

Marian Schlesinger Oral History Interview—JFK #1, 7/25/1980

Administrative Information

Creator: Marian Schlesinger

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Biographical Note

Marian C. Schlesinger, a painter and author, was formerly married to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., who served as Special Assistant to the President during the Kennedy administration. Although her husband had supported John F. Kennedy (JFK) during the 1960 election, Marian had been a strong supporter of Governor Adlai Stevenson. This interview focuses on Schlesinger's impressions of the Kennedys, her reasons for supporting Governor Stevenson, and the 1960 presidential election and its aftermath, among other issues.

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Marian C. Schlesinger—JFK #1

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

MARIAN CANNON SCHLESINGER

July 25, 1980

By Sheldon Stern
For the John F. Kennedy Library

STERN: Okay.

SCHLESINGER: [Referring to the first time she met Jack Kennedy]. It was in 1952. I remember it so well. It was a friendly lunch at our house and Paul Douglas of Illinois was present. He was a great liberal in the Senate. And the Mac Bundys [McGeorge Bundy] were here for lunch too and Jack Kennedy.

STERN: Yeah, that was. . . .

SCHLESINGER: I'm trying to remember whether it was after or before lunch. But anyway, the thing that amused me was the fact that the Kennedys were always being delivered wherever they went in big, black cars driven by hirelings. In this case I believe it was Judge Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey], i.e., later Judge Morrissey, appointed by the president at a later date. And the cars were always kept idling out in front no matter how long or how cold the weather. They see these sidekicks as hirelings that do their bidding. And if you read my book, Snatched from Oblivion, A Cambridge Memoir . . .

STERN: Yeah. I have.

SCHLESINGER: . . . you realize I was brought up in this liberal family but in a funny way there was this passive sort of anti-Catholicism in the air for many middle-class protestant Cantabridgians, especially high-minded liberal types who felt that Irish politicians were ruining the city, getting all the jobs and appointing their relatives, to everything from the city clerks to the librarians, no matter

whether qualified or not. In a funny way, I always had this latent sense of anti-Catholicism although I went to public schools where most of my classmates were Irish Catholics. I don't want to sound snide, because I don't mean it that way. I'm just trying to evoke the atmosphere of the time. The sense that all Irish were sort of lace curtain or lower class. It sounds awfully snotty, but I don't mean it that way, for many of my friends were Irish Catholics with whom we children used to have heated theological arguments. As I say, I am just trying to recall the sense of the times. So when this attractive, well-bred, mannerly, sophisticated young man came in, I was completely unprepared and overwhelmed by this attractive creature. As I recall, he listened with great attention and modesty to Paul Douglas who had come to Harvard to deliver the Godkin Lectures. Naturally the subject of politics came up and Paul Douglas proceeded to advise Kennedy, who was then the representative for the 10th district in the U.S. House, who was considering running for the Senate against Cabot Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge], to serve as apprentice in the House for a few more terms before running for the Senate. Of course, Kennedy later that year ran for the Senate and defeated Lodge hands down in the fall. At any rate, that luncheon was my first introduction to Kennedy. And I always remember that in spite of his worldliness and sophistication, that in a curious way there was something rather parochial about him. I had a feeling that he was in an alien atmosphere and that he wasn't very comfortable in it. All those intellectuals!

STERN: Hm.

SCHLESINGER: The thing that interested me later on was the way these intellectuals often projected on him the status of a "big" intellectual, projecting their own ideal of what this "prince of a man" was, one of them! I think this was characteristic of many of the people who gathered around Kennedy in his administration. This was the first time, of course, that I had met him. I think in a funny way as I saw it from the outside, that the Kennedys were not in the old fashioned American political tradition. They were the wave of the future, something exotic and alien. I thought that if Truman had been the man who had come to lunch on that day, I would have had a greater feeling of affinity and familiarity than I actually had for Kennedy. Though, they were both "ward" politicians in a sense, pay off your pals, etc.--of course all politicians do that--but I felt that in a funny way he belonged to a different tradition. Well, anyway, be that as it may. . . . Now won't you ask me some questions?

