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Bernhard, Berl oral history interview

Don Nicoll

Interview with Berl Bernhard by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Bernhard, Berl

Interviewer
Nicoll, Don

Date
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Place
Washington, D.C.

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Biographical Note

Berl Bernhard was born in New York, New York on September 7, 1929 to Morris and Celia (Nadele) Bernhard. Berl lived in New Jersey, then attended Dartmouth College, graduating in 1951 and Yale Law School, graduating in 1954. His law career began in Washington as a law clerk to Luther Youngdahl. In the late 1950s he took a position on the Civil Rights Commission, and was appointed staff director by John Kennedy in 1961. In 1963 he returned to private practice, and became counsel to the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee in 1965. He became involved with Senator Muskie's 1968 vice presidential campaign as a result of his DSCC work, and then went on to work for Senator Muskie's 1972 presidential campaign as national campaign manager accompanying the Senator on his trips to Israel and the Soviet Union. From 1980 to 1981 he served as senior advisor to Ed Muskie when he became Secretary of State.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: trip to Israel continued; visiting Menachim Begin without clearance; Begin's stance on foreign relations; Begin's attitudes toward Golda Meir; Begin's responsibility for the Kind David Hotel; Muskie's reaction to the secret meeting; Golda Meir's reaction to the meeting; Ben-Gurion meeting; Muskie's meeting with Knesset members; Yitzhak Rabin's painting Ed Muskie as an "Unfeeling Polish Catholic"; Muskie's reaction to this

criticism; South Florida Synagogue meeting; "Remember the Warsaw Ghetto" banner at the Florida synagogue; Moscow trip; Russian KGB surveillance in Moscow; meeting with Aleksei Kosygin; meeting with Andrei Gromyko; Germany trip; setting up a finance committee in 1971; secret Republican financing for Muskie's campaign; John Clifford Folger financing the Israel trip; John Snyder fundraising for Muskie; problems disclosing the source of Snyder's money during the Watergate investigation; Snyder turning over names of dead people; Muskie's lack of fundraising ability; lack of clear strategy for winning the 1972 primary; 1970 Nixon-Muskie back to back; inability to handle widespread support; Muskie's stance on Vietnam; strategy of seeking endorsements; inability to generate "ground support"; inability to mobilize labor; and failure in the primaries.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Tuesday, the 17th of September, 2002. We are in the offices of Berl Bernhard, Attorney at Law, in Washington, D.C., and Don Nicoll is interviewing Berl Bernhard for the second time. At the end of our last discussion, Berl, you were talking about your encounter Menachim Begin and Golda Meir, and the flap over the fact that you had talked to Begin without clearance, I believe, and Senator Muskie felt he was in an embarrassing position.

Berl Bernhard: Well, Senator Muskie didn't know anything about the trip prior to my going over to the apartment. The idea of going over to see Mr. Begin was because I believed, properly or improperly, that there was more than one side to the story, and more than one political view. And I believed that what Senator Muskie was going to receive from Golda Meir and the other people in that administration was one point of view, which wasn't necessarily the whole point of view. And I thought I had an obligation to shall we say assure balance.

Well, there was someone, I can't remember the person's name, I'll try to think of it but I can't, who told me that it was very, very important to get the point of view of a man named Menachim Begin, because he represented a very hard core line, and that it was a significant pressure point on the Knesset and on the prime minister. So I said, "Well, can you arrange it?" And he could arrange it. And so I was, I guess someone notified him that I wanted to speak with him, and that I was welcomed, blah-blah-blah, and I went over there.

Now, I don't know who all the people were, that were there, but there were a number of security people when I went to his apartment. And he was very gracious when I got there. He very much appreciated my coming over there to talk to him to get a full point of view. And I don't think we, I was there more than a few minutes when, I was seated very close to him, he offered some wine which I didn't accept. And it was in that short period of time he started to talk about the dangers with Egypt, and the fact that their planes could be bombing Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and Haifa in a period of twelve minutes or less from the point that they were to leave, and Israel was defenseless. And I said something to the effect, "Well, what makes you believe they would want to do that?" [Begin replies:] "We're encircled. The whole world knows that they want to do us in, they want to destroy Israel." That started it, and it got more and more vehement to the point that I realized that this was not just a question of finding balance, it was kind of frightening.

