

Max Freedman Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 5/25/1966
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Biographical Note

Freedman, author, journalist, personal friend of John F. Kennedy, discusses JFK as a scholar, handling the Catholic question, and the Berlin trip, among other issues.

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Max Freedman – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

Max Freedman

May 25, 1966
Washington, D.C.

By Joseph E. O'Connor

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'CONNOR: Mr. Freedman, you said you were a good friend of the president's. Well, I'd like to hear a little more about that.

FREEDMAN: Well, every newspaperman has a favorite senator, and my favorite senator was always Jack Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. I had watched him from the press gallery of the House of Representatives when he was a young congressman. He was an extraordinarily indifferent young congressman who didn't work very hard at the job and who

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would have been an unbelievable figure if he were cast in the role of a young man of destiny.

I became interested in Senator Kennedy when he defeated Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge] in the 1952 race. I'd grown up worshipping the memory of Woodrow Wilson and loathing the first Henry Cabot Lodge, and I rejoiced when the grandson was defeated. And when I told this to Senator Kennedy, he thought this was immensely amusing because one of his heroes was Woodrow Wilson. I discovered then what was to be for the next...Until Dallas, the great link between Kennedy and myself was a love of American history, great books, and what he called high-spirited, chivalrous biography.

My position as a newspaperman was of no value to Senator Kennedy. He used to ask me with a mischievous twinkle if I was still writing for the Manchester Guardian, which

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he used to call the “dead letter box,” and periodically asked me if he could still carry Manchester by a huge majority. It was of far more consequence to him, if he were searching for a newspaper friend, to have the correspondent for some paper in Wichita than to have the Manchester Guardian on his side. So this was a friendship that was not based upon mutual interests in a professional sense. I didn’t need to be a friend of Senator Kennedy to get scoops, and he didn’t need me to present his point of view to the readers of England. We were friends, and what I never forgot was the extraordinary perception that he had about me.

I can still remember very vividly the first lunch that I had with Senator Kennedy and Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy]. She had brought the lunch from home for the three of us, and he showed

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me the little memorial book, which you must have seen....

O’CONNOR: For his brother?

FREEDMAN: For his brother. And he asked me to take it home. When I came back the next day to return it, I said that his father must have been enormously moved by this book. And the senator said, “My father has never read it. He goes through the first two or three pages, and his eyes fill with tears, and he closes it, and that’s the end of it.” Now, he knew that as much as I loved him, I had very grave reservations about his father. This was the only time that we ever had any extended talk about his father, and it was against this background. His father is perhaps an incomparable head of the family, and anybody who listened to the young senator talking about his father and the way he

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brought up his children, the contempt for mere money, the passion for excellence, the free debates at the dinner table, the desire to be of public service, the unfettered inquiry that preceded a decision, would understand that this was a seminary of statesmanship and that the greatness of this family was an emanation of the central role that Joe Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] played in bringing up his children.

Now, I’ve made it sound much too formal, much too weighty, much too argumentative. Everything that I’ve said to you I got by osmosis from the Senator. It was bleak, indirect, informal a tribute for the shrugged shoulder, no attempt at eloquence, but unforgettable. You understood what the father meant to the children and what the children meant to the father, and years later, when I used to go

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with Senator Kennedy on campaign trips, I would quite often find myself seated at a hundred dollar a plate dinner at the plate purchased by Joe Kennedy. And this was one of the ways in which the Senator signified the fact that we had taken this particular problem in stride, and that I didn't have to be a cheerleader for Joe Kennedy to realize that the usual things that were said about him were mischievous overstatements of half-truths that did grave injustice to a noble father and a valuable American. I have never retreated one inch from that belief. I feel very much towards Joe Kennedy the way Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] feels towards him.

I think that when you understand that the President loved his father so much, that it becomes a far greater tribute to President Kennedy that he so often stood for causes and fought for ideals

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which were remote from his father's interests and loyalties. This is one of the supreme tributes you can pay to Senator Kennedy and to President Kennedy. He was no small man to gain say, and I remember Jackie saying to me once, when she came back from Paris, that she wasn't the least bit frightened to see General de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle] because she had already seen Joe Kennedy. [Laughter] He left an imprint on all his children, but Jack Kennedy was a special son. There was a quality in him none of the rest had.

Now, I used to loan Senator Kennedy many, many books, and he used to have me over at the house, and he would read aloud to me. I remember him reading for nearly two hours at a stretch Allan Nevins's The Emergence of Lincoln and talking about Lincoln [Abraham Lincoln] with a delicacy and a respect and an insight into the problems of statesmanship that showed

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that he was a genuine student of American history, as well as knowing a great deal about the art of government. Now, I want to pause on the second phase, knowing a great deal about the art of government.

He used to quote the old saying, that you are a bad political leader if you make perfect the enemy of the good. Politics, he used to say, is not the art of the possible, it's the enlargement over what is possible. But you must always address yourself to the agenda of reality. His criticism of what he used to call rather contemptuously the "professional" or the "ritualistic" liberals is that they'd much prefer the grievance to a solution of the problem. They were only interested in the barricades provided they could cut an attractive figure while standing on them. He wanted to win the battle. He was not interested in

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gestures or in passion for the sake of public display.

I remember an occasion – I'm jumping ahead of myself – when there was a hearing on the minimum wage, and the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration said that to increase the minimum wage would feed the fires of inflation. There really was not much

in terms of money involved, but there was a great deal in terms of principle. President Kennedy – Senator Kennedy – questioned Jack Mitchell [James P. Mitchell], who then was Labor Minister, incisively but very courteously. When the hearing adjourned, Myer Feldman, Ted Sorensen, and I were again having lunch with Senator Kennedy, and the senator was so enraged at a Republican administration fighting a paltry increase in the minimum wage that he began to pace up and down the room and swear. His gift for picturesque profanity was as abundant as it was versatile. When he fin-

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ally ran out of breath I took it on myself to ask him why he hadn't questioned the Eisenhower spokesman more vigorously in public session. He looked at me as if I'd taken leave of my senses and said, "I'm a Kennedy, this is an election year. Who would believe me if I campaigned for a higher minimum wage?" Now this, too, I never forgot. He didn't have to impress Ted, or Myer, or me. He was infinitely more interested in the welfare of the working man, infinitely more liberal and progressive in his outlook, in the secrecy of his own office, than he was before the television cameras, so that when the New Frontier – which is a phrase I originated – came out as the policy of the Kennedy Administration I wasn't at all surprised. I always knew that he had these deep fires in him, and that he would be in the great performing tradition, liberating tradition in the

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White House.