STERN: Were you surprised that he ran for the Senate later that year?

SCHLESINGER: Oh, yes, I thought that it was marvelous that this little whippersnapper--did I actually use that

word? I certainly didn't mean anything derogatory about him. That was of course the time that Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] was running for president and I was working very hard for him and not paying much attention to the Kennedy campaign. He was doing it all by himself with his own gang and certainly didn't need any help nor want any help from any of us. In fact I think they despised liberals and weren't involving a lot of people that might have worked for them. They kept their campaign strictly separate from the Stevenson presidential campaign. The Kennedys didn't want to be touched or "tarnished" by the Stevenson workers. I think they were playing it very close to the chest. And of course Kennedy won and Stevenson lost against a war hero.

STERN: Did you attend any of those Kennedy functions in '52?

SCHLESINGER: No. Not that I recall. I really think I was so preoccupied by the presidential campaign that the Kennedy campaign really made very little impact. Did you ever know him?

STERN: Ah, I met him once.

SCHLESINGER: He had star qualities, no question about it. You could feel it when he came into a room, especially, I suppose, after he became president. I'll always remember when I first met him, what a revelation it was to me. It shows something about me, I think, as much as about him. [Laughter]

STERN: Can you recall next time you met him or had some contact?

SCHLESINGER: Well, I think he came to a party at our house after commencement one afternoon. That was very perfunctory. And then I met him on two occasions when he was running for the presidency in 1960. Once when he spoke at the Winsor School. The girls were all crazy about him. It was wonderful. And then I think I went to a reception for him and shook hands in a friendly manner. I really don't know whether he remembered me or not. I think the next time was after he was elected president. We went down to Hyannis at one point.

STERN: I have some specifics here that I was about. . . . Maybe this will help.

SCHLESINGER: Yes, maybe you can remind me.

STERN: First, there's some interesting material about the May-June 1960 period when Professor Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith] and Schlesinger [Arthur

M. Schlesinger] endorsed Kennedy for president. And you stayed with Adlai Stevenson. And there were some interesting things about that, particularly a letter that Arthur Schlesinger received from Robert Kennedy in which he included a "P.S., can't you control your own wife or are you like me?" Do you have any recollection of that whole thing?

SCHLESINGER: Well, I remember it because I was so mad! I remember the night before the announcement Stevenson had been at dinner at our house, and I had no idea that Arthur was going to go public though I knew that he was going to come out for Kennedy. I don't think he realized that it was going to be announced either, at that moment, to somewhat excuse him. But I was so outraged and embarrassed by the fact that here was Stevenson, a guest in our house for dinner, and Arthur had never said anything about it which I didn't think was quite right. This made me so mad that, I just thought it was very bad. So anyway, Stevenson was really my president, you know. He always has been and always will be. I felt as though I was morally committed to him. And I guess I'm not a very good politician, because I'm not very good at shifting gears when I'm devoted to someone.

STERN: Do you recall the day in June, '60 when you and Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger went out to Hyannis to sail with the president?

SCHLESINGER: Yes. We went out on the boat, a power boat not a sailboat. We sat on the terrace of the house before we went out on the boat. Jackie [Jacqueline B. Kennedy] was there, the sun was shining and it was very relaxing and friendly. We had lunch on the boat. I remember we had oeuf en gelee. I can remember places and times by meals I have eaten, and after lunch we came back and sat again on the terrace. There was a lot of discussion of politics and as I remember Jackie and I talked. I can't remember what we talked about but as I recall we had a very pleasant time. She was very nice, a very friendly person to me. You know, one on one she is very easy. I can't remember in detail what the contents of the discussion was though I am sure that there was a lot of talk about strategy and policy. Of course this was before Kennedy's election. Was it ever recorded there in your notes?

STERN: Well, apparently one of the topics was that Kennedy was puzzled about your support of Stevenson. He was puzzled about why, particularly, so many women supported Stevenson. That's what one of his people said in his memory. He was sort of curious about why that was the case.