Because he told me that he, and I don't know if this is true or not, but I remember him telling me and I thought, 'hmmm'. He was telling me that he was trained as a fighter pilot, and that he personally, if this situation continued and Israel were not to do more in terms of self defense, he was prepared to put a bomb in a fighter plane and drop it on Cairo. Well, what do you, how do

you respond to that? I wasn't quite sure. And I was probably there for no more than, I would say an hour, maybe hour and a half, no more than that maximum. And it was more and more strident. And the more he seemed to get tanked up with his own voice, the harsher it became.

And he was talking about Golda Meir as this, what did he refer, this 'fat school teacher from Wisconsin' or Minn--. I mean, he kept saying that all the time. And that she was a non-leader and she was giving the country away and all the rest. Well I, you know, it was over, and I'd listened to it all, and I have to say I said relatively little, because I didn't quite know what to say. I wasn't that sophisticated about all the issues or what he really had in mind, but it was very scary. I had no question when I left there that he was a warrior, and it was the first time I had ever heard him say anything, that even by implication, suggested that he might have been involved in the bombing of the Kind David Hotel. And I was stunned. I mean, you know, there'd been all this speculation about it, and his involvement in the (*sounds like: air raid on*_____). But I had, there weren't, you know, he didn't say, "I did it," but it was with a certain sense of pride that he was talking about how many people were killed, and what an important, symbolic move it was. Well, that was the nature of the meeting, and I left there quite shaken but convinced that I had to talk to the senator about this, the pressure point of a balanced view of what the prime minister was confronting in trying to get support from the Knesset group.

Well, it didn't quite work out the way I thought it was because I, quite naively, underestimated the intelligence apparatus of the Israeli government. Because, by the time I got back to the hotel I had a note that the senator wanted to see me. And I thought it was going be, you know, we'd have a nice discussion. Well, he'd already heard from the prime minister by the time I got there. And he was in a state of true Muskie agitation that I had, I was causing embarrassment, that that should have been cleared. I should never have done anything like that. And he's probably right. And at the time I thought, 'God, I really blew it'. But I did, at that point, say to him, "Well, Senator, let me express why I don't, I should have done it in a different way and the process wasn't right, but my heart was in the right place. And besides, I thought it was very important to hear something about what were the pressures on the prime minister and her administration." Well, he didn't accept that very well, but he said, "What's done is done, and I don't want you to ever do anything like that again."

And I thought it was over, but the next morning he was having a meeting with the prime minister. And she, the first thing she turned around and said to me, she looked at me and pointed at me and said, "So you're the one." And I said, "You're talking about, I presume, last night, and I want to apologize to you. I think my intentions were the best, I thought, and they were honorable in trying to get a better perspective on what was going on in the government and the various parties. And I had heard about Mr. Begin and about his strident points of view, and I thought it was important for the senator to know." "I'll tell you what's important for the senator to know," and then she reamed me out just as he had done before. And I thought, well, this is the end of that trip, it's time to get out of town.

But it calmed down after that. And that afternoon, I think was the same afternoon the army provided a helicopter, because Ed wanted to go see Weisman. And we went out there and it was a very cordial visit. And we met General Haad, I guess, who was head of the air force at the time, who was very nice. And we met all of these blue-eyed, blond haired Israeli fighter pilots

who I think were from Poland or Eastern Europe somewhere. And things quieted down after that. It, I think, was really a visit of respect for, you know, really the founder. And that was, you know, that was kind of the end of the most dramatic parts of that trip, which I remember quite clearly because it was kind of singed into my soul that I better be more careful in the future.

DN: Now, with Ezer Weisman, a group of us went, including the senator, to see Begin.

BB: That was later.

DN: That was later. And do you recall that evening?

BB: No, not, I recall it generally, but I don't recall the details of it at all. The first one was sufficiently endearing to my soul that that was the one I really remember. I don't, I remember the meeting, but I don't remember much that happened, actually.

DN: And you referred to the helicopter trip which was down to Sde Boker, and visiting with, not Weitzman but, the founder, Ben-Gurion.

BB: Yes, I'm sorry.

DN: And do you recall the atmosphere in that meeting?

