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LAWRENCE F. O'BRIEN ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW XXIV

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Signed by Lawrence F. O'Brien on April 5, 1990.

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ACCESSION NUMBER 92-35

INTERVIEW XXIV

DATE: July 22, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: LAWRENCE F. O'BRIEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. O'Brien's office, New York City

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: Okay, one more question about Chicago. Did you make an effort there to have [Eugene] McCarthy support the nominee at the convention?

O: Yes. There were contacts made with McCarthy and we, as indicated in the negotiations on the Vietnam plank and on the Unit Rule, sought opportunities to create an atmosphere that might lead to unity. At the same time, of course, there were ongoing negotiations involving the liberal wing of the party, the [Robert] Kennedy supporters and the McCarthy supporters, to see if they couldn't mount a unified effort on their part to stop Humphrey. As I indicated earlier, their problem would be who is going to be first among equals? You are never going to resolve the situation because if Gene McCarthy wasn't going to be first among equals then there was little advantage to him in going through the exercise of putting the Kennedy-McCarthy pieces together. We were anxious to have McCarthy endorse Humphrey. Over these several days there was no serious concern on my part regarding the outcome of the first ballot.

I should mention the fellow who accompanied Leonard Goldenson to visit me, to have my assurance that I would be working on behalf of the three networks the day after the convention. He was Bill Lawrence, who was an old friend of mine. It is worth noting that George McGovern gave strong support to the Humphrey nomination despite their different views. The record should note that came without difficulty. In fact, George promptly moved to endorse. It should be noted also that Teddy Kennedy strongly supported Humphrey's candidacy, so it left you after the convention with Gene McCarthy as a problem. That remained a problem for a considerable period of time. We were talking about the launching of the campaign over that Labor Day weekend.

G: One other thing first. McCarthy's forces had complained that delegates had been stolen or that the maneuvering at the convention had not been fair to the McCarthy support. Was this a legitimate argument?

O: I have no recollection of that being a legitimate argument. It is not an abnormal convention situation in any event. I can look back to four conventions that I had active participation in and in each instance there were charges of that nature, whether you are talking about Los Angeles, even Atlantic City, Miami and then Chicago. We didn't feel the national committee was giving us a fair shake. The fact of the matter is we were treated evenhandedly with McCarthy. We had no advantages over McCarthy other than

one obvious advantage; we had more delegates than he had.

G: You did at Chicago prepare a long memorandum for Vice President Humphrey on the campaign, a memo dated August 27 that discusses very frankly the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign and the candidate.

O: Yes.

G: Do you recall the motivation for that?

O: Yes. I felt the appropriate close of my commitment to Hubert should include whatever views I had regarding the campaign itself. That would be the final chapter. A great deal of thought was put into it. Joe Napolitan had a very active role in developing this. It is considerably different in thrust than a campaign manual or an organizational outline, although it incorporates organizational activity with emphasis on media. It was an attempt to be candid regarding the candidate and the public attitude that I perceived regarding him--his strengths and his weaknesses. It encompasses about thirty pages and it goes into detail on many basics--materials, the appropriate use of media, the role of labor and other elements. It also spells out, state by state, where I felt the emphasis should be. I have no recollection whether or not Humphrey had read this by the time he and I met in the wee hours of that morning concerning my continuance. But it was the basic document that, once I stayed aboard, we tried to follow.

G: The memo was submitted before you had your meeting with him, is that right?

O: I believe so on the basis of the date. It would almost have to be because--or maybe it wasn't. But it was prepared, certainly.

G: You do mention in there that [Orville] Freeman--you do not have a role for yourself in the campaign, so I assume--

O: No. It was not envisioned as a document that would include a role on my part. The Freeman aspect of this would not have been--if I hadn't stayed--easy to resolve because Freeman was still a member of the cabinet. If he were designated officially as a campaign leader, I think it would have created some difficulties. However, that was not my problem. So that would not deter me from suggesting what Freeman's continuing role would be. He had been very active in support of Hubert from the beginning. But I was the only cabinet member to resign and participate in the campaign that I recall.