SCHLESINGER: I don't have any memory of his asking me. I didn't know this was so, that Kennedy wondered why

all the girls seemed to like Stevenson so much. I think he may have been a little jealous, who knows? Or genuinely puzzled. They weren't each others types, one might say. He was always so high on the ladies, as you know, one way or another.

STERN: In his book, Mr. Schlesinger mentions that you were there at the Hyannis Port house with Mrs. Kennedy during the first debate. And watched it with her on TV. I wonder if you can describe the whole experience.

SCHLESINGER: Well, I remember just being there. Archie Cox [Archibald Cox] and his wife were there. And I and Jackie who was quite pregnant at that point. And no doubt others.

STERN: Oh, right.

SCHLESINGER: We all were sitting around, and I don't remember it particularly well except that we were all delighted with Kennedy's sure-footedness and obvious relish, and was obviously, you know, well ahead of Nixon [Richard M. Nixon]. And of course that was absolutely delightful for all of us. I just remember that euphoric feeling of Kennedy putting it over on Nixon, no questions asked! That's all I really can remember.

STERN: You don't remember anything specific about Mrs. Kennedy's reaction, anything particular she might have said?

SCHLESINGER: No. She is rather a low-key person. I think it is her personality. But when she says something to somebody, she can be very sharp and insightful. Do you know her at all?

STERN: No, not really.

SCHLESINGER: As I said, she seems to me very sharp, meaning smart, and intuitive. She's a very interesting person. A jeune fille, bien elevee, not particularly an intellectual but with a good deal of intuitive cleverness. At least that is my impression of her--bright, intelligent, couth, a fashionable intellectual type, interested in art and literature and with a wicked sense of humor and irony and a satiric eye if I judge her right.

STERN: Do you recall the telephone call from Senator Kennedy after the debate?

SCHLESINGER: No.

STERN: He apparently called in a state of great excitement.

SCHLESINGER: I can't claim that I remember that.

STERN: How about the campaign itself? Did you take any part in it? Do you have any specific recollections?

SCHLESINGER: No, I didn't actually. You see, my husband was traveling around from time to time and I had four children I was riding herd on. There again, Kennedy had his own gang working for him, especially in Massachusetts. I was somewhat preoccupied with the question of Stevenson and what he was going to do. No I didn't really do much! I did go to the convention.

STERN: Oh, do you have any recollection of that?

SCHLESINGER: Well, yes that was terrifically exciting. I remember that. I recall that although I loved Stevenson dearly I thought it was dumb of him to let his name be put in nomination. I think he was over-persuaded by a lot of people, his lay friends who really had quite an influence over him. I think he was very ambivalent about the whole thing. I don't think that there was much love lost between him and the Kennedys. For one, the Kennedys treated him nastily. I don't think they liked him. There was a kind of . . . I can't make out whether it was sort of envy or disdain or what? They were pretty tough eggs. If you weren't with them, you were out in the cold. And no doubt they must have felt that Stevenson wasn't whole-hearted if you know what I mean. And you certainly sensed the way they felt when you were with them. And I think this is why they were so completely surrounded by such people turned courtiers. Because the fact was, either you were in or you were out. That was it. They were really rough.

STERN: Do you have any specific recollections of their reaction to that big Stevenson demonstration?

SCHLESINGER: No, I wasn't in on it. I was up in the gallery just as a spectator. Jack Kennedy couldn't understand why Stevenson wouldn't come out and give him his endorsement. That May I think.

STERN: Right.

