Pamela Turnure, Oral History Interview
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Biographical Note
Pamela Turnure served as a receptionist and secretary in Senator John F. Kennedy's (JFK) office and later as press secretary to Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy. In this interview Turner discusses working in the senate office and White House, the 1960 presidential campaign and inauguration, foreign travel, press relations and JFK's assassination, among other issues.

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Table of Contents

Oral History Interview

with

PAMELA TURNURE

By Ann Fredericks

For the John F. Kennedy Library

FREDERICKS: Pam, I think when we start this tape going back to the beginning, your beginning is further back than anyone else that I have interviewed, and I wondered if you wouldn't mind telling us how you first came to work in Senator Kennedy's office and your role there.

TURNURE: I went to work in Senator Kennedy's office in October of 1957. At the time I was living in Washington and working at an embassy and was very keen on working in some way with the government of my own country. I met the then Senator Kennedy at the wedding of Mrs. Kennedy's stepsister in June of '57 and discussed my interest, and he said if I was really interested to go in and have an interview in his office, that the girl was leaving that fall to be married. And I followed through in August, went in for an interview, and was told they would call me -- not to call. And they did call in October and said could you come in the middle of the month and be the receptionist and secretary to Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.], who was then administrative assistant to Senator Kennedy.

FREDERICKS: So you went in to work. What was your initial impression of your new boss? How often did you see him, working as a receptionist I presume in an outer office rather than just directly under his supervision?

TURNURE: Well, originally we started in very cramped quarters. As things progressed in his career, we expanded. Our office began with one big room where a receptionist sat and four or five secretaries. The Senator's office was on the right-hand side as you come in, and the legislative assistants' offices were on the left-hand side as you come in. And gradually, as things progressed, we got a little bit more room, and consequently I didn't see as much of the Senator probably. But in the beginning he was in and out always, and everyone, I think, came to know him quite well. And I guess that the first thing that impressed me was his natural warmth and curiosity about people, friendliness. Curiosity, I guess, was the most impressive thing, which I think is a Kennedy family trait -- the ability to talk to a person and make them feel what they are saying is the most interesting thing being said and what they are doing is the most interesting thing being done. And whether it was a receptionist in an office or a visiting constituent or another senator, everyone certainly got a taste of this warmth and interest.

FREDERICKS: Was the Senator as anxious to have efficiency and perfection and precision in his early days as he was later as head of the White House?

TURNURE: Very much so, and I think it was one of the great challenges in working for him was that he had such a quick mind, and he really thought things before he said them almost and, consequently, almost expected them to be done before they had been asked for. He really kept everyone on their toes, and it was one of the very exciting parts of that office; one never knew when he might be walking past my desk on his way over for a phone call, and he would call back over his shoulder, "Oh, would you write a letter to so-and-so?" and would dictate a letter in two minutes -- in less than that, in a minute -- on his way out the door. Well, I, unfortunately, didn't even take dictation, and I was the one really closest to the door, but I really learned to memorize and quickly type out what he said. Usually the letters were very short and to the point. But there were many instances of that sort of thing, and as I say, it kept everyone on their toes.

FREDERICKS: How was the esprit de corps in the office? Was there….

TURNURE: There was always the most wonderful atmosphere of a really wonderful family working together. Everyone was there as a member of the team. There wasn't a feeling of titles and roles, it was all there because of this one person, John Kennedy, so it was the happiest office I've ever worked in. In a way, when I went to the White House, I missed this atmosphere -- not that it wasn't the same spirit in working for the man, but then we were all divided up and in separate wings. But in the Senate everyone was together. You really never knew who you would be called upon to do something for, the men in the office, typing, and when the time came to get a major speech out, everyone dropped what they were doing to go into the Senator's office and spread the

pages of the speech out on the sofa, the floor, and the desk, and whoever was there would come and pitch in, and there was always this feeling of working together.

FREDERICKS: Did the Senator work intensively on his own speeches or did he leave it to a speech writer and then put the finishing touches on….

TURNURE: Well, certainly in the beginning he did everything himself. Later on as there were more demands upon his time and he was making more speeches, he would say, "I want to speak on thus and so," and ask someone like Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen], and Fred Holborn or Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] later on, to work out a draft. Then he would devote a great deal of time going over it and rewriting where he thought it should be rewritten and…. But in the beginning, and I would say in every case, the major speech really represented his effort.

