

# An Oral History Interview

with

## CLIFF ROBERTSON (part 2)

*conducted by*  
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## Cliff Robertson

Cliff Robertson grew up in La Jolla, California. After attending Antioch College, he worked briefly as a journalist before beginning what would become a life-long career in acting, directing, and screenwriting.

In 1963 Robertson became the first actor to portray a living American president after being personally selected to play John F. Kennedy in "PT 109." In 1968 he won the Academy Award for his starring role in the movie "Charly." His career took a turn for the worse, however, after he blew the whistle on became known as Hollywoodgate, an embezzlement scandal involving Columbia Pictures executive David Begelman.

Robertson became friends with Congressman Morris Udall during Udall's campaign for the 1976 democratic presidential nomination.

JF: Okay, we're on Side B now. You had mentioned that you knew Mo's wife, Ella. How would you describe her? Or what were your impressions of her?

CR: Well, I never met his first wife, and so I only met Ella, who had been his secretary, as you know. She had ... almost a raffish sense of humor. They were working hard in those days, and they were under a lot of pressure, and of course she was, too. So at the end of the day, if some of them might want a shooter or two, you could understand. She seemed to--she always was very nice to me, always glad to see me walk into a room. Kind of big voice. Little woman--big voice. "There he is! C'mon over here, Cliff!" And she was loyal. She seemed to like to be in a position of puncturing balloons, if they got too full--not that Mo ever--I never saw that in Mo--but I think all politician's wives probably feel the need for that, because politicians, like actors, get an awful lot of attention, and pretty soon they start to believe a lot of things about themselves, that are not always true. I always had a feeling she was kind of a leveler.

JF: I think she played that role (CR: Yes.), I really do. And somebody needed to occasionally.

CR: Yes, once in a while. Well, when you've got a man of such great character, and such Lincolnesque qualities, just automatically they will magnetically draw an awful lot of worshipping type of people. And amongst them, of course, are going to be women as well as men. And sometimes the women--particularly the younger women--just maybe in a fatherly way, just get a huge crush on the man. So a gal like Ella, she's not unaware of that. So I think she had a way of kind of keeping him....

JF: And you kept touch with them as a couple, then, over the years?

CR: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I mean, I'd go down to visit there at McLean, stayed there sometimes. Usually when I'd go down to see him, it was at his office. And then we would go have lunch at the cafeteria.

JF: You said that you had talked to Mo after Ella died. (CR: Yes.) How was he coping? I mean, I'm assuming this was quite a shock to him. Maybe I shouldn't make any assumptions.

CR: Well, of course, she died after he had become ill. I never tried to talk about it. I'd kind of take my lead from him, you know. So we never really went into details. But he did tell me that sometime later, when he was thinking of getting married to Norma, I was one of the very first people he told. He said that. I've forgotten how he worded it, but he said, "I may be nuts, but I'm thinking about.... I've known the lady for a long time." I guess she had been married, I guess she was a widow. So then he said, "I want you to meet her." So then I came down again and we had lunch in the cafeteria of the Senate there, and she seemed very nice. And like everybody who loved Mo, I just hoped that he would not be lonely. You think, "Well, with all those people, how can a guy be lonely?!" Well, you gotta go home at night.

JF: Probably seems all the more lonely with the crowds of people around you during the day.

CR: Yes, because suddenly the curtain's drawn and you're backstage and nobody around but the stage door. It's a sudden, abrupt.... I was concerned during that time, because he plunged into work, even [more] than ever. We'd walk under the tunnel there, and he still walked fast. I'd drive with him. Didn't feel like he was eating properly. He was just having a sandwich or having some stuff brought in. He ate in his office, you know, or in the Senate.

JF: He was amazingly productive during that time. (CR: Yes.) He produced a tremendous amount of legislation (CR: Yes.) after the 1976 presidential campaign, which is about.... He started showing signs of Parkinson's disease in the late seventies. (CR: He told me.) When did you first become aware of it?