I remember during that period from the time I joined Hubert and the close of the convention that I had spent time in his office in the EOB [Executive Office] Building. To be utilizing the office of the Vice President for political purposes could raise some eyebrows. That is what occurred; opposition surfaced. I had a touch of that when I took my group around the country in 1964. We were obviously immersed in campaign activity. Yet I was a member of the White House staff. People could have said, a) he is receiving

his government salary but he is out politicking; b) he is violating some procedure by being engaged in a political campaign when he has an official capacity. None of that occurred. You didn't give it much thought and you didn't worry about it. The same using Humphrey's office. It did enter my mind. You're a little vulnerable. But it wasn't significant. It wasn't of any interest to anyone.

G: Where were the headquarters for the Humphrey campaign?

O: At that point there was ongoing activity on the citizens' side. The people involved in the Humphrey campaign, Bill Welsh, Bill Connell and others were Humphrey staff people. The citizens' activity was conducted elsewhere. So that was really the nature of the campaign up to that point. The appropriate place for me to function for a brief period would be in those offices. Offices were turned over to me for my use and it was very doable to function from there.

G: Then did you move over the DNC later or--?

O: Once the extension I referred to was agreed to, I took over the chairman's office of the [Democratic] National Committee. Our plan was to take over the national committee and, as needed, supplement the existing staff. This would be a coordinated effort, the national committee and the Humphrey campaign. That was formalized and then I went directly to Waverly.

G: In this memorandum you make it clear that the way to win the election is through television.

O: That's right. Television had become an extremely key factor. It is more so today. But what awakened us to the role of television, the impact of television, were the Kennedy-Nixon debates. The turn of events immediately following the first debate was enough to convince you that from then on television would play an extremely important role in all elections. Also, Humphrey acquitted himself well on television. Proper packaging of spots and other material seemed the best opportunity to promote him. Of course, with the selection of Muskie it became even more obvious. Even then television was extremely expensive. You were dependent on substantial campaign contributions to carry out a media program. You can have the best people in television and it might be interesting to view their product in an office somewhere but can you utilize the product to the fullest?

That's where the frustrations come in because in the Humphrey campaign there were two overriding problems. One was Vietnam and the second was money. You launch a campaign with Gallup or Harris saying you're sixteen points down in the polls. Political realists have a tendency not to reach into their pocket quickly when it's not a good bet. It has a tremendous negative impact on a campaign. You can't avoid the reality that a down side in the polls has a tremendous effect on your ability to finance a campaign. That's exactly what did happen.

G: Let me ask you to go into the media in some detail. Did you meet with Tony Schwartz during the campaign? You indicate in the memo that Tony Schwartz should be retained to produce some spots.

O: Yes, I did meet with him. We went over in detail what I envisioned to be the thrust. We met with others who were involved doing the bio.

G: Tell me about your conversations with Tony Schwartz and your strategy there.

O: Initially I told Schwartz it was two-pronged. We had to present a strong, decisive Hubert Humphrey. He had license as to how he presented this. Equally important, I saw a splendid opportunity to go on the attack. I felt both Nixon and [Spiro] Agnew were vulnerable--their leadership qualities or lack of them, deviousness, harking back to the fur coat, the Nixon-Kennedy debates. So I saw a potential for very powerful spots.

Now the record shows that they were powerful in the attack. They were somewhat personalized and they went up to the line in terms of possible counterproductivity in the sense of public reaction. They would feel they were too negative, too nasty, too whatever. We, recognizing the sixteen points and the long shot aspects, were going to take chances. And the chances were taken. In a couple of instances, spots were surfaced and then withdrawn after we felt we had made an impact. We scared the candidate to death when he saw one or two of them.

Schwartz was important because we were going to be heavy on spots. We could develop a Humphrey bio. We could develop a similar bio for Muskie which would be a first. In the past, from my experience, a vice presidential candidate was not emphasized to that extent. He wasn't front and center almost in an equal position. In my table of organization, the media side was of utmost importance. I made it clear Joe Napolitan would have complete control and total coordination of all aspects of media. We had a specific idea of the general thrust and the implementation would be left solely to Joe Napolitan. He had my authorization to make every decision necessary as we went along.