FREDERICKS: What were the qualities in the Senator that made all of you feel that it was great to be working for him?

TURNURE: Well, I have to go back again to this warmth and feeling that you know you were an important person to the success of the office, and everyone always felt they had a part to play that counted. It's hard to pin down, but I can never remember anybody watching a clock. There

were no set hours in that office, except to be in in the morning by 9. But beyond that, as long as the Senator worked, everybody else worked. There were times when you did have to go home for some reason at an early hour, he might have been detained because of a vote on the Senate floor. You would come back in the morning, and if you hadn't put all your papers away, you would find notes scribbled on unanswered mail saying, "What are you going to do about this?" "Speak to me about this." And it might have been mail that had come in that afternoon. But this great curiosity came through again, and if he didn't have anything to do, he would look through and see who was doing what. And so…

FREDERICKS: Open the mail on the various desks.

TURNURE: Yes. And something that you might feel that "If I get a moment, I'll ask him to dictate an answer on this,' and there it would be scrawled in his handwriting.

FREDERICKS: Pam, as 1960 drew nearer was there a sense of mission and new direction in the office? You recall he announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for the presidency on January second, I believe, in 1960.

TURNURE: Well, he was certainly…. I started in the office at the end of '57, so 1958

was a year where he was very busy in Washington. And then that summer he was up for reelection, and he went home to run for the Senate again. And then '59 did become a different kind of a year because he started traveling more and more throughout the country, and one could sense that the thing was in the wind. But I was really not in the position to be in on when this decision was made or able to discuss it.

FREDERICKS: Can you recall from your years working for the President when he was Senator his various friendships or admirations or dislikes amongst his colleagues?

TURNURE: That's a difficult question, really, to answer because again I was not in a position to really be perfect at this kind of….

[-4-]

FREDERICKS: No. Did you have any indication of who would come to see him most, for instance…

TURNURE: I think it depended upon what he was working on. The most important thing, certainly, during the period I was there was the labor legislation, and he was very much involved not only in the Rackets Committee hearings but the Labor and Public Welfare Committee and working on its legislation, but he was the kind of person who went to see other people. He never sat back and waited for them to come to him. Actually, I guess this was a part of his character, you know, that no matter who it was, he would say, "Call Senator so-and-so, and see if I can come over and see him." And he was the one who was always willing to go, and I think a little embarrassed by people coming to call on him. He liked it the other way.

FREDERICKS: Well, from the pattern of motion that we've discussed before, the quick step, the on his toes, was very much a part of his way of operating.

TURNURE: Definitely.

FREDERICKS: What about the personal mannerisms? You mentioned last time that when the President concentrated, he would snap his fingers or tap on his front teeth or tap with a pencil or glasses on something -- certainly always in motion and…. Can you tell, Pam, any of the things that the President didn't like as well as the things he enjoyed about his office life and his staff?

TURNURE: I don't think he admired self-important people very much. He liked people who produced and people who didn't blow their own horns but just did what had to be done, and this was the way he was as a person. I can remember once in 1958 he was making a speech in Baltimore, and this was in the days when there wasn't an enormous entourage of followers, and he asked in the office if anyone would

like to go and several of us said yes. I went in the car with Ted Reardon and the Senator. We got outside the auditorium where he was speaking, and there was an enormous traffic jam. He was a little bit late for the speaking engagement, and he couldn't get through, and it was a rather frustrating moment and I said, you know, "Let's do

[-5-]

something, we ought to call a policeman and say who you are. After all, you are making this speech. Honk the horn or something." And I reached over and started to honk the horn, and he said, "Oh no, don't do that. That's terrible. People will wonder who that is honking the horn, so please don't." And was really quite upset by it because he would have preferred to be a half an hour late for his speech instead of arriving with a big fanfare and upset other people.

FREDERICKS: Rather than push his way through. So his conduct was conservative.

TURNURE: Very.

FREDERICKS: Did he ever say anything about the flamboyant oratory on the Senate floor that you recall? Or about the flamboyant personalities, perhaps?