SCHLESINGER: The theory of the thing was that if he had, he might have been made secretary of state. I'm not sure that that was true because I think Kennedy had every intention of being his own secretary of state. I think that Stevenson recognized that. As I have said before, I think

the Kennedys really turned people into courtiers. Maybe courtiers isn't the word but they really used people. Well, of course, all politicians use people. . . . I mean that they manipulated and used people in a rough way. And Stevenson was the sort of person who wasn't about to give up his freedom to people that he did not particularly respect or like. He was a very honorable man and I don't think he liked the shenanigans going on in the Kennedy camp. I'm only talking about my impression, obviously, because I don't know. I was not in the least privy to his thinking. Of course, he had been in politics in Illinois and he must have known a lot about political shenanigans there. He was no political naif. He was a very funny man - probably too funny for his political good. When he used to describe politics in Illinois it was one of the most amusing things I ever listened to. He had a marvelous sense of humor. And he always treated people who worked for him like equals - never patronizing, respectful of them as individuals whereas the Kennedys so often turned them into, what's a synonym for courtiers--lackeys is too strong a word--but they were made to be followers.

STERN: Yes.

SCHLESINGER: That was something I always remember about Stevenson, that he had great respect for the individuality of the people who worked for him.

And he attracted nothing but the best to work for him as a result. It's interesting that so many people that worked for him when he was governor of Illinois went on to distinguished careers in the Kennedy administration. Some of the really best people. To name a few--George Ball [George W. Ball], Minow [Newton N. Minow], Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon], my husband and a lot of others, too. I am sure you must have a list of them. They were an extremely able collection of people.

STERN: How about the whole vice presidential thing at the convention. Do you recall that it was a great shock at the selection of Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]?

SCHLESINGER: Ah, well, of course, there again I was always way on the outside. Yes, it was a terrific shock. This was where Phil Graham [Philip L. Graham] came in. I am sure you have all the material on that. I think my husband was terribly shocked. I think all the people that still had an idealistic approach to politics were in shock until they got used to the idea that this was a pragmatic decision for a political purpose. I think working for Kennedys was a learning process for a lot of people.

STERN: And you didn't have any direct role in the campaign at all?

SCHLESINGER: Not really. They seemed to have everything under control, especially in Massachusetts. They had their own group here in Massachusetts off and running and they thought it was a shoo-in anyway and didn't bother with it much, at least they did not try to contact and use many liberal democrats of the Stevenson persuasion.

STERN: How about the election itself?

SCHLESINGER: That was terribly exciting. The night of the election. . . .

STERN: Were you with any of the major people on the night of the election?

SCHLESINGER: Where was I? Oh, isn't that awful? I can't remember. I think we were here because all the Kennedys were at Hyannis Port and we certainly weren't at Hyannis Port. But it wasn't until early morning that the whole thing was known. We used always to have big parties at our house on election nights. I remember that on the night that Truman [Harry S Truman] was elected there was the greatest excitement of all. We had gathered to sort of mourn the demise that turned out to be God's gift to the hostess when he also won late in the morning. Yes, I am sure we were here.

STERN: How about the appointment of your husband. And the move to Washington, that whole thing. I wonder what you recall about that?

SCHLESINGER: First of all, I remember that the next time I saw Kennedy he had just been elected president. He had come to Cambridge to a meeting of the Board of Overseers of Harvard of which he was a member. He had asked my husband if he could use our house as a place where he could interview people whom he wanted to come to work for him in his administration. He interviewed Bundy, Wiesner [Jerome B. Wiesner] of MIT who became his science advisor, Mortimer Kaplan and some others. I am sure there is a complete list somewhere. Arthur was not appointed at that time. Actually, he did not know what was going to happen and he was on tenterhooks. A few days later, the president called and asked him if he would come down to Washington, without actually spelling out what he would do. When Arthur expressed doubts about what he would do, the president made a rather cute remark "Well, I don't know anything about. . . . I've never been president before, so why not?" It was very nice. I think that at one point they offered him an ambassadorship, and he didn't want that. And then he got the job as special assistant, the perfect job for him and one that he wanted. Actually I think he would have loved to have had Mac Bundy's job. He probably wouldn't have made a very good statesman (laughter) but I don't think Bundy did either.

Actually he might have been very good. He was early on against the Viet Nam war. In fact he was right on about all the big issues of the day. But he did a marvelous job in his role as special assistant. He moved to Washington in the middle of January as I remember and I went down to the Inauguration. I remember Inauguration day as incredibly cold with snow on the ground but a brilliant sunny day.

