

**Torbert H. Macdonald Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 08/11/1965**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Torbert H. Macdonald  
**Interviewer:** Charles T. Morrissey  
**Date of Interview:** August 11, 1965  
**Place of Interview:** Washington, D.C.  
**Length:** 29 pages

**Biographical Note**

Macdonald, roommate of John F. Kennedy at Harvard; Representative from Massachusetts (1955-1976), discusses his personal friendship with JFK and his contributions to JFK's various political campaigns, among other issues.

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**Suggested Citation**

Torbert H. Macdonald, recorded interview by Charles T. Morrissey, August 11, 1965, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Oral History Interview

Of

Torbert H. Macdonald

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Torbert H. Macdonald – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

TORBERT H. MACDONALD

August 11, 1965  
Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, DC

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the Oral History Program  
of the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Mr. Macdonald, do you recall your first meeting with John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

MACDONALD: Yes. Of course, I do.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me when it was?

MACDONALD: Believe it or not, it goes back to 1936. I'd been introduced to him at Cape Cod, but I just saw an ungainly, rather non-prepossessing type of person in whom I did not have very much interest.

Actually, first time I had much to do with the President was when I crewed on his boat as sort of a substitute for some people who were supposed to have arrived who did not. When I met him in depth—I guess would be the word now—was when we were both classmates at Harvard College. My first real awareness of the President as a person was in the fall of 1936 at which time we were both candidates for the freshmen football team. I was kidding around in the locker room. It's so vivid in my mind because he used to kid me about it later. We had a fairly substantial number of well-known athletes who had been captains of their preparatory school teams or

inter-scholastic people who had entered that year. There was so much talk about what a great team we had, we were all a little unsure whether we would make the team or not, that it got a little over-bearing. At this point I started kidding the freshman group that was assembled in the Dillon Fieldhouse about the fact that this was not a usual Harvard freshman team, but that it had so many stars assembled that we were going to change the format of the freshman schedule; we were going to play people like the University of Southern California, Notre Dame, et cetera. Hard as it is to believe, it developed that most of the people in the room believed what I was saying, although I was obviously just kidding and needling. Finally, another voice chimed in and made more extravagant claims than my own, and the voice, it turned out, belonged to Jack. We sort of looked at each other; I knew he was kidding, and he obviously knew I was kidding. From that point on we took notice of each other perhaps, but I certainly took notice of him. Our friendship, I think, grew from that moment.

MORRISSEY:                   When did you become roommates?

MACDONALD:                 Actually, Jack lived alone his freshman year in Weld Hall in the Yard, and I lived in Malden, which is just about five or six miles, so I was commuting. I had a car which I used to drive to and from; I guess it was just before Christmas at the end, perhaps, of the football season, Jack suggested that I change and move in with him. I said, “Well, no, why don’t we wait until next year?” So, actually I used to stay in his room very often, and we studied together, and we took classes together. But the actual time of official roommateship—if that’s the word—was when we both became sophomores and went to Winthrop House; we roomed together at that time.

MORRISSEY:                   For the sophomore, junior, and senior years?

MACDONALD:                 Yes, I lived with him sophomore year, and then the first part of his junior year, and all of the senior year. But during his junior year, which many people forget, he left the college and went to work for his father [Joseph P. Kennedy. Sr.], who was then Ambassador to England. He was missing from the college from, let’s say, Christmas of ‘37 to.... Actually, he finished college in three and a half years.

MORRISSEY:                   Going back to that freshman football team, how well did it do?

MACDONALD:                 Well, it’s been a long time, and there’s a lot of water over the dam. You’d have to check the records, but we did have quite a lot of talent as far as that goes. I think we lost, I recall very distinctly, just two games. We tied Andover. I was very interested in winning that game because I’d been on Andover [Phillips Academy Andover] the year before and never particularly like the coach. We also lost to Yale [Yale University]. But in between times I suppose we compiled a fairly decent won and lost record.

MORRISSEY:                   What position was John Kennedy interested in?

MACDONALD: Jack was an end. His specialty—if you want to call it that—was offensive. Those were the days of the single wing attack and formation. Jack played offensive end and was a very good pass receiver. He had great desire, wanted to play very much, but his physical make-up was not that of an end who could block tackles which in those days were the biggest defensive linemen that the opponents ever had. His greatest success was in catching passes, shall we say.

MORRISSEY: Did he continue to play after his freshman year?

MACDONALD: Yes. In his sophomore year he went out for the football team and played on the junior varsity.

MORRISSEY: Did you know his older brother, Joe Jr. [Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.]?

MACDONALD: I knew Joe very well, yes.

MORRISSEY: Did you feel at the time that there was a great difference in the personality of Joe Jr. as compared to John?

MACDONALD: No, on the contrary. Much has been written and said about this aspect, but I think it's completely false. There were differences between Joe and Jack just as there are differences between Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] and Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] and Jack, but they had a very strong family feeling. They were very close. Joe was physically more rugged and was sort of an outgoing type of personality which Jack at the time was not. But there was no rivalry, as has been said, or in my judgment did Jack ever try to keep up or to surpass. They got on very well and used to see each other practically daily. It was a very normal, brotherly relationship. The amount of rivalry, I think, has been overdone.

MORRISSEY: Were there other roommates in addition to the two of you?

MACDONALD: Well, of course, this has gotten completely out of both context and sense because what happened was that during Jack's time that he was going to be absent—he knew he was going to go to work for his father in the winter and the spring of his junior year—he thought I would be left alone in the room because we had just lived together. So, for a period of time we moved into a four-room suite, also staying in Winthrop House, with a fellow called Charley Houghton [Charles G. Houghton Jr.], who was a Republican but with it all a very nice guy, and Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith II] of Gloucester, who was a very close friend of mine who played on the football team. They were the class ahead of us, the same class as Joe. This was done just so that, when he left, I wouldn't be rooming in a two-room suite by myself. Jack only lived in there for maybe two, three months, and then he left. Of course I stayed. When he came back, we moved in together again. So, while it's technically correct that there were two other roommates, in matter of fact

it's not quite true.

MORRISSEY: I've heard of a fellow named Bill Coleman.

MACDONALD: Yes, Bill Coleman.

MORRISSEY: He was not a roommate at any time?

MACDONALD: Oh, no. Bill lived with Jim Rousmaniere [James A. Rousmaniere], who now works for the college. I've just been back to my twenty-fifth reunion and so renewed acquaintanceships with many people. Bill Coleman at no time was a roommate.

MORRISSEY: Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon Jr.], I assume, was not a roommate.

MACDONALD: No, Ted was in Joe's class, Jack's older brother. He was a great friend of Joe's and spent a lot of time in Joe's room. I, personally, was very friendly with Ted, and of course, Jack was too. He became Jack's first administrative assistant when Jack came to Washington. But, as far as Jack and I living together is concerned—roommates as you say—as I say, or that very short period there was Houghton and Ben Smith, and that was it.

MORRISSEY: Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] says, in the current serialization of his forthcoming book on Kennedy, that John Kennedy admitted to Ted Sorensen that he, John Kennedy, whiled away most of his time as a freshman and sophomore but became very serious as a student when he was a junior and senior. Does this fit your own impression?

MACDONALD: I wouldn't go as far as Sorensen allegedly has gone. I haven't seen the installment, but I don't think Jack whiled away his time. I thing, taking a look at his grades and talking to his tutors and stuff like that, that it wouldn't be true to say he just frittered away his time. I would say that he was more interested in sports and games and running the Freshman Smoker, that type of thing, and he was dedicated, but I don't know—at least during my era at college—how many freshman or sophomores are dedicated to what they're doing anyway in as much as, you know, you don't know what you're doing when you're a freshman or sophomore. I think that the main part of it came about after he'd worked for his father. Incidentally, at the end of our junior year we toured Europe together and saw.... You know, you'd have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to see that the Germans were about to invade everybody. When we came back, I know I changed. I can't look into Jack's mind. I would think it was the exposure to the greater political and diplomatic world in which he traveled when he worked for his father that brought about a deeper feeling about what was going on.