BB: Well, the only thing I recall, it was very cordial, very respecting. I don't remember any of the details of what was discussed. I wish I did, but I don't. I think everything was blotted out by the prior discussion with Ben-Gurion. But I remember we did talk to the pilots, the fighter pilots, about how they were prepared, what their timing was, because I kept remembering the twelve minutes from Cairo and, twelve minutes to Cairo. And there was some discussion about Begin; that was a very hot topic. And it had nothing to do with my improvident move. But I don't remember. I remember it was a very cordial and nice meeting. Quite a bit of that time was just the two of them talking, and I kind of wandered around aimlessly, but I don't remember much of the details of it.

DN: Were there any other parts of the trip to Israel that impressed you?

BB: Well, there were some discussions that the senator had had with some of the members of the Knesset, which were very substantive and, I thought, very good. There was an informal get-together before a meeting of the, how is it, speaker, what do you call it, speaker or president of the Knesset? I can't remember. There were about three or four people there, and it was a discussion about the border security, and the concerns about Syria which was a very hot subject at the time. But I don't remember.

You know, Ed, I think, had carried, I would say, the view of the United States with probably more rationality than the United States would have done it, about what we were committed, what the U.S. was committed to do, to assure stability in that area, which hasn't worked out well. But in terms, if you remember at that time the Syrians were up by the Golan Heights, and Ed, we

went up there and, you know, it was quite clear, because we could see the Syrian machine gunists not that far away, a few hundred yards. And it was clear that there was a real concern about Galilee and the kibbutz along there, and about the capability of the Syrians to basically destroy Israel, if they were up there.

So, I think Ed became very supportive of the need for the United States to secure the integrity of the territory. And he was very good, very articulate about it. That was the thing, he was always very articulate, and I think he was very convincing to them that this was a genuine commitment. And that's why I was so angry, subsequently during the campaign, when he was painted as this unfeeling Polish Catholic, which is another issue which we'll get to at some point.

DN: Let's talk about that now. How did that -

BB: Manifest itself?

DN: - attack emerge?

BB: On him? Well, it first started with a comment made by [Yitzhak] Rabin to the press. No, that's unfair, it was not to the press, it was to the Organization of Presidents, Jewish organizations, where he said it was not good for Israel to have a Polish Catholic president. I learned that from one of the members of that organization. And I called Arnold Picker, who was then chairman of our Finance Committee, and said, "I am really distressed about this."

And Arnold got in touch with Rabin's people. He did not withdraw from the statement and say I was misquoted. But he said it was a legitimate concern, and that he didn't mean that the senator, as such, was anti-Israeli. But, that there was a reason for any Jew in the United States, or any Israeli citizen, to be concerned about a Polish Catholic as president of the United States, because of external pressures. And I remember that very well. It was put to rest, but with unease. And we tried to arrange a meeting with the senator and Rabin, that occurred later, and it, as usual, you know, the senator was very effective. I'm not sure that it did more than to quiet Rabin. I think he still harbored those feelings.

But the, one of the things that is not directly related, but nonetheless I found one of the most distasteful things that happened in '72, early, was when we knew that the Florida gold coast, which had a very heavy Jewish population, was important to carry the state of Florida. And so we made this arrangement to have Ed speak to the largest congregation, synagogue, in south Florida. And he did, and it was a great speech about Israel, and it was, you know, as usual it was thoughtful. And at times, when he got away from the speech, a little bit rambling, but it was a good speech and it showed heart. And as we went out, and there were cameras everywhere, people on the street, it was a big occasion; it was one of the few times we built up very well as opposed to the usual. And just as he stepped out, with all these television cameras going, there was this huge banner that was unfurled and it said: Remember the Warsaw Ghetto. And I was totally deflated.

I mean, it was, you could just, it brought back everything that, the kind of things that were whispered by Rabin and some others. And it was, it really hurt. And did it make a difference in

Florida? Who knows. George Wallace was the king of Florida at the time, that's how people felt. It probably didn't, but we came in something like fourth in the state, and I don't think we did very well on the gold coast.

DN: Who was behind the unfurling of the banner?

BB: Well, we don't know. I did testify about that in the Watergate hearings. We never did find out. I remember talking to Terry Lenzner who was doing some investigating. No one ever admitted it. You know, we had, if you remember the letter that was ostensibly written by Ed, about Hubert Humphrey and Scoop Jackson, that we pinned to the Committee to Reelect. But we never could get, no one ever fessed up to that. No one. And I don't know who did it.

DN: Back to the trip to Israel, Egypt, and Moscow. Do you remember the senator taking a message from Golda Meir to Sadat?