STERN: I was about to ask you about that.

SCHLESINGER: Too bad I didn't keep a journal. Everything was so hectic that I don't remember a lot of details.

One met all sorts of new people all at once. If you know anything about politics, you know how everybody is so friendly and gracious, one smiling face after another. I remember the gorgeous party that was given by the Steve Smiths [Stephen E. and Jean Kennedy Smith] two days before the Inauguration. They lived in a house on O street next door to a house that we eventually lived in in Georgetown. One of the things that politicians do I have noted is that they leave their wives more or less at the front door and move on. At least that's what inevitably happened to me on many occasions. You have to sink or swim. I am a pretty good swimmer. I remember running into Mrs. McNamara and her husband Robert McNamara who like me didn't know anyone at that point so I made conversation with these nice strange people who then turned out to be such big guns in the administration. But it really was great fun because in a way it was everyone starting from scratch. I remember Mr. Auchincloss [Hugh Auchincloss], Jackie's stepfather, was awfully nice to me, making me feel comfortable. The house was full of these beautiful nymphets imported from New York. It was sort of a prelude to all the parties that took place later on in the White House. Everybody was there. I left a little earlier than some and I think the president came eventually. But Bobby Kennedy and Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] and the whole family and all the cabinet people and a host of friends etc. were there. Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] no doubt was there though I didn't meet him then. It was a marvelous party and I shall never forget it. It was my introduction to Washington. Pretty heady! We had a lot of friends in Washington. The Joe Rauhs, the David Ginsburgs, people like that whom we had known before. Everyone was having parties. The Phil Grahams who were old friends of ours had a huge one, more fun than the enormous Inauguration ball. After that I went back to Cambridge and Arthur went off to South America with George McGovern. I have forgotten what the trip was about. We rented a house on O Street and I came down with the two school age children who went to Madeira and St. Albans. My oldest son was at Harvard and his twin sister at Western College for Women in Ohio. No sooner did we move in than we started this incredible manic round of social life which went on all during the Kennedy administration. You know, Washington, is pretty sociable anyway. After all, its business in the end is

people, but under the Kennedys, it was just wild. Fun, but wild.

STERN: Did you go to any dinners or parties at the White House yourself?

SCHLESINGER: Yes, we went to dinner there at least four or five times as I remember. And we were asked to these fabulous, small dances they used to have. One of the things I especially remember was the way the Kennedys ran the White House like an intimate, very attractive, luxurious, private house. And so the parties were so delightful, like going to a great party in someone's private house. One of the things that I thought quite interesting were the people that weren't invited to these parties.

STERN: Oh, that's interesting.

SCHLESINGER: The Irish mafia never went to these parties. Like Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and maybe Lawrence O'Brien, at least I never saw him there. Nor did I see Ted Sorenson. I'm pretty sure Pierre Salinger used to be asked and the vice president and Lady Bird Johnson were usually present. At least it was quite obvious that there was a certain group that was not asked and that was typical of Kennedy, the fact that he completely divided up his life. I gathered that he made hard and fast choices. The Irish mafia belonged to one sector of his life and his more social friends to another and I guess they didn't mix much. And I guess his girl friends represented another side of his nature, all divided into separate compartments.

STERN: I wonder what your observations were with the relationship with Mrs. Kennedy and with Bobby Kennedy?

SCHLESINGER: One of the things which they all seemed to partake of, they were terrific kidders. Especially Bobby and Ethel [Ethel S. Kennedy] who did it all the time. It was awfully tiresome. But I think in a sense it was their way of communicating. It was one of the things the president liked to do, too. I remember going there to dinner or lunch or something and Jackie coming into the room in a very good looking suit that she obviously had paid a lot of money for--Chanel, I remember--and his drawing attention to this and saying "Well how much did you pay for that, Jackie?" You know, half kidding and half mock irritation at how much she had paid and at the same time there was an element of showing off. It was sort of cute and fun. As I have said, this kidding was a form of communication, but I think it was also a way of keeping people at arm's length. Keeping things under control. They all did it. It was very Kennedyish. I found it terribly irritating after a session of it because nobody conversed, they didn't talk about

anything. It was all sort of wisecracking.