- MORRISSEY: Do you recall the germination of the thinking which led to the book he wrote, *Why England Slept*?
- MACDONALD: I don't know if it's a Freudian slip to say germination of it because it dealt with why England slept. I know where the title came from. Winston Churchill had either a paper—meaning a white paper—or perhaps a series of articles entitled “While England Slept.” Jack thought this was a very apt thing, and as his honors thesis he took something from which he had a good deal of experience, namely, what was happening in England while Germany was arming itself to attempt to conquer the world. It just expanded from being an honors thesis to being a book. I think one of the first people who suggested that since he had access to a good deal of material that other people would not have was sort of a glamour professor who I took courses in government from and now whose name has escaped me. He was a white-haired, very dapper....
- MORRISSEY: Was this Arthur Holcombe?
- MACDONALD: No. Although I took courses from him, so did Jack. This fellow's name was Hooper. He was a glamour lecturer, in any event, of the era; he was a very hard task master and helped Jack a good deal. But he was the one that suggested that perhaps this could be translated into a book that would have great appeal to many people. I'll think of his full name in a few minutes, I'm sure.
- MORRISSEY: I recall reading somewhere that John Kennedy at one time during his college career chose to write a long paper about an obscure New York state Republican congressman, whose name I can't remember.
- MACDONALD: Bertrand Snell [Bertrand H. Snell].
- MORRISSEY: I think a few people who have written about John Kennedy have wondered why he was attracted to writing so extensively about such a person.
- MACDONALD: Lost in the memories of time. If, indeed, I ever heard about it, I can't recall anything about it. The only Snell I ever heard about is the New Zealander who runs record miles. I never heard of Congressman Snell, nor do I recall Jack saying anything about him. I don't know in which course it would be that he would write about him.
- MORRISSEY: Maybe that's where I got the name of Holcombe from. It might have been in Holcombe's course.
- MACDONALD: Holcombe, on the contrary—I'm sure you have other information—but

Holcombe was the professor.... They have some chair, I forget what the name of the chair was, that he occupied as lecturer. He was just that, a lecturer. He addressed a required course called Government I which, I think, was mandatory to, if not for all freshmen, at least those freshmen who were going to major in either history or government. He was a very good lecturer and a very able man, but I think that his influence with Jack, perhaps, has been exaggerated. One of the people who influenced Jack's thinking in many ways was a man who's never been heard of in anything that I've ever read, a man called Payson Wilde, who was a tutor, I think the senior tutor at Winthrop House, who later became either chancellor or dean—whatever the title they use—at the University of Chicago. He was a great friend of Joe's, Jack's brother, and became a very close friend of President Kennedy's. In my judgment he influenced Jack in more serious veins than any other single person. The fellow's name who I couldn't think of, who first encouraged Jack to turn his thesis into a book, his name was Hopper, Professor Hopper.

MORRISSEY: Are there any other tutors or professors you might mention who you think had a strong influence on John Kennedy?

MACDONALD: Do you mean official or unofficial tutors?

MORRISSEY: Either.

MACDONALD: I was just making a joke, even though I know we're on tape. They used to have a system, which now has been stopped, whereby you could go to a "cram-school." Sometimes, Jack utilized those services. The guy's name was Wolfe, as I remember. He ran Wolfe's Tutoring Service for which you paid a fee. He was banned, I think, after we graduated or perhaps in our senior year when we had no use of him anyway. I utilized the services myself, I remember. Hal Wolfe. He's credited with getting Roosevelt Jr. [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.] through the college, and I know he helped me, and I'm sure he helped many other students.

MORRISSEY: That's a fairly impressive alumni association that he has. You mentioned the Freshman Smoker a few minutes ago. I heard a story that John Kennedy did extremely well in importing first rate talent for that Smoker. Have you ever heard a story along that line?

MACDONALD: I worked on the committee with him. I suppose he appointed me to the committee; I forgot exactly how it worked. I was on the committee, in any event. I recall very well I never saw much of that particular Smoker because I was working. My job was to go pick up Dizzy Dean, Frankie Frisch [Frank Frisch], who was then the manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, and I don't know if the other fellow was Pepper Martin, but one of the well-known.... This was the era of the "Gashouse Gang" as they were called. My duty was to go into the Hotel Kenmore—they were in

town playing against the Boston Braves—and to transport them to Cambridge and then take them back out

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again. I did just that, and I heard some rather earthy dialogue from Frisch to Dean, or the two Deans, I think, plus Martin, that I recall fairly vividly. It's perfectly true that Jack did quite a good deal of work in putting the thing together, and apparently it was very successful. As I say, I was not present through a lot of it because I was out doing this chore.

MORRISSEY:                    You refer to him as “Jack,” and I've heard people say that he preferred to be called “John.”

MACDONALD:                 Well, if he preferred to be called “John,” I've miscalled him since 1936.

MORRISSEY:                 Do you recall at Harvard, or later at Melville [Melville, Rhode Island], that he ever kept a loose-leaf notebook or diary in which he wrote his ideas, thoughts on current events, this sort of thing?

MACDONALD:                 I have no knowledge of that.

MORRISSEY:                 Do you recall at Harvard that he ever took a course in public speaking?

MACDONALD:                 No, I would think that he took the same course I did which was not called public speaking but was called speech habits or something like that. It was known in my era as a “gut” course. It was given by a man called Packard, and it was good for a credit. It wasn't the most exacting course that you could ever take. I would believe completely that he took the course although I don't remember it. I know I took it. As a matter of fact I think we were in the same section. It wasn't public speaking in the sense that the public speaking course that was taught around Boston for a while, which Joe took. I forget the name of it. Staley College of the Spoken Word [Staley School of the Spoken Word] or something. Joe Kennedy, Joe Jr., took that course. As far as I know, Jack never did take it. No.

MORRISSEY:                 Would you say that Joe Jr. was more at ease in front of an audience, that he could speak better than John?

MACDONALD:                 Do you mean at the time they were both in college? I frankly never heard either of them speak to an audience.

MORRISSEY:                 Did either of them see much of their grandfather, Honey Fitz [John Francis Fitzgerald]?

MACDONALD: Oh, yes, both of them saw Honey Fitz quite often. There was a strong mutual bond of affection. It doesn't take me to say that Honey Fitz was a very lovable, affectionate, not character in that sense of the word, but he was a sort of a memorable figure. He always had a joke, and he was so spry for his years that it was unbelievable. I visited with Jack many times—both Honey Fitz and Mrs. Fitzgerald [Mary H. Fitzgerald].

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—in their apartment at the Hotel Bellevue. He was very interested in everything that was going on, the boys' careers at college, sports. You know, you name it, and Honey Fitz had an interest in it. He was a very remarkable man.

MORRISSEY: As the time approached when you graduated, did John Kennedy indicate what kind of career he thought he might follow?

MACDONALD: Well, yes, in a way. But everyone forgets now that when we were at college, and as we were graduating, Europe had gone to war. It wasn't a time that one would sit down and say, "Well, I'm going to become a doctor," or "I have five years that I'm going to dedicate to the Peace Corps," or something like that. It was a time of urgency; I think all of us knew that we were going to be in the war eventually. So there were no really long, drawn-out plans as to precisely what anyone was going to do. But he had evidenced a strong interest in becoming a journalist. As a matter of fact, as I recall, he had gone to Stanford University—before Pearl Harbor, obviously—at the same time that I had gone to the Harvard Law School. He went to Stanford to enter into the School of Journalism.

MORRISSEY: Did he ever consider law school like yourself and his older brother, Joe?

MACDONALD: Not to my knowledge, no.

MORRISSEY: At the time, as I need not emphasize to you, there was a great public debate about whether or not this country should involve itself on Britain's side in the developing war in Europe or whether we should stay out of it.

MACDONALD: On the Allies' side you mean, not just Britain's.

MORRISSEY: Right. Do you recall John Kennedy offering his opinions about what this country should do?