TURNURE: I can't really recall his ever discussing them. But it's rather interesting how he emerged as a speaker because as a Senator I don't think he had a particular distinguished style mainly because his mind was always racing along so, and he would rush over to give the speech and…. [Interruption]... keep up as a speaker in those early days. I think all his heart went into the writing of the speech, and once it had been written, the giving of the speech became a chore for him. And it really wasn't until the campaign, when the marvelous rapport with the people started and the real shot in the arm that you get from being received by a crowd got through to him, that he started to respond and then went on to become one of the greatest speakers of all time. But it was a while in developing, and it is an interesting contrast.

FREDERICKS: Pam, you mention the campaign as being the first time that the Senator really put his heart into oratory as a style and a method of reaching people. You were with him, weren't you, in Wisconsin and in West Virginia?

TURNURE: I actually went out in both cases and the advance party to set up headquarters in the state and to live in a particular location and be there for the whole

[-6-]

time. So in a way I saw less of him then because I guess I was in Wisconsin for three weeks with the headquarters in Madison working for Chuck Roche, who was the press secretary for

the Wisconsin primary, and only saw the President, then Senator, a couple of times when he came through to make speeches in Madison. And then, of course, in the end in Milwaukee, when everyone moved to Milwaukee. And that was a very exciting night of waiting out the returns.

FREDERICKS: What was the feeling of the Senator's party at that time? Did they feel that it was going to be close, that Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] had given him a run for his money? Or were they confident? Can you describe a little bit of the feeling among the….

TURNURE: They knew it was going to be very difficult in the beginning, but they worked very, very hard. Wisconsin is a funny state, and I can remember the Senator saying, "This is the coldest state I've ever been in." And that wasn't just climate. People are very taciturn in some areas, and you just don't get a response. But I think everybody's morale was very high, and they honestly thought they were going to do better than they did, and so there was a certain amount of disappointment that they hadn't won by a bigger margin because they worked so hard. But like the 1956 Convention which had he won for vice president, he probably never would have gone on to be president, Wisconsin had the same meaning because he had won by an enormous margin in Wisconsin, he might not have gone to West Virginia -- as he said later in thanking Wisconsin for making him go to West Virginia, because that was what really made the difference.

FREDERICKS: In the West Virginia campaign, how were you….

TURNURE: I went there for five weeks and was headquartered in Parkersburg, which was a sort of center for the distribution of all the materials he used in the campaign, and again only saw the Senator a couple of times when he came to our particular area campaigning. I did go out with Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] on some of his forays and Franklin Roosevelt and a number of people in the state. I once was called on myself

to speak at a luncheon when they ran out of Kennedy girls. So I had an overall taste of the campaign but in a way from outside because I was really living with the people rather than traveling with the candidate.

FREDERICKS: Did your office carry much of the burden in the sense that the Senator brought his staff with him, or was the greater part of the burden carried by the local Democratic associations?

TURNURE: Well, really I would say it became Kennedy operations in each state. This is why people moved in. And of course when we started campaigning

politically, those of us who had been in the Senate had to go off the Senate payroll, and we became part of the campaign staff. There was much switching back and forth and traveling back and forth by various members of the staff. But in each case an advance group would go into the state and work with the local people and bring ten or twelve people who were Kennedy people, not necessarily Washington staff but friends like William Walton, who pitched in and came and took over an area, and Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings]....

FREDERICKS: Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline B. Kennedy] came out during the primaries, didn't she?

TURNURE: Yes, she did. She was very active in Wisconsin and then less active in West Virginia because she was then expecting John though it had not been announced, but she traveled quite a bit with the President. And was a marvelous asset, in some cases having to fill in and make speeches for him when he was called back unexpectedly for votes.

FREDERICKS: And this was really her first experience…

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: Person to person.

TURNURE: No, I correct myself on that because she worked very hard with him and traveling with him in 1958 when he was up for reelection in the Senate.

FREDERICKS: In Massachusetts.

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: How did the people respond to her at the time? I am thinking now of the raving crowds in Paris and Vienna -- did you see some of this personal appeal then?

TURNURE: Well, I think everyone was, you know, really in awe of her. First of all by her looks, by her manner. She really is quite a basically shy person, and I don't think that she really emerged herself until she became the wife of the President, and got self-confidence. In the beginning she really preferred to stand back and let the President be the important person.

FREDERICKS: But at the same moment she could come forward and pinch-hit….