STERN: Well, that's very interesting because very often people described these dinners as having serious discussion about politics or whatever. About issues.

SCHLESINGER: Maybe. Who describes it that way?

STERN: Oh, I can't say off hand, but I've seen descriptions of that kind.

SCHLESINGER: Well, perhaps I wasn't present for one of these sessions. They were primarily social occasions as I remember and rather light hearted. Though I remember sitting next to the president and having an amusing talk about Massachusetts politics. But I don't ever remember much general conversation. People who used to be there quite often were the Charles Bartletts and Tony and Ben Bradlee [Benjamin Bradlee].

STERN: I have one example here from Barbara Ward Jackson, an oral history in which she describes a dinner at which she mentions that you and your husband were present and the discussion with the president about Africa.

SCHLESINGER: Well, it must be said that Barbara Ward was apt to dominate the conversation. Probably the president couldn't get a word in edgewise. And, of course, she insisted upon talking about Africa. I think the reason I can't remember the dinner is that I must have tuned out. I had heard her talk incessantly so many times about the imports and exports of Ghana, etc., etc. I mean, if anyone could kill a dinner party, Barbara Ward could in one fell swoop.

STERN: (Laughter) What about these so called cabinet seminars, or these Hickory Hill Seminars. Did you have any contact with those?

SCHLESINGER: Oh, I thought they were ridiculous. A sort of intellectual quick fix! Everyone was there as I recall and all very serious-minded and attentive. They would bring in these great guns and then people would have great thoughts. No doubt a harmless exercise but so Kennedyish, especially Bobby--the whole of Western thought in eight hour-long seminars. Sort of silly.

STERN: Can you recall any of the speakers?

SCHLESINGER: Yes. One of them was Freddy Ayer [A. J. Ayer], the English philosopher. Very difficult. I don't remember what he was talking about but something

he said got under Ethel's skin and she blurted out "Oh well, I believe in God!" or something like that. And I remember that Bobby turned on her and virtually told her to shut up. I don't know whether he used those words actually, but the implication was "Keep your mouth shut. What do you know about anything?" And this was supposed to be a learning experience! And Isaiah Berlin was there once at the White House. A delightful man. Full of wit. I cannot recall what he talked about but he again was another English philosopher. The whole enterprise seemed to me rather self-conscious, though harmless. Sort of like Voltaire at the court of Frederick the Great. It was rather a court thing with the intellectuals, the musicians and the philosophers in attendance.

STERN: Do you think he, the president, had a political motive behind it in any way? I sense that it was sort of winning a certain kind of constituency.

SCHLESINGER: No, I don't think so. Actually the seminars were primarily Bobby's idea. I think he genuinely wanted to learn and to widen his horizon and reach out. He wanted to make a quick study as I have already said. Of course he never had anyone there to speak who wasn't out of the top drawer. They had to be classy. Nothing but the best no matter whether they were comprehensible or not. Whether many of them understood a word of what these people said was sometimes questionable. I was really thinking of Ethel and some of her girlfriends who attended, who I doubt understood what, for instance, Freddy Ayer was talking about. Not that I did either most of the time. You probably have a record of the seminars somewhere.

STERN: Oh, sure. I have it. There were these cabinet wives' seminars also.

SCHLESINGER: I never went to one of those. I don't know anything about them.

STERN: Do you have any personal anecdotes that you can recall about the relationship between President and Mrs. Kennedy?

SCHLESINGER: No, I really don't. I didn't see enough of them together. I always thought that there was a very pleasant atmosphere. Jackie would often greet the guests for cocktails before dinner and then the president would come in, informal but still so charismatic. Of course, they were both good actors, maybe they were putting on a show, but the impression was one of good natured relaxation and high spirits and friendliness.