MACDONALD: Well, there were two phases of it, actually. I can recall distinctly at one stage that Jack thought that the people whose motto then was "America First" were correct, and that we were just going to get,

needlessly, entangled in what was basically a European war, or seemed to be at that time. He held these views for a while. Later he swung completely around. Obviously, his own actions in volunteering for fairly hazardous duty shows that, once we were committed, he went along—I shouldn't use the word went along—he felt that here it was; it was them or us, good guys versus the bad guys. He obviously felt that the course that the United States took was proper.

MORRISSEY:                   When he was in England during his junior year, his father sent him to

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help some refugees from a ship that had been torpedoed.

MACDONALD:                 The *Athenia* was sunk, right.

MORRISSEY:                 Do you recall him discussing this?

MACDONALD:                 Yes. I was in England with him that summer. This was the summer we traveled to England. I'd gone over to England as a member of the combined Cambridge-Oxford team as it was called, because we ran against Cambridge and Oxford. We were the so-called Harvard-Yale team which they picked by the best times. We had a meet, actually, in which you had to qualify for it, which I now recall. The first and second winners of various track and field events of Harvard and Yale combined to run against Cambridge and Oxford. As a matter of fact, it was a very embarrassing time for me because I had never concentrated on track, but I ran on the track team—the sprints, the one-hundred-yard dash, and the two-hundred-and-twenty. I'd fared quite well here in the United States although I was playing baseball and sometimes spring football. So I went over to run in the meet. Jack was already over there. The Ambassador, most of the family....I couldn't name all, but I know specifically that "Kick" [Kathleen Kennedy Cavendish], his sister, was quite friendly. Jack and the Ambassador all came to the meet which was held in London at White City. Jack had pointed out that I'd won most everything that I'd run against. It was a great disappointment to me because it's the first time....It's run on a dog track. It's an interesting thing. I don't want to get carried off on it, but at Harvard you run the two-hundred-and-twenty just straightaway. At White City you start in staggered lanes. In other words, the person in the last position starts, at least from the eye view, about ten yards behind the person—and there are only four people in the event—in the outside lane. I had the misfortune to pick the lane that was the furthest out. In other words, I was ten yards ahead of everybody until you come off the curve. I'd never done it before; we'd never run around curves, and I felt myself far ahead and came off the curve and found myself about ten yards behind everybody. I tried very hard because I was showing off to "Kick" and the Ambassador and everybody. I made up quite a good deal of ground as I recall but finished second or perhaps third, a close third. Some of it was embarrassing to me, to have that sort of thing after Jack had got the whole family out to see us run. I don't know if that's an answer to the question you asked or not. But this is how I was in England. We toured, and the Ambassador I can recall very well, indeed. As we went to tour, we stayed at the embassy in London for maybe a week or ten days. Then we went to tour the continent. On the tour was included Germany. I recall very well indeed the Ambassador saying,

calling both of us in and saying, when we were in Germany, no matter what happened, not to cause any trouble and to bend over backwards to stay out of trouble. At this time, obviously, war had not been declared, but he indicated that they were very tough and paid no attention to laws or rules, and if anything happened, just to back away. Strangely enough, we did just this. We were in, I think it was Berlin, and met “Whizzer” White [Byron R. White], who is now the Supreme Court Justice. He had a car; he was at Oxford on an exchange Rhodes Scholarship, I think. We went touring, I think it was Berlin, a German city in any event. Just by happenstance we met, and he’d been

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there for a while. He asked us, did we want to see the city? We said yes. We went with him. He was driving a car which had English plates on it. We drove by the monument where Horst Wessel, the so-called young leader of the Nazi Party, had been killed during some kind of demonstration. For no reason perceptible to me—and certainly not to Jack or White; we hadn’t done anything, we were just driving by the place—they started booing us and started throwing rocks at the car. Obviously, this seemed a bit strange. We went to retaliate and yell stuff back because they were yelling at us. Jack just said, “Whizzer, let’s get out of here,” which goes back to the Ambassador’s instructions. We did. Afterwards we debated and came out with the conclusion that the fact that the car that we were driving had English plates on it made us a target of sort of a disorderly mob attack, but a demonstration against the car. Jack and I, later discussing it, decided that, if this is how the people, and they were just kids hanging around an area, felt, obviously war couldn’t be too far away.

MORRISSEY:                   The reason I asked that question about the refugees of the *Athenia*....

MACDONALD:                 Well, this is how I remember the *Athenia* though it’s a long-winded answer to your question.

MORRISSEY:                   It was a tough situation for a young man to be thrown into.

MACDONALD:                 Actually, he said the people behaved very well. I discussed it with him because.... We parted company; I went to Budapest and he went to Prague. On his return from Prague the *Athenia* happened.

This was in September of 1939. I’d been reading in the newspaper and seeing on the news shown in the movies—in those days, no TV—shots of Jack interviewing the American citizens who were taken out of the water from the *Athenia*. I asked him about just how hard it was, and about what he did and so forth. He said the people had behaved very well. You know, no panic and no screaming about American rights and all that sort of thing. Mainly what he did was try to reunite families, which he did very successfully, apparently, and also giving people who had lost their money and their possessions in the torpedoing, hurrying up their processing through our embassy. He was full of praise for the survivors of the torpedoing.

MORRISSEY: He started, as you know, as a freshman at Princeton and then became sick and transferred to Harvard. I've often wondered what motivated him to go to Princeton when he had a father and a brother who had Harvard connections.

MACDONALD: Since I now have a son, I can understand why, and perhaps for those very reasons.

MORRISSEY: Well, the next question is why he chose not to stay at Princeton when his health improved.

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MACDONALD: I don't think that that was the whole thing. I think that, in addition to that, two of his very close friends—a guy call Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings], who's been a friend up and through the time of his death, and also "Rip" Horton [Ralph G. Horton Jr.]; they'd lived together at Choate [Choate School]. Those two were going to Princeton. I think, perhaps, in some measure, though I've never discussed it in any depth with him, the fact that they were going perhaps influenced his going to Princeton. And I think he was a little disenchanted with the country club atmosphere of Princeton.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall what his club was at Harvard?

MACDONALD: Yes. He belonged to the Hasty Pudding, Institute of 1770, and also the Spee Club.

MORRISSEY: Moving ahead, I've heard that he took great delight when he was selected as an overseer of Harvard.

MACDONALD: He did, yes.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall any of his comments about his duties as an overseer?

MACDONALD: Well, he never commented about the duties. I think that what he really felt was that Harvard's never been noted for picking Irish Catholic overseers. I think he felt that this perhaps indicated that people as a whole in the United States are not as bigoted as a lot of people make them out. I suppose you could read political overtones into it, that he figured if he could get elected overseer of Harvard against the religious convictions of perhaps eighty-five to ninety percent of the people voting, that he might have a shot at being president one day. I don't know that to be a fact, but I think it perhaps could be deduced.

MORRISSEY: I know that you saw John Kennedy again at Melville. Did you see him between graduation and the time that you....

MACDONALD: Yes, I did.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me the circumstances of that?

MACDONALD: I don't quite follow the question.

MORRISSEY: I was just wondering if you had any close relationship between, say, June of 1940 and the time that you both were stationed at Melville.