Now, I said that he began to grow in 1955. What I mean by that is that up to this point he had taken hold of issues that appealed to him deeply as a human being as well as a Democratic senator. For instance, anything that affected labor legislation or loyalty oaths in a university or ending colonial rule in the world, these things aroused the philosophic side of his mind, and he became very active. But on other matters in the Senate he was inconspicuous. You must remember that Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] was three times elected Majority Leader of the Democratic Party, and that three times Jack Kennedy voted for him for that job. I would think that between 1953 and 1960 that Senator Lyndon Johnson didn't have to ask himself three times what the junior senator from Massachusetts thought about legis-

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lation. He was not a pivotal figure in the life of the Senate, nor did he ever want to be, even when ambition aroused his energies and he began to reach for the great prize of the presidency. I'll explain why later.

In 1955, Teddy White [Theodore H. White] came into the Senator's office. He'd written a column that he wanted to check with Ted Sorensen, and Teddy White suggested to Ted Sorensen that it would be a good idea if the Senator tried to get the vice presidential nomination in 1956. Ted thought about this, and then spoke to the senator about it. The senator thought that it was a silly idea, nobody runs for the vice presidency, and Eisenhower

was going to be reelected so you were running for inevitable defeat, and that didn't seem to be a heroic prospect. Ted argued with the senator. He said that it was important for

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the senator to get onto the national stage, to begin to speak about national issues, and not simply to be a voice of Massachusetts or, at best, a voice of New England. Finally, he persuaded an extremely reluctant and skeptical senator to go out into the country and find out what people thought about this idea on the condition that Ted made it clear to every leader that he interviewed that he was acting on his own. That he was in no position to make any pledges or commitments to anyone, and that Senator Kennedy might not run at all once this preliminary inquiry was over and all the findings had been studied in Washington.

On that basis, with this strict limitation placed upon him, Ted began his investigation. And it's as a result of this investigation that he wrote the now famous memorandum...

O'CONNOR: The Bailey Project.

FREEDMAN: ...in which he explained that being Catholic can have as

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many advantages as disadvantages, and that in the particular circumstances of the 1956 campaign the advantages might far outnumber the disadvantages. That is a crucial moment in Senator Kennedy's life. The way he read that memorandum, the way he asked friends to study it, talk it over with him – I was one of, I suppose, twenty-five or fifty people who were consulted by Senator Kennedy about this point. His father, you know, was against it on the ground that he probably wouldn't be nominated and if he were nominated, it would be a losing ticket and would hurt the cause of eliminating the anti-Catholic prejudice in presidential affairs. I was always more passionate on the Catholic question than Senator Kennedy was.

O'CONNOR: What do you mean, more passionate?

FREEDMAN: Well, he was very relaxed about it. He thought

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that Al Smith [Alfred E. Smith] had handled the Catholic question clumsily in 1928 and that the way to deal with it was to assume that the American people were fair-minded and generous and tolerant, and not to anticipate prejudice which might exist only in the eyes of the beholder.

I told him once that this attitude reminded me of something that Philip Guedalla had said about anti-semitism, that most Jews go around feeling their own pulse. And he laughed and said, "Well, that's it exactly. You only feel your own pulse when you're not healthy, and I'm going to pay the American people the tribute of thinking that 95 percent of them don't

even know what the word bigotry means and that the other five percent will open to argument and reason if this issue ever arises. In any case, I'm not going to run as a Catholic

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candidate." And I said to him that I would rather see him on the ticket, even if he weren't a friend of mine, because he's a Catholic. Time had come to end this bias. And he said that he hoped that nobody would ever vote for him because he was Catholic, just as he hoped that nobody would vote against him because he was a Catholic.

Now this was said five years before he himself became the presidential candidate, and he said very much the same sort of thing once the national spotlight was turned on him. He wasn't acting a part, he felt this way, and I think it's because he felt this way that he was able to do so wonderfully in Houston when he was talking to those Protestant ministers. They suddenly realized that this wasn't an improvised act, and when he said that he'd sworn to take the oath to protect the Constitution of the United States as a

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congressman, as a senator, as a member of the armed forces, and that nobody had questioned the sincerity of that oath, why should they question it when he took it as President of the United States? There was a ring in his voice that was absent from anything that Al Smith said. And I don't want to downgrade Al Smith, I think he was a very great man, but he, Al Smith, thought that the way to fight this issue was to grip prejudice by the throat and strangle it, whereas Kennedy thought the way to fight it was to make it ashamed of itself, and he succeeded.

O'CONNOR: You've referred several times to 1955 being a very crucial year. I still don't quite understand why you feel that way.

FREEDMAN: Well, because after this memorandum he decided to run.

O'CONNOR: Do you think this was crucial in stirring his ambition,

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or something of this sort?

FREEDMAN: Yes, he accepted far more speaking dates outside Washington. He always decided that he would never be on the national ticket in the first place or the second place by his standing in the city of Washington. He would make it because of his standing in the country. Now, if you will remind me about this later on, I will tell you how that affected the 1960 campaign against Nixon [Richard M. Nixon]. He began consciously to seek support in Democratic strongholds right across the country.

O'CONNOR: What do you think his ambition was composed of then before 1955? You said that he didn't strive to be an important member of the Senate.

FREEDMAN: He had no more ambition than most members of the Senate. He was just one of them. I don't think that in 1955 the Senate Press Gallery in a secret ballot would have included his name in

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the first twenty-five important members of the Senate, nor would he have questioned that poll. But then something happened; it really happened after the convention. You may remember that at the convention he almost won and within hours of being defeated by Kefauver [Estes Kefauver], he was flooded, flooded with invitations from all parts of the country, including the South, to come and speak. And he suddenly realized for the first time that he was a national figure. You know, all that he had done at the 1956 convention is narrate the film on the New Deal, and then he ran up on the platform and smiled, and the American people for the first time saw....

O'CONNOR: And he also nominated Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson].

FREEDMAN: Ah, yes, but those things don't make you a vice-presidential candidate.

O'CONNOR: That's true, that's very true.

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FREEDMAN: And this meant a great deal to him, the fact that in Washington he was just one of the crowd, at a national convention he was an applauded leader. Being Jack Kennedy, he made a resolution that only he would have made. He decided that he had to justify this position of national leadership, he had to train himself to be worthy of it. I felt that it was impossible for me to love any public man more than I already loved Jack Kennedy by 1956, but after 1956 my love deepened.