BB: I remember he had one, I don't remember what he . . . . We went to Cairo and he, I know that he had a message. We didn't talk about it very much, but the only thing he said was, there is a real effort being made to see if the two countries can get closer together and avoid confrontation. But I don't remember the response to it. I know he had a private meeting with, in Cairo, with Sadat. And I don't know, there was a reception that we had when we were there, but I don't remember what the discussions were. They were very private discussions and I was not there.

DN: And then we went on to Moscow.

BB: That was pretty fascinating. I guess our ambassador was, it wasn't Watson, no, but Averell met us at the airport at three o'clock in the morning. It was snowing and colder than hell. And we were staying at the Racia Hotel, and I remember that when we had the meeting early in the morning with the ambassador, wasn't it Watson, was it? I can't remember.

DN: I forget his name.

BB: But in any event, remember he was the one who said, before anybody said anything, he said, "Now I'll tell you which rooms you're in." And I said, "Oh, well, you (*unintelligible phrase*)?" He said, "No, I'll tell you which ones they are. Now, the senator and Mrs. Muskie are in so-and-so, that's a room that's got both video and audio. And you, sir," looking at me, Ayou're in the room, they've just got audio in yours so you just have to be quiet with whatever you're doing." He went right down the list of where everybody was staying and he said, "Look, this is par for the course. Now when you get to the hotel, you'll see a very sturdy looking woman at the end of each, at the beginning of each corridor, who will ask for your ID. They're all part of the KGB. And your taxi drivers, or any drivers you get that the embassy lines up will also be informants for the secret police, and I think you've got to be very careful. If you're going to talk, either turn up the radio, or talk outside of the hotel, but be very careful."

Well that got everybody off to a little unsettled beginning, but it turned out to be, as you know, I thought a really good visit. Save for the fact that Moscow was in just a terrible physical

condition at the time, and the economy was bleak and, you know, things were strained. The most fascinating part of the trip was in the Kremlin, which was a staggering place. And the meetings that he had, first with Gromyko. And Ed had been very well briefed and had all the briefing books, and I thought he was very good at that. And that set up the meeting with the prime minister, I guess it was.

DN: Kosygin.

BB: Yeah, but what's he, the prime minister, what was he?

DN: He was premier.

BB: Premier, that was it. And he was very jolly, you know, it was all a very jolly kind of thing, but it got very serious talking about the Cold War, talking about distrust. And I remember that Ed brought up the Israeli issue because there were still very high tensions there, and talking about he hoped that they would be able to help and seek some cooperation with the Arab neighbors and Israel. But it was a very good session. And that was the best part, I think, of the whole trip, basically. I mean, some of it was just interesting historically, you know, where the Germans had been stopped right by the big statue, the pointed medal. But it wasn't a long trip, but it was, there were some kind of funny times, too.

DN: Do you remember, in the meeting with [Andrei Andreyevich] Gromyko, Averell Harriman's arrival?

BB: Yes, yeah, it was like long lost warriors. I mean, obviously they had fought, and they loved each other out of a sense of real respect for the capability and articulate quality of each of them. And it was really like big old friends, it was almost like a fraternity greeting. It was the damndest thing. I expected it to be cold but Averell was just loved. He'd been there a long time, and they just thought of him as someone they could deal with. It was quite neat.

DN: I remember that, because we came into the room, a rather low ceilinged conference room, dim light. Gromyko came in to greet us with his very dour look, very polite, very formal, very dour.

BB: He was always that way.

DN: And then Harriman arrived a little after us and came through the door at the end of the room. And when Gromyko turned around and saw him, his face was transformed, it just glowed.

BB: It's amazing, it was amazing. And, I mean, that was, you know, I've seen, you've seen it, too, over the years, people who are in wild disagreement but have similarly been effective leaders for their cause, and respect the others who have stood up and been effective leaders for their side. And that's what it was all about, I swear. I mean, I see it recently with Senator Dole and the president of Cyprus. You know, there's no reason for them to be particularly consonant, but both of them were war heroes in WWII. And you know, [Glafcos] Clerides, the president of Cyprus, had been shot down and was a fighter pilot, and Dole was in the 10th Mountain Division

and lost an arm. They were, I mean it was like Harriman and Gromyko, and it was quite extraordinary, amazing. It's wonderful.

DN: We came back from there, well we stopped in Bonn and met with the presB, chancellor, Billy Brandt, and some of his people.