CR: Late seventies. He said to me--he was up in New York one time--he said, "I've got something to tell you, but I'll wait." Then later on he said, "Looks like I've got Parkinson's." My memory of him.... (aside about tape) In New York, I sat up with him one time in the hotel. He was writing something, and he was asking me ideas. I was helping him. I mean, he was a good writer, but [unclear] a couple of ideas. I'll never forget, the damned typewriter ribbon was not working well. I had to go back to my apartment. I came back, [he was sitting there] in his BVD's. "Damn, Cliff, I don't have a typewriter ribbon." "Mo, just pick up the phone! You're an important guy." "Well, I didn't want to bother anybody." I said, "Geez, c'mon! Get somebody to bring the darned thing up here." He was disinclined to kind of exercise his power that way.

JF: That was one of the attractions of him.

CR: Sure. Because I work out there with those Hollywood characters, and they just snap their fingers and they've got thirteen minions running around.

JF: He apparently considered running for president again at some point. Did you ever talk to him about that?

CR: No, but I had a sneaking feeling that he was flirting with it for a short time.

JF: Did you have any thoughts or feelings about that?

CR: I said to him, "Mo, I'm with you, you're stuck." He said, "Well, you've never been involved out there...." Because, see, I'm an obdurate independent, really--whatever that means. It may mean that I just don't have the guts to connect myself with one or the other. I'm inclined to go to the Democrats, but I still like to think that I vote for the individual. I told Mo that from the very beginning. And I said, "But you're stuck with me. Anything you run for, I'd just consider it a privilege to take the time to be with you."

JF: Do you think that with the Parkinson's at the point where it was at that time--I'm thinking this was about 1984 or so--do you think he would have been able to make the run?

CR: Who knows? I guess a doctor would say no, it would be very iffy. But then somebody else, those same doctors might say, "A man of that character and that dedication, and the support that he would get, might do miracles."

JF: Might have even done miracles for him.

CR: Yes. Well, that's my point. I think the very challenge might have made him do it.

JF: Was it soon after the 1976 campaign that you were--as I understand--effectively ostracized from Hollywood for blowing the whistle on--was it the head of Columbia Pictures?

CR: Yes.

JF: David....

CR: Begelman.

JF: For some forgery scheme.

CR: Yes, he forged my name.

JF: Tell us about that.

CR: Well, we've got Watergate, and then there was Wall Street gate. There was a Hollywoodgate. A lot of people forgot it. Of course it was on the front covers of Newsweek and a few other [magazines] at the time.

JF: What year was this?

CR: In 1979, 1980, 1981. What happened--I won't go into boring details--but I was out doing a thing with Jason Robards, called "Washington Behind Closed Doors," and I took my wife and my younger daughter with me. On a Saturday I was going over my bills with my secretary of now thirty years, as I am wont to do, and going over the bills and I came across a government 1099, indication that I owed taxes on \$10,000 that was ostensibly paid me by Columbia Pictures. On a 1099, which was called "Miscellaneous Income," it indicated I owed taxes on this. Well, the interesting thing is, number one, it's not what I'd get for a movie; and number two, I never got miscellaneous income in my life, that I knew of. And number three, I hadn't even worked for Columbia. So I just thought a computer had made a mistake. And I said to my secretary, "Well, this old Scot isn't gonna pay taxes on money he didn't receive, so check it out." She used to live in California, and as soon as I finished, I went on back East, and she'd get to a dead end.