He went back to school. He decided that as a senator from Massachusetts he had the full resources of Harvard and MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], Boston Tufts, Williams, and Brandeis at his call, and he began to organize an informal brain trust. At the beginning these professors thought this was a sort of joke, but when they saw how he

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studied their memoranda as if he were preparing himself to write an examination on it, their attitude changed to one of reverence. It was this private study that transformed him into a very great senator.

Now, by that time he was no longer interested in the vice presidency. Nobody works this hard to be the second man on the national ticket. I remember asking him once why he wanted to be president and why he thought he was worthy of being president. He laughed,

and he said, "I know what's wrong with you. Whenever you look at the presidency you think of Washington [George Washington] and Thomas Jefferson. But I'm going to be running against Nixon, and that's rather different." And he said, "When you ask whether I am as qualified to be President of the United States as Kefauver or Johnson or Symington [Stuart Symington, II] or Adlai Stevenson, my

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answer is an unhesitating yes. And of all those people, the man I would most willingly support for the presidency if I don't get it is Lyndon Johnson. But he can neither be nominated, nor can he be elected." Well, fate took care of both those problems. That was, what, '58. He later said this, sometimes at dinners with reporters at which I was host, as candidly as I'm now saying it to you. This mind grew and grew and grew.

I said I was going to talk about Nixon and Kennedy. Nixon defeated himself when he agreed to debate Kennedy. Nixon had great pride as a debater. His career had been based upon his debating skill. And actually he had almost never heard Kennedy make a big speech because, as I said, unless it was a thing affecting education or labor or Algeria, Kennedy very rarely spoke in the Senate. He quite often

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submitted a speech for the record without bothering to read all of it. He had never gone out in the country with Kennedy the way I had. I must have attended four or five hundred meetings with Senator Kennedy between 1956 and 1960. Well, maybe four hundred is a lot, three hundred. I used to be with him a great deal. And it was in those meetings that he developed the technique of the twenty minute speech, which is a new art form in American politics. Then time for questions. Time always for a two or three minute interview on television or radio. By the time 1960 came Senator Kennedy had developed what I regard as an unrivaled capacity for packing five minutes with the maximum of thought. By the time Nixon wound up, the five minutes were over. Kennedy's friends weren't telling Nixon, you know, we weren't running to him with all

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our secrets, but I know that in the negotiations they were ready to give Nixon anything he wanted, provided that these debates could be arranged.

There's an interesting, if I may digress for a moment, there's an interesting footnote to the first Kennedy-Nixon debate. President Johnson was in Texas the night the debate took place, and he heard it first on radio, and he thought it was a draw, and he was downcast. Then a couple of hours later he heard the delayed television broadcast, and he saw the assurance and mastery of Kennedy and the fumbling futility of Nixon. He sent an ecstatic telegram to the candidate promising that Texas would go for the Democrats, which was a pretty good dividend from that debate. Texas did go for the Democrats. But up to that point Lyndon Johnson had his reservations about Kennedy because he had a higher

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regard for Nixon as a national debater and leader. He had never seen the other side of Kennedy.

What I'm telling you, you know, the months, the years of study, of research, of endless talk with friends about complicated questions... You know, when you'd go traveling with Kennedy you'd always have to take five or six books along to make sure he had something to read every night. And these wouldn't be best sellers, I mean they would be great books. I did my best. I used to ultimately carry two copies of Macaulay [Thomas Babington Macaulay, Baron Macaulay] to make sure I had one for myself. He read the great books as if they'd been written specially for him. It was a joy to talk to him about it afterwards.

O'CONNOR: It's so interesting to hear you talk about his support for Lyndon Johnson because after Kennedy became president Johnson became

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vice president, there was news reported that there was a good deal of hostility between them.

FREEDMAN: Well, remind me about that after we get to the election because I think that's one of the legends that's taken deep root and it should be plucked out. [Pause] Is this of any value?

O'CONNOR: Yes, indeed, you have a very graceful turn of phrase even when you're speaking, not just when you're writing.

I don't wish to jump all around here, but there are some things I want to ask you about that I don't want to forget.

FREEDMAN: Let me get into the nomination.

O'CONNOR: All right, fine. [Laughter]

FREEDMAN: I took leave of absence from the Guardian in '60 for long stretches to go with Senator Kennedy and to work for him. I never in my life have

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been so involved emotionally and personally, not only with the candidate, but with his wife, his brothers, and above all with Ted Sorensen. Many and many is the chore that was flung in my direction, and which I rejoiced to do.

In the Wisconsin primary I sat in the back of Senator Kennedy's car with Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and LeMoyne Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings], who was doing the driving, for days on end, and I have a vivid recollection of one night Kennedy

saying he had nothing to read. And I had with me the current Foreign Affairs, and the lead article was by a fellow named Dean Rusk on the presidency and foreign affairs. I'd just finished reading it, and it was a tip-top article, and I suggested he should read it. At breakfast the next morning he talked about the article and about Rusk, a new name to him, and I told him

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that I remembered Rusk as one of Mr. Acheson's [Dean G. Acheson] bright young men in the worst period of the row over China, and that the one fellow who never seemed to get involved in the controversy was Dean Rusk even though he was the Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East. Well, that's the first that Kennedy heard about Rusk, and as you know he appointed him the Secretary of State on the recommendation of Bob Lovett [Robert A. Lovett]. It's the one time that I regret having had something for Kennedy to read.
[Laughter]

O'CONNOR: That can stand a lot of elaboration.

FREEDMAN: But I agree with what Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] says about Dean Rusk: that's the simple way of putting it.

O'CONNOR: Well, did you hear Kennedy talk about him at all?

FREEDMAN: Oh, many times, and everything that Arthur says

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is perfectly right.

O'CONNOR: Well, of course Kennedy denied the idea that he was going to drop Dean Rusk....

FREEDMAN: You mean Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] did.

O'CONNOR: Well, I thought John Kennedy himself did publically.

FREEDMAN: He was dead when the book was written.

O'CONNOR: Sure, I know, but people had asked him this sort of thing before.