Somebody else had the responsibility to raise the money for implementation and that was Bob Short and some close friends of Hubert, Duane Andreas and several others.

G: Describe some of the spots you remember as being particularly strong.

O: There were a couple of Agnew spots that were strong and hard-hitting. One was "A Heartbeat from the Presidency," which was a simple spot showing the heartbeat as it went across the screen simply saying, "Spiro Agnew, A Heartbeat from the Presidency." There was another spot, on Agnew. A fellow is watching his television set and Spiro Agnew appears and the fellow chuckles, then laughs and then becomes hysterical, simply saying, "Just imagine Spiro Agnew vice president of the United States." There were some spots where we used Nixon clips and they were hard-hitting. We carefully reviewed Nixon's



address to the American people when he was retained by Eisenhower on the ticket.

G: The Checkers speech.

O: The Checkers speech. We considered excerpting from the Checkers speech with another punch-in-the-nose type spot. We were getting into dangerous territory because how far do you go and where do you stop before it becomes a negative factor and comes back to hit you in the nose. We finally decided not to use any of the Checkers material. I must have looked at that film ten times and with some reluctance decided to drop it.

G: Were there any spots that you did not use at all that Schwartz prepared?

O: Well, there were a couple. One was our Wallace spot. We knew he was going to garner blue collar support, organized labor support, and we decided to play hard ball. I had suggested to Schwartz that he think that aspect of it out. Here is this sort of woebegone fellow waiting to go into the voting booth which was curtained. He's mumbling, sort of talking to himself as he was going up the line. He made it clear he was a lifelong Democrat. He was concerned about what he was considering doing; it was a sign of disloyalty to the party and certainly a decided change in his approach over his lifetime. It was bothering him but he was sorely tempted to vote for George Wallace. He finally convinced himself as he was about to enter the booth that he was going to vote for George Wallace. He pulled the curtain and you hear the lever and the whole thing disintegrated. We didn't use it. That was a very strong spot. Of course, it was tied not to Wallace; he was going to vote for Wallace and [Curtis] LeMay.

G: Then it ends in an explosion?

O: Yes, the whole thing disintegrated in an explosion. It was clear what you would accomplish if you assisted in electing Wallace-LeMay.

G: Were there any spots that your own candidate reacted to?

O: At least one of the Agnew spots I referred to. I was not sure when I received a call from Hubert Humphrey whether he had actually seen a spot or it had been reported to him. But he had received a negative comment from some Democratic county chairman, and that would impress him and he was disturbed by it. It was described to him and when he called me he was upset.

I listened and did not agree with him. There were others who were wishy-washy in their reactions. We had committed to use both spots through the first go-round. We closed out one of them. One of those two spots we did not rerun. We were playing with some fire but it's an indication of the approach to the problem of climbing that mountain. I agreed that Agnew a heartbeat from the presidency could be conceived as a joke. There was a personal element to it. Some people can construe that was mean. We were just talking about Spiro and Dick and we had balance because the other side of media was to

present the Hubert Humphrey that we knew.

Now, a half hour bio film had already been done. Joe and I reviewed it. Joe had a very strong negative reaction. He thought it was weak and meaningless. He didn't hesitate to express a strong view. So we discarded it and started all over again.

(Interruption)

O: The new program that was developed was awfully well done.

G: Who did it?

O: An outfit in St. Louis. Napolitan negotiated that and it came over beautifully. You had him at home in Waverly, with his grandchildren, with his kids. You had him in a very warm situation with a youngster who was retarded. A great family man with a marvelous wife and a wonderful family: Middle America. We received great positive comment regarding it. Unfortunately, we couldn't use it often enough because of our budgetary problems. We had a similar program developed that was good on Muskie and we had spots, of course, presenting Hubert and his positions and policies and record. I don't want to overemphasize the attack side of the media. We did succumb to temptation to a certain extent. It was reasonably effective.