MACDONALD: Oh, yes. He went to Stanford. We used to talk on the phone. That was

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the time of the great Stanford team that went to the Rose Bowl, Frankie Albert [Frank C. Albert] and Gallano and all those people. Jack liked sports, and he knew I did. He used to discuss them, and he always compared Frankie Albert to a fellow called Frank Foley who had played for Harvard, who, Jack and I both shared the opinion, was just lucky and never was very good; he used to compare Albert to Foley. We discussed California and whether that was a good place to live. Then he got drafted. As a matter of fact he was one of the first people in the country drafted. Before he had the chance to tell me, I had been to a movie and seen a news reel about the first draftees, and I almost fell out of my chair when I saw Jack's face and his explanation about what he was going to do. Frankly, I don't think he could have passed the physical. This I've never gone into with him. I do know that he wanted to go into the service, and he was very interested in the Navy. He came into the Navy, came here in Washington where he was stationed as an intelligence officer. When he was here in the Navy I was at the law school. I had not been drafted, and my number was so high I would not have been drafted, probably. In any event, when he was stationed here in Washington, I came to visit him in Washington and spent a week with him in which we discussed the war, et cetera, as any junior officer, I suppose, would do in the intelligence of the naval arm of our services. He felt they were just putting a new team together, and he wasn't very happy with it. Something happened which I won't go into even for the library, and he got transferred to Charleston, South Carolina. He disliked Charleston, South Carolina, and the duties that were entailed, highly. He talked to me several times on the phone and asked me to come visit him after some exam had finished. I did, and I stayed with him in Charleston for a week or ten days. Nothing important, just once again discussing what we would do in general. He kept asking me what I was going to do. I said I was at law school; I didn't know what I was going to do. Obviously, I'd go in. This was all before Pearl Harbor. Then Pearl Harbor happened. I, like a nut, figured the war would get over soon, and guys I knew were getting killed, et cetera, so I went and volunteered. Like Jack, I wasn't put on active duty since I never had any training. One day I was a civilian; about one month later some orders come through the mail I'm an ensign in the Navy. They had taken four guys from the Harvard Law School and put us in the Office of Naval Inspection. In any event when I was there, which is the point that involves President Kennedy, Jack had transferred from Charleston into PT boats [Patrol Torpedo boats]. He had done it by being selected from a midshipmen's



school out in Chicago, I guess at Northwestern University in a V-7 program or something. He'd been selected to go into PT. I was serving in the Navy as an ensign in the Park Square Building in Boston. He called me from Newport, Rhode Island, and asked me would I be interested in going into the PT boat service. I said I didn't know much about them, just what I'd read about Buckley [John Duncan Bulkeley] taking MacArthur [Douglas MacArthur] out of the Philippines, and I didn't know. But I was sick of sitting behind a desk, and why didn't we transfer into the marines. He said that he thought that he could effectuate our transfer, and I thought that the marines were [ ] because at that time they were the only people who seemed to be doing anything much. He said he'd call me back. A couple of days later he did call me back and said that he thought he could get me transferred, but he didn't think the Marines was such a great idea. Why didn't we go into PTs? So I said, "OK." I put in a request for a transfer from my commanding officer of the Naval Inspection Bureau. I was in charge of priorities on machine

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tools for New England, as dull a job as you could find in the Navy—although on some long, cold nights in New Guinea, it seemed like not a bad job. He said he thought he could do it, so I put in a transfer and was refused by my Captain. So Jack put something into the works—I don't know how; he never told me, and I never really inquired. First thing I know, orders come in from Washington for me to report to Melville. I went to Melville where Jack had trained. He stayed over as an instructor; the classes only took two months. He stayed over as an instructor for two months in order to join a squadron which I would go out with him on the same boat; we'd be in the same squadron. It was all arranged; we were going to do it. Admiral Harlee [John Harlee], who was then, I guess, a lieutenant commander—he's now chairman of the Maritime Commission [Federal Maritime Commission]—for some reason picked his squadron, included Jack in it and included me in it. Jack did not arrange this; this was Harlee and myself. Then he canceled the thing, for which Jack never really forgave him. The next thing we knew, special orders came in to fly Jack out from Melville to the South Pacific as a replacement. A worse job you couldn't imagine because all these guys had been working together and been together for a number of months. Then to have a replacement, you know, you don't know what you're doing, you're the first man killed. I remember driving Jack's car to the dock, it was typical for Jack in those days, and throwing his laundry aboard this thing that was going to take him to New York and put him on the plane to fly him to someplace. Then, as a matter of fact, the next time I heard from him after the transfer, he had taken a boat from New York—a PT boat—and had navigated it, taken it down, through the inland waterway to Miami where it was going to be transshipped to the Panama Canal. Off Cape Hatteras, or one of the Capes—I think it was Hatteras—they ran into very rough weather. A crewman had gone overboard; Jack went to save him or help him and ended up being treated in the hospital for immersion in very cold water. He called me from the hospital. From there he did go to Miami and got transshipped directly to the Pacific. In the meantime, I stayed with Squadron 12, and he went to the Solomons [Solomon Islands]. I had a number of letters from him, and I wrote him, but I had no direct contact with him until after he returned to the states.

MORRISSEY: Do you still have those letters?

MACDONALD: Yes, I do.

MORRISSEY: The library would be interested in having them.

MACDONALD: I don't think the library would like a couple of the letters I got. I'm interested in the library, but I'm also interested in President Kennedy as the people of the United States know him and respect him for the great man that he was. I think his thinking about the war along the time he was writing me.... Perhaps he would have reconsidered what he'd said in the letters to me, so I don't think it would be fair to anybody to give the library or anyone else the letters. He was cautioning me, since we knew each other very well, to stay alive and not to take more risks than were necessary, because it seemed that the people back here in the United States didn't always understand what risks people were taking for them in the combat area. But I think taken out

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of context the letters would not contribute anything to the library or to anybody else.

MORRISSEY: When did you see him again?

MACDONALD: I did my tour of duty. I used to kid him about it because he didn't finish his tour of duty. He went out and got run over and came back within a period of I don't know how many months. So I was kidding him about it, you know, "That's how to do it; go out and get run over by a destroyer and come on back." But it was just kidding, because, obviously, he had gone through a good deal. I couldn't tell you the year because the years were ones into another during the war. I did my tour which was eighteen months, came back to the States, and I came back to Boston. I had a thirty-day leave which I spent in Boston. As I recall, Jack at that time was in the Chelsea Naval Hospital being treated for a series of things, back injury among others, but other things in addition. At that time his feeling about the Navy was fairly low because they hadn't treated him very well. I don't mean medically, but I mean just in general. I visited with him. This is where it gets a little confused in my mind. I don't know at that time whether he was released and went back to active duty. I do know that I had to return after my leave—which is given to everybody coming back after the kind of tour of duty we had—to Melville; I was at Melville. I think—I wouldn't swear to it, but I think—that he was put back on active duty but sent to Miami to take up work as an instructor in PT boats. They had moved a branch. God knows why they ever put a PT base at Melville because, during the months I trained there, you had to break the ice in the lagoon to get out. To go from that kind of weather operations out to the South Pacific was just madness, and Miami obviously was a better place. I had my choice of assignments because I had been injured in my left leg, and I was declared not fit for active duty on the boats. But I knew a lot of the people, and I had a couple of decorations from the boats—Silver Star, et cetera—and they were willing to give me most anything I wanted. At that time I can recall very well Jack asking me to join him in Miami where, as I recall, he was stationed as an instructor on the PT branch of Melville. I don't know where it was, but it was some place around Miami. I talked to him on the phone a number of times about it; I couldn't make up my mind. I'd just come out of the tropical weather for let's say eighteen months, but it was longer if you put in our training in Panama and all that. My mother was not well; she was undergoing treatments, et cetera. So, I

wanted to stay closer to home, and yet the idea of having that kind of duty, being with Jack and having a good time and all—we were both single, and all—was appealing. I can recall very well being torn as to whether I should go there or ask for some other duty closer to my mother. Finally, I decided that I would stay in the northeast; I asked for assignment as a midshipman instructor in the New York area because they didn't have any openings in Massachusetts. Through Charlie Houghton, the guy that I was telling you about, who I knew well in college, who was then in the Division of Personnel.... I called him on the phone. The chief instructor at Melville, who was theoretically in charge of me—Walsh, now an admiral—gave me *carte blanche* that whatever I could get, he would okay. I went to a midshipman's school in New York while Jack was in Miami. This part I'm clear about. I was in New York; Jack was in Miami. He used to come up every once in a while, and I'd see him in New York. Then he went back again into the hospital. How he got transferred

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to Chelsea again, I don't know, but he did. He was thin, not well, and still not terribly happy about the Navy. I went to Fort Schuyler, a midshipman's school, where I was an instructor, and then got transferred, without my request, from Fort Schuyler to a special school in Lexington, Virginia. Jack at the same time was in Massachusetts. I used to talk to him on the phone, although he must have been able to get out weekends or something because I'd meet him in New York, not every weekend, but many weekends. I was using his car, as a matter of fact, which, when I gave it back to him, he kidded me for months about how I had deteriorated the car, and they couldn't get anything for it. It was a Buick convertible that should have been blown up two days after it was made. It was a miserable God-damn car if I ever saw one. I mean, everything always happened to it. In any event, then I got transferred to a special school down in Lexington, Virginia, which is the home of VMI [Virginia Military Institute], but that isn't the school I went to.