BB: Who was a very impressive fellow, I thought. Very, you had the feeling he was a person of consequence. Whether he was or not, I don't know, but he gave that appearance.

DN: And returned to Washington and the campaign. And you mentioned in talking about the plans for travel and the cost of the trip, the generosity of one donor, but those were not easy times for raising money.

BB: It was very tough. We had formed, as you know, a finance committee. And clearly, the most committed, devoted, most ethical person I think damn near I've ever met in the campaign, was Arnold Picker. And it was just at the beginning of that real effort to raise money, and it was hard picking. Even though everybody was assuming Ed had a real shot at being president, there was still this, we don't know. And I didn't know where we were going to get money. Do you remember the dates of that trip?

DN: That trip was early January of '71.

BB: It was toward the end of January, wasn't the end of January, I can't remember.

DN: It was right at the beginning of the year.

BB: Well, what, yeah, that's right. Because, I remember it was around Christmas time I was trying to raise the money for it, and we were having a lot of trouble. And that's when we went to see, I went to see, this wonderful man, a major Republican. I guess we, he isn't here, Cliff Folger, who was really quite a neat old bird. He had been once finance chairman of the Republican National Committee under Eisenhower, and ambassador to Luxembourg, I think. Had his own investment house here, and hated Richard Nixon beyond all capacity to stand it. And he thought that Muskie was the only person who had any chance of keeping Nixon out of the White House, and he wanted to do whatever he could.

So through one method or another, he said, "I will finance the trip to assure that the senator will be able to go and feel more comfortable internationally, and generate new respect that he can handle foreign policy," and all that kind of. So he paid for almost all of it. I guess all of it, actually. And he became a source of support through the entire campaign. And even when things weren't going well, he stood up for it. He was very nervous about it, because he was so close to Stans and some other people in the Republican Party, but I promised him that he ain't going to hear anything from me. And I don't think he ever did.

We did run into a problem later on, which, you remember the . . . . Truman always had a very warm spot for Senator Muskie. He thought he should be president of the United States, and voiced it. And John Snyder, remember John? Who had been his secretary of treasury, and he

was also a friend of Cliff Folger's. And one way or another he asked me to go see Mr. Snyder at his apartment on Connecticut Avenue, he would like to help us. And Ed knew the Secretary and he had called him as well, and the result was we got a bundle of money from John.

And we had a system, which we've not talked about very much, to assure that money that came in was spent for the campaign. So if anybody got cash, soon as the cash came in, we recorded who gave it, and we gave it to someone else to count. And each person's initials went on before it went into the, our safe deposit box, and then it was sent to the bank. But we kept formal records, which may have been good or bad when Watergate came, but it turned out okay.

But in any event, John raised a lot of money, mostly from the St. Louis area, because they were all friends of Truman's. They (unintelligible) a lot of money, like a hundred thousand dollars. And I thought, 'wow, God, that's wonderful'. And it was only later on that I guess either Maurice Stans or somebody raised the question to Cliff about, did he know where we were getting this money? He [Maurice] thought we were out of money. And Cliff didn't say very much. And he said, "You know, they must be getting help from the Republicans." And Cliff didn't say anything either at that time, he was just silent.

Well, when we were finally confronted with the Watergate subpoenas, the question is: Where did all this money come from? And all we had was, Missouri, and then a hundred thousand dollars, and no names on it. And the FBI wanted to know who gave us that money. And you know, I knew in essence where it came from. But the upshot of it was, I went to see John at his apartment. I said, "John, I've never asked you for this before but I have to ask you now. I need the names of the people and how much they gave." "I can't remember." I said, "You've got to remember. I've got, I have an obligation to report, and I don't know who the hell they are and the FBI wants to know where the hundred grand came from." So we went round and round and round, and he said, "I'll really think about it." I said, "There isn't a lot of time, I have to submit, respond to an interrogatory under oath. And I can say I don't know, but I've got to know. I mean, you know, it's my obligation to know."

Well, finally he calls me back and says, "I've checked my records, and I've got a list of people." And I said, "It doesn't have to do with any Republicans or anything like that?" He said, "Oh no, no, no," he said, "I've talked to Mr. Folger." I said, "Oh." And he said, "But he's not involved in this, but I'll have the names for you." So he gave me this list. I think it was about, I can't remember the exact, twelve, fourteen names, and that was fine. I was really delighted, their addresses and all that kind of. So I submitted it to the bureau and said, "This was who the people were." And by that time we had all the Watergate questions coming up in more detail, and I talked to Ron Natalie here, who's really one of the smartest lawyers in the firm. And I said, "I want you to help me take a look at everything to be sure that we're okay." And I said, "The first issue we've got is this money that comes from John Snyder, but it may also involve a Republican or two."