G: In your memo you had recommended using Charles Guggenheim, who had done those--

O: He was active in that campaign. We selectively brought people aboard for their particular expertise. That would be an area of expertise that Guggenheim could engage in as Schwartz on spots and others were involved. So there was no single media entity.

G: There was also a spot utilizing Ted Kennedy's endorsement of Humphrey, is that right? One out at Cape Cod.

O: That was a unique situation. Ted had done a number of things during the campaign that [were] helpful. He had introduced Hubert in Boston. He was doing his best to be helpful and it was greatly appreciated. As the campaign was closing out, we had committed to a telethon to close.

G: A telethon.

O: A telethon. That was unique. We were to the last two or three weeks of the campaign. The monies raised from about a dozen Humphrey supporters in the context of loans assured us that 40 to 50 per cent of our projected television would be utilized. We had to cut the time by more than half. We would have no television for the last three weeks, except for a meeting that was held at the Waldorf with Hubert. I committed to approximately three million dollars. That assured us we could stagger through the remaining three weeks.

- G: The subject has come up; why don't you go ahead and describe that meeting?
- O: The meeting was hosted by Duane Andreas.
- G: Give me the background of it. How did it--?
- O: Duane was a lifelong friend of Hubert's; had been a contributor during the campaign and recognized the disaster that faced us.
- G: Were you actually going to have to shut down all the media?
- O: That's right.
- G: Was that how dire it was?
- O: Yes, we were through. The last three weeks of the campaign would have been whatever the press reported. While Nixon had a tremendous media package in place for the last three weeks. He had started his media earlier than we had.
- G: There was no way to borrow any more money?
- O: No.
- G: Had you tried?
- O: We had done everything possible to raise money.
- G: Tell me, how did this get--did you go to Humphrey or did Andreas go to Humphrey or--?
- O: Andreas volunteered to host this. He had an apartment in the Waldorf and it was handy. He served lunch--very carefully selected group. I knew some of the eleven or twelve who were there. I knew John Loeb from Wall Street. I knew Arthur Cohen, a realtor in New York. And I knew [Edgar] Kaiser, the head of the Kaiser [Aluminum] Company. There were others at that financial level.

I was in the role of describing what our program for the remainder of the campaign would be, provided we could finance it. So I was to give them a pitch. I went through the media aspects with emphasis in that area, because that's where the cost factor predominated.

It was a low-key situation. They were not people who had to be persuaded to support Hubert. They were supporters of Hubert and in about every instance had made contributions by then. Now you are saying to them, "We're desperate. Can we come up with a concept of loaning us the money with hope for repayment? If we're successful, we

have a strong Democratic National Committee; we will have fund-raising opportunities after the election. This is not a contribution. It's a loan. Would you help us? We're desperate."

Duane Andreas took over the discussion by saying that he thought that was a vehicle.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 2

O: No one was guaranteeing the return of the loan, but they were not prepared at that point to make further direct contributions. All of them had made contributions.

(Interruption)

G: Concept of the loan became--

O: The end result was that perhaps everyone there made a commitment to loan the campaign money with the provision for repayment down the road.

G: Did they all agree to lend an equal amount or was it--?

O: I don't know as it was totally equal, but as a result of that luncheon we would have three million dollars to finish the last three weeks of the campaign. Overridingly, that money would go into media and we would be postponing all of our other indebtedness as much as we could. We would cut in half the media package which was six million dollars. We were able to see a 50 per cent effort in our media program. The reality was that Hubert Humphrey would not have been on television the last three weeks of that campaign. The campaign would be over three weeks before election day.

G: Well, do you think that the standing in the polls that gave Nixon an early lead was what hurt the contributions?

O: There were two aspects. Obviously, the big story out of Chicago was the riots. There was a tremendous negative hanging over the campaign as we departed Chicago. The Vietnam situation was in the minds of most Americans and Hubert Humphrey had to share that burden with LBJ. That was a tremendous negative in this very short campaign. It was reflected in the Gallup Poll eight weeks before election. Sixteen points down indicates that the odds are heavily against you. The fat cats, so called, are in many instances not reacting from the heart when they contribute to a campaign. The polls continued to reflect negatively, even though there were slight changes. At no time, until the last days, did the polls indicate a close election. Even then the mere indication of a close election was not impressive to media. We're dedicated and we're not going to be deterred by bad news from polls, but the heavy contributor doesn't react that way.