MORRISSEY: Washington and Lee [Washington and Lee University].

MACDONALD: Yes, that's it. I went to Washington and Lee. Then, once again I got my orders where I wanted to go, and I requested California because there was nothing open on the east coast. I was en route to La Jolla, where I had rented a place by mail, to work on the submarine base. I was going to be a base officer at the submarine base in San Diego. As that all happened, they dropped on Hiroshima, Jack still being in the hospital—relating back to what it's got to do with Jack. I went down to the First Naval District to say it was crazy to send me out—they gave you some kind of terminal leave after the school—they put out the point system. I forget how the formula worked, but it was a number of points for how many years you were in, how old you were, whether you were married, what decorations you had, and I had x-plus number of points to get out of the service; yet I had orders to go to California. So I went to the First Naval District and tried to explain to them, and you know the Navy. Then I called up Jack who was either in Chelsea or down at Hyannis Port, I forget which. Anyway I talked to him. He didn't do anything, but he suggested I get hold of David I. Walsh, who was then chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee, and who I had known just casually through football and stuff. So I did get hold of him, and they whisked my orders through, and I came home. I went back to the law school. I joined Jack and

spent, as a matter of fact, about two weeks with him on the Cape before reentering Harvard Law School.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall his thinking about entering the Democratic primary in the Eleventh District?

MACDONALD: I remember very well. By that time I was married, and I was not living on the law school campus in law school quarters. I had an apartment of my own on Chauncey Street in Cambridge; that was in the district that Jack would represent. We talked about many things at many times. One day he came over to my apartment, sat down, and started asking me what did I think of his running for Congress from that area? I'm not saying that he relied on my judgment or anything like that, I'm just

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saying that he did ask me. It was sort of a novel idea to me. I had always thought of congressmen in those days of being old, sort of fatherly people, and Jack didn't fit the concept. I thought about it, and then I said, "Well, I don't know Jack. If you want to do it, I'm sure you'd probably get elected." Anyway, we kicked it around for a while. I went out in the area where my wife shopped and asked questions: did they know him; and could he get elected and that sort of thing. Then I reported back to him. What I did report, as I'm sure many other people did, is that if he worked very hard and got himself better known, he would have a very good chance to do it. Of course, he did announce, and he did run. During the campaign I took him around where I lived in Cambridge; I introduced him to people I knew. Even then he was very hard working, you know, hand shaking and all. Also, along with Ted Reardon, I ran his—I shouldn't say I ran, but Ted Reardon and I were what was then called co-secretaries for the office that Jack had opened in Union Square, Somerville. I devoted as much time as I could to helping him with his campaign for Congress.

MORRISSEY: How harmful was the so-called carpetbag issue?

MACDONALD: Well, he got elected; it couldn't have been too harmful. Mike Neville [Michael J. Neville], who's now dead I guess you know, was an old "pol" from Cambridge which was sort of the heart of the district. He beat Neville badly, I recall. But the issue was carpetbagger, which is funny when you listened, as I did, to the issues raised against Bobby during the campaign for the Senate in New York. It was just the reverse; it was the same thing but in reverse, what happened to Jack when he first ran from Massachusetts. "Who is this New Yorker who's running in Massachusetts?" Obviously, they were saying about Bob, "Who's this Massachusettsan—or whatever the word is for resident of Massachusetts—who's running in New York?" People completely overlooked the fact that Bob had spent most of his adolescent life, certainly, in New York. But both got elected, so I don't guess it's a very important issue.

MORRISSEY: I've read somewhere that before John Kennedy decided to run for the congressional seat that Maurice Tobin [Maurice J. Tobin], if I recall correctly, wanted him to run as Lieutenant Governor.

MACDONALD: I remember that Maurice Tobin was very friendly with Mr. Kennedy and appointed Mr. Kennedy, the Ambassador, head of the Commerce Department or something like that. I think that, perhaps, Tobin would have welcomed Jack's appearance on the ticket highly.

[TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

MORRISSEY: Moving on to 1952, do you recall John Kennedy thinking about running against Henry Cabot Lodge for the Senate seat?

MACDONALD: By "moving on" you mean moving on from where?

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MORRISSEY: From the 1946 race for the congressional seat. If I'm overlooking anything in those six years, please insert whatever it is.

MACDONALD: You're in charge of the interview; I'm just answering questions.

MORRISSEY: Were there any particular legislative issues that you recall John Kennedy talking about during his congressional years? I know that James MacGregor Burns, one of his biographers, has commented that John Kennedy's most surprising vote in Congress was cast in favor of the proposed twenty-second amendment which limits the President to two terms in office.

MACDONALD: I haven't read that, and I don't see why that would be terribly surprising. Maybe you have some significance....

MORRISSEY: I was pointing that out simply to ask if you recall any discussion on it or on any other votes that he cast when he was a member of the House.

MACDONALD: I remember staying with him and visiting with him the time that he served on the Labor and Education Committee here in the House. A long strike, in which alleged Communist domination of the union was a principal factor, and the whole strike and the union were being investigated. I recall very well his very standupness, as they say here in the House, to the issue. It was, obviously, the pre-McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] era, but there was a good deal of pressure exerted on both sides of that issue at that time on President Kennedy. I happened to be staying with him at a house in Georgetown which he rented during most of this time, and I thought he displayed a tremendous amount of intelligence and integrity.

MORRISSEY: I recall that he wrote a dissenting report to the proposed Taft-Hartley Bill [Labor Management Relations Act of 1947]. Do you recall him talking about that?

MACDONALD: Yes, I think he was rather unhappy with the Taft-Hartley Bill.

MORRISSEY: There is the famous matter of the petition to get Mayor Curley [James Michael Curley] out of jail, and of course John Kennedy did not sign it.

MACDONALD: No, he did not. I think that was the first open breach he ever had with Speaker McCormack [John William McCormack], the now speaker, the then majority leader.

MORRISSEY: I've heard people say that before he decided to run against Henry Cabot Lodge for the Senate seat he did consider running for the governorship of Massachusetts.

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MACDONALD: I think you heard accurately.

MORRISSEY: Did the decision to contest Henry Cabot Lodge come after a great deal of investigation and soul searching?

MACDONALD: Well, there was a good deal of soul searching about taking on a man who is that formidable both in national politics and especially in the state. I think the decision was made, primarily, for President Kennedy by circumstances, and I think it was made when Governor Dever [Paul A. Dever] decided to run for reelection.

MORRISSEY: I've read somewhere that you were present with John Kennedy on the night the voting returns came in.

MACDONALD: That's true; I was.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me where that was, and something about the situation?

MACDONALD: This is the campaign against Lodge? Ambassador Kennedy, who had stayed very much in the background during the campaign, but who had been in Boston, had an apartment on Beacon Street—I forget the number on Beacon Street now. He had a small dinner for members of the family; I was invited to attend when the first returns started coming in. It was a fairly informal and gay, entertaining type of party where everyone was having fun; no one was talking about the campaign. The radio was on, and the returns started coming in. I remember Connecticut, which

has machines to count the ballots, came in, and Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] was sweeping the state. As you know, Lodge had been very close to Eisenhower, and one of the imponderables in the campaign was how much effect Eisenhower's coattails would have on Lodge. Everyone felt that Eisenhower would be a great help to Lodge. When Connecticut came in, and it was a clear sweep of Connecticut for Eisenhower, some people started to get a little worried and so forth. After a while, we were listening to returns, and Jack, while outwardly paying no attention, had to hear the returns. Being as politically astute as he was, he had to have some reaction. Ambassador Kennedy suggested that Jack and I take a walk across the Common, up the Gardens—the apartment was down at that end of Beacon Street—you just walk across the street to the Common. One of the things that has been noted, which is absolutely true, is that during the walk as we talked about everything, and nothing very substantial, and just kidded around, we started talking about the campaign, and he asked me what did I think about Connecticut. I thought, I heard the results and, you know, it looks like Eisenhower is going to win easily. But I said—and I'm not second-guessing myself—"I don't think that necessarily means that it's going to affect you in Massachusetts." He said, "Why not?" I said, "Well, I think that you represent the best of the new generation. Not generation in age but minorities, really. The newer arrived people. And Lodge represents the best of the old-line Yankees. I think there are more of the newly arrived people than there are of the old-line Yankees." He

