZ: Well....

HACKMAN: Can I close this?

MANKIEWICZ: Sure. Are we picking up sound from that air conditioner?

HACKMAN: That's all right. It's not bad.

MANKIEWICZ: Because, in the first place, it permitted me to be more--I don't like to use the word innovative but, say, sort of follow my impulses because I had no standard by which to know that they were wrong. But more important--and I think it was probably Wes Barthelmes' [Albert Wesley Barthelmes, Jr.] problem--because being press secretary for Robert Kennedy is not like being press secretary for

anybody also. I mean, if I'd gone to work for Chuck Percy [Charles Harting Percy] or Win Prouty [Winston Lewis Prouty]...

HACKMAN: Win Prouty.

MANKIEWICZ: ...or Albert Gore [Albert Arnold Gore, Sr.] or, as Mary McGrory suggested to me once she watched me work for a couple of hours she said, "Why don't you go to work as the press secretary for both Senators Everett [Robert Ashton Everett] and [Leonard Beck Jordan] Jordan?" And she said, "You could do that job and be the press secretary for both of them, and go out to lunch, and take the afternoon off." But that kind of situation requires a certain knowledge of the biz, I think. You got to know when a guy's deadline is, how to get something that will hit the morning papers, when to get something out that will hit the afternoon papers, what days the television stations need material.

But, hell, you're working for Robert Kennedy and the problem is not how to get space, the problem is, in a sense, just how to get along and try to sort of rub off some corners and somehow stay on top of the whole flow. And I have a feeling that just ordinary judgment is what's required there. And if I had it on those occasions when I did, fine; on those occasions when I didn't, not fine. But in no event was it determined by my knowledge of what the hell the overnight was or at what time you have to do film in order to get it on the evening news. I mean I didn't know any of those things, I learned them all. They were very easy to learn. But, since I learned them on the job they didn't dominate the job, which I think they might have if I'd come to the job from a newspaper or from a wire service bureau here. And I think Bill Moyers [William D. Moyers] demonstrated that over at the White House. I mean Lyndon Johnson never had it better than when Bill Moyers was doing his press work because Bill was all over the map and tended to deal with the White House Press individually rather than as an institution. And I don't know, but Bill Movers might not have been the model for Senator Kennedy because it's certainly a radical departure.

Now, Ed Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman], in a way, was the same kind of thing because Ed was not a political reporter. Ed was not a Washington reporter, he wasn't particularly a political reporter, he was an investigative reporter and a great one. And when he went into the Justice Department I suspect he was operating pretty much the same way. He didn't know Washington. He didn't know the relationships between the Hill and the White House and the executive departments and all that business that I suppose a good Justice Department press officer knows. But the more he knows the more routine and sort of good and gray he's likely to become. So I suspect that the reason Guthman did such a great job may have been involved in that, too. He'd never done it before.

HACKMAN: Coming in without this then, you said you picked it up over time, but, in the early periods, were there ever any real problems created because you didn't bring that to the job. Can you recall, you know, some real screw-ups or whatever?

MANKIEWICZ: Yes. Well, I can remember, you know, press releases that sort of dropped down the tube because they happened to hit at just the wrong time. But I

caught on to that. And I had some good friends in the press--I mean, I acquired some good friends in the press. They weren't friends of mine but they were sort of anxious that Senator Kennedy do well and they gave me a lot of advice. I remember particularly Alan Emory [Alan Steuer Emory], who had no particular reason to want me to thrive except that he's a nice man--he's a correspondent for the *Watertown Times*--and when my appointment was announced, and I was still over at the Peace Corps, he called me up--first New York newspaperman I'd ever talked to--congratulated me, said he'd like to meet me, like to come over and tell me a little about the New York press corps, and maybe set up a luncheon with all the New York correspondents in Washington. And he did, and it was of enormous assistance. I got to meet all the people and he told me a little about their idiosyncrasies and so forth. He was always terribly good.

[INTERRUPTION]

MANKIEWICZ: But I do remember one thing. We took--I guess it was in August or September '66--I'd only been there a couple of months, and we were laying out a campaign schedule. He was going to go out and help other candidates. He had an awful lot of requests to go around the country and speak. And the first one we did--as I look back on it now, probably Jerry [Gerald J. Bruno] set it that way as a sort of shakedown because we had some new guys, and also, he'd never done this.

HACKMAN: New advance people, you mean, or....

MANKIEWICZ: Well, me and Adam [Adam Walinsky] and Peter [Peter B. Edelman] had never been involved in this kind of activity in the Senate. I mean he was elected in '64 and except for a couple of Democratic dinners and so forth and some things like an ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] convention or a child welfare conference, you know, he'd never been out on the road politically as a Senator. So we went down to Huntington, West Virginia, I think it was, to give a speech for Jennings Randolph. And it was just going to be a flight down and a flight back--I think it was on this flight, I'm not sure--but it was an early flight that I was on, first or second or third time I'd been on a campaign plane. And I made an announcement over the loudspeaker what time we were going to land, where we were going to go, when the speech was going to be, and when I could release the text. And I remember one of the press guys--maybe it wasn't this trip, but it was an early one--one of the press guys hollered at me and said, "When are we going to have time to file?" And I didn't know what he meant. I just didn't know what he was talking about. I had a vague notion that--I mean, if I had to guess what he was talking about I think I would have guessed right--that he meant, "When are we going to have time to write our stories and get them off?" But I really didn't know and I certainly didn't want to embarrass myself. So I said to him, "You'll have plenty of time to file." I assumed it was something that required plenty of time. And they said, "Yes, but when?" And I said, "Well, when we get there." And then I went and asked somebody what that was all about. And then I think at the same time they were asking me, "Is there Western Union?" And there I made a serious mistake because obviously the question meant, did we have a Western Union man along or was there going to be a guy there at the airport who would take the copy. And I thought he

meant, you know, was there a Western Union office in that town we were going to. And I didn't know whether the hell there was a Western Union office, but I figured it was a reasonable size town and there probably was and I said, "Oh, yes, there's a Western Union." And, of course, there was, but it closed at 5 o'clock like all Western Union offices in small towns.

But that sort of thing didn't happen very often because there isn't very much of that. The fact is it's not that hard to be a press secretary technically and it didn't bother me too much. Although I suspect that I was not very efficient right up to the end because those things were never foremost. I mean, I knew enough after that when we were on the road to talk to Jerry and be sure that there was some time to file somewhere, either half an hour before the plane took off or after the speech, and that there'd be a press room somewhere at the stadium or the hall or the hotel, that there'd be some typewriters there and some phones--beyond that, the rest is sort of [Inaudible].