We were desperate to keep abreast of the polls before they were publicized to see

if there was an improvement in the situation. The time frame is closer now, but in those days they came to their statistical conclusions and then, a time frame for publication. You did have that period of probably several days. We couldn't afford our own polls, but state-level candidates would conduct polls. The presidential aspect was in all the polls. I remember learning the result of a Texas poll that showed Humphrey carrying Texas in a three-way split. Among those in media that I called to give them this good news to persuade them was Rowlie Evans of the Evans-Novak column, [who] was a long-time friend of mine. While the conversation was pleasant, I was unable to persuade Rowlie Evans there was a clear indication that Hubert Humphrey would carry Texas. He was disbelieving.

You're playing catch-up ball or trying to. You're desperate to create a climate that this election isn't over. That was a continuing effort to persuade, persuade, persuade. It was reminiscent of my efforts to persuade media that Bobby Kennedy was in better shape delegate-wise as we headed toward the Chicago convention. You try to place the best face on it you can.

There are those who have written about 1968 who say if he had only had another couple of weeks he would have prevailed or if he had only had the necessary money that was budgeted he would have prevailed. It doesn't mean much. The fact is that he didn't prevail. I am absolutely persuaded that if we had been able to implement fully our campaign program and could have financed that campaign as we developed it, Hubert Humphrey would have been elected. And it wouldn't have taken the additional two or three weeks. He was improving in the polls; some people say, "Two or three weeks more the polls would have turned to a Humphrey victory," and there are others who say that if we could have financed it fully there would have been a Humphrey victory. I share that point of view. The same people who said there was no way he could win and predicted his overwhelming defeat through the campaign were quick to say he would have won if. It's something to speculate about and can be a conversation piece.

The other overriding problem we've referred to on a number of occasions was the Vietnam issue. When I was discussing with Hubert the possibility of joining him through the convention, I remember having lunch with him and he showed me--I can't remember the content now--a statement regarding Vietnam that he was going to issue. It did represent to some extent a change in position. He said, "I'm going to issue this. I think it would be helpful, but obviously I'm not going to until I discuss it with the President. I am meeting with the President tonight or tomorrow." A few days went by and I heard nothing. I was with Hubert and I asked him. "Well," he said, "I did meet with him but we weren't alone. There were a couple of other people present. I didn't have an opportunity to go into something as serious as this with him. However, that opportunity will present itself I'm sure in the next few days. I'll get it done and I'll keep you advised." I heard nothing further about that.

Then there was another occasion as we moved toward Chicago. By that time I was aboard. Showing me the statement was part of a pitch to come aboard. So, this later

occasion was at a time when I believe Humphrey had been at the Ranch and had been in direct discussion with the President. He came to the office, the EOB building, and was very enthusiastic as he told me that there was going to be [a] big break regarding Vietnam. It would be publicized or initiated by the President shortly--that was highly confidential. He wasn't at liberty to discuss it with me in any substantive way. I never heard about it again.

So as the campaign was launched, Hubert obviously remained awfully concerned about this issue that was so harmful to his candidacy. Nevertheless there were no discussions that I recall regarding positions he would take that would be contrary to the President's position.

The initial campaign swings were disastrous. While audiences in some locations were respectable in terms of size, invariably there was a segment, a significant segment, of the audience that was present solely to harass Humphrey; disrupt his speech, interrupt him, unfurl banners that were mean. So the stories coming out of his campaign were not positive. There was a tendency on the part of media to lead, "Last night's appearance of Hubert Humphrey was disruptive. There was a segment of the audience that registered their disapproval of him and the Vietnam policy." Even worse, the segments on the news of his appearances focused almost totally on the actions of those in the audience who were harassing or berating him. And the polls were, in those early stages, not reflecting any improvement. But I don't recall the polls ever went below that initial poll of sixteen down.