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sort of agreed to that, and we kept walking for a while. Then out of the clear blue sky he asked me a question which was, as I said, it's been quoted before; it's absolutely true. He said, "I wonder what sort of job that Ike will give Cabot" (which Henry Cabot Lodge is known to his intimates as). I just thought to myself that if I were in Jack's position, and I was listening to these returns, and I was running against the guy who had nominated Ike and who Ike had determined to get elected by finishing off his campaign in Boston, et cetera.... You know, where do you get that kind of serenity that you're wondering about what kind of job your opponent's going to get from an elected President who has come out flatly for your opponent? I just didn't say anything for a while, and then I started to laugh. He asked what I was laughing about, and I said, as a matter of fact, I said, "What kind of job do you think Ike would give you?" We just laughed about that, went back into the house, and stayed at the house until around eleven o'clock or so. Then some of us—Jack, I accompanied Jack, and one or two of the girls, I forget exactly who—the girls meaning his sisters, wither Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] or Pat [Patricia Kennedy Lawford] or somebody—went down to headquarters. Everyone was yelling and screaming, "Hurray! Hurray!" Bobby was there, and Bobby looked kind of worried. Everyone was all around the candidate, and they were taking pictures and all that—the candidate, of course, being Senator Kennedy. So I went out in the back room with Bobby, and Bobby was saying that it didn't look any too great. Of course, I didn't have the figures; all I heard was coming over the radio, but they had direct communications. Bobby was a tremendous help in that campaign as well, which everyone has always overlooked. I can recall very well that we stayed.... It was a squeaker really, as the presidency was. It was four-thirty, five o'clock in the morning, and Bobby and I were walking up and down. I guess Jack had gone back to the room; I don't know where he went. Or else he was handshaking inside, but I remember being with Bobby. Bobby was saying things about this guy and naming guys who hadn't done what they should have, including a lot of labor people, people who they thought should have been more helpful who really had just given

lip service and hadn't done what they should have for Jack. Then, I don't know, it must have been six o'clock in the morning when finally.... But it was a real squeaker. The records will show. I don't know what the margin was, but it was a squeaker. Dever, whose headquarters were down the road and who had tried to join up with Jack during the campaign—after at first pooh-poohing the chance that Jack had of winning—as it went down to the last two or three weeks, or certainly a month, he was trying to join forces with Jack by tacking up signs around Kennedy headquarters throughout the state and that sort of thing. I can remember him going by. He was beaten—in a squeak—but he was beaten by Governor Herter [Christian A. Herter]. Jack was just edging away. I don't know what the final margin was, but it was a very close race.

MORRISSEY: Had you worked in that campaign?

MACDONALD: Yes, I did. As a matter of fact, that's one of the reasons I was talking to Bobby because in between times I had been the regional attorney for the National Labor Relations Board, and I know many of the people in labor. I'd worked for Jack heading up the—each campaign has somebody with a title, not that the

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title means much—I was in charge of this sort of liaison between the Kennedy camp and the labor groups. This is why I recall distinctly Bobby naming certain people to me who hadn't done what they should have done in distributing a pamphlet—"The Kennedy Story" or something like that, it was called. Labor had not done its share in getting this distributed throughout the plants of Massachusetts.

MORRISSEY: Did Lodge have some labor support?

MACDONALD: Yes.

MORRISSEY: Any particular industries?

MACDONALD: I don't recall. What everyone forgets was that he was a fairly liberal Republican, as John Lindsay [John V. Lindsay] now. If I, as a Democrat, vote for a bill, that's only what I was supposed to do according to the public. People just take you for granted. But if you're a Republican who votes in a liberal vein, you get to be a hero. I never quite understand it myself, but that seems to be how it works. In the same instance—to update the thing and perhaps take it out of context—Lodge was sort of a local Lindsay, a Massachusetts Lindsay.

MORRISSEY: This prompts me to ask a question that I've never seen any definite proof of. That is, that a lot of disaffected Taft supporters had worked for John Kennedy in reprisal against Henry Cabot Lodge because he had been so effective in getting Eisenhower to run for the Republican nomination. Did you see any concrete evidence of this in that campaign?



MACDONALD: No, I did not. I think many disenchanted Taft people maybe voted for Jack; one newspaper on the Cape was very helpful.

MORRISSEY: That's the one example that's always cited. Basil Brewer came out for John Kennedy.

MACDONALD: But I never saw any workers, Taft volunteers, working for Kennedy. No. If they were working, they were kept in the back room. I never saw any.

MORRISSEY: When you were serving in the House, and John Kennedy was still serving in the Senate, did you have much to do with one another on the common legislative problems affecting Massachusetts?

MACDONALD: Oh, hell! We had a lot to do with each other, but I don't know about legislative problems. You sound like a professor now, asking me questions about the government of Massachusetts. I thought this was

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for the Kennedy Library. I saw Jack more often, well, as often, during that period of time as any time in our relationship here in Washington. We worked together on some matters, but there were no matters of that importance that I, as a junior member of the House, or he, as a junior member of the Senate, could put our heads together and come out with a plan to aid New England or aid Massachusetts or anything like that. If I had a bill that I got through on the House side, obviously I'd talk to him and ask him could he see to it that it got through the Senate side. That happened on a number of occasions, but it didn't happen on any great, major legislation.

MORRISSEY: You were seeing him at a time when two things of importance happened. One was the effort in 1956 to win control of the Democratic State Committee.

MACDONALD: I surely did.

MORRISSEY: I guess that was quite a fight.

MACDONALD: I took more heat, perfectly frankly, on that than anybody connected to either camp because I was John McCormack's whip here in the House. As such I had to work with McCormack. On the other hand, obviously I was a very good friend of Jack's. When the split first came, first I was involved in the decision as to whether it was worth making the fight for. Then after the decision was made whether to make the fight, I still had to exist here in the House with the Majority Leader then. Still, I couldn't be two-faced and not say what I was doing. So I solved my own problem with that by going to the Speaker and telling him that I thought that his choice who was commonly known as "Onions" Burke [William H. Burke, Jr.], was not a good one, that Mr.

Burke, whom I didn't really know personally, just what he had done and was doing, didn't create a good image for McCormack or for the party, that despite that fact, no matter what happened my loyalty was going to be given to Senator Kennedy because our relationship transcended that of politics. He knew what close friends we were. Strangely enough, I just called him aside one day and told him just that. I said, "I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that this has nothing to do with you. I'm not opposed to you; I'm just for Jack Kennedy, and I'm going to do everything I can to see that Senator Kennedy wins this." He said he understood perfectly and, as far as I know, has never held it against me. But I was the only congressman—I don't mean to have this sound like an "X" thing; we're talking about President Kennedy, not myself—but I was the only elected official here in Washington that stood up with Jack. Everyone else either took a duck or was on McCormack's side. I lined up my congressional area, the delegates to the State Committee, solidly for Jack, but, once again, Jack himself was the one who put it over, not me or anybody else. He did it.

MORRISSEY: Were you at Chicago for the '56 convention?

MACDONALD: I was at Chicago, yes.

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MORRISSEY: Did he talk about his prospects of running as Vice President?

MACDONALD: I lived with the President during that period of time. I stayed with him at the hotel; we lived together.

MORRISSEY: Is it true, as I've read, that when he actually went to Chicago he figured that his chances were pretty slim, that he was surprised when Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] threw it open?