And nothing happened for a day or two. And then the FBI came into the office, at the other building, and said, "We need to talk to you about these people that we've got a list of." I said, "Fine." So they came, and they showed me these names. And I said, "Yeah, those are the names I sent to you." Silence. AThey're all dead." They've been dead; every one of them had

died more than two years ago. Silence for a second, and Ron Natalie pops up and said, “Dead men tell no tales.” *[laughter]* It was really a bad scene, but we got over it. But that was, but Cliff did, he did help, and he helped on that trip and he helped subsequently. Because we didn't have the money, as you know. It was very hard in those days.

DN: What was the reason, do you think, for the difficulty in getting money? Were people afraid of Nixon?

BB: There were a lot of reasons, I think. That was clearly one, fear of having your name down with a man that people, I think, in the business community and elsewhere felt was ruthless. I mean, that was certainly the perception. That was one. Two, and this was true all the way through, Ed didn't know how to ask for money and was embarrassed to ask for it. And it was difficult for Arnold [Picker] or Sumner to generate the kind of money you need in a campaign without the direct involvement of the senator.

And as you can recall from your many years, you could go with a list of two or three names of people to please call, and here's what you should say, four lines, to these people, and did it individually so it just wasn't cut from the same cloth, and will you please call them today, here's what they should send, please, will you. I don't believe out of the twenty or so I'd give him every week, he made more than one call a month. It was not in his system. He was embarrassed about it.

I guess it was different in Maine where people wanted to contribute to him, because he was such a huge figure and so important. But on the national scene, that was different. These were not friends of his. These were not even acquaintances, quite often. These were names we dredged up of people we thought would support him. And he was uncomfortable doing that. That was a major issue.

And I could go around with hat in hand, and the rest of the so-called finance committee could as well, but it was different. And it was both fear, and lack of involvement by the senator. That was just not his thing. You know, George McGovern was doing much better at it. He didn't seem the slightest bit embarrassed. I mean, he was like one of the Kennedys, that was just part of breathing, just ask for money left and right.

So that was, it was tough, it was very, it was a difficult, it was, and it ran all the way through beginning to end. We were always right on the edge of failure. Because we didn't have the money, we couldn't make the advance commitments that you had to make for, whether it was radio or television or newspaper advertising, or magazine advertising. We were always short of being able to plan a month in advance, six weeks in advance, which you really had to do. It was difficult.

DN: As you headed into the campaign, particularly late '70, '71 and into '72, was there a clear strategy for winning the nomination? Or was it al fresco?

BB: Unfortunately, more the latter. What came out of something that you're very familiar with, was the television, the night in, the '70, Nixon - Muskie [1970 election-eve speech], back to

back. The result of that was both wonderful in terms of establishing the senator as a person of real moment, and not only of confidence but believability to everybody who saw it.

But it turned out to be a disaster, because I don't think anybody had an expectation that there would be such an outpouring of support for him, from all over the country, people who had seen him. We were not equipped to respond to that. And the result was, people thought it was disinterest, as opposed to incompetence. And the result was, it turned a lot of people off. And I think we literally spent months trying to make up for that. You will probably recall, we tried to mobilize people everywhere to get this pile of letters or telegrams, whatever had come in, to try to go back and reconstruct it and respond. But some of the response was two months late, you know. It seemed indifferent, but it wasn't indifferent, it was just no way to be prepared for that. No one expected the '70 election eve speech to have that impact.

The second part was that, for reasons that are looking, you know, hindsight, reasonably clear, was that there still was a measurable negative aftermath to Vietnam. And, you know, the feeling was that Ed was not crisply opposed to everything going on in Vietnam, and it was still there. I mean, you know, we still had round table, or square table, everything else going on in Paris. And we, the students were pouring out for McGovern, right at the beginning, if you recall. I mean, the people that we all admired were just anti-war, McGovern. Ed had the rational view, I thought, that just pulling out was not going to assure stability in southeast Asia, and that he wasn't prepared to walk out on the administration and just say, ‘everything they've done is wrong, let's pull the curtain down’.