TURNURE: Oh, she could. Always could. And I think her shyness was very appealing, but she didn't go out and overwhelm the people because she felt she should hang back. But then she grew and blossomed when she became the First Lady.

FREDERICKS: Did you feel that the President, then Senator, was elated during his West Virginia campaign, or did he seem tense and pushing even harder than ever, from what little you saw of his comings and goings?

TURNURE: I think in the beginning it probably was a very intense effort, and then there was a turning point when he made a televised speech and discussed the Catholic issue. It was one of those things that you just sensed it was so right, and from then on in it seemed like smooth sailing in the sense -- I know, I noticed in our own headquarters people who hadn't been in, and they used to just walk by and look in the window and not come in. But after the speech the same people when we were on a downtown street would come in and say, "Is there anything we can do to help?" And there really was an overnight change in the atmosphere.

FREDERICKS: And then you felt that his speech explaining his religious stands really cleared the air?

TURNURE: Yes, they really did.

FREDERICKS: Well, what about the returns the night in West Virginia when it became apparent that…

TURNURE: It was a very exciting night. I was in the local headquarters watching the returns come in. The President was then in Washington, and apparently he had gone off to a movie that night, and they had tried to find him. I think this was probably his way of relaxing from what was a very tense moment. They finally did find him, and he got on a plane and flew down to Charlestown, the headquarters there. Unfortunately, I wasn't there so I didn't see the atmosphere, but I know that was the turning point of the whole campaign.

FREDERICKS: From then on you all forged ahead.

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: After the Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries, you came back to Washington and stated, you did not go to Los Angeles?

TURNURE: I did not. This again was an example of the President's great

thoughtfulness. He wanted everybody on his staff to have a chance to participate in some way in the campaign, and so those of us who had been out in the field in Wisconsin and West Virginia came back so that those who stayed behind could go to the Convention. It was a marvelous experience for everyone.

FREDERICKS: And I am sure much appreciated in the office.

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: And after the Convention, then came the big campaign. Do you have any memories of that that are….

[-10-]

TURNURE: Oh, goodness! The marvelous spirit of it all. I was working as the secretary on the trip for both Pierre Salinger and the pressmen and for the speech writers, and it was…. Consider the atmosphere of a traveling company of a road show or circus or something -- this marvelous spirit that people get from working together or traveling together. Airplanes are really our home, and the candidate was then traveling on the *Caroline*, and we had one press plane and one staff plane that followed behind and many, many exciting moments and this marvelous feeling that we really were headed in the right direction. And I guess the turning point there was the first debate, which again had been so right, and the next day out in the streets in Ohio people were hanging out the windows, screaming and yelling and so excited about seeing him that we knew this was the tide that was sweeping him in the right direction.

FREDERICKS: All this was certainly a great instrument in this campaign, working the right way all the way.

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: For the President.

TURNURE: And he worked hard for that, the debate. I can remember people saying from Nixon's [Richard M. Nixon] camp that Nixon had been a high school debater and class valedictorian and was very experienced, and as I said before, Kennedy was no known for his speaking ability, and this really was the most incredible upset because no one had expected this, and yet he really prepared that afternoon of the first debate. It was a free day in Chicago for everyone, and he closeted himself in the hotel and really did his homework on this, and took the initiative from the beginning in the debate so that it became something that Nixon had to keep answering him rather than stating his own views.

FREDERICKS: Pam, I think quite a bit has been written about the Senator's ability to hold

facts, that he was just a perfect truckload of facts at all times, and that

[-11-]

his powers of retention, of details, served him in very good stead. Did you see him, or were you with people who talked to him when he came out of his first encounter?

TURNURE: Well, I really wasn't because we went right off after that. He had to make a stop right away at a shopping center just outside of Chicago, and it was everybody exuberantly spilling out of the CBS studio and going on to the next stop.

FREDERICKS: But did he feel as he came out of the studio that he had won? There was an exuberance?

TURNURE: Yes, definitely.

FREDERICKS: And how was his reception at the shopping center?

TURNURE: Oh, very, very warm. And people with signs up like for baseball games, like, one home run for John Kennedy. And right away people….

FREDERICKS: Moving from the great debate series with Nixon on to election night, could you reminisce a little bit for us there?