And I think the press likes a little hardship. I have a feeling that the better among them, at least, like running for a phone and hustling their story, trying to get a story off in fifteen minutes that they might otherwise take forty-five minutes to do. I think that kind of urgency creates a better story--at least that was my experience that the.... We had a whole day off once in the campaign in Utah--it was prior to the Indiana primary. And the stories that came out of that day, when everybody had all day to drink and get his laundry done and rest and look around, they were all sort of reflective and polished political dope pieces and they all found something wrong. I think it's in the nature of a political reporter that he finds trouble before he finds things that are going well. So you give them too much time, it's not going to work. I think it's somewhat like Churchill's [Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill] great remark when they were rebuilding the House of Commons after the war. And the proposal was to build a modern legislative hall--room for everybody and offices and so forth--and Churchill said no, he thought it should be rebuilt along the lines of the old one where there were fewer seats than members. There were some five hundred members and seats for, say, one hundred and fifty. And he said that that way on great state occasions it would be jammed and crowded in and it would convey a sense of the urgency of the moment. And I think that's probably pretty good, and I think it applies to time as well. Political reporters, you give them too much time then they become pundits.

HACKMAN: Yes. When you came: how much staff did you have when you came to the job and did this change much over time? Did your staff enlarge?

MANKIEWICZ: What did I have?

HACKMAN: Yes.

MANKIEWICZ: Well, I had nobody because Wes Barthelmes had had a secretary and she was just leaving. I had her for about two weeks to tell me how the routine things worked--which mail I got to answer, which mail I had to answer. At that time I was doing--well, I guess I did all the way through--all the invitations. We had a system where all invitations would go to one girl. She would make a first cut, that is she would throw out--but not irrevocably.... What she would do would be divide the day's mail,

the day's request for speeches and appearances, into three categories. One would be those who would get a letter saying no; one would be those who would get a letter saying, "I would certainly like to talk to your group, but not then"; and the third she would leave open for me to decide whether they should go into one or two or whether I would send them on in to the Senator with a recommendation. And sometimes I'd change those. Sometimes she'd find one and she would think it would be the kind of group he wouldn't want to go to and I'd think, "Oh, no, maybe he would, or maybe he ought to." So I got all of those and I had to read them all.

I had all mail related to press, which in the arcane workings of Joe Dolan's [Joseph Francis Dolan] mind, or perhaps in the mailrooms mind, meant anytime anybody sent in a clipping and said, "You rotten bloodsucker. What did you mean by doing this?" or somebody'd send in a cartoon and say, "Aha, they're catching on to you," or they'd write in and say, "I see that you sponsored the such and such bill." You know, it was clearly a legislative matter, but because they sent a clipping from a newspaper in that would be mine. And then I also got a lot of clippings. And I really had a job of reading everything and sending in to him what I thought he ought to read. I tried to send him a batch of clippings every day or two. So I had all that mail. I probably had more mail than any of the staff got.

Then I also got all Latin American mail and everything in Spanish because they just automatically did that, and a lot of phone calls. But I had no help. I had this one girl, Wendy Cimmet [Wendy Markson Cimmet], who left because her husband was ill. She later came back but she never worked for me. And then I had a succession of temporary secretaries. And finally I got Pat Riley[?]-kept her until, almost till the campaign began. But I never had more than a secretary until just before the campaign. Around January we got an APSA [American Political Science Association] fellow. They had a program where they brought newspapermen to Washington and they worked for a senator for a couple of months and then for a congressman for, say, three months. I think it was about six months.

HACKMAN: That was Hugh McDonald?

MANKIEWICZ: That was Hugh McDonald. He came down from *Newsday* [Garden City, L.I. *Newsday*] recommended by Bill Moyers and he wanted to work for us.

So we took him, and, of course, by the time his three months were up we were into the campaign so he stayed. He didn't go over to the House. But, except for that, I never had, before the campaign began, I never had any help at all. And I had Hugh finally the last two or three months and he was very good. And then, of course, he was quite good in the campaign. But I can't help but think it was a terrible accident for Hugh because I think he's kind of a shattered guy right now, and, in a sense, that was all because of that. I suppose rationally he would say that it was worth it. Maybe it was.

HACKMAN: Let's talk about the invitation thing for awhile. Would you make a decision on what went in or would you check around with other people on the staff? Would Dolan get into this act at all?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, I would do a little checking. First of all, if it was anything New York political I would bang it right over to Dolan. I mean, if there was an

invitation to address a Polish group in Buffalo or all the St. Patrick's Day stuff in New York, all the county dinners I would send to Joe. Some county chairman would write in and say, "My uncle is the program chairman of the Kiwanis here in Schenectady and they'd love to have you come to their annual legislative dinner. I'd appreciate it as a personal favor if you'd do it." I'd give that to Joe. Anything that had a request from some other congressman or senator, which we would get occasionally, you know, some Southern senator or Western senator would write and say, "The kids at the state university in my state want you to come very much. I would sure appreciate it." I would talk all those over with Joe or I would bang them right in to the Senator. If it was another senator and I knew it was a friend, I'd let him.... Where it got a little obscure I'd talk it over with Joe. But on the rest of the stuff I made the decisions--religious things, patriotic stuff, Kiwanis. I mean, in general, if it was small and out-of-state we wouldn't do it; if it was small and in-state we'd think about it; if it was large and in-state we'd try to work it into the schedule. Union stuff I think I also talked over with Joe, you know, address a convention of a particular union, even if it was out of New York.

HACKMAN: Can you remember getting a feel in the early really period as to what groups he really felt he had to do a lot of work with over the next several years and which ones he didn't?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, he talked a lot about wanting to do a lot in New York and particularly upstate, but when it came down to it it was always a low priority. And not because he didn't like it, but simply because he felt the Senate work came first. I mean we'd always call off a speech if there was a vote on any kind of--well, almost any vote. That made it very difficult to schedule things the first six months of the year or more, I guess, where the Senate would go out. We'd try to do it during holidays, during Senate vacations, and so forth. His family came very high on the priority list. We almost never gave him something to do on the weekend if he were going to be home because he didn't want to do that. I mean, the idea of spending a Saturday in New York or anywhere else was almost out of the question.

Now, if there was something he had to be at--if there was an annual convention of the UAW [United Automobile, Aircraft, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America] or the Machinists [International Association of Machinists] or something that he'd accepted for a particular reason and he had to be in Albany on a Saturday night, then we'd talk to Jerry and see if we couldn't build up a swing through the valley during the day, let's say, something like that. He liked New York stuff. He worried about his natural constituency--Irish groups, Catholic groups, law enforcement groups, people that he'd sort of been attached to earlier, and indeed probably spent most of his political time with, plus political groups, county organization groups. But he didn't spend very much time with them when we finally got down to it. And mostly what he really wanted was some kind of assurance that there would be at least something enjoyable about it. I mean I'd show him some things that I thought he ought to do and he'd make a face. And the reason would be because he just knew that from the minute he left Washington until the minute he got back he wasn't going to have a bit of pleasure. Whereas, if I could say to him this is an interesting group and the guy that runs it is doing such and such with black capitalism, or he's doing this or that with the church, or, you

know, this group of priests is such and such or something, then he'd brighten a little bit and he'd say, "All right, I'll do it." He was very pleased, always, to do anything with students. I mean, that he considers.... You know, if we'd say there's a university thing that looks good, he'd be happy to do it.

HACKMAN: Did that change much over time, particularly as '68 got closer and the whole...

MANKIEWICZ: Not really.