The time finally came when Hubert made a decision to devote a nationally televised speech to the subject of Vietnam, his position regarding it and what he would do if elected president.

The issues aspect was basically a team input. Orville Freeman would chair meetings on issues. Ed Cubberly was the liaison between the campaign operation and this issue group. He would attend these meetings and memo me as on what took place. They were discussion groups and there are a number of Cubberly memos to me on the record. I don't recall any great emphasis in those discussion groups on a change of position regarding Vietnam. Orville was a very staunch supporter of the Johnson Vietnam policy. He was very much a hawk. He was the most hawkish member of the cabinet and he was the most aggressive in touring the country, appearing on college campuses, taking a lot of abuse but hanging in there with his jaw out supporting the policy. I admired him greatly for it, and he never deviated one inch. It was not because he was supporting Lyndon Johnson solely, it was because that was the policy he firmly believed in.

But I do remember in late September--it was a Saturday--I was in the national committee headquarters and delivered to me was a draft of the Vietnam speech that at long last was going to be presented to the American people on national television. We had reserved a hundred thousand dollars for this program. I read the draft and I was appalled. I telexed Humphrey my views. He was on a campaign trip on the West Coast. This is the Ball-Welsh Vietnam Draft. George Ball was active in the negotiations with the

Vietnamese and was an acknowledged expert in his field, and Bill Welsh was a writer among other accomplishments. It was clear the two of them got together on this draft.

I say in my reaction, "This draft is an abomination. It's not worth the expenditure of a hundred thousand dollars. Overall, it has no eloquence or drama. It will be a major disappointment after having been billed as a major speech." I went on to say, "It is way too heavy in what the President can do and has done. It is very weak on reducing troop levels. In fact, it takes us back to deciding next January 20 to de-Americanize the war instead of moving ahead with a pledge of troop reduction which would in fact accomplish de-Americanization. It contains no real political challenge to Nixon. It is strictly a State Department approach. May be appropriate for delivery by an under secretary of state. It places major emphasis on two points which are not new and which everyone in this country accepts. Mutual troop withdrawal; in other words, we'll take out all our troops, if the enemy would take all of his troops. Then, noninterference in the post-war government; that's a noble objective which has nothing to do with stopping the fighting." Then I add, "There are numerous other specific problems in phrasing and wording."

A couple of hours or so elapsed and Hubert called me. He said, "I have just read your evaluation of the Vietnam speech. That's certainly rough. I've got to tell you something. I haven't seen the draft. It hasn't caught up with me. You obviously feel strongly about it. I'd like to have you drop whatever you are doing, get on a plane and join me and we'll discuss this." So I did just that.

I arrived on the West Coast on a Sunday morning--this was Saturday when this conversation took place. Hubert had instructed the top people in the campaign to get together. Hubert joined us and a general discussion began without rancor or animosity. I don't recall whether Hubert made reference to my memo. But nothing was being accomplished. We weren't getting into the subject, yet the speech was only, I guess, a day and a half away.

So the day was wasted and it was decided that we fly on with Hubert to Salt Lake which was his next stop. And we did, Ball and Welsh and I and a few others who happened to be present.

That night Hubert did not have any appointments. This was a layover night and the speech was going to be the next day. So, in his suite the discussion started and it ended--at least my role ended at four o'clock in the morning when I left the meeting. There were several people present.

G: Rowe was there, is that right?

O: On the side that something definitive had to be done to adopt a position that would have an impact were Fred Harris and me; on the side of those who--"There's no way that you can do what's being suggested without being accused of being disloyal to the President. That would be counterproductive and be harmful to the campaign." That was the view of

Bill Connell and Jim Rowe. This went on and on and on.

G: What about Ball? Did he participate?

O: Well, I guess so. But I don't--

G: He wasn't firmly identified with either group?

O: Ball had been called in. He was really not part of the campaign; he had been called in to draft a speech. My problem in recollecting who else was in the room is difficult because this finally emerged as a debate, Harris and I with Rowe and Connell, Hubert sort of sitting there and occasionally making a comment.