TURNURE: I was working with the group -- there must have been, I guess, twelve of us -- who set up headquarters in the Attorney General's [Robert F. Kennedy] house in Hyannis, and we had a battery of telephones, and we each were assigned four or five states to handle. And our men in the field were going to call in and give us the returns just a fraction ahead of the way they were coming in on the television from other sources. Then Lou Harris the pollster was there with his slide rule, and as we'd get the returns, we'd write them down and give to somebody to rush them upstairs, and he would project it to see how we were going to do. And it was an unbelievably calm evening for the longest time, I think until the returns from Connecticut started to come in. And then we sensed that something was about to happen. And more and more people started drifting over to the house, the Attorney General had been there all along and Mrs. Robert Kennedy; the senior Kennedys came over, family friends, the Ted Kennedys.

[-12-]

And finally the candidate himself came over and just sat in the back of the room -- there was coffee being served and things to eat -- and just rather quietly by himself watched the television, and occasionally he would reach over when he would see a flurry that a late return was coming in on the phone and see what the vote was. But he impressed me so much

by his air of calm. And at one point it looked so good that we all started clapping and congratulating him, and he said, "It's much too soon to tell." But we said, "It's certain, it's certain!" But he said "No." And we watched for a while longer, and it still looked very good. Finally he stood up and said, "Well, I think I'll go to bed." And he got up and left the room. So he never took it for granted then, and he didn't want…

FREDERICKS: Did you feel that he was holding in? You mentioned that at times of deep personal concern there was a definite withdrawal….

TURNURE: Yes, of holding in and masking his real feelings, but I'm sure that he must have been pleased that everybody else was so pleased, but he just didn't want to give in right then and be overly self-confident. He wanted to wait until the facts were absolutely definite.

FREDERICKS: So he was very cautious and self-contained.

TURNURE: Yes, very much so.

FREDERICKS: What about the Attorney General who worked so hard as the campaign director?

TURNURE: I'd say he was probably more excited about it but again very interested in the facts and to keep those figures coming in and to keep checking them out. And those of us who were working there on the phone just didn't want to give up. We just, you know, it got to be the wee hours of the morning, and there really wasn't anything to watch on the television, but he kept hoping somebody would call from the state and that something would happen. And finally he said he was going up to bed too and did we want to stay? We felt then we should go back to where we were staying and come back first thing in the morning.

FREDERICKS: When did you get the definite victory tally?

TURNURE: I guess it was the following morning. And I recall we finally did not go back to the Attorney General's house because there really wasn't any work to be done. None of us went to bed. We found a place that was open and went and had breakfast in town and went back to our motels, and then we finally got the call that there was a press conference at the Armory, and that must have been about 10 in the morning, as I recall. It took that long. Also I think that at one point we were all so exuberant because I believe Hagerty [James C. Hagerty] had sent a telegram from Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] by mistake in advance of Nixon's loss and the telegram arrived, and everyone gleefully said, "Well, here it is." And as I recall, the President said, "You know, I haven't heard from Nixon yet. It would be nice to have, but you can't go by this."

FREDERICKS: But the next day at the armory…

TURNURE: It was a very moving, marvelous, wonderful moment. Even though it had dwindled down, it was victory. And everyone had worked so hard, and there was a wonderful atmosphere. Very exciting.

FREDERICKS: Then all of you on the staff came back to Washington?

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: Had your futures been assigned and planned in case of victory? Were you, for instance…

TURNURE: No, for most cases this was a very difficult period of not knowing just what was going to happen. Not a difficult period, but just a period where our first duty was to clean up the office and pack up things to go to archives and start clearing out. One of the first things the President did do, though, was to call everybody in and to say, "I want you all to know there will be a place for all of you." And while he couldn't promise specific positions to everyone, he did call them all in so that there wouldn't be this feeling of….

[-14-]

FREDERICKS: Uncertainty.

TURNURE: Uncertainty. But still one, you know, didn't know quite what to plan for, but there was plenty to keep us busy in the office.

FREDERICKS: I'm sure there was. I have a note here that John's birth shortly followed the election.

TURNURE: Yes, at Thanksgiving.

FREDERICKS: At the end of the month, wasn't it?

TURNURE: That's right.