HACKMAN: Even after McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] got in?

MANKIEWICZ: Not really because all through.... Well, until McCarthy got in and even a little beyond that--almost until the end of '67--he was inordinately worried about the senate race in 1970. He talked about it a lot. He believed that John Lindsay [John Vliet Lindsay] was going to run against him and he thought it would be a tough race. And I think he was right. And he worried about that flank. And so he didn't spend as much time as other people did worrying about the presidency. And when he got mad at people--me, Joe, whoever it was--it was because, it was almost invariably over a neglected New York issue. "John Lindsay is going to murder me up there on that issue. Why am I going to California to talk about Indians when I could be in Rochester?" And yet every time we'd lay on something in Rochester and Buffalo he'd start moving around trying to find some way that he didn't have to go--particularly areas where the Democratic Party was at its most pedestrian. He didn't mind going to Nassau. He liked Jack English [John F. English]. He liked going to Buffalo and talking to Joe Crangle [Joseph F. Crangle]. He didn't like Rochester. There was a bad organization. He knew they really didn't like him--and a couple other places. And most of those cities up there are so grim.

HACKMAN: How about O'Connor in Albany. The O'Connell organization.

MANKIEWICZ: O'Connell, Dan O'Connell [Daniel P. O'Connell].

HACKMAN: O'Connell, that's right.

MANKIEWICZ: Well, of course he got along with the old man, although the old man was not functioning publicly and at full strength or anything like full strength. But he got along all right there although I think he only went a couple of times, had one appearance up in Troy or in--what's the city right across the river? I guess it's Troy. And then he went on into Albany. I guess it was in Albany where he just couldn't resist it. I guess he was speaking for Frank O'Connor [Frank D. O'Connor], I'm not sure, but mostly he was there for the local ticket. And there were the candidates, you know, for sheriff and auditor and alderman and county executive and county treasurer. And they were all on the stage and they were all introduced and then he was introduced. And then he looked at them all and, you know, it was a caricature. It looked like the Tweed Ring [William Marcy Tweed]. And I'm sure they're all good guys, but somehow with their black suits and the kind

of dingy hall we were in--it was the academy of music--old, old, old place and, you know, in this grimy hall with these pole, you know, with banners like "The Third Ward Committee Welcomes Senator Kennedy", you know, and on every box--of course they didn't use boxes anymore, but the boxes were there--and on every box in this place was written in ornate letters the name of a famous classical composer. And, you know, it was so absurd to see these guys for county treasurer standing there and around them it would say Mozart [Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart] / Haydn [Franz Joseph Haydn] / Johannes Brahma /, you know, / Franz Liszt. And he got up to speak and he turned to this group of men and he looked at them. He said, "There they are." He said, "Can't you just tell from their honest faces they're going to do a good job?" And, of course, the press roared and I don't know how the audience took it but it was late at night.

But he was happiest with student groups. He was happiest with any live groups that would ask him questions, that would test him. He didn't like to get the same questions from the same groups. As a matter of fact as he moved on he came to the realization that a good business group was probably more friendly, in a sense, and responsive to what he had to say than a labor group--that they were much more likely to be frozen and sort of set attitudes, particularly about the war. I remember one day in Rochester not too long before the campaign began when he spoke to a labor group in the morning--absolutely cold. And it was clear that they didn't like his position on the war. And he went from there to a sort of off the record session with leading businessmen that Jerry had worked out at the club, the city club or whatever it was. And here were these business guys and they were lively and energetic, and interested and responsive to his ideas about private enterprise in the ghetto and not unsympathetic by any means to his position in Vietnam. And that night he spoke at the Rochester Chamber of Commerce and there was a blizzard--they'd called off everything in Rochester that night except that meeting and I suppose it wasn't quite as well attended as it would otherwise have been, although damn near everybody was there. And he took a poll like he always does about the war, and for the first time he had a sizable majority for stopping the bobbing and starting negotiations. And he noticed that. I remember talking to him on the way back about how the businessman, perhaps by the nature of his calling, is more ready to change his mind because he doesn't hold opinions deeply and ideologically. It's a questions of dollars and cents in some cases and a businessman is always more ready to cut his loses.

HACKMAN: Did you have to work hard to get invitations of that kind or did these come easily?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, we hardly ever--we never stimulated any, hardly ever, hardly ever, except when something would be laid on and then Jerry would go to work. In other words, as I say, if he had accepted a state editors convention in Syracuse on a given date then I would call Jerry and tell him that he had accepted it and it was at 8 o'clock that evening and why didn't we work out a day in Syracuse or in the Onondaga Valley or something before it. And then Jerry would go stimulate things for the Senator.

HACKMAN: How was Bruno to work with an upstate things? How satisfied was the

Senator with the job he was doing?

MANKIEWICZ: Oh, I think he was quite satisfied. I think if there was any friction it was that Jerry, of course, was--of course. I don't know, friction between the Senator and Jerry, I suspect there probably wasn't any. But the trouble was that Jerry was almost totally non-ideological. I mean Jerry didn't really take into account--because that wasn't his job--what kinds of constituencies he was beginning to appeal to and, particularly, which kinds he was not appealing to. Jerry was impatient with intellectuals and I think properly so. And probably I would think that if Jerry fell short in any direction it was that he tended to turn off liberals and reformers who might otherwise have come to us more quickly and with a little more enthusiasm. But I would say he more than made up for it with energy and talent and just extraordinary dedication. And Jerry was damn good at things that nobody else in the office was any good at at all, which was spotting people to be interested in, people who were having their 110th or their 50th wedding anniversary, or a good Democrat whose daughter had just won a scholarship at a conservatory, or somebody whose wife was sick.

HACKMAN: Which meant writing letters usually?

MANKIEWICZ: That's right. Which meant writing letters or in some cases a phone call. I mean that stuff of politics Jerry was just tremendous at, particularly, and often with press people. He was very, very good at that.

HACKMAN: What about on keeping the mayors happy and the local Democrats in terms of projects?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, no, we had another operation for that. Jerry didn't do that. Jerry's operations was almost purely political. We had Barbara Coleman, and then later somebody else who didn't work out too well--I can't remember her name. It was like Stansbury...

HACKMAN: It wasn't Ellen...?

MANKIEWICZ: It wasn't Ellen. I tell you who did it later was Newberg, Esther Newberg. But between Esther Newberg and Barbara Coleman there was somebody. But Barbara was superb and I think Esther was damn good.

HACKMAN: The people from New York just called in directly?

MANKIEWICZ: That's right. And they handled all city project substantive problems--a mayor wanted to get in on the, you know, pure water program, or he wanted some newer money, or he wanted to get in on the economic development thing, or Appalachia, or whatever it was, that Highway 7 business. And they handled all of that.

HACKMAN: What about the New York office on things political? Tom Johnston [Thomas M.C.. Johnston]. Would he be making many decisions on what kind of groups he would address, or was he good on something like that, or was he more project?