She'd call people, and they'd just go to blind alleys. Finally I told my accountant, a man of unimpeachable integrity, who had actually at one time worked for the IRS. I said, "Check this thing out. There's something wrong here, because why am I being asked to pay taxes on money I didn't receive?" So time went by, and then finally.... Meanwhile, my accountant and my secretary are still calling Columbia. Begelman had been an agent. He was a crook, it turned out--a very slick crook, a con man, but he had been an agent. Indeed, he'd been one of my agents. Well, one of mine--he was one of twelve--that worked for CMA, Creative Management Associates. And CMA was the agency that at that time represented me. And in my contract it said that there were six different people in New York who could represent me--any one of them, in any kind of negotiations--and there were six on the West Coast. And one of the six on the East Coast was this guy Begelman. And he was a guy, a con man--charming, like so many con men--he was smooth! Talk about slick! We used to joke that.... You know, to me, he was one of those guys that looked like he'd just come out of a steam bath and had a manicure, and everything was just kind of.... Wore these fabulously-tailored suits. Turned out later on his father had been a tailor, so I guess he knew something about that. But he had been an agent. He wasn't a writer, certainly wasn't a director, and he certainly wasn't an actor. He'd been an agent. And then, very mysteriously, and rather quickly, he was suddenly made president of Columbia Pictures. And a lot of eyebrows shot up, because at that time, before that, a man, the head of Columbia, Abe Schneider, was a man of integrity and a good man. And his son, Dick Schneider, was the president, and an equally honest guy. But I don't think he was as tough as some of these other characters in this--particularly out there. And they were both in New York. And Schneider was kicked out, well, quietly. And the only reason I knew that, I was doing a movie in England, and [Richard] Schneider called me and he was now an independent producer. He said, "Well, they got rid of me." Certain powers, I won't name them--well, I could name them later. They're there. These are guys who had influence--some of them without portfolio--but they had influence because they'd been big producers. Guys like Ray Stark and people like that. And they didn't, I guess, feel that the Schneiders were in their camp, or whatever the reason, they got rid of them. So suddenly, David Begelman was the president of Columbia Pictures out in Hollywood. And everybody said, "He didn't come up through the ranks. He wasn't...." He's an agent, but he never worked for the company, he had never been in any of the fields of the company--distribution or any of that stuff. He had posed as a former Yale law graduate. Well, when this thing hit the fan--I'm jumping ahead of myself--but later on, after it finally hit the fan and opened up, an intrepid young woman reporter, I think from New West magazine, called New Haven, and they said, "David who?" And then of course it turned out that not only had he never been a lawyer--of course, he wasn't practicing. He claimed to be a lawyer. He'd never been a lawyer, he'd never been to Yale. He went to Dewitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, and after the war he sold encyclopedias. And then he got a job in an insurance company in the forties, and then was fired under a cloud of stealing, even then. So, you know, it's like so many people: If you go back, there's little tracks. And at a certain age, they may have learned to dress properly, and they may have a pretty good veneer, but the leopard doesn't change his spots at fifty years of age.

Now to go back to where I was. So I had Mr. Kahaner--Abraham Kahaner [phonetic spelling] was my accountant, the man who had formerly worked for the IRS--he called finally one day. I was out in New York, he called me from Hollywood. He said, "Cliff, I got a call this morning from David Begelman." I said, "What did he say?" Well, obviously, it had trickled up to his office that my secretary and my accountant were smelling something funny, because they were asking, "What's the story with this?" And obviously it had gotten to Begelman. It's a little like the situation maybe now. People start making phone calls, and you say "Whoops." And certain people start covering up. So Begelman told Mr. Kahaner, "Tell Cliff the mystery of the \$10,000 has been solved, and not to worry." And Mr. Kahaner said, "Well, he'll be glad to hear that. What's the mystery?" He said, "A young man"--he didn't identify who he was or his name--"who worked for Columbia"--didn't say what he did, had come to his office with his father, and these are his very words. "The father, on bended knee, had pleaded with David to forgive the boy, because it was his first crime." And the father promised full restitution. Pretty good story. I did think at the time, "Well, a first time, they usually start with hubcaps and work up." So I said, "Well, sure, I don't...." He said, "So please tell him to forget it." I said, "Okay, I don't want to send some young kid to prison. It's not for me to take the law into my hands." But I wasn't prosecuting anyway. I simply gave it to the authorities, which the law said I had to do, because I wasn't going to pay the taxes. The same day, I had a call from my agent, and he got the same phone call from Begelman, that the mystery had been solved. So I told my agent the same thing I told my accountant. "Okay, don't prosecute. I don't want to send the kid to prison--as long as I don't have to pay taxes on it."

And not long after, I had been made honorary chairman of Mental Health, because of "Charly," and they called me and asked me if I would go to New Zealand for a couple of weeks. I wasn't working at the time, I was free. And would I go down and help them raise money for their mental health program? They were going to have a telethon, and they were going to try to raise enough money for a whole year of their mental health program in a four-day telethon. I said, "That's a good cause, I'll go. Can I take my daughter?" He said, "Yes." I took my eight-year-old daughter, it was during a spring vacation. So Heather and I went down there. Well, before we got there, we went to New York, and as I am wont to do, I called my secretary and she said, "Call Mr. Kahaner right away, your accountant." I said, "Well, I'll call him from the hotel." She said, "No, he seemed in a hurry, he seemed anxious." I said, "All right." I call him, he said, "Get over here right away." I said, "We just came in from New York. Can't we go...." He said, "Now!" We went over there, Heather stayed in the outer office with one of the secretaries--my little eight-year-old--and I went in and Buddy said, "Well, guess what? There was a check made out to you for \$10,000." I said, "Really?! I never got it!" He said, "I know." I said, "What did it look like?" He reached in, he'd just gotten a Xerox copy that day, threw it across the table. "Columbia Pictures Industries," check, "payable to Cliff Robertson, \$10,000." Two officers' names, one a woman. The address, Bank of America, Hollywood and Vine. He said, "Look on the back." Didn't say what it was for, just said \$10,000. And then on the back was a florid signature--not mine--"Cliff Robertson," a little stamp underneath it, and the initials "J.L." I said, "What does this mean, Mr. Kahaner?" He said, "It means this check was not cashed at the Bank of