This is, seems rambling and not responsive, but the practicality of what we confronted had to do with the strategy we tried to develop. If you recall, people wondered what in God's name we were doing seeking all these endorsements. The endorsements, quite frankly, in my mind, were important as a substitute for being able to get ground forces. And the hope that I think I had, probably ingenuously, but I had, that if we got enough endorsements, it would be people who really counted, who were thoughtful, who cared about the country, who had ideas about the country. If they all said, “This is the man who ought to be president,” maybe that would trickle down and would offset the volunteers that were in the field big time.

You know, I use McGovern, but I'm talking McGovern in general, but Humphrey had that, you know, people didn't like him but he was in the field with great happiness and he was fine. But the McGovern fever, not George McGovern as such, we couldn't overcome the inability to generate ground support. And that was true from beginning to end, unfortunately, until, you know, we dropped out of the primaries in Michigan and Pennsylvania. But it was really difficult. We’d go, everywhere we'd go there would be the residue of the Kennedy, the Bob Kennedy following and George McGovern commitments. If you remember, everybody in the world was in that for a while. You know, we had John Lindsay people who were sucking things out of New York.

But it was, they all had easily definable positions on the number one issue. We lost fifty thousand people or more in Vietnam, and nothing's happening good, and this man is not saying, you know, “Pull it down now, stop it.” So that was a factor. And the strategy was almost predetermined, rather than, you know, having a primary strategy where you said, okay, “go to

our strength first". We know we have to follow the patterns that have been laid down from a calendar standpoint in New Hampshire and in Florida and Illinois, but let's try to decide how we want to come out. I mean, where do we want to put our troops? I mean, if we had any.

And I thought we'd do better in New Hampshire. What did he get, forty-eight percent, but I mean the assumption was he'd get a clear majority and he didn't. And then the Florida scene was just horrible. I mean, that was where the Segretti forces and the rest of the people really made a mess. That was their first big attack. I mean, where they really, and I didn't know, what a dope.

But in terms of what was our strategy, much of the strategy was just determined by a reality. You know, we had all kinds of concepts, if you remember, we had all kinds of people working on strategic approaches, [Jack] English and [Mark] Shields, and who was that one, of Harold Hughes and Moe Udall, all these people had their own, and they were sending in little papers, this is what we ought to do. But there was no way to do all of that if you didn't have the money and you didn't have the ground forces. And didn't seem to be able, have the capacity to generate that. There was no fever that we could generate. And I didn't know what the hell to do. But, I mean, that's -

DN: Interesting question in terms of different constituencies. You mentioned the students, the young people. What about the labor union members who were the traditional ground force.

BB: Democrats, they were really in the middle most of the time, protect America stuff. Well, you remember Ed's brother was a steel worker. And we went to meet him, I can't, was it Cleveland, Detroit, or one of those, try to get, and Nordy was trying to get support in the steel workers. And that was the first time I realized that they weren't prepared to commit, you know. They did commit finally to give us some support, but they never really helped. The unions never came out and busted tail for Ed. Why that was the case considering his background, his commitments, where he came from, I've never been entirely clear. They were essentially sitting on their hands. And if you remember what some of the leaders of the union at that time were talking about, they wanted more strength internationally, Lane Curtland and that whole group. They wanted a warrior. I mean, they were on the opposite side of the kids, I mean, clearly.

So we had this dilemma. I mean, if we went too far in seeking support of all the unions, as you know there was a fight to get support of the AFL-CIO, and I mean an all out effort was made on that. And, of course, that redounded to some extent to our disadvantage, because it was a public effort, I mean, to try to do it. And the kids were furious about that, because they saw the labor unions as part of Vietnam problems. It was a mess, I mean, to tell you the truth.

But the unions were a failure. I thought the unions would enable us to get out the vote, they would carry the message through all the media that they had, weekly, monthly, whatever they put out. But they didn't, I mean they just, they sat on their hands basically. And I remember having very tough arguments with some of the union leaders at the time. I remember Nordy really busted his tail going all over the country trying to get support.

DN: The unions were not either able or willing to produce.

BB: I think that's true. I expected we would get initial support, because of Nordy and the meetings we had with the steel workers, that they would come out very strongly in support. They did, but it was lukewarm, it wasn't what we had hoped for. And the AFL . . . .

End of Side A