MANKIEWICZ: Tom was more project. I always thought that end of the operation was weak, that we didn't really have a hard political fellow in the city. I suppose Steve [Stephen E. Smith] did a lot of it. But I had the feeling that Tom and Carter [S. Carter Burden, Jr.] got us into things that he didn't have to be in, that had a sort of social, good government, nice aspect to it that I was never too happy with seeing him spend as much time on. I mean, I don't know why he hung around Lincoln Center so much. You know, I don't know, but I just always had the feeling that Tom was one step away from politics and missed the point a couple of times. And I always had a great deal of trouble in New York because there was never anybody who really had press responsibility. And I couldn't do it all. I mean, I'd go up to New York City once every couple of weeks, spend a day or two up there just hanging around talking to people. But then things would suffer so badly here when I did. I also tried, and succeeded a little bit in '67, in spending two or three-- I was trying to do it every couple of months but it never worked out quite that way--a two day or three day swing through the state which Jerry would set up for me, go on a little television and go around and talk to the press and the television guys. But we were so shorthanded and it just bothered me. I mean, I'd be in Binghamton or something and I'd get a phone call from the office here and there'd be, you know, three crises to settle at once and a press release to dictate. "Well, let Adam do it." "Well, Adam's not here," you know; and it frayed my nerves so that I probably spent more time in Washington than I should have.

HACKMAN: You were talking about Senator Kennedy's intentions to spend a lot of...

MANKIEWICZ: We also had a good thing that we did with New York which I worked out with DNC [Democratic National Committee]. They had a radio business over there--I don't know how well set up it was for anybody else, but we used it extensively--where you could give them up to twenty radio stations, telephone numbers of the stations, and then they carded it automatically. And when you had any message that you wanted to go to any or all of the twenty you just call them up. And what we'd do, we'd send.... Barbara Coleman, for instance, would give me an announcement that a grant had been made to a post office facility in Schenectady or whatever, and I'd look at their list of radio stations I had and decide it was good for three or four of them in that area. Then I'd call the DNC and I'd say 1, 4, 7, and 11 and then I'd put the Senator on the phone and he'd read a little statement that we'd write from the grant. And we had him on the radio like that a couple times a week. And I think that was quite good and it took care of a lot of upstate stuff. And I always thought it was very.... That, you know, you'd pick up the newspaper in the morning and here'd be Robert Kennedy proposing a sweeping reorganization of the poverty program or admitting the Viet Cong to a share of responsibility in Saigon. And in the afternoon he'd be on your local radio station talking about an expansion of the sewage treatment plant in Dunkirk. So we did a fair amount of that and he was quite willing to do that.

HACKMAN: Any problems at all in getting things out before Jacob Javits' [Jacob K. Javits] office had gotten the announcements of grants and...

MANKIEWICZ: I was told when I started that that was a big problem but it never really was. Occasionally we'd get beat on some of them. Jerry would call and complain bitterly that, you know, Small Business Administration--five grants had been announced that day by Javits and where were we. And the reason we didn't have it was either Pat hadn't got to it because I had her typing a letter to a constituent whose son had died in Vietnam or because I was somewhere else or, you know, shorthandedness accounted for most of it.

HACKMAN: You never felt that there were people in the administration who simply were not...

MANKIEWICZ: Yes, there were some I think but it always seemed to me a rather small problem. We got enough of them. I mean if we'd gotten five more grants a day to announce than we had, I don't know how we would have been able to do it anyway.

HACKMAN: What about the upstate papers? Which ones did he really have problems with when he came in? Did you ever accomplish anything with any of these that turned anybody around?

MANKIEWICZ: I think we did good work in Syracuse and in Buffalo and Rochester. I worked very hard with those guys. Bill Cotter [William Donald Cotter], who became the editor of the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, was very standoffish and, I think, a little negative and I think always for the wrong reasons and we really put a lot of personal time in on him. When he came down here for the ASNE [American Society of Newspaper Editors] we had him over with his son and he and the Senator had lunch. And whenever we went up there we'd always go into his office and just talk with three or four of us. And I think it paid off in a very great sense. I mean, I'm not suggesting that Cotter is susceptible to flattery, but I think, as is true with most press people, the better they got to know him the more they liked him. It was just the nature of the situation. If you have a cold standoffish guy you don't want to do that but Senator always, I thought, made.... I thought the impression he made was direct proportional to the number of people who were there. We'd get a delegation of fifteen or twenty in to see him, it would usually go pretty coldly. You know, one or two guys and they'd come away convinced. And the *Gazette* in Rochester we spent a lot of time with. And also Paul Neville and a couple others in Buffalo. We had some friends anyway at some of the other papers. But the small papers, as Jerry would say, beat our brains out all the time and they just didn't like it. And there'd be cracks all the time about why didn't he get a haircut and how come he's going skiing in Idaho. So he'd have to go skiing in New York every once in awhile. But that kind of stuff really depressed him. I mean it just depressed him terribly to think that it mattered where he skied.

HACKMAN: Did you ever get on the phone...

MANKIEWICZ: And I suspect that he didn't really think it mattered and I'm inclined to think he was right. I don't believe he ever lost a vote because of where he skied. I'm coming more and more to believe that all that old politics stuff is wrong and that people just--that you can say in an apple state that some other state's apples are better and I don't think you lose any votes.

HACKMAN: Would you be on the phone or writing...

MANKIEWICZ: All day.

HACKMAN: ...frequently to these kinds of people on these little things?

MANKIEWICZ: Yes. I called a New York State newspaper--at least one a day just almost by rotation. I mean I'd look them up in the book and if I'd talked to the one in Ansonia within the last six months then I'd call the one in Batavia and talk to anybody, hopefully the publisher or editor.

HACKMAN: But would it be about something on the skiing or something like the skiing?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, I would try to have something to talk about. How is that campaign going for the forever wild? You know, or if I knew something about the guy or the town--and usually there was something in there--you know, did that sewer treatment plant work out, did you get in the model cities program. And, if failing that, I would just simply say, "I just thought I'd call and see what's on your mind. How can we help you? Are you getting our releases?" You know, something like that. "What can we do to increase the service?" or "Do you get the Senator's speeches in time, and if not, what can we do about it?" And I don't know if that stuff did any good or not.

But, you know, the pressures, as I look back on it, were just enormous. I mean there'd be five or six urgent things a day from the standpoint of the caller. You know, the AP [Associated Press] has got to know what is his position on this. And some guy calling from a radio station in Memphis because some guy that morning had said that Robert Kennedy once did such and such and what's the answer to it. Then some college in Kansas City that wanted him to address their students by open-line phone at 2:45 and can he do it. "Well, I don't know, there'll be a vote," you know, and back and forth. Meanwhile, of course, there.... And also the sort of permanent targets were always there like the major speech that had to be ready by the following day, and when the hell were they going to get it out and when was he going to sit down and go over it so I could get a release out. So that all that was going on all the time and every day was just a frantic effort to stay even.

HACKMAN: Would it have been much help if you would have had more staff?