America, Hollywood and Vine Branch, it was cashed five miles away at the Beverly Hills Branch of Wells Fargo." And I said, "Well, what's this little initial under the stamp, 'J.L.'?" He said, "Well, that's the initials of the man who okayed it at the Wells Fargo Beverly Hills Branch." "What's his name?" "Joe Lipshire." "What does he do?" "He's the entertainment, and he okayed it." "Well, what does Mr. Lipshire say?" He said, "I haven't been able to reach him. I tried to reach him, but he wasn't available. But," he said, "I talked to a woman down in Los Angeles, at one of the other branches, and she said, 'Call back and ask for either Miss Fitzgibbons or Fitzsimmons'"--I can't remember it--"and ask for her, because she is the woman that processed it." So Mr. Kahaner had done that, but she had told him--because I wasn't in the office yet, I was still on the plane--she had told him she couldn't give him all the information. Bank rules say you only give the information to the individual involved. So I said, "Well, call her." So he called her, picked up the phone and I'm on the other line. He said, "Miss Fitzsimmons/Fitzgibbons, this is Mr. Kahaner. I'm here with my client, Mr. Robertson." "Oh, yes." "Would you give us the rest of the information?" "I'll be happy to." She was very straightforward, everything seemed to be above board and honest. "When was it brought in?" She gave the date. "And when it was brought in, it was okayed by whom?" "By Mr. Lipshire, in charge of entertainment. And then it was processed, yes, by me." "And it was in cash?" "No, American Express Travelers Checks." "And it was for who?" "The president of Columbia Pictures, David Begelman." "Thank you." (click)

JF: The Travelers Checks had been made out to him?

CR: Made for him. It had been okayed by Lipshire. But Columbia Pictures did a lot of work at that branch bank, so he knew him, so he'd just [unclear]. Now his story, later on--it turned out he'd done that with other people, too--was that he advanced me money or something. None of it was true.

JF: And other people had not discovered? They just paid the taxes and didn't look at them?

CR: No, the other people were Marty Ritt, a big liberal director.

JF: They figured it out, but didn't want to squeal, basically.

CR: Well, not squeal. No, they're looking at their money. People were giving them jobs. They don't know how many of them were made. But, what happened, when Mr. Kahaner called up and he said, "Thank you," he hung up, he looked at me--and I'll never forget--he said, "Cliff, you're sitting on a hydrogen bomb. This guy is very powerful right now. He's also a very big gambler. He's in with Las Vegas and all these characters. What are you going to do?" I'll never forget the first thing I said, "I wish it were you instead of me." I said, "What am I going to do?! Whatever the law says." He says, "Well, I gotta tell you, you are now an accessory. You have all this evidence, you've got the woman, you're an accessory. You will be an accessory, unless you give it to the authorities." I said, "Okay." He said, "Maybe you'd better get a lawyer." I said, "I'm not a cop. But I'd better not get a Hollywood lawyer, there are too many...." So I called my

old friend Seth Hufstedler, whose wife [Shirley] is a former on Jimmy Carter's cabinet, Health [,Education] and Welfare. I've forgotten her name. She was a judge, Seth Hufstedler's wife.