G: Did it seem that Rowe and Connell were motivated by a desire not to alienate the White House?

O: Rowe was. Rowe was extremely strong in repeating and repeating his view that, "Let's not discuss the substance of Vietnam, what you could do if you were president. There is no way you should undertake anything that would deviate from the LBJ position on Vietnam. There is only one interpretation that would be made and that is that you are a disloyal vice president that has walked away from your leader." Quoting Jim, "How can you contemplate anything such as is being advocated in this room? It's an absolute disaster if you ever went in this direction." Harris and I are equally vehement saying this isn't a personal matter, that we were persuaded that the politician LBJ would understand. Indeed, obviously this would be made known to him in advance of the speech. He would be alerted to it. Granted, it might disturb him. It might arouse him in some way. He might be disappointed in Hubert Humphrey, but he'd been through a lot of political campaigns and he knows there is only one bottom line: win. This campaign cannot continue this way; it's not going anywhere until there is a specific presentation by the candidate.

G: Were the negotiators at Paris a consideration here, [Averell] Harriman and [Cyrus] Vance?

O: Yes.

G: You didn't want the speech to be construed as something that would undercut the U.S.--?

O: The speech was to be forthright, direct: "This is what I would undertake immediately upon becoming president. I have been totally supportive of his [Johnson's] policy. I have been totally supportive of my president. If I am president, the responsibility becomes totally mine and at that point I would undertake the following."

Well, at some point in all of this Hubert became exasperated. Dr. Edgar Berman was there. There were other people in the room making comment from time to time.



There are two opposing points of view here. Fred Harris and I weren't comparing notes. It was a visceral reaction we had. Fred Harris and I had no hesitancy to express our views even if that might not please Humphrey. The time had come. The chips were down and I know in my mind I was thinking, "I'm taking a tough position here because at some point we've got to come to some middle ground." Now, maybe Rowe's motivation might have been similar on his side of the issue.

But then the comments came to--"You have an image," directed at Hubert--I don't know whether it was this specific or whether it evolved this way--"of not being your own man, not having guts." This was repeated two or three times and finally Hubert exploded and said, "I am sick and tired of hearing this. I am insulted. I have guts. I am my own man. Nobody can question my loyalty to Lyndon Johnson, but nobody can question my ability to be president. I've listened to the Gene McCarthys say that I'm gutless. I'm not going to listen to any more from you people. I'm telling you right now, I've got guts. Now, damn it all, I'm sick of listening to all of this. Give me a pad"--and he took out a pen--"I'm going to write this damn speech myself."

Well, that kind of quieted everybody down and somebody--I think Edgar Berman--said, "We ought to get some sandwiches. Nobody's eaten and maybe we ought to have a drink." (Laughter) But Hubert took stage center. "You can shut up; I'm taking over." He started to write. Then he started to read what he was writing. This went on and on. The nitpicking aspect started again and he was becoming aggravated all over again.

Finally, under his direction and with his decision alone, the final draft was put together. It was in rough form but that was basically the final draft. Now, it's about four o'clock in the morning. Everyone is totally exhausted, including Hubert. There's no point in pursuing this. I decided I wasn't going to go to bed because we were going to the--

G: The tabernacle.

O: --the tabernacle. There were things that Humphrey had to be engaged in relatively early in the morning. I remember thinking, "If I go to bed now, I'll never get up. So the best thing to do is shower and shave and change clothes and stay up." So I got up and said, "I'm going to leave." I started to the door and Humphrey looked at me and asked, "Are you leaving?" I said I was and he said, "You're not giving up that easily, are you?" I said, "Do you think that I'm giving up easily?" "No," he said and he smiled. I smiled back. I felt what Hubert meant was, "I'm sorry you're leaving not totally pleased." But we had negotiated.

With what was at stake, the end product is not that exciting--probably nobody considered it justified, that lengthy debate and negotiation. The key passage had its share of qualifiers. The key passage was, "As president, I would be willing to stop the bombing of North Vietnam as an acceptable risk for peace because I believe that it could lead to success in the negotiations and a shorter war. This would be the best protection for our

troops. In weighing that risk and before taking action, I would place key importance on evidence direct or indirect by word or deed of communist willingness to restore the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam. If the government of North Vietnam were to show bad faith, I would reserve the right to resume the bombing."