FREEDMAN: Oh. I heard him once say that the worst appointment he made in the Cabinet, next to Luther Hodges [Luther H. Hodges], was Dean Rusk. Now there must be fifty people in this town who know what President Kennedy thought of Rusk. The notion is that he wanted to be his own secretary of state and that he really wanted an Undersecretary. I've heard the President on that. He said that he

was a very powerful secretary of defense, but nobody thinks that McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] is making

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the defense policy of the United States. And he wanted a powerful secretary of state. His criticism of Rusk was that it was impossible to find a single instance in which the secretary of state had drawn fire away from the president to himself. That's one of the most important functions of the secretary. Mr. Acheson and Mr. Dulles [John Foster Dulles] were doing this all the time for their presidents. The president is not expendable, the secretary of state is, and Mr. Rusk became an advocate of agreed policy. He never went one inch beyond the perimeter of that agreement, and that's not enough for a secretary of state. And I heard the president say in a phrase, which I appropriated for myself, that Mr. Rusk doesn't know how good he is. He's one of the few men in this town who has far more ability than he's ever acknowledged. He's been content to mute that ability in order to play

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it safe. But there are higher credentials for statesmanship than an instinct for survival. Anyway, I can talk about Dean Rusk without exhausting the language of eulogy. But that's not.... I wanted to talk about the campaign.

O'CONNOR: All right.

FREEDMAN: In Wisconsin I saw something about Senator Kennedy's character that I had never seen. In the very first place, the way he persuaded Jackie to campaign for him. Now, I must say something that'll – it's probably not heard very many often in these interviews. I think, and have always thought, Jackie is a greater person than her husband. I don't mean that she had more ability than her husband, but I think she had qualities of imagination, compassion, and tenderness that went beyond even what her husband did. One of the problems in that relationship was that the president always wore armor, was always in

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battle. And Jackie usually shrank from this battle. But in 1960, at great stress of spirit of herself, she decided to campaign.

I remember being with her in Des Moines, Iowa, in a room full of farm women. I want to speak with the greatest respect for the farm women. I was the only man in that room, and all I can say is the difference between Jackie and these farm women was noticeable. And my embarrassment must have been visible because Jackie walked across this room to me and did her best to make me feel at ease and say that she's suffering far more than I am, but we just gotta go through with this, that's all. So we manufactured small talk for a couple of hours, and I think the meeting was a success. Now this is to me as heroic, knowing what this meant to Jackie, as the things that Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] did in her

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days in the White House.

Now, I said I'd learned something about the President's character in the Wisconsin campaign. About a week before the results were announced, he knew that he was going to win. He was afraid that he wasn't going to win by a sufficiently spectacular margin to impress the country. That's exactly the way it turned out, and yet to win at all in Hubert Humphrey's backyard, in a farming state, was a triumph. But the only thing the country seemed to be interested in was: are people asking Jack Kennedy if he's a Catholic? They ignored the real things that are being talked about in the primary. Anyway, Kennedy would go all out from 7 o'clock in the morning until midnight, and then at midnight everything would explode. He would again become profane, and he'd go through a regular act; "Where in the hell's my board?" The sleeping

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board for his back. And he would storm and curse and rage, and it didn't matter who was within shouting distance, he was at the moment the target. This was his way of opening the safety valve. The next morning at 7 o'clock he would be ready for battle again, and there wouldn't be one false step, one false word, no matter what the stress or the provocation, until midnight, and the same thing would be repeated every day.

Let me tell you about the other great primary that was West Virginia. That's important because of Adlai. In the middle of that primary Senator Kennedy thought he was going to lose. I remember Ted Sorensen telling several newspaper friends we were to circulate the story that the Protestant majority was too great. This wasn't a question of bigotry, but we didn't have enough time to swing over this ponderous Protestant majority

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and the senator was going to be defeated. In the last week things changed and he won. But during this doubtful period he wanted to see Adlai. He was terrified that Symington might get the nomination, and, as he said, he personally would find it hard to vote for Symington. He didn't think he was qualified. But he had figured out that if he is defeated, he might very well have a deadlocked convention, and Symington would get it as a border state candidate. He wanted - to see he didn't think that Hubert Humphrey could defeat Nixon. He thought that Hubert Humphrey was peculiarly vulnerable to the Nixon kind of attack, with the ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] record and so on, and that business would go against Humphrey. And, of course, he never thought of Johnson as being able to carry the convention even though in terms of personal ability he put

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him at the top of the list.

Well, he wanted to find out where Adlai stood, and he sent intermediaries to see

Adlai. He was ready, if he lost in West Virginia, to say something very friendly about Adlai. He thought that Adlai might say something very friendly about him. They could still run against each other for the nomination, but there would be tacit agreement that at a certain point they would begin to think of who's going to be the senior partner here. Adlai refused to see Jack Kennedy. He took the high line that he was neutral and he was going to stay uncommitted regardless of the pressures, whether they came from friend or foe. And when this word was relayed to Jack Kennedy, he marked down Adlai Stevenson drastically. I think that that's when he decided that Adlai really wasn't capable of being president or secretary of state, because I remember him saying that

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“If he's afraid to negotiate with me, how can he negotiate anything with Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev]?”

O'CONNOR: You don't know who he sent to talk to Adlai Stevenson, do you?

FREEDMAN: Yes, I do, but I'd rather not say. I think you've already interviewed him, and if he hasn't told you, I don't see why I should. There also was written communication. This whole episode is very well documented. In any case, Adlai was having nothing to do with us. Now this was very much in the mind of the Kennedy people at the convention. You know when Bobby Kennedy not only told Adlai that he was going to be defeated, he told him the number of votes he would get. He said he would run last, he would run behind Symington. The choice before him was to nominate the next party candidate and perhaps the next President of the United States, or to run last in a contested convention. And

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Adlai thought that these “teenagers” were the voice of the American people and the voice of the convention, and he wouldn't believe Bobby, so he ran last. Now I like Adlai, but you know, I always thought he was an adolescent as a political leader compared to Jack Kennedy, and as I know the president said that the only man he ever crossed on the way to the presidency who never forgave him was Adlai Stevenson. When they sat in the White House, he thought that Adlai thought that he should have been sitting in the president's chair.

Hubert Humphrey was totally different. Hubert bled all over this country fighting Jack Kennedy, he more than anybody else, and because he's Hubert Humphrey, he was decent and noble in defeat. I remember an evening in which a lot of ADA'ers and New Republic people were present, and Hubert Humphrey was the guest. It was very early in

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the Kennedy-Johnson Administration and these liberals were taking after Kennedy as a failure, a man who was a verbal liberal, who made all the appropriate gestures and then never delivered the goods, a flop, a resplendent flop. I didn't say anything because everybody

knew that I was conducting a public love affair with Kennedy, but Hubert Humphrey spoke up and he fought everybody at that table.