FREDERICKS: And was that a great moment in the President's…

TURNURE: Oh, I certainly think so because he had gone to Florida right after the election to try to get a little sun and rest -- it was a very very grueling thing for him, for everyone -- and then had come back for Thanksgiving. Mrs. Kennedy wasn't traveling then because the baby's birth was imminent. He came back

for Thanksgiving dinner with her and Caroline in the house in Georgetown and then was planning to go back to Florida for a few more days before coming back to Washington in early December to work. He was really commuting back and forth, and again he had thoughtfully arranged for all members of the staff to go down on alternative trips to Florida.

I was on the trip going down right after Thanksgiving, and I was on the advance plane, the press plane. We landed, and normally cars would have been there, and we would have driven right off to where we were going, and they said, "You have to wait at the airport. Nobody's to leave the airport." And we didn't know what had happened. His plane was slower than ours, and we had to wait for about forty-five minutes. Finally, it landed, and he got off the plane and was taken straight into the airport, which I thought was rather peculiar because normally he would have gone and got into his car. And he came out, and his face was absolutely ashen. They'd arranged for him to go on the press plane back to Washington because of the fact that it was faster than the Caroline, and of course he had been told that Mrs. Kennedy had been rushed to the hospital, the baby was coming. And then I did not come back from

this stay because there was only one plane going back, and we got the news that she had a son and all was well. But it was a time of crisis for him to be repeated later on really where his first duty was to his family, and yet he had to carry on with his work as well. And it was a difficult time.

FREDERICKS: I think that after the birth of the President's son, Inauguration night remains a high point in memories of the new President. Do you have any tales to tell of what happened, who went where, the President's reactions?

TURNURE: Well, I was very privileged to see the President the night of the Inauguration, purely by chance. I went to the Inaugural Ball at the Armory, and one will recall Washington had been in the midst of the most incredible blizzard over that whole period of time and transportation problems were just desperate, and people were going in every possible conveyance to the Armory. I was lucky and had been with a friend in a car, and we were late getting there so we just abandoned our car in a snowdrift right outside the Armory and took the chance that it would be towed away. But we decided we would be better off without it if it was, came out, and sure enough, the car was there so we got in it.

At this moment a man came running up desperately calling my name, and it was Joe Alsop. And he said, "I am glad to see somebody with a car. I can't find our card and driver. Would you give me a ride back to my house? I am expecting some people to come by after the Inauguration Ball." So we said we were delighted to do it, and en route he said, "I insist you come in for a drink and scrambled eggs or something." And you know, "Please do stay." Well, we got there to his house in Georgetown, and there was a very cold, frosty group of people standing on the sidewalk locked out because Joe Alsop had not gotten back, and he

rushed in and let them in. It was a very congenial group of, I don't know, in all, some other people arrived, ten or twelve people.

Joe asked me if I would help cooking the scrambled eggs and the terrapin, and I was in the kitchen when there was a knock at the door, and Joe went to the door and who was standing on the doorstep but the President, who had decided at the end of the evening to drop by his old friend's house. And it was a most

[-16-]

exciting moment because it was really everyone's first chance to see the President as President but in his old surroundings, and to a man, everyone got to their feet, and it was suddenly no longer the Senator or Jack, whatever people may have called him, but Mr. President. And I can't really adequately describe the electric feeling that was in that room. I mean everyone so proud and excited to be there. And yet there he was as natural as ever and the same. He talked quite candidly that night about Eisenhower and how impressed he had been by the changed look in him within the span of a few minutes with all the cares lifted off his shoulders, how he suddenly seemed to become more youthful right in front of his eyes. He talked about the responsibilities of the presidency. It was really a fascinating evening and a very candid one, I think, his reflections on the job ahead and…

FREDERICKS: Can you remember the gist of some of his reflections?

TURNURE: If you stop for one minute, I'll try to collect. the main thing I can remember his discussing was the fact that he thought the country had turned out to be a lot more conservative than one had been conscious of during the campaign, and he reflected back on the election returns and the fact that this must be some indication of that. And that, you know, the first year was going to be a difficult year, and one would have to work very hard. But this predominant thought: what a conservative country this had become. And I think he talked of it in terms of having come as a surprise, and that it wasn't what they thought it would be. And then the rest of the conversations was about the various parties they had been to, the Inaugural parade, and family things.