Anyway, I called Seth, because his former partner had been like a grandfather to me--Chuck Beardsley--and I had known him for years, and he had died. So I called Seth. He said, "Get down here right away." So I went down there with Heather--she's exhausted--and Heather stayed in the outer room. I brought the Xerox copy of the check that Mr. Kahaner gave me, and all the telephone logs and all that stuff. He said, "Okay, you've done the right thing, and if you hadn't done the right thing, you could be--it's a high crime, you'd be an accessory to high crime. You are witness to a forgery, the whole thing. You've done the right thing. I will get this to the.... Where are you going?" I said, "Well, we're on the way to New Zealand, we're going to leave in about thirty hours." He said, "Well, where are you staying?" I told him, "The Bel Air Hotel." He said, "No you're not." I said, "Yeah, we have reservations." And you have to know Mr. Hufstedler--very unemotional--flat, gray eyes, he never gets excited, he's very conservative. He said, "You're not staying in any hotel." I said, "Yeah, we are." He said, "Cliff, listen to me carefully. By now, obviously this has trickled upstairs. People know. The public doesn't know, and therefore, certain people would not be heartbroken if something happened to you, if a truck hit you or whatever. And you have to understand what's involved here. We're talking about powerful people, huge amounts of money." I said, "Okay." He said, "So I would suggest to you, I insist that you not stay at any hotel or stay with any person in the business, because they might track you down. It's very unlikely at this point. Now, I will get this into the district attorney's office tomorrow, and when you come back in two weeks, it should be pretty much a fait accompli."

Meanwhile, I had to go out to Heather, and I said to Heather--I couldn't think of anybody, and I remembered when Heather was out, I used to take her to Disneyland with another little girl named Kathy, and her father--lived in Hollywood, he had four daughters. So I said, "Do you have his number?" She had like her little red address book. And she said, "Yeah, Daddy, here's the number." So I called him. I had to lie to him. I said, "We're here and we can't get a hotel room." He said, "In all of L.A.?! Must be a lot of conventions." I said, "Yeah." He said, "All right, you can...." Because I couldn't tell him why, but he understood that it was important. He said, "Well, we'll double up, you guys can stay here." So I went up there. I stayed in the house. [Hufstedler] had said, "Don't go out, 'til you go to the airport." Now it's beginning to be so bizarre. "Wait a minute! I don't even live in this stupid town, and this is kind of surreal!" And Heather kept saying, "Daddy, don't you have to go to work?" I said, "No, no, I'm just...." So we took the cab to the airplane, we got to altitude, and they gave me a bottle of Champaign. Heather said, "Daddy, you don't drink very much normally." I said, "Honey, there's a time in every man's life when he drinks." (JF laughs)

Took us about fourteen hours to get down there--or more. I did the thing, it was very successful, it took care of everything. Came back in a couple of weeks, called Seth, he said, "Get out of town!" I said, "What?!"

JF: "I just got back!"

CR: "I just got back!" He said (decisively) "Get out of town." I said, "Did you give this to the district attorney?" He said, "Yes." Seth Hufstedler is a former head of the California Bar. This is not some schlocky, two-bit lawyer--a man of high integrity. He said, "For now, don't let anybody in this town know where you are. Get out of town." So I called a pal of mine back in Illinois, a pilot, who'd always said, "Anytime you and your kids want to come back here...." Lived in Winnetka. So I called Bill. He subsequently was killed in a plane crash, a wonderful guy. So I went back there and took Heather and told my wife where we were. [Hufstedler] said, "Don't tell anybody but your wife what's going on. I'll be in touch with you." He called me, I don't know, ten days later, I guess. He said, "I just got inside information. Surprise, surprise, the Hollywood Police, the Beverly Hills Police, the Burbank Police won't touch it with a ten-foot pole." I said, "Won't touch what?! This is not an assumption or a presumption, this is bona fide evidence. The woman in the bank, and it was cashed." He said, "I know." I said, "What about the district attorney?" He said, "I'll call you next week." He called me the next week, and I said, "What about the district attorney, Seth?" I'll never forget, that's when the hairs went on end. He said, "Nada." That's when I found out.... I'll never forget, I said to my wife.... Oh, I said to Seth before I hung up, "Seth, tell me what's happening to our country?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "When does a victim of crime, high crime, felonious crime, have to run away from the perpetrators?! What's this all about? What do I do?" And then that thing that really upset me, because he was honest. He said (in a whisper), "I don't know."