O'CONNOR: When was this?

FREEDMAN: Oh, very early. The president hadn't been president for a month or two months, I guess. It was after the State of the Union message, yes, two months. I remember telling President Kennedy the way Hubert Humphrey had behaved and the president saying he's very pleased to hear this and he's had similar reports of similar meetings and that Hubert's a first-rate fellow. Now you want to know about Kennedy and Johnson....

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O'CONNOR: Well, just one thing before that. You said you were involved to a certain extent in the West Virginia primary. One of the things I would think that would have angered Hubert Humphrey most of all about that primary was the....

FREEDMAN: The FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.] thing?

O'CONNOR: Yes.

FREEDMAN: It was shameful.

O'CONNOR: Well, shameful, but whose responsibility? There have been reports on both sides, reports that say it was the responsibility of FDR Jr., reports that say it was the responsibility of the Kennedy organization.

FREEDMAN: I think that FDR Jr., did it on his own. I think that the repudiation could have been swifter and more dramatic. I hasten to add that it did Hubert Humphrey an immense amount of harm. It was a very tragic, foul blow. I'm

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sorry that it was done.

O'CONNOR: Do you think that this was done entirely without the knowledge of John F. Kennedy or Robert Kennedy or Ted Sorensen?

FREEDMAN: I think it was done without the knowledge of John F. Kennedy and Ted Sorensen, and I would like to believe without the knowledge of Bobby Kennedy, but I don't know. Bobby was in another part of the state, but I was with Ted and with.... And I know how sad they were. This is the sort of thing that

once said can never be overtaken. Remember what Mark Twain once said that a half-truth goes around the world while the truth is still buttoning up his shoes. And this wasn't even a half-truth. Hubert Humphrey had tried desperately to get into the war and hadn't been accepted. He taught fourteen classes of Air Force cadets at Macalester College in St. Paul and Minneapolis, and each of the cadets

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had the right to vote for his own convocation speaker, and fourteen times Hubert Humphrey was the convocation speaker. So the people who were closest to him in the war, and most able to judge on this, gave him a spectacular vote of confidence.

O'CONNOR: Everyone agrees that that was a low blow. The question always comes up, though, with whom does the responsibility lie, and I think we've answered that question, or you've answered that question pretty well. Before you talk at all about the administration, though, you mentioned a little while ago, and I've heard it before, that you were responsible for the phrase the New Frontier. Would you elaborate on that a little bit?

FREEDMAN: Yes. I don't like elaborating on it, but I will. It was.... Ted says in his book that so far as recollection goes, nobody worked with him on the acceptance speech for the convention. That is

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technically true, and he is certainly the last person in the world to want to take any credit away from me. As a matter of fact, he mentions my name only once in his book.

O'CONNOR: The speech on Berlin.

FREEDMAN: About the speech I wrote up of Berlin. But in the dedication – he gave me the first copy of his book – there are words used which amply repay me for anything that I ever did. I went out to the convention a week in advance, and I worked so hard on.... I had two assignments. One was to write a lot of the nominating speeches and seconding speeches. Orville Freeman [Orville Lothrop Freeman] made the nominating speech, then there were a lot of seconding – I wrote most of the seconding speeches. In addition to that, my job was to read all of the proposed drafts. Adlai had submitted a draft for Kennedy, curiously – this was long before the convention – Bill Shannon [William V. Shannon], various

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people. Any my job was to study all of these and try to use something of them before, so that Ted would have a lot less work to do on them. In the course of this work I wrote something on the New Frontier, about which I thought nothing. It was that the phrase occurred and the

definition of what it was, and so on. Ted entitled the New Frontier speech that; that's how the phrase got its currency. I always thought that there were at least fifty other phrases in the acceptance speech that were better.

You see, we'd been looking for a phrase like this, you know, the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the New Freedom, the Square Deal. A phrase that Kennedy wanted was the "New America," but that had already been, unfortunately, chosen as the title of one of Adlai Stevenson's book of speeches, so that was out. And in sheer desperation Ted picked on this, and that's how the phrase got in, and

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I always have been very embarrassed about it. Walt Rostow [Walter Whitman Rostow], who originated the phrase, "Let's Get America Moving Again," which did have a lot of meaning. . . . But that's the story of the New Frontier thing. I want to make it quite clear that after the president went into the White House neither the president nor Ted ever asked me to work on any matter of policy. That would have been a breach, I was a newspaper man. But I never pretended to be impartial. You know, if you had all the apostles on one side and Jack Kennedy on the other, I'd have been on the side of Jack Kennedy. What I often did was write an introduction or a peroration.

O'CONNOR: Ted Sorensen put it. . . .

FREEDMAN: You know the famous speech at the U.N., "Let Us Call a Truce to Terror"? Well, all that first part was mine. Things like that which didn't affect the substance of the speech. Sometimes I struck

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out. I remember Ted calling me and saying that the president wanted to make a speech at American University and this was a great chance to break fresh ground. I said, "What's the speech on?" Ted said, "Peace." And I laughed and said, "Tell the president I'm in favor of it." And Ted said, "Now look, that's no joking matter. There are no orders for this speech. We can say whatever we wish, and the State Department is staying out of it. They don't want us to make this speech."

O'CONNOR: One of the most famous speeches he ever made.

FREEDMAN: That's the June the tenth speech. Now Walter Lippmann wrote a column on that speech in which he said that there's reason to believe that the White House knew that we were going to have a signal from the Kremlin that led to the nuclear test ban negotiations. That's not true. The president had wanted to make this sort of a speech,

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in his phrase, “disenthraling ourselves from the dogmas of the Cold War” for many months. But always the State Department wrote a memorandum suggesting that the time was premature and that the speech would be misunderstood and do more harm than good. Finally the president, with a statesman’s instinct for the unfolding fact just the other side of the horizon, decided that the time was now. He told Ted to go ahead with the speech. Ted told me that after the Khrushchev message was received he had to add two paragraphs to the text. This was the ultimate tribute to Kennedy as a world leader. He did it. He sensed that something was happening in Russia, and this speech hastened the process. All the credit goes to him.

Now, I didn’t even contribute a comma to that speech. I had a chance. I couldn’t believe Ted when he told me that we could think afresh on this stale

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subject without dragging in the mechanical invective of the Cold War to which we’d all grown familiar. A number of times our old speeches, saying we’re going to stand firm in Berlin now, all that we took for granted. We’re going to move on. Now I happen to have a special interest in the German problem; I always regard Germany as the pivot of Europe. And one of the things that the president, that President Kennedy did for me was to let me stay in the margins of the German problem.