MANKIEWICZ: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. I got to thinking about that. I'm not sure because I don't know what they would have done, because I really did want to do a lot of this myself. I mean I don't know that I would have.... Then again when I had, there were periods of time when I honest to God didn't know what to do with him. Now, that may be me--I suspect it is because I'm probably not a good delegater or manager in that sense. But, on the other hand, a lot of what I was doing was me and had to be done in that way. I mean, I would have wanted somebody who could jolly these people along and sort of talk to them. And also what was very difficult was to tell people nothing while appearing to tell them something. That's very hard. And I remember very well that early on I decided--and it's no great decision--but the Senator was very insistent on this, that I just simply--he didn't want two things: he obviously didn't want anybody lying about anything. And one way in which he accomplished that was by simply not telling me about a lot of things until it was in a posture where I could talk about it. So frequently I would say to people, "Well, I don't know anything about that." And they'd say, "Well, come on. Of course you know about it. Have you talked to the Senator today?" And I'd say, "Well, yes. I talked to him four or five times." And they said, "You mean he didn't say anything for us to know about?"

HACKMAN: What kinds of things?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, for instance, the whole Manchester [William Raymond Manchester] business I didn't know anything about until the law suit was ready to go--and for that reason. A lot of the early discussions on his candidacy, meetings, I didn't go to. He talked to me about it, should he run, should he not run, you know, give him advice and tell him what people were saying. And there was no secret that he was considering it. But I would find out that Steve and Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] and this one and that one, you know, had been in a meeting and I'd come in and say to him, "Was there some kind of meeting in New York last night?" And he'd say, "Well, yes. Some people got together." And I'd say, "Well, you want to tell me who was there." And he said, "No." So I'd say, quite truthfully, I didn't know.

And the other thing was to be accessible. I discovered very early that the one thing that drives a reporter crazy is to have the feeling that people don't want to talk to him. And it was worth an extra hour a day--easy worth an extra hour a day--simply to call twenty people in that hour say, "I'm returning your call and what I have to tell you is nothing. I know you want to interview him on ABC [American Broadcasting Company] tomorrow at 10a.m. and I just haven't been able to get to him to tell you. I know you want to do a long layout on him as an athlete and take picture of him playing tennis next May, and I don't know if he's willing to do it or not. I think it's a good idea and I'm going to try to get him to do it but I haven't talked to him." And that's a hell a lot better than just not calling. So I made a lot of extra calls.

So I would think accessibility and truth were the keys to the operation. And, of course, truth requires, I think, a certain skill because nothing, or damn few things are yes or no or up or down. They're a little gray and a little tilted and you really got to sort of pick your way through. And the other that thing that he didn't want was he didn't want me getting into issues and arguing with people. I remember early when the Hoover [J. Edgar Hoover]

controversy came up. I went over very carefully with him what his position was. You know, he said, "I don't want to read tomorrow that you're in an argument with J. Edgar Hoover." But he had already made it clear that he didn't want to talk to anybody. He said I'll stand on this statement." He said, "You can explain it in this way." And so I'd say, "They'll say, 'What do you mean by this?'" He said, "Well, then we'll say this." And we went over and over it. He said, "But I don't want to see that Frank Mankiewicz says there was no bugging." So that was a tough thing to do. But once you have that fixed in mind you can do it. And I was always afraid that if somebody else got into it that, since they hadn't been through the same things I had, and didn't have the same conversations with the Senator that I had, that it wouldn't go the same way. I was reluctant to turn any of that over to anybody. And I think, by and large, I was successful. I think I was the least known press secretary around to the public.

HACKMAN: When you say not turning it over to someone else, you mean other people on the staff?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, you asked me if I had a couple of assistants would things have been better.

HACKMAN: Okay. I see what you mean.

MANKIEWICZ: I mean, I wouldn't have wanted anybody to explain to Fred Graham [Fred Patterson Graham] of the *New York Times* what that release on wiretapping meant except me. And I also learned very quickly that a small paper somewhere can be just as powerful as the *New York Times* or the AP if they get something good because then they'll use it and then bang, it's all over the place. So that people would say to me, "How come you're standing wasting your time talking to these guys from Oklahoma City?" And I'd say, "Well, listen, they got a wire service too. And if my third assistant says something to them and they think it's a great thing it'll be in the *New York Times* tomorrow morning. The only difference is the story will begin by saying, 'The Associated Press reported today....' You know, what the hell difference does it make?" I always thought that high policy stuff--and there was always at least one thing going on whether it was Vietnam or Hoover or Manchester or is he going to run or, you know, this or that or the other thing--that was very delicate and if it was going to get screwed up I wanted to screw it up.

HACKMAN: What about your relationship with the rest of the staff, Joe Dolan, Walinsky, Edelman, Pigman [Wendell Pigman], people like this on matters...? Did you have any problems with them talking to the press or cutting in?

MANKIEWICZ: No, because they rarely did. They didn't want to particularly. Adam and Peter were rather resistant, didn't talk to the press and if anybody wanted to talk to them they'd come in and say.... You know, Peter would say to me, "So and so of the *Star* wants to talk to me about the welfare bills. Should I talk to him?"

And I'd say, "All right. Tell me about the welfare bills." And I'd say, "Well, yes. It's all in the legislation. Why don't you just--sure. Only be sure that they don't quote you." Joe I was probably closest to. We worked at that. We were in the same office deliberately because we kicked a lot of political stuff. See, we moved in--I mean from the middle of 1966 to the end of 1966 it was just incredible. I don't know if you know the office setup we had over there.

HACKMAN: Just seen pictures. I remember seeing pictures of it.

MANKIEWICZ: But I was in the reception room, if you can believe it.

HACKMAN: Yes. I've seen pictures of you and everyone crowded in there.

MANKIEWICZ: Here are two girls out front greeting the public and answering all the phones. In front of them are five chairs where people sit while they wait, and then there's a little partition about that high which you can go past--some of the people sitting there can look behind the partition. Behind the partition was me and my secretary and Wendell and his secretary and this girl Wendy Cimmet who used to do the invitations. So when one of the girls at the desk would get a phone call for me, they'd just holler, you know, "Frank!" I'd say, "Yes." "So and so of the AP is on the line." I says, "Tell him I'm not in." Well, there's five guys waiting there, you know. It was impossible. Or they'd say, "Burke Marshall is on the phone." And then I'd have to talk to him of some confidential thing about how we were going to handle the Hoover business. Very tough, very tough. Then we moved and we wound up.... Joe and I shared one of those big rooms. Of course, there were six girls in there too but.... And we could talk a good deal, and more and more our stuff came to come together as we started getting much more political in the end of '67. And also I would try a lot of things out on Joe, and he on me. You know, he'd look at a speech and he'd say to me, "Have you seen that speech he's going to give such and such?" And I'd say, "No, I haven't seen it yet." He'd say, "Well, you better take a look at it. I think the press is going to run with this or that and I don't know if that's what he wants." So I'd look and then I'd say, "No, I don't think so Joe. I think it's more, you know, such and such." or I'd agree with him and we'd go in and see the Senator. And he'd say, "Yes, that's right. Let's move that." And Joe saw a lot of press guys.

HACKMAN: Would speeches usually come to you that route or would they coarse directly from Walinsky or Edelman or whoever was working in them?