So I said to my wife, "Well, I've got to think about this. I went in the other room, and thought, "I've got to get somebody's counsel here. I'll call Mo." I called Mo in Washington, told him on the phone what happened. He said, "I understand." Because I knew he would give me counsel. But I was physically concerned for my family. Forget the professional thing--that was down the slough, I knew that. But I knew that I'd done the right thing, and I knew that I wasn't going to let this bunch of thieves.... So I called Mo and I told him everything in detail, and he said, "Okay, because they have offices out there, and because it happened there, FBI. They have every right to look into this." Because it was done in L.A. and FBI offices are on that. And I said, "Okay." So we called the FBI and they quickly said, "Come on down to Washington." Had a couple of operatives meet me at the airport, took me up to the offices and I gave them all the papers, (aside about tape) and they said, "Okay, what is your schedule?" I said, "Actually, I'm supposed to leave in two days for England to do a movie." They said, "Don't say a word to anybody. You go to England, but we'll be in touch with you." I went to England, was in touch with the FBI. It was arranged that I would go to work in a car--have a driver take me to work, you know, when you're starring in this movie--but it was with a seat, a Citron. The seat would go back, put a blanket over my face, we'd go in the back way. He explained to me that, you know, "They put a hit on you. It's international." They give some guy, "here's the guy, here he's going to work, here's his face." Some hit man, he doesn't know you from Charles Brown, but he knows who you are and he's got a contract. So I had to go and do that whole picture.

JF: Now, what movie was that?

CR: It was a picture called "Dominique" with Jean Simmons.

JF: That must have been a frightening time for you.

CR: Well, it was interesting, but I wasn't allowed to say anything. But I kept my ears open. The driver would take different routes to work, and the FBI was in touch with me in London. They were very good, very professional. So then one day a producer came.... Oh! then I got a call from New York, and my wife said, "Let me read you the headlines of Variety. 'David Begelman resigns, pending an investigation for financial irregularities.'" Well now there's hope. The FBI said, "Don't say anything!" So then a producer came in, a guy who I knew, a nice guy--I'd done a film for him. I was having lunch with him, about six different actors there. They were all talking about, "What's the story on 'Begelman resigns pending a financial....'" You know, that was the subject. I'm sitting there with four-foot ears. I'm acting "Mr. Dumb," I don't know anything, but I'm listening. And I'll never forget, he said, "Well, you know, the whole thing's a farce." Somebody said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Oh, are you kidding? They've got P.R. people there at Columbia, Begelman's got access to them, and he's already got Judd Marmor--who was a psychiatrist to the stars--"coming out to visit him, and making sure that the people could see him walking up and down the aisles." People said, "Oh, it was a temporary aberration." You know, just a temporary thing. But, he said, "They're slick." And he said, "I'll guarantee you, he'll be back in power in six weeks." He was wrong--four weeks.

JF: Amazing.

CR: Amazing. So anyway, I just sat there and listened to all this. I did the film, came back, and finally I called.... There was concern that maybe somebody was going to do something. So that's when I called Kate Graham, The Washington Post. I told Mo, "I'm not going to ...." I put on my reporter's hat. I was sitting there, I was listening to it, and Dina came back from some fancy club and she said, "Oh, this woman was there, and they were talking about what a wonderful man Begelman was, and all this stuff."

JF: Now, Dina was....

CR: Dina Merrill my former wife. We're no longer--we were married twenty-two years, but she wanted to move to Hollywood, so she went out there and got married again, the third time. But anyway, so then when Kate Graham--she said, "Well, would you be willing to cooperate?" I said, "Wart and all." It was kind of buried, though. It came out on Christmas, and I was up skiing. I immediately got a call from Ray Stark--because he was one of the guys that put Begelman up there--immediately. How he found me, I don't know. I said, "Listen, Ray, I'm not a prosecutor, I'm not prosecuting, I am simply doing what my lawyer said was the right legal thing. I will not be a part of any of this stuff. Whatever happens, the law takes [unclear], fine, but I am not on any witch hunt or anything else. But I don't play those games."

JF: And I gather Mo was basically pretty supportive.

CR: Oh, was he ever! He later on had it put in The Congressional Record.

JF: Oh, did he really?

CR: Yes, I've got a copy of it at home.

JF: Now, what did he have put in?

CR: Basically he said, you know, "With all...." I can't remember the thing, but he said, "It appears with all this Hollywoodgate stuff, that there are some people who really are not afraid to stand up for what's right, and I think we should recognize Cliff Robertson." And it's in The Congressional Record.