I must explain the fact that I was probably the only journalist in this town who was a great friend of both Johnson and Kennedy. Now I immensely respected Johnson, and I loved Kennedy. There were many people who were friends of both, but I don’t think that anybody else had the degree of emotional involvement with the two men that I had. I’d been introduced to Lyndon Johnson as early as 1949

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by his closest journalistic friend, Bill White [William S. White], and we’ve always been friends. I was overjoyed when he was chosen as the vice presidential candidate. And we heard him at this dinner table here, President Johnson, tell the story of how he was chosen, and it’s very different from the version that....

O’CONNOR: Yes, I’d like to hear you talk about that. [Laughter]

FREEDMAN: Some other time. But....

O’CONNOR: I’m sorry to hear you say that.

FREEDMAN: But you said that relations between these two men were not happy.

O’CONNOR: Well, they’ve often been called in question.

FREEDMAN: Yes. I think that what is closer to the truth is to say that the staff of the two men had unhappy relations, as often happens in Washington. The big men forget and forgive long before their assistants do. I can tell you of the effect

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that President Kennedy made on Vice President Johnson after the first Security Council meeting. I received a telephone call from the vice president to come to his office. I guess I was with him for over three hours, and he talked to me about the man that he'd never seen before in his life, President Kennedy. All the people with responsibility in the field of national security from the Secretary of Defense to the head of the Voice of America had, in one way or another, appeared before that council meeting. The questioning had been done by the president, and Vice President Johnson said he had never seen such incisive, well informed, probing, responsible questioning. He'd never known this side of President Kennedy. Very few people in Washington had ever seen it. This was the scholar in Kennedy.

O'CONNOR: We're at the end of...

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FREEDMAN: The tape?

O'CONNOR: Yes, just about.

[BEGIN SIDE II OF TAPE I]

FREEDMAN: I can tell you exactly what the vice president said that day. He said that he looked at everybody in the room, everybody seated around the table, and with the exception of himself, everybody in that room, not excluding President Kennedy, had more power now than they'd had before the election. He, Johnson, was the only man who had had more power before the election. Next to President Eisenhower, he was, for eight years, the biggest man in Washington. And he said that it was no easy thing for him to subordinate himself. He went right around the room – McGeorge Bundy being on the team of Harvard, and so on – and compared it with his role. He said it's no easy thing to subordinate himself to somebody younger and, in terms of

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legislative experience, demonstratively inferior. But the thing that made this association palatable was the display of ability which he had just witnessed. This had changed his whole attitude to this president. Now, he also then said that he was going to try to be as loyal and helpful and honorable a vice president as he could possibly be and that it would be difficult for him to remain in the background, but he was going to do it. It ended up by the vice

president asking me to suggest about a dozen books for him to read because he had to begin the process which Kennedy had begun in '55-56 and what Hubert Humphrey is now doing.

O'CONNOR: Do you think Kennedy used him as well as he could have, particularly with regard to getting legislation through Congress?

FREEDMAN: Well, no, I thought he could have done more.

O'CONNOR: Did Johnson ever mention that to you?

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FREEDMAN: Yes, in many instances. I don't think we'll have time to go into that now – many instances. But President Johnson always felt, after an initial rough period which lasted, say, three months, that Kennedy went out of his way to be courteous and forbearing and helpful to the vice president. That was not true with some members of his staff. I've heard the president say that the only member of the Kennedy administration who ever seemed to give the vice president more than he had asked was Dean Rusk. And this is, of course, one of the important reasons why Rusk is so secure today. I remember being with Vice President Johnson on more than one occasion when a memorandum came from the administration that could barely be used. After all, it's the vice president's function to speak for the president, not for himself. And you would naturally try to follow a memorandum.

I remember

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an occasion when the president was to speak to a governor's conference in Honolulu, and President Kennedy finally decided that he couldn't go. About forty-eight hours before the meeting, the draft came over from the White House. Well, it must have taken Sorensen or Walt Rostow or McGeorge Bundy or whoever wrote it, about twenty minutes to compose this speech. It was commonplace and cliché-ridden. And the vice president said he couldn't use it. And I said, "I have nothing to hide, let me try it." Then I sat down and wrote another speech. Then it was sent over for clearance because it was almost all on foreign policy. It was sent over for clearance to Dean Rusk, who made two or three of the most minor verbal changes, and the speech was delivered. And the vice president got a glowing letter of thanks from President Kennedy. But this is quite

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characteristic, you see, that the staff would have given him, oh, the third best and President Kennedy would have wanted the outstanding.

Let me tell you about one thing that I think is of immense consequence: the famous Berlin trip that the vice president took. The background to that has to be understood. It's very different, almost a hundred percent different, from the public record of what took place.

This has some consequence. You may remember that there was an election for the Chancellorship of Germany just after the wall began to go up. And Mayor Willy Brandt seized onto the wall and made it the greatest.... And Adenauer [Konrad Adenauer] for a couple of days took a high and mighty attitude and dismissed the whole thing and called it a municipal problem. Of course, the German people didn't regard it as a local problem, and Adenauer very soon discovered his mistake, that he

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had handed Brandt an issue that might win the election for him. And messages were received from Brandt at the White House – from Adenauer at the White House that suggested that the old man was in a state of panic. And this trip, which was designed to reassure the German people, was really designed to reassure Adenauer or the man who might succeed Adenauer.

Now, President Kennedy phoned me and said that the vice president was going to phone me, and everything the vice president said carried the president's approval. The vice president phoned and said, would it be possible for me to go to Berlin, not as a newspaperman, but as his friend, and to be around. And I said yes. I thought that I had that status with the Guardian, I would notify the Guardian once we got to Berlin, which was exactly what happened. I didn't have time to get a passport – my passport had

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expired. Flew over and back without a passport, which was also fun. Anyway, when we got on the plane there was Chip Bohlen [Charles E. Bohlen], General Clay [Lucius D. Clay, Sr.], Hillenbrand [Martin Hillenbrand], the German expert in the State Department, and four or five other people, plus a bunch of reporters. And my job was to be as inconspicuous as I could be because I was a foreign correspondent, and here I was, going to be doing a lot of writing. Anyway, to make me inconspicuous they took me into the room where the vice president was with Clay, Hillenbrand, and Chip Bohlen. I've never forgotten that conversation. There were numerous checkpoints that the American troops had to cross before they got to Berlin. And these bigshots in the plane were scared stiff, literally scared stiff, that at one of these checkpoints there would be a communist challenge, some American would fire a shot, and they didn't know what would happen. They

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had no idea what situation we would meet when we got there.