Someone told the story of watching the parade sort of from the end of Pennsylvania Avenue just beyond the White House where it terminated, and standing there in a crowd of people who were all facing down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the Capitol watching the parade and beyond that to the empty streets, and seeing a black limousine come by with a man and woman sitting in the back and nobody looking in that direction except this one man who just happened to be there. And a hand reached out and waved, and it was Richard Nixon on his way out of the Capitol and everyone was, in a way, appalled by this, how quickly the transition is. And I think the President was particularly -- one day you're there, and the next second you can be forgotten.

[-17-]

FREDERICKS: A somebody's a nobody in a matter of hours.

TURNURE: And then he didn't stay, I don't think, for more than probably an hour and fifteen minutes, but it was probably an important moment, having been through this incredible day, to come and unbend a bit with the old friends. And yet everyone else was really in awe of him because he was the President.

FREDERICKS: So even old friends' roles are inevitably altered by this. Pam, your life was changed certainly after Inauguration. I can't remember just when it was announced that you would be Mrs. Kennedy's press secretary. Can you discuss your new role and your new job and the problems you had?

TURNURE: Well, I was appointed just prior to the Inauguration, about ten days before, and was in Florida then to see Mrs. Kennedy and discuss my job. It was announced, and I started answering questions about two minutes later. That was a real baptism by fire. And then it started in the White House, I guess, at 9 o'clock the next morning after Inauguration. The President asked for everyone to be in their offices, and we just went right in and started to work, and in the beginning I was mainly concerned with questions about Mrs. Kennedy getting settled in the house; the plans for decorating the private quarters; the plans for bringing the children up from Florida because she had left them there for this period until she got the house settled. And then as she started doing more things my work became more involved.

FREDERICKS: Well, did Mrs. Kennedy work out with you some sort of policy about the press?

TURNURE: Yes, she did. She wrote me a very long letter, first of all, when she asked me to take on this job, outlining her feelings about privacy to make sure we understood one another and what could be said and what couldn't be said and what was public information and what would not be, and from the very beginning, it was very clear to me that she would do everything to protect her children and her

family life and that she would give her all in her public role but that the other role belonged to her family. So it was very easy to work for her because she was always very precise in spelling out how she wanted things to be done. I had excellent guidelines.

But there were problems simply because they were a most attractive family and people were interested, and even though you would explain we would not be answering questions of this kind and that kind, still they would come, and if we would not be having picture taking sessions with the children, they would still wait in the streets for them to come out on some excursion and still the pictures would be taken. So the first really big challenge was to try, in a way, to be in a protective role rather than in a role of giving out information. I never had to work at creating any kind of image for the family because they were themselves

and people were always interested, and whatever information was available was readily picked up.

FREDERICKS: Pam, did the President work with Mrs. Kennedy on deciding what would or would not be public information or was this something that was a matter of her temperament and taste?

TURNURE: I would say it was a matter of her temperament and taste. We ended up having jokes about it because it was a sort of…. I was aligned with Mrs. Kennedy against the President and Pierre. I mean, he just adored his family and was perfectly willing, you know, to have whatever came naturally come out, and she felt it would be hard on the children. So there were a few stories which were done, which, as I say, we joked about because they were cooked up when she was away or I was away, by Pierre or the President. But one of the things that, happily, was done, and she has mentioned since, was the *Look* stories and pictures of John and his father because that was done when she was away and without my knowledge. And at the time we were both livid about it, yet the pictures were the most attractive pictures. But then it became a blessing that they had been taken. They'll be something for John to see when he grows up.

[-19-]

FREDERICKS: Was Mrs. Kennedy livid about it even after they were in *Look*, and she could see what a very personable image this made for the President?

TURNURE: No, she wasn't. As I said, once she had seen the pictures -- and they really were so appealing and attractive….

FREDERICKS: Her heart must have melted over those pictures.

TURNURE: They certainly did. But…

FREDERICKS: This was the kind of thing that she really did not want, though.

TURNURE: She really bent over backwards to keep the children out of the limelight, and we had many many discussions with the photographers and asked them to please not take pictures through the fence at the White House when the children were out playing because it didn't seem fair; this was the only place they had to play. And yet with telephoto lenses their pictures would be all over the papers. And we had a sort of moratorium for a while, and then there'd be another spring day and a new activity of the children, and it was natural that someone would take a picture of it. So I think we all became used to it, but it was the thing she liked the least about public life.

FREDERICKS: What displeased her about the press reports on herself on the President?