JF: That's fascinating. And that all happened not too long after you got to know Mo, then?

CR: Yes, not too long--a few years. Five years, I guess.

JF: Let me ask you, probably the last question that I have concerning Mo. What would you say in your estimate were Mo's greatest strengths and weaknesses?

CR: Well, I think he had a love for mankind, obviously. And he had a love for nature. And he wanted the two to love each other. I think he felt like a custodian to that. He had an insight, very sympathetic insight, to the little guy. As I said in my poem yesterday, he never looked down on anybody. He had this towering strength and influence, but he never looked down on anybody. He looked right straight across.

JF: How about his weaknesses?

CR: I don't know that I can comment on his weaknesses--I never saw any. (long pause)

JF: None at all?

CR: I never saw any. Maybe his family would know that, or his wives or something like that, but I never knew any.

JF: That's wonderful. I don't have any more questions. Do you have anything you'd like to add? Or shall we get you to the airport?

CR: Okay, bless your heart, thank you. I could add.... (aside about tape) Well, let me just finish up on that. So at any rate, I didn't work for about three years.

JF: I apologize! I didn't know we had more to go on that!

CR: Later on, when a guy named Doug Trumbull, who does not enjoy the fatuous fruits of Hollywood--lives up in a cabin in Maine--and he was going to direct a film, and he hired me. And from then on, I started working again. So then my agent at the time told me what went on during that three years. I mean, I gotta keep working. So I wrote a play for my wife and she was in it and so was I. And I was asked to speak at colleges about corporate corruption. You know, I never considered myself Don Quixote, with or without portfolio. I just did what I knew was right, and I would not bow down to that kind of pressure and evil.

JF: Do you think that has dogged you at all?

CR: Sure! Oh, it killed my career. Sure. Oh, everybody says.... You know, I'd won an Academy Award and all that. Oh, yes. And I knew, when people said, "Would you do it again?" I'd say, "In a New York minute!" I'd have to--have to.

I had a phone call from one of these Hollywood characters. I'd get these interesting phone calls. As the FBI said to me, "We're not dealing with the mafia here. This is not a bunch of guys that meet in a motel in upstate New York and have somebody come around and say, 'Do you treasure your knees?' We're talking about some very, very smart, much smarter, people." And he said, "They don't care about Cliff Robertson. You've got to understand, what you have done is you've interrupted a thirty-year honeymoon, or longer." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "These people--power people I'm talking about now--have enjoyed this immunity. And the unwritten covenant in Hollywood has been 'Thou shalt never confront a major big mogul on corruption, or thou shalt not work.' It's as simple as that. And you have broken the covenant. And they don't care about you, Cliff Robertson. What they are being smart and care about is that maybe you, by breaking the covenant, have set a precedent." And it was right, because within twenty-four months after I did that, Lawrence Olivier, Sean Connery, Michael Caine, Richard Attenborough, James Garner, among other people, started coming out of their closets on what was known as creative bookkeeping, and started coming out of their respective closets and confronting these people. So we broke the honeymoon. So we're proud of that.

Now, I'm a board member, and have been for over twenty years, of the Screen Actors' Guild, so we have access to a lot of information. We were interested to see if the year after we blew the whistle, if it would have an effect on the residuals to the actors--never mind the directors or the writers or the producers' union--but the actors alone. So we found out that after I blew the whistle--and I use that term only because I can't think of another term, but I just simply gave it to the authorities. I said, "Do what the law says. I am not going to be an accessory to high crime. Do what the law says." It wasn't like this man had made a temporary little mistake. He apparently had been doing it to a lot of people. And he had a slush fund, and he had all kinds of.... He killed himself finally. Well, we're not sure whether he did, because he had big gambling debts. But he was in more scandals after that. He put Columbia, MGM.... Then he got, he was made, after that, after Columbia--and he got off. When David McClintock [phonetic spelling],

former Wall Street investigative reporter, was asked to--he was going to write a book about this. He asked me, "Will you help?" I said, "Sure. I'll tell it to you, whatever you want." He said, "Well, you know, it might be dangerous to your career." I said, "C'mon, I'm already...." So he wrote the book called Indecent Exposure, and he told a lot of stories about some of the people. One of the figures in there--every one of those people but me ended up with money. Not....