Something else I wanted to say that I think is interesting

and I don't know whether it was ever pointed out to you: the number of lives that were wrecked of people who had been connected to the Kennedy administration. Someone could do an amazing story of people who were divorced, who died of drink or committed suicide or whose children had breakdowns or who had violence done to them including the president, Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Mary Meyer, who was said to have been the president's mistress at one time, was murdered on the tow path in Washington; Phil Graham, publisher of the Washington Post, and an intimate of the president, committed suicide; Kenny O'Donnell died of drink; both Lord Harlech, the British Ambassador during the Kennedy administration, and his wife died in separate automobile accidents. Relatives of Ethel died in airplane accidents or in turn died of drink, and one of her sons died of an overdose. There was an atmosphere of license in the air that seemed a bellwether of times to come. There were a lot of high flying or would-be high flying people as often happens in political administrations and nowhere more evident than in the Kennedy administration. People's lives peak often at a comparatively young age and nothing is the same again. It was true of many young people in the Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] New Deal days, the same sort of excitement that one felt in the air in the early '60's in Washington.

STERN: That's very interesting. Did you ever go abroad on any of your husband's trips?

SCHLESINGER: Yes, I went around the world on his trip to India in 1962, which was extremely interesting. We traveled with George McGovern who was on a trip for the Food For Peace Plan. Ken Galbraith had asked my husband to come and lecture at two or three universities. Galbraith was Ambassador to India. It was a marvelous trip. McGovern is a delightful man and a great traveling companion. It was the first time I really had met him. It was really the beginning of his career. He has a great deal of humor and is a dear man. We all went on to Bombay, Madras and finally New Delhi. In Calcutta we joined Bobby and his party that were coming around the world en route to Italy and Germany from a successful time in Japan. We flew on their plane to Beirut and then on to Rome. There were a lot of silly shenanigans in Rome I gather, though I was not in on them as I was visiting friends of mine there. Then we flew on to Berlin where Bobby Kennedy gave an address at the University of Berlin. I was present at one of the most embarrassing occasions I ever witnessed in my life. There was a dinner before the speech, given I think by the mayor of Berlin, in one end of the Rathouse, a very heavy, Germanic baroque edifice.

STERN: That must have been Willie Brandt. Wasn't he the mayor at that time?

SCHLESINGER: It probably was. The dinner was very Germanic and

formal and heavy. There must have been thirty or more people there, all important figures in the government. Teddy Kennedy had joined us and Teddy Kennedy was at his juvenile worst, and for that matter so was Bobby. Apparently it was Teddy's birthday and in the middle of this formal dinner party Bobby gets up and says, "Well, whose birthday do you think it is today? It's Teddy's birthday!" He continued in this inny, awful kidding vein and then Teddy, who had this sidekick with him, was asked to sing by Bobby. "Teddy's going to sing some songs from South Boston." So he and his pal get up in the middle of this banquet and sing "Irish Eyes Are Smiling" and "Danny Boy" and some other such. Teddy was obviously high. It was so embarrassing! This is what the Kennedys did. They made so many occasions into a little private party of their own full of private jokes, etc. They were so self-centered. If something happens to them, then it must be of overwhelming importance to everyone concerned. It took me an awfully long time to get over that one!

STERN: This was at what time? Was this in June of '63 or when?

SCHLESINGER: No, I think it was March of '62.

STERN: Oh yes. I was thinking of the president's trip to Germany.

SCHLESINGER: The motorcade was terribly impressive and fascinating. I'd never been in Berlin before and I couldn't get over how American so many people in the crowd looked. They were like people that you see in our Middle West, very Middle Western faces. Very strange. I had only been in southern Germany before and these people looked much more like Scandinavians than the southern Germans do. Except for the rather awful banquet, the rest of the evening went off very well. Bobby spoke very well and the audience was enthusiastic. He had also spoken to enthusiastic crowds in the afternoon at the Rathouse after the motorcade that impressed me so much. I guess my reaction didn't ruin our relationship as I went on to campaign for Bobby in 1968 in Indiana, Oregon and California.

END OF TAPE