MACDONALD: I think that would be an obvious thing. You could hear the gasps. It's never been done before or since to my knowledge that the President says, "All right, delegates, you choose the Vice President." Traditionally, obviously, it's always been done by the nominee. He was surprised. However, he'd done considerable groundwork in getting together support. But the support actually were people who were to let their feelings be known to Stevenson that they thought that Kennedy could help the ticket. I was in charge—in you want to use that word—with the duty of seeing to it that the congressmen friendly to President Kennedy made their feelings known that they would not object to having a Catholic on the ticket and thought that Kennedy would make an ideal running mate to Stevenson. I went with Bobby to see—what was the guy's name who was running Stevenson's campaign in Chicago? I think his name was Finnegan [James A. Finnegan]—to present our point of view to him, saying that, as leader of the delegation and with these number of votes controlling, Jack hadn't been paid enough attention to. We made quite a strong case to Finnegan. Then, of course, when the thing got thrown open, I met with Jack and Bobby. The Ambassador called from France, et cetera. Some people were trying to dissuade Jack from getting into it. My own advice, which Bob knows and which, obviously, Jack knows, was that, if he went back on these people who he had put on the line, that Kennedy was a good

candidate, they'd never trust him again; that even though he didn't win it, he'd lose more by not going through with putting on a fight than he would if he put on a fight and got beaten badly, which was a great worry because nobody knew how much strength he had.

MORRISSEY: Did you think during the course of that evening and next day that you were going to win?

MACDONALD: Well, it all gets so fragmentized because he devised the group of people who were to him and assigned different delegations to different people. So the delegation that I was assigned to go see and sound them out on how they would feel about Kennedy, it looked pretty good just because, perhaps, the delegations were more favorable—California, which didn't come through in the long run, but the night before seemed like they were going to. In the various delegations that we were assigned to, you'd have to take a compilation of the four or five people who did it. I accompanied him from the hall to go see McCormack who was staying with his wife [Harriet McCormack] at a hotel in downtown Chicago. It was the first thing he did despite the fact that everyone says that

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they were such bitter enemies. The first thing he did was to go see McCormack and ask him what path he should follow. McCormack was quite gracious and gave him some pretty good advice.

MORRISSEY: What were the state delegations that you worked with? Do you recall?

MACDONALD: Yes. Let's see. California. I remember Pat Brown [Edmund G. Brown] being so indecisive. That's the main reason I remember California so well. Ohio, which we did zero. We had high hopes on doing well. Illinois, which we did very well; not thanks to any efforts of mine, but I just had to make contact with them. I forget exactly; there were maybe six, seven delegations. Bobby was doing the same type of work with other people.

MORRISSEY: There's been great confusion about the fact that Speaker McCormack asked the then speaker, Mr. Rayburn [Sam Rayburn], to recognize the Missouri delegation, which he did, and it turned out Missouri was not for Kennedy. Some people attribute this to just the confusion of the convention floor and so forth.

MACDONALD: I was on the floor, working the floor for Jack, and I didn't see it. I've heard about it, but I didn't see it. I don't know. I'm not being coy. I wouldn't put it past the powers that then were, Rayburn, Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], et cetera, to try to cut off a threat. I just don't know. I'm not being naive and saying it couldn't happen. I just don't know whether it happened or not. I didn't see it. I heard about it, but I never saw it.

MORRISSEY: In the late '50s when John Kennedy was traveling around the country, then, of course, in 1960 when he entered some of the primaries, did you travel with him?

MACDONALD: Yes, I did.

MORRISSEY: Any recollections of any specific trips either for the accomplishments they gained or the problems you encountered?

MACDONALD: Once again you sound like a professor instead of an interviewer for the Kennedy Library. During the early part of the primary I had offered my services to Jack, and he'd put me in charge of running the state of Maryland for the primary which entailed organizing Maryland. It sounds like it should be organized automatically but was not. Morse [Wayne I. Morse] was a resident of Maryland. Everyone forgets that he ran against Jack in Maryland. Maryland was going to be of importance because it followed West Virginia in sequence. There was about six days' difference. I think the primary was five days, six days away after West Virginia. Therefore, if

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Jack had got beaten in West Virginia, this would be a bail out operation in which he'd win so overwhelmingly—or we hoped—in Maryland that everyone would forget about West Virginia. It may be wishful thinking, but that was the point, and that's why I worked as hard as I did in Maryland. That's how Jack explained it to me. Plus the fact that, if you think Massachusetts' politicians are peculiar, the ones in Maryland could deal Massachusetts aces in spades. They're split fifteen different ways. Everyone who doesn't live in Baltimore are a breed unto themselves. The downstate counties are one thing, and the upstate counties are a different thing, the Eastern Shore another. Maryland was a hell of a job, and I'm not exaggerating. By "hell of a job" I mean a difficult job to try to keep the various factions; they all hate each other. It's like Massachusetts in that way, except more so. To try to get them to work as a team had never, ever been done before. We sort of put that together. I was commuting from Washington to Baltimore. We took out headquarters in the Emerson Hotel. As a matter of fact, I guess I'm responsible for Tydings [Joseph D. Tydings] being Senator because I chose him. I had carte blanche. Once again it was not an "I" story; it's just because Jack said do it. I chose him to head up the Kennedy delegation. Although you keep reading in the paper what great, close friends they were, Jack actually had never met him before the campaign. I chose him because of the name, because he was clean—is clean, was and is—he was Protestant. You know the various reasons that go into it. He headed up, on title, the campaign while we did the work out of the hotel. He worked very hard, I must say. But Jack didn't need the help that badly. The only thing we had to do was conserve money because everybody over here was trying to raise the ante. One guy had Jack worried. Mahoney, I think his name is. He's a friend of the Ambassador. They were always trying to hold me up for money to get the precinct workers out. They have a custom where they pay everybody twenty dollars a day just to show up. I was saying, "This is unnecessary." Mahoney flagged the Ambassador saying that I was screwing up everything because I wouldn't pay this money, and that Jack was going to get defeated, and it would be a black eye, et cetera. The Ambassador got upset enough to talk to Jack about it. I explained to Jack why I wasn't going to do it. You know,

Jack was a very stubborn person. His father was giving him the word to do this, or somebody was, and I kept saying, "It's unnecessary; it's a waste of money; you've got it anyway." After I talked to him, he said, "OK." We didn't do it, and Jack won by a landslide.

MORRISSEY: I assume, then, that you had very little, if anything, to do with the West Virginia primary.

MACDONALD: No, I didn't have anything to do with it.

MORRISSEY: How about Wisconsin?

MACDONALD: Well, I was out there a couple of times, but once again Jack did as he did with me. He designated somebody to head up Wisconsin, and then he put various people in tough precincts and areas of Wisconsin. Having served in the House, he knew I couldn't spend two months in Wisconsin and then still

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be a congressman from Massachusetts. It took daily detail. I would have liked to have done it, but just in the nature of things I could not.

MORRISSEY: Before the primaries were there any states that you paid special attention to?

MACDONALD: What do you mean?

MORRISSEY: Just sounding out people on the Kennedy candidacy, trying to line up some leadership within the states.

MACDONALD: As I repeat, my job—I guess Bob did it within the states or had people do it within the states—as far as what Jack asked me to do, was to do it here within the Congress, people I knew from the Congress who represent areas of the various states, to try to line them up for Jack, which Johnson was doing himself. Johnson had two or three people doing it, and I was doing it in the House.

MORRISSEY: Successfully?

MACDONALD: Depending on what state you refer to.

MORRISSEY: I was wondering if the Johnson people were there first with more pulling power.

MACDONALD: It's a strange thing—I'm not knocking Johnson—but a lot of people who had served with Johnson in the House always felt that he would not make a good President.

MORRISSEY:                   Going on to the '60 Convention, were you involved in the various things that led to Lyndon Johnson being chosen as the number two man on the ticket?