The first paragraph was the one I wanted and the added paragraphs were urged upon him by Rowe and Connell. It represented a compromise. There was contact made with the President prior to going to the studio to put the speech to bed. He was advised. What his reaction was, I don't recall I was ever sure. George Ball was involved in that aspect in some way.

The fact is that the speech went. And the amazing fact is that there was a dramatic turnaround immediately following the speech in terms of the campaign and the reaction to Hubert Humphrey. I've never quite understood it. I guess it's another example of the power of television because none of us contemplated this was going to most dramatically affect the campaign. Clearly, the speech was middle-of-the-road. In fact, when you read it, you wonder why there would have been such meaningful impact, in terms of a news story or what have you.

In any event, we departed Salt Lake to North Carolina where I was picking up a private plane to Washington. On the plane ride down, there was a telegram from Teddy Kennedy to Hubert strongly approving the speech and complimenting him on it. That pleased him, obviously. We got off the plane and there was a throng at the airport. Terry Sanford and others were just glowing. What had happened overnight? You must attribute it to the speech. From that moment on, the momentum increased, reflected by the enthusiasm and size of crowds at all the stops and disappearance of the protesters that would harass him. You suddenly found yourself in a campaign with substance and discernible progress. So it was the turning point.

Now you're in early October. You're talking about four, four and a half weeks. You're trying mightily to catch up with the polls and persuade media to take another look--to open its eyes to a truly hotly contested election. The media still wouldn't buy. We were in our last desperate effort to raise funds. There was an enthusiasm level that a couple weeks earlier you would not have found. I doubt that you would have a group willing to loan money if this turnabout hadn't taken place.

There was the feeling that Johnson was disturbed with Hubert. There was a suggestion that he wasn't supportive of him. That was put to bed as the campaign progressed with the great rallies in Texas toward the end of the campaign, where Johnson and Connally and all the others participated. Johnson had made at least one national address supporting Humphrey. I'm not suggesting that he was pleased with the Humphrey speech. I don't know how displeased he was, but there was an uneasy situation throughout the campaign involving the President. I remember memoing the President with suggestions, if he could take time for active campaigning. There were areas of campaigning we would consider a priority and whatever he decided to do would be greatly

appreciated. We were anxious to have him.

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- O: There was another occasion, however, when Hubert told me he felt uneasy about the President. That perhaps, while no one had purposely done so, it was conceivable we had ignored the President. Hubert had great hesitancy to push the President to greater effort in the campaign. He didn't feel it was fair to do that. He suggested I might have some communication with the President to ensure he was aware of our anxiety and my interest in having him participate to a greater degree than he had been. Whether it was that memo or subsequent memos I forwarded to the President, I don't know, but there were efforts made to elicit more participation. Clearly there was an uneasiness which didn't affect me because my role would not be to contact the President directly. It would be Hubert's role. Hubert was concerned that there was, at least as he perceived it, an atmosphere that was not totally what he'd like to have.
- G: Was there a feeling in the Humphrey campaign that too close an association with the President or involvement of the President would be counterproductive?
- O: There were some who would suggest that, but it never became a great issue or a great point of discussion in the campaign because there wasn't any indication he was being that active. So it never became an issue. It wasn't as though the President or his people were advising us that the President was prepared to take a more active role and would like to have any thoughts we might have. That never happened. It was, on our part, an attempt to have a better line of communication and clear the air if it needed clearing. That concerned Hubert at some point, because he made his concern known to me. But it never reached the point where somebody would say, "Lyndon Johnson is going to do the following. I think that could be counterproductive." That never happened. That might have been the view of a couple of people in the campaign if that situation arose, but it never did.

I think the key is, and I have no knowledge concerning this, how strong was Lyndon Johnson's reaction to the Hubert Humphrey speech at Salt Lake?

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview XXIV