Well, we finally got to Berlin, you know, and I was standing as close to the vice president as I am now to you, and the vice president shook hands with the commander of the American troops and asked him if he wasn't nervous or worried. And this fellow, who was from Texas, didn't understand the question. The vice president had to repeat it, and then he said as calmly as somebody announcing the time of the day, well, they had a rendezvous to keep in Berlin at a certain hour, and he was just going to keep it. And the contrast between the self-reliance of the soldier on the spot and the jitters of the big shots in the air is a

valuable lesson in American democracy. I reminded the president, President Johnson, of meeting this fellow a couple of weeks ago when we were at the White House, and he was touched at the fact that

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I remembered he was a Texan. But it was an unforgettable moment.

Well, we flew to Bonn first, and Adenauer talked so much that we were three hours late for our appointment with Willy Brandt. I didn't tell you some of the things that Adenauer wanted. He wanted us to declare an embargo on our relations with the Soviet Union, even to the extent of denying landing rights to Soviet planes. When the vice president reported to the president, he advised him to ignore the Adenauer memorandum, not to reply to a single point, because if you were drawn into an argument with Adenauer he would then have to take one or two or three or four of the things. Well, this is the greatness of Johnson. He may not know all about foreign affairs, but he knows how to deal with people, and President Kennedy took his advice.

Well, I remember when we got to Berlin, several

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people in the American Embassy thought that we should have knocked down the wall. There really was no wall when we were there.

O'CONNOR: A barricade had been put up.

FREEDMAN: There was barbed wire and they'd begun to build a wall, but it hadn't risen to the height that it now has. So far as I remember, Paul Douglas [Paul H. Douglas], Senator Douglas, was the only man of consequence who wanted us to knock it down. When I came back from Berlin President Kennedy asked me what I thought of it, and I told him what these officials had said. And there was a long silence, by which I mean thirty seconds, a minute, and finally the president said, "You know, that may be the view of my officials in Germany, but not one of my officials in Washington has advised me to do that." Which is something for the record.

Anyway, I want to come to the speech after the Berlin crisis explodes, the one on which I worked.

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The vice president, who was then living at Warman Park, Vice President Johnson, asked me to come over. He said that I would be seeing the second last draft of the television speech which the president would be making the following night, and it largely depended on the vice president whether that became the final draft. This was a very great speech. This was President Kennedy and Ted Sorensen at the top of their incomparable form. But there were several things of which the vice president disapproved, and he penciled in suggestions. And he wanted me first of all to express an opinion on his suggestions, and then to suggest precise

wording. The vice president, for example, wanted a state of national emergency to be declared, and President Kennedy didn't take that idea. But I remember very clearly a passage in that Berlin speech in which it was stated that

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we would not necessarily bind ourselves in advance to wait until an atomic nuclear bomb was used on us before we employed that weapon. And President Kennedy had drawn a line against this paragraph and written, "this wise?" The large part of the evening that I had with the vice president was devoted to concocting a paragraph – when you write to any President, you should write very succinctly – just a paragraph explaining why we thought it was unwise. Now that paragraph came out of that speech, but in the second Cuban missile crisis almost the identical words were used. President Kennedy was ready in 1962 to make a statement on the possible use of nuclear power that he wasn't ready to make about Berlin in 1961. That'll be an index of how important he felt the Cuban crisis was, because we'd always been taught to believe that Berlin was the pivot

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of free world security.

Now let me just close by two very simple stories about President Kennedy. I had once introduced him to Denis Brogan [Denis W. Brogan], and he discovered that Denis Brogan was in town, and I was asked to come to lunch. I remember the day; it was the twentieth of March 1961, precisely a month before the collapse of the first....

O'CONNOR: Cuban crisis.

FREEDMAN: Precisely a month. The President spoke to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April the twentieth on the Cuban crisis. Well, that meeting, that lunch, which went on endlessly, fell into two parts. The first was prefaced with a rather tearful statement by Denis Brogan how much it meant to him to see a Catholic in the White House. The president, very calm, collected, and smoothing Denis Brogan's elbow and stroking

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him into self-restraint, stopping his blubbering by saying, "Now, now, Professor. Now, now." A great moment. And then they spent an hour exchanging anecdotes about Irishmen in politics in this country and Ireland and England. I wish there'd been a tape recorder for that.

O'CONNOR: Yes, that would have been enjoyable.

FREEDMAN: And then, after we'd already been there for well over an hour and a half, the president turned to Denis and asked him what he would think of using force to destroy Castro [Fidel Castro]. And Denis Brogan, on the spur of the moment, made a fifteen or twenty minute statement of why he thought that would be dangerous lunacy. And everything that was ever said from a liberal point of view against the invasion was said to the president by Denis Brogan one month before the signal for the invasion was

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given. And the president turned and listened, but his eyes narrowed, which was the certain index that he was giving you the full power of his attention. He never said a word until this long, long statement finished. And when Denis came to an end the president asked one question, "Tell me, Professor, would you still say that if the dictator that was to be pulled down was named Trujillo [Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina] and not Castro?" And Denis stopped, Denis is an honest man, and he said, "Mr. President, that's a very good question. I have to think a moment before I answer it." And the President cut in like an adder's tongue and said, "Oh, no, you've already given me the answer. There's a mythology on the left that there's one rule for pulling down a dictator on the right and another rule for pulling down a dictator on the left." And he turned to me and he

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said, "You are astonishingly silent." And I said, "Mr. President, I've decided that you just had a weary day, and you want an hour's relaxation. Nothing is more impossible than an invasion by you, but if you are going to invade, make sure you succeed." And the president looked at me hard, laughed, and said, "Maybe that's not such bad advice after all." Then he took us into another room, and there was McNamara and Rusk and Allen Dulles [Allen W. Dulles], and we still didn't tumble onto what was on, and we talked to them for about half an hour. I came home and I told Joanne [Joanne Freedman] this story, I said, "The president was just having fun." That will show you how great a newspaperman I am.

O'CONNOR: Oh boy.