MANKIEWICZ: Occasionally I'd look at drafts before he saw them. But usually he'd call me in right about the time he was beginning to talk about them. In other words Adam or Peter.... The way it would go, I guess, is that Adam or Peter would talk to him first generally about what kinds of things he felt like saying. They'd make suggestions, he'd make suggestions. Adam would take notes on them and Adam would come up with a draft. At that point he'd say to me, "Read the draft." And I'd read it and come up with some ideas and then we'd probably have a meeting. But it was never that systematic because it would come out of something else. I'd be in his office asking him if he wanted to talk to the guy from *Time* on an off-the-record basis that afternoon and as I was

leaving Adam would come in and he'd say, about this speech so forth. And the Senator would then say, "Well, Frank what did you think about it?" And suddenly we'd be in a two hour discussion of the speech. And then I always saw it at the end, just before it got printed. So I'd usually get in at that point.

HACKMAN: What were the things you usually found you had to be most watchful for, the things that Walinsky or the Senator would--types of things they'd likely miss?

MANKIEWICZ: Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] things, sharp departures from either his own line or the accepted line, and arresting phrases that I would want to move up or set off. I mean those are style questions, on substance almost anything. You know, do you really want to say this. Also things that might offend. I mean I realized that he was quite willing, and indeed in some points anxious to offend certain groups and I just wanted to be sure. In other words, I'd say, "If you say this labor guys are going to be sore. Why don't you say some because there are some labor unions that have done this or that," you know, or whatever it was. But trying usually to soften something that I thought might unnecessarily get people mad. And then sometimes he'd say, "Well, that's exactly what I meant to say. I hope they get mad." Well, all right, fine, just so you knew.

HACKMAN: Did you have problems with many speeches being written completely and being given before you had a chance to be in on the thing?

MANKIEWICZ: No. No, never. No. I mean some things we'd gamble on. I'd say to Peter, "Is there anything in that thing he's giving to the child welfare center that I ought to know about?" And he'd say, "No, it's the same speech he gave to the other group plus a summary of the new bill." Of course, nobody was trying to conceal anything. I mean nobody was trying to smuggle anything by anybody. And I don't believe that I ever had that problem. I mean sometimes people would come back at me with a speech which I had read and missed something, you know. And I'd, "Oh, God yes. I'll...."

HACKMAN: What did you see about his relationship with the rest of the staff? You talked about your predecessor leaving because of, maybe, the chemistry just wasn't right.

MANKIEWICZ: That was my feeling.

HACKMAN: What did you see then about Edelman and Walinsky and Pigman and Dolan?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, Pigman, of course, was a special problem because, you know, he was ill.

HACKMAN: Yes.

MANKIEWICZ: But Joe Dolan, you know, had a very close relationship. And, you know, they talked in monosyllables. They both talked like Casey Stengel [Charles D. Stengel], like kind of monosyllabic Casey Stengel. Steve Smith is Casey Stengel. Steve is marvelous, you know, you ask Steve something and he'd say, "Well, you know that other fellow that we talked about. He's been saying, you know...." So I'd say, "Wait a minute." What's he talking about and what does it all mean? But Joe and the Senator, you know, Joe'd come in and say, "That okay?" And he'd say, "Yes." And Joe'd say, "You don't think." "No." Like that, the whole conversation, you know, and that'd set Joe up for two days.

Adam, of course, had a marvelous relationship with him because he was always pushing him. And that's what he wanted. I mean, I think he always understood that Adam conceived his role as being to write outrageous, in a sense, first drafts which could then be cut down. And Peter on the legislative stuff, you know, I think--I don't know, I think they were all quite close. Of course, they were all there when I came, you know, and they'd all sort of developed their patterns of interaction. They were not, I think, in to see him as much as I was, as many time, although probably for longer.... I mean whenever Adam went in to talk to him he would go on maybe for an hour and a half through a lot of interruptions. I had an awful lot of 45 second dialogues. You know, "Hays Gorey wants to spend a day with you next week to do a feature." "Okay." "So and so wants to do this." "Well, I don't want to do that." "Well, I think you should because you remember that's the group that such and such." "Well, all right, next week sometime." I figured that probably meant no but I'd make another try the following week. So that I was--I suppose an average day, if he's in the office, I might see him five times for a half a minute and three times for five or ten minutes and maybe once for a half an hour. Maybe I'd walk over to the floor and come back to get something settled.

HACKMAN: Where does Joe Dolan fit into the picture philosophically? Is he toning down, or trying to tone down, a lot of things that Walinsky and Edelman are doing?

MANKIEWICZ: No. He's not trying to tone down the general stance but perhaps on occasional questions to protect a particular political position. In other words, Joe, I think, is just as much of a dove as any of us, just as strong feelings about domestic political matters, but might feel that there's no reason to get mayor so and so mad today on that issue. Joe, I think, thought more--I think the rest of us, I don't know about me, but I think the rest of us were sort of looking at it from our own point of view as to what'd be best for the Senator. Joe, I think, most closely looked at it from his point of view. In other words, Joe was much more in his shoes--would I want this to be said, would I want to do this. Joe, I think, understood better than any of us the Senator's own feelings and desires and frustrations.

HACKMAN: What can you recall in your first conversations with him about how he felt he was being treated by the press, the major press, the *Times*, the news services, and everything?

MANKIEWICZ: We didn't talk about it.

HACKMAN: Not at all?

MANKIEWICZ: We hardly ever talked about it except in individual cases on individual stories--except for the *Times*. We sort of understood that the *Times* was not going to be very favorable, indeed was going to be hostile. Occasional people, but we never really had any kind of philosophical discussion about the press and how it treated him. We talked about particular issues.

HACKMAN: Okay. What about specific--well, maybe the *Times* is the best place to start, most important. What can you remember about your first conversations about the *Times* and then trying to do something about this over the next couple years?

MANKIEWICZ: I remember--I think at their initiative--I went very early up to New York and had lunch with Abe Rosenthal [Abraham Michael Rosenthal] and--who's his protégé? Gelb, Arthur Gelb, Mr. Gelb. And this was, I think, right after--maybe it was right after the Silverman [Samuel Joshua Silverman] election, it was pretty early. And they spent the whole lunch telling me about how, on the *New York Times*, editorial policy never influenced news judgment, never. And they must have said it twenty times. I mean, that's all the whole lunch was about. And I was so curious, you know, I kept wondering in my own mind, why are they talking about this so much? You know, why don't we talk about other things? Why don't we talk about Senator Kennedy's role in New York City? And finally, you know, he said it once too often, I guess, over the coffee maybe and I said, "Well, you know, you guys have said that now fourteen times but it doesn't make it true. It's not true. And you know it isn't true. And maybe it's more true than it is on some other papers but why are you telling me that?" And they said, "Oh, you really don't believe? You see, there's that belief in the Kennedy office. They all believe that somehow our editorial policy influences our news judgment." And I said, "Of course, it influences your news judgment. It influences, first of all, the kind of people you hire to exercise your news judgment." And you know, I told them the old newspaper line which is, you know, that the milk wagon horse knows the stops and the driver doesn't have to tell that horse where to go. He knows the route. The *New York Times* is not going to have an anti-Zionist story on page one or any other page. It's not going to promote Robert Kennedy, it's going to promote John Lindsay, to put it crudely. "Not a chance," they said. "It's out of the question. We would resist bitterly any attempt by the...." And I said, "Oh, come on. Let's not even talk about it." You know, and it wasn't a very happy luncheon. It was all right because it wasn't angry or anything. I just said, "Well, you guys go ahead and talk about that but I've read the *New York Times* for years and I know better.