MACDONALD:                 Well, I can say that the accounts that have been published are not accurate because they all talk about the call going out of the hotel and all that. I personally—not as a policy maker, but as an individual—placed the call, the original call, from the apartment in which I was staying with Jack in Los Angeles, West Los Angeles. I placed the call to Johnson's apartment, and I had a hell of a time finding him because he wasn't staying in the place that he was registered to stay. Finally, after about fifteen minutes of trying to locate him, somebody gave me the number; I don't know who. It was a completely different hotel and everything else. I talked to Lady Bird [Lady Bird Johnson] and identified myself. I had met her, but I identified myself as calling for nominee Kennedy. She said that he was sleeping, and I said, "Well, I don't suppose he'd want to be disturbed." I'd call back. So I told Jack about it, and he said something like, "For

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Christ's sake, what's he doing asleep?" I said that he probably had a long night, as I'm sure he must have. So he said, "Why don't you put it in again, and if he's not awake, let it go. I'll call him later." I put the call back in in fifteen, twenty minutes. Lady Bird answered again, and he answered the phone; she put him on the phone. Jack talked to him. After that we went on downtown. This was from a small apartment out in West Los Angeles—or East—anyway, it was in Los Angeles, but sort of a suburban part of it. We went downtown, and then all the confusion that has been discussed happened. And no one, I don't think anybody, could tell you exactly what happened. I do know there was a strong reaction from the liberal group. I don't know for sure, but my impression was that Bobby wasn't happy with it. Not for any personal reason, just because nobody knew Lyndon there. So nobody in the Kennedy group could dislike him for any personal reasons. Maybe you've asked Bob, and maybe he's recorded for the Library. I know Joe Rauh [Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.], I think, was one, and the guy from New York from the furriers or the hatters, Alex Rose, all those guys were saying, "Christ, if he's on the ticket, we're off the ticket," and this and that. There was a hell of a hubbub. But if you want my honest opinion, I think A) that Jack was surprised that he would accept it; I think B) that once Johnston had said he would accept it, that although Jack listened to everybody saying we're going to lose the South, we're going to lose this, we're going to lose that, that liberals will take off, I am convinced that he had his mind made up as soon as Johnson said yes, he'd take it. He listened to everybody so they'd all have their day in court, but my judgment is he had his mind made up, and he was going to take Johnson.

MORRISSEY:                   Had you gone out to Los Angeles thinking the Vice President would be Symington [Stuart Symington, II], Henry Jackson [Henry M. Jackson], Orville Freeman [Orville Lothrop Freeman]?

MACDONALD: These, of course, are technical things that I shouldn't get into because I don't want to overplay my role in the matter. When I was asked what I thought, I had my opinion. But I think, I don't think during the campaign anyone was promised the vice presidency, but I wouldn't be terribly surprised if a lot of people throughout the various states of the United States who were in positions of importance had high hopes. Incidentally, that was the campaign son, now that I remember it, because I traveled the country with the President, and I heard that "High Hopes" thing till it was coming out my ears. I would think that many of the people of prominence in the various states had high hopes that they would be the natural nominee.

MORRISSEY: I didn't ask the question with any likelihood that any promises were involved.

MACDONALD: I never heard anybody promised anything. Once again, if you're asking my opinion, I think that "Scoop" Jackson [Henry J. Jackson] was very disappointment when he heard that it was Johnson. I don't know about Symington. I think that if you take a look at the fact that they gave Senator Jackson the chairmanship of the Democratic Party for a year following it, I think that you could deduce that he'd been promised something, but I don't know. I never heard any promises made. I

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don't know anything about that.

MORRISSEY: What did you do during the campaign?

MACDONALD: Which campaign?

MORRISSEY: '60. You were running for the House yourself, but did you campaign?

MACDONALD: I did not campaign in my district except for maybe the last four days of the campaign.

MORRISSEY: Did you campaign outside the state for John Kennedy.

MACDONALD: I did.

MORRISSEY: Whereabouts?

MACDONALD: I appeared for him in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Illinois. Mainly, I traveled on the trip with him. I traveled through the various states. He didn't hit fifty, but he hit almost fifty. I made the swing with him from when Congress adjourned until four days before the election, when I came back to my

own district.

MORRISSEY: Before you came back to your own district, did you think the outlook was extremely promising?

MACDONALD: I bet two thousand dollars on it.

MORRISSEY: But not to win as narrowly as he did?

MACDONALD: I didn't know how close or how much. I just knew, or felt very strongly. Two thousand dollars from Ambassador Kennedy wouldn't be much, but from me it was considerable.

MORRISSEY: Which way was the Ambassador betting?

MACDONALD: I guess that he wouldn't cover Nixon, would he? He'd already invested, I'm sure, a good deal more than two thousand into the campaign. I felt, from the response of the crowds every place that he had gone, that you couldn't put your finger on why or how, I just felt certain that he was going to win. Some of it was misleading. I can recall a swing back and forth across Ohio. We must have gone in Ohio three different times, and the crowds would be out at two, three o'clock in the morning just lining the streets to see him and to wave, the "jumps" as they

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were called by the press corps and the photographers. You'd think he could walk on water, practically; it was that sort of reception. There was something, you know, almost kooky about the enthusiasm that these people showed, even in Missouri and places where you wouldn't think a Catholic would do very well. He had fantastic crowds; people would line the roads of the cavalcade; they'd come at the airports at two, three, four o'clock in the morning, just the general enthusiasm. Of course, I had no way to counterbalance it by seeing how Nixon was doing, but I just figured that if this many people were this interested in the campaign and Jack's success, he would have to be elected.

MORRISSEY: Take a state like Ohio. When you traveled there with the presidential candidate, did most of the local party leaders feel that this enthusiasm shown indicated that....

MACDONALD: They were all talking big win.

MORRISSEY: The name in Illinois?

MACDONALD: I talked to DiSalle [Michael V. DiSalle], and I never did talk to Daley [Richard J. Daley], so I don't know. DiSalle was telling me privately, semi-privately and individually, he was saying, "Big

win, can't miss," et



cetera. Mike Kirwan [Michael J. Kirwan], who was the congressional coordinator here, was saying, "I never saw anything like it. You get the point I mean?" You know how he talks. I would have bet that Ohio was going to vote for Kennedy; I don't know if I would have bet two thousand on Ohio. The people I did talk to in Illinois, the other congressmen, all thought that he would carry Illinois. I repeat I never talked to Daley personally. He did carry Illinois, but close.

MORRISSEY: With a new administration coming in, did you consider leaving Congress to take a position downtown in the new administration?

MACDONALD: No.

MORRISSEY: Did you consider leaving the House and going over on the Senate side?

MACDONALD: Yes.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about it?

MACDONALD: Well, many are called, but few are chosen.

MORRISSEY: Does that cover it?

MACDONALD: That's what happened. I wasn't chosen.

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MORRISSEY: Did you want it real badly?

MACDONALD: Yes, I would have liked it very much.

MORRISSEY: Would you have left in two years?

MACDONALD: Would I have left politics, or left the seat?

MORRISSEY: Left the Senate seat.

MACDONALD: If I had taken it with the understanding that either Bob or Ted were to get it, I think I might have, yes. I would have probably. But I wouldn't have run back for Congress or retired. I would have run for Governor which is up at the same time.

MORRISSEY: This is '62 that you're talking about, isn't it?

MACDONALD: Every two years the Governor of Massachusetts runs. I wouldn't have just retired, no. I wouldn't have taken it for two years on the grounds that, having taken it, now you retired to private life. I

would not have done that, no.

MORRISSEY: Did the discussion ever get to those particular points?

MACDONALD: There were never any deep discussions about it. I spent the time after the election, at Jack's request, with Jack at the house while the rest of the group stayed downtown at the Palm Beach Towers, or whatever the name of the hotel was. I stayed with Jack, and during that period of time, Jack raised it to me, actually. I said, "Yes, I would like it very much, Jack. If I could have it, I'd certainly like it." He said something to the effect about Furcolo [John Foster Furcolo] being very ambitious himself and not wanting to create somebody who would be a problem to him, him being Furcolo. I replied that I didn't think that Furcolo could control the President of the United States and that if somebody talked to the incoming Governor, who was going to be Volpe [John A. Volpe], you could bypass Furcolo. He agreed that that could be done, but said that he thought that there would be so many wheels in motion, that there'd be so many people, in his vernacular, "cutting my head off" that it would be difficult. He said that he would like to have me have it, since I wanted it that much, and he would do what he could to see that I got it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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