FREEDMAN: But, you see, it never crossed the president's

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mind that he was talking to me as a newspaperman. He used to say that he has to tell me something three times before I ever write a thing. And it never would have crossed my mind that he was talking to me as a newspaperman. Now, one of the things I used to do for him – I would break his tension – quite often I would get a telephone call from him, and he'd ask me about a book. And as abruptly as he had phoned, he would sign off. Sometimes he would talk to me for thirty seconds, sometimes for five or ten minutes. But I always knew that something had gone wrong, and

he knew that if he got me on the phone that he could talk to me about books or the theater, and that would be it. It was helpful to him. I remember the last thing I ever did for him. We were there one night, and we were talking about biographies, and he asked to give him some. So I sent him

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thirteen, and he returned twelve with comments on them. He kept one, The Strange Death of Liberal England by George Dangerfield. He'd never heard of it, and he loved it. Of course, it's one of the great books of the century.

Well, that's the sort of man he was. When things were rough he sought nourishment of the spirit far outside the White House. And Emerson [Ralph Waldo Emerson] has a phrase in tribute of the English: they have an instinct that enables them to see a little better on a cloudy day. I think that's a wonderful quality, and I think that President Kennedy had it. One of the reasons he had it was that he could push his problem away and see it in the light of history.

I never remember President Kennedy ever paying me a tribute except once. He had been talking about another journalist – who shall be nameless – who wrote for a magazine, and he repeated from

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memory the lead paragraph that he had written and thought how melodramatic and falsetto the whole thing was and turned to me, he said, "You never write that, do you? You just rely on good clean prose, don't you?" Now, I remember that because he'd never told me that before. But when you wrote something for President Kennedy he would read it and look at you, and there was a look in his eye which made you understand that he knew exactly why you had chosen that particular form of words to convey the idea which he had expressed informally to you the day before. He didn't have to write you fan letters because you knew that if he had time, he could write a speech five times better than you could, you know. It was just the bludgeoning of deadlines that made him call on friends. And you wrote to the top of your bent for this man, just as you did

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for FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt].

FDR had Rosenman [Samuel I. Rosenman] and Bob Sherwood [Robert E. Sherwood] and Harry Hopkins [Harry L. Hopkins] and Archie MacLeish [Archibald MacLeish] and Frankfurter [Felix Frankfurter]. They weren't writing for a hack. They had that famous phrase about Martin [Joseph William Martin, Jr.], Barton [Bruce Barton], and Fish [Hamilton Fish, III]. In the early draft it was Barton, Martin, and Fish; that's a laundry list. Then they changed it to get the cadence. And when FDR read the revision, he laughed, and said, "Oh, the crowd will love it." Of course, the crowd picked it up and chanted it. When you write for a man like that, who can be so sensitive to three proper names and the sequence in which they occur, you do your best to write well. And that's what Kennedy did: he was a

Toscanini [Arturo Toscanini] in politics, and when you picked up the fiddle, you did your best.

When we went, we lost the capacity for growth that was miraculous. When you think what he was in '56 and what he was

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in '63, it doesn't require an act of faith to think he'd have towered into ultimate genius if he could have stayed in the White House 'til '68. He was being educated into greatness every day that he was president. And he had a quality of magnanimity that reminded one of Lincoln. So many of the people around him were people who'd fought him on the way to the presidency, but he thought they were as loyal to him as the members of his own staff. And they became loyal. Now, that's a very rare quality in a president. Half of the State Department was staffed with Adlai Stevenson people, even though he had his doubts about Adlai.

Now, I want to say something about Mrs. Roosevelt before I stop. I like her. She was a great woman, but truth has its obligations and somewhere on these tapes somebody should tell the truth about the early relations of Eleanor

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Roosevelt and Jack Kennedy, and I'm going to do it. She was against Jack Kennedy, just as other people from New York who later prostrated themselves were, like Mary Lasker. Mary Lasker frothed at the mouth against Jack Kennedy because she thought he was a Catholic and would be against birth control. Barbara Tuchman once had a vicious argument with Arthur Schlesinger. She would never vote for Jack Kennedy because he was a Catholic.

O'CONNOR: It's interesting the way....

FREEDMAN: And Arthur Schlesinger said, "Barbara, you're Jewish, and that's a monstrous thing for any member of a minority race to say." Well, it's because I can name a hundred such people who now bow down and worship the memory of Kennedy that I want to say something about Eleanor. She was against Jack Kennedy because her husband quarreled with Jack Kennedy's father and because

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she wanted Adlai to have a third chance. And it was pretty obvious that Jack Kennedy stood in the way. So she first of all supported Hubert [Hubert H. Humphrey]. She'd have supported anybody who was against Kennedy. She wrote a column in the New York Post in which she said that Jack Kennedy was trying to buy up the Democratic nomination and that he had all sorts of agents scattered across the country corraling delegates to the convention. Jack Kennedy wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt saying that this was factually wrong; could she name the agents that he had in the country; wouldn't it be perilously stupid of a man who has not

yet been nominated to have agents making commitments that could never be honored, he would be stirring up trouble for himself in the party that would foreclose his future; who were these agents? Mrs. Roosevelt wrote back,

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saying that she'd made many speeches in the country, she was in many cities, and she had heard this repeated many times. Jack Kennedy wrote to her saying, "Would you please tell me the difference between your letter and McCarthyism? Isn't this guilt by gossip, guilt by innuendo? Who are my agents?" She wrote back saying that, "If you wanted me to write a paragraph in the column saying you deny that you have agents in the country, I will gladly do so." He wrote to her saying, "This ends this particular correspondence. I don't want you to run my denial, I want you to admit that you made an accusation for which you have no proof." That ended that episode.

A little while later in the New Leader Reinhold Neibuhr wrote a thing praising Kennedy, but having a paragraph in the middle of this praise that he regretted that Kennedy had agents in the country corralling

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delegates. I remember bringing this speech to Senator Kennedy. And his eye leapt onto this paragraph, and he wrote to Reinhold Neibuhr saying, "Who are they?" And Reinhold Neibuhr, being a gentleman, as Eleanor Roosevelt was not a lady, wrote back saying, "I apologize. Now that you've put the question directly to me, I have no proof. I was repeating gossip, and if you wish I will write an apology." And Kennedy wrote to Reinhold Neibuhr saying, "No apology is needed. Thank you very much for that admirable article in my praise."

Now that contrasts the way Neibuhr behaved and the way Eleanor Roosevelt behaved. Later, of course, they became great friends. But when they first visited at Hyde Park, they entered as if they were declared enemies and they emerged smiling, arm in arm. Both called on their resources of charm. But they had a lot of ice

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to break.

I'm weary and you must be tired.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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