And then I came back and talked to Senator about that. And he laughed. He thought that was odd that they should be trying so hard to convince me of that. And we talked about some instances and things they had said. And he said that he thought, for the most part, that it was true. That is that reporters, particularly here in Washington, would write their stuff and the *Times* would print it. But what were they writing and from what vantage point?

HACKMAN: Yes.

MANKIEWICZ: And I remember once John Oakes [John Bertram Oakes] came in to see him in, I gather, a rather grim meeting. And after he left I talked to him about it. I said, "How did you make out with Johnny Oakes?" He said, "Oh, he doesn't like me. He doesn't like any of us. And I afraid he doesn't like me any better now than he did when he came." Time was always a terrible problem; I don't mean the magazine, I mean time itself. You know, I'd finally wind up with twenty...

HACKMAN: I'd better stop now.

[END TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2]

HACKMAN: ...Oakes and left and...

MANKIEWICZ: Yes. Let's go to 12, huh?

HACKMAN: Okay, that's fine.

MANKIEWICZ: Where are we now?

HACKMAN: Well, you talked about that meeting.

MANKIEWICZ: I would say the only other publication that we specifically talked about was *Time* because he would talk from time to time about Otto Fuerbringer [Alfred Ottomar Fuerbringer] who was another sort of confirmed anti-Kennedista. You know, I'd read those magazines early Monday morning and then we'd talk about then and how.... He had a certain frustration about it but also he was quite able to laugh at how they could pick things up and, you know, give other people credit and twist things around. But I don't think he ever really got mad. I know he was delighted in May '68 when they changed managing editors, because I had told him. I had picked that story up about six months before that they were going to change and that there were two candidates for the managing editor and that one of them was my friend Henry Grunwald [Henry Anatole Grunwald] whom I'd known for a long time, because my sister worked for him, very closely. Then the appointment was announced, I forget where we were, but I ripped off a ticket and I found it and I gave it to him--I guess maybe we were both in Los Angeles at the time, I can't remember--and showed it to him. And he said, "God, that's really..." He said, "That's the kind of thing a press secretary ought to do. You know, that's a real accomplishment to get your friend named managing editor of *Time* right in the middle of the campaign." He said, "How'd you find the time to do that?" And, as a matter of fact, you saw it happen. The next week there was a cover story which really, I think, was Henry Grunwald telling the *Time*

organization not that we were pro-Kennedy now but that the wraps are off and, you know, this guy is an American political leader and we ought to treat him as such.

HACKMAN: On the *New York Times* thing, was there ever any progress at all? I mean there were other meetings, weren't there, with the editors?

MANKIEWICZ: No. Well, he got along alright with Scotty [James B. Reston]. Scotty'd come in from time to time. I talked to him. I got along quite well at the working level with Warren Weaver [Warren Weaver, Jr.], John Herbers [John N. Herbers], those fellows, Tom Wicker [Thomas G. Wicker]. But up in New York it was always very close, unpleasant. Bill vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel] was sort of our ambassador to the *New York Times*. Things would get a little better then they'd get worse. I remember they were particularly nasty at the time of the constitutional convention when they proposed a new constitution up there.

HACKMAN: The Blaine Amendment thing?

MANKIEWICZ: The Blaine Amendment stuff. I remember one story about that. Pat [to secretary]. Can you find that letter that I wrote to the *New York Times*--that Senator Kennedy wrote to the *New York Times*--that we never sent, about the Blaine Amendment?

SECRETARY: I don't even remember it.

MANKIEWICZ: Oh, yes, it's in unsent letters. You know, it's about, "I notice you point out that Robert Kennedy is a Catholic. Why didn't you point out that Frank Hogan was a protestant," or somebody. I guess Frank Hogan [Frank Smithwick Hogan] is a Catholic too, but somebody was a protestant. They really were awful during that time. Well, the *New York Times* is anti-Catholic. I mean they're not against Catholics but they're institutionally anti-Catholic. That reminds me though that we did do a lot of that, which is: he would write, or I would write for him, nasty letters to newspapers and people who had done terrible things and we'd never send them. It was sort of understood that we'd never send them. But, you know, he'd show me something from *Skiing* magazine that somebody had sent him, or *Town and Country* or *Harpers Bazaar* or *Time*, Mary McGrory, *Newsweek*, *New York Times* whatever it was, and he'd say, "Can't we write these people and tell them such and such?" You know, there'd be a thing saying that the Kennedy family had taken over the ski lift for a day and kicked thirty blind kids that were being brought there specially for the day off the ski lift or something. And he'd say, "This is just total falsehood, you know." And I'd write some nasty letter and then he'd make a few little corrections and then I'd make a few and then the thing would just get kicked away. And I still have a lot of those letters, but this is a fine one. This is to Abe Rosenthal, October 2nd, '67 and it says--well, this is from me, but he and I worked on this. It says:

"On Friday, September 29th, you ran a story about Senator Kennedy's views on the constitution along with accompanying pieces describing the views of Arthur Levitt

and Mayor Lindsay. What news principle animated the *Times* to point out that Senator Kennedy is a Roman Catholic while neglecting to describe the religion of the other two? It seems to me that the unpleasant religious overtones of the debate over the so-called Blaine Amendment...

We always called it the “so-called Blaine Amendment.”

...ought not to be thus reinforced. Aware as I am that editorial opinion of the *New York Times* in no way influences the way in which the news is either written or displayed, may I be excused if I wonder if the League of Women Voters would have been so prominent on page one had it decided to support the constitution?”

Well, then we did that sort of thing from time to time. We used to call the Blaine Amendment the “so-called Blaine so-called Amendment” because it wasn’t really an amendment either. But that kind of thing was a way in which he took off some of that pressure. He’d write a nasty letter or he’d ask me to write a nasty letter and then we’d never send them.

HACKMAN: What about the news services? AP. Jack Bell’s [Jack L. Bell] still at AP when you were there?

MANKIEWICZ: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

HACKMAN: What about him? Any complaints?

MANKIEWICZ: No. Jack Bell was a friend--that is, he liked Jack Bell. He was never pro-Kennedy or anti-Kennedy. You know, AP is pretty much down the middle. Some of their guys, I thought, were not up to the issues. They have a guy, I guess it was at UPI [United Press International], named Pat Sloyan [Patrick J. Sloyan] who did the poverty stuff. He just never understood what the hell we were talking about. I mean these guys have to put everything into a certain category and his views on the poverty program and the whole questions of how to deal with poverty and the urban problem were just too complex for the wire service reporter. It might sound snobbish but it’s true. It’s true. But he never complained about any of that. I mean if a guy got a story wrong and, you know, well, that’s all right. It didn’t trouble him. What troubled him was nastiness, you know, leaving things out.... Kenneth, Ken Crawford [Kenneth Gale Crawford], there was a guy who could really get your bile up because Crawford just never paid very much attention to the truth in describing this stuff. But when a reporter for the AP didn’t understand the tax incentives program, why, it’s all right. We’ll get him next time, you know, try to brief him ahead of time or something.

No, Jack Bell he liked and Bill Theis [John William Theis] he liked. And we always brought them in--as a matter of fact, when he gave his speech on Vietnam, on the bombing in March in ’67, we sneaked Bill Theis and Jack Bell in an hour ahead of the speech and gave them a copy of the speech, and let them read it, and then let them ask him some questions just before he went over to the floor, so that that story would be clear.... It was my feeling that.... I mean, what the hell, the AP story on that speech is probably going to lead the paper

in maybe six hundred papers throughout the country and lead the paper in every paper that didn't have a correspondent in Washington. So we got them in. You know, here's Warren Weaver and Dave Broder [David Salzer Broder] and this one and that one and the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Baltimore Sun* and Phil Potter [Philip Potter], you know, all these guys cooling their heels in the outer office waiting for a text and meanwhile we had Bill Theis and Jack Bell sitting in his office getting a briefing. And I think it worked because these prima donnas, you know, they all wanted--they didn't want to be briefed. They just wanted the text because they can tell what the hell he's saying from the text, you know. Well, I think it was a good thing to do and we would have done it more often but, you know, then things started to accelerate. We did a couple of times, I think.

HACKMAN: What about the other New York City papers, what the *Post* and the *Herald-Tribune* was still alive?

MANKIEWICZ: No, the *Trib* was gone by the time I...

HACKMAN: By the time you got there.

MANKIEWICZ: No, it wasn't. No it wasn't because I remember writing an obit, I mean, writing a statement for him on the death of the *Herald-Tribune*. But it must have been very quickly after that.

HACKMAN: You don't remember any contacts with the Thayers before the thing...?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, Harry Thayer [Harold Eugene Thayer], who was Walter Thayer's [Walter Nelson Thayer] brother, runs a radio station in Kingston. And he was a good friend and I used to talk to him quite a lot. And we got the Senator up there a couple of times for various thing of Thayers and a guy named Don McIsaacs[?], who was a friend of Thayers and worked for IBM [International Business Machines] up there, was sort of an amateur Kennedy press guy, and I used to deal with him, but not Walter Thayer, I don't remember dealing with him at all. Ted Lewis [Edward Williams Lewis] of the *Daily News* [*New York Daily News*] was a marvelous guy. I think Ted Lewis is the best newspaper man in town--didn't always treat us terribly well, but always honestly. And I think he understood the Senator better than almost any other press guy, he really did. Ted would call me and Joe and he'd say, "Now, here's my slant on this. What do you think?" you know. And by god, he was always pretty shrewd, pretty shrewd. The other guys, Jerry Greene [Charles Jerome Greene] is a hard line hawk, but fair. My impression is that the *New York Daily News* has the fairest news coverage of any New York paper. I mean, there's a paper really where their editorial policy does not influence their news judgment. It really doesn't. It may influence their play a little bit. I mean, like the *New York Times*, they're not going to run John Lindsay on page one in his sweat socks. They're likely to run Mario Proccacino [Mario Angelo Proccacino] accepting a honorary badge from the Police Protective League. But their stories are good and their Washington coverage is fine. They had good guys down here, Ted Lewis, Stan Carter [James Stanley Carter].

The *New York Post* is hopeless. The *New York Post* had one guy and, you know, just swamped. Obviously they liked Kennedy and they played him big, but we could never really sustain anything with the *New York Post* because the poor bastard was all over town. You know, *New York Post* rewrites the *Times*. That's what they do best.

HACKMAN: How about Wechsler [James A. Wechsler]?

MANKIEWICZ: The Senator liked him, talked to him from time to time. When we wanted to do something with the *Post* we'd usually start with Jimmy. He liked to talk to anybody who was literate. He didn't care really whether they were for him or not, he liked to talk to them and get, oh, byplay. And, as a matter of fact, almost everybody from any of these papers, when I heard about it, or Adam mostly would hear about it, that a guy had just come back from Vietnam we'd call him up and get him in. And then it would be a reverse interview.

HACKMAN: Who were people you could talk to if either the stories that were coming out didn't reflect what the Senator had meant to say or if he just wanted to put something out? Whom did you call that you could count on?

MANKIEWICZ: Well, it would depend, on the kind of story.

HACKMAN: Was Wechsler a guy like this?

MANKIEWICZ: Yes, yes. In general, if we wanted to start a press campaign, either to counter something or to get something going, we'd go to Wechsler, and in the *New York Times* Scotty maybe, or Wicker. I mean I didn't see anything wrong with planting stuff, you know, I'd just call them up and get going on it. And if they took it fine, if they didn't that was all right too. But I'd call a guy up like Tom Wicker and I'd say, "Listen, we're--the Senator has the feeling that his approach to such and such is not really getting across. I'd like to talk to you and explain it to you." "Fine." And then I'd do the same with Wechsler and somebody at the wire services and elsewhere. Marty Arnold [Martin Arnold] was always a good friend at the *New York Times*.

HACKMAN: Who were the people who you just would not let come in or would consistently really upset him if they came in?

MANKIEWICZ: Nobody really. The real enemies never wanted to come. He got so he didn't like Clark Mollenhoff [Clark Raymond Mollenhoff], but he never wanted to come in really. Phil Potter he probably disagreed with more than anybody but it didn't bother him. Hugh Sidey [Hugh Swanson Sidey] and Pete Lisagor [Peter Irvin Lisagor] used to come every couple of weeks and that was nice.

HACKMAN: Is Lisagor another guy that you could talk to very easily?

MANKIEWICZ: Yes, yes. And Sidey.

HACKMAN: Let me just give you some of the names I've heard. I'm not sure they were even still around after you got there. Ted Knap[?], Paul Scott[?]...

MANKIEWICZ: Well, Paul Scott never came around.

HACKMAN: ...Sarah McClendon [Sarah Newcomb McClendon]?

MANKIEWICZ: No, she wasn't around. Ted Knap was a lightweight. He didn't mind Ted Knap. He didn't get anything out of him, and he felt that whatever he told Ted Knap, it was going to come out the way Ted Knap wanted it to come out. I mean not in terms of hostility but just that he wasn't capable of very serious thought. I must say I shared that view.

HACKMAN: Lansing Lamont[?]?

MANKIEWICZ: I had that same view. I don't think he cared one way or the other. He liked Tony Lewis [Joseph Anthony Lewis] but he was gone. Haynes Johnson [Haynes Bonner Johnson] is probably the reporter he had the most respect for professionally.

HACKMAN: You've got something at 12 don't you?

MANKIEWICZ: Yes. All right, should we do this again?

HACKMAN: Yes.

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