TURNURE: I never heard her comment about herself. If something might have displeased her about the President, a report about him -- she had such a marvelous intense loyalty to him…. I would get more upset about press things that I thought were not fair to her, and she would be the one who would calm me down about it and say, "Well, you know, I don't read those things. Don't pay attention to it. What's water over the damn is gone. Don't worry about it."

[-20-]

FREDERICKS: Did you work with Pierre, with the exception of the pictures of little John? Was there some attempt to coordinate the press coverage?

TURNURE: There was on, well, major releases I did with Pierre, generally the announcement would be made at Pierre's briefing, whatever it might be -- something like the Fine Arts Committee establishment or a major trip Mrs. Kennedy was taking would be done in Pierre's wing. The day-to-day things I handled myself -- the twenty or thirty queries that one gets in the White House about what's going on. Her engagements were all handled separately. I used to brief a small group of reporters quite often on our sides as opposed to over at Pierre's briefing.

FREDERICKS: Would those be reporters from the women's page?

TURNURE: Yes, the distaff side, the women's page. And then I would handle the arrangements for the coverage by reporters at state dinners and receptions and things of that kind and set up the guidelines for the press office on the photographers. This again was a problem because Mrs. Kennedy always felt that a dinner in the White House should be a most beautifully possible thing and to have a lot of photographers and lights would detract from it and be distracting to the guests. And so we did have a lot of give and take in this department but finally worked it out to set up photo shoot on the stairway, and occasionally we would let a special come in to cover and important dinner like the Casals [Pablo Casals] dinner, the Nobel Prize dinner, or the Malraux [Andre Malraux] dinner. But her instincts were always toward the comfort of her guests, the well-being of her family, and she would, I think, rather have had some bad press because she didn't let them in than to inconvenience the people she asked to the house as guests.

FREDERICKS: Was the President interested in her side of the press coverage? We have always been told that he was an avid reader of newspapers and chewed through any number in the morning.

TURNURE: He was very interested and very proud of her in what she did and was quick to call to say, "That was a very good story today about such and such. That

worked out well and was handled well." He did read the women's pages.

FREDERICKS: Pam, we talked about image, and you say the Kennedys didn't -- that no image was needed to be created for them because they were so dynamic and so attractive that the public interest was all very sharply focused. We talked last time about the political problems of Mrs. Kennedy's going abroad after the loss of the baby, Patrick. As I recall, there was a lot of very popular press at the time of her first private vacation in the Mediterranean, handled in a way that evoked criticism of her -- or if not expressly stated, one felt undercurrents of criticism.

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: Was the White House aware of this? Were they…

TURNURE: I would say that we had a certain degree of mail on this, but this was something that really was a decision between the President and Mrs. Kennedy that she should go. And it really amounted to be a private matter between them.

FREDERICKS: Are you talking about the first or the second trip? I am talking about her first trip before Patrick was born, when she vacationed.

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: Fine. I was unclear….

TURMURE: Yes, when she went to Ravello, Italy.

FREDERICKS: With her sister.

TURNURE: Yes, this was…. The White House, I think, is a place that everyone needs to have an outlet from, and different people get their outlets in different ways. And the Kennedys worked out their arrangement in that respect, whether it was to go to the country for weekends or go to Florida in the winter or it was a very good change for

Mrs. Kennedy to get away on a trip of this kind in the summer, and then she could come to what was really a grueling schedule for a woman. She has never been a strong woman. As well as she looks, she doesn't have a lot of stamina and staying power. So this really was something that was considered a private matter. And yes, we did get some mail on it which

we just thanked people for writing in and expressing their opinions. I don't think that that sort of thing was ever a major problem.

FREDERICKS: It wasn't a major problem for you nor was it a matter of any major concern to the President, I take it?

TURNURE: Never to the President because when he made up his mind about something, that was all….

FREDERICKS: That was the end, there and then. Of course, so much has been written about Mrs. Kennedy's lovely appearance and her clothes. A great deal of the publicity, as I recall it, was what she wore, how she looked, as well as her graciousness. As I recall, there was a small flurry about what the President himself wore and how he looked and his haircut and his barber, and whether he wore buttoned down shirts or didn't. Can you bring this more vividly into focus?

TURNURE: The only thing I can remember was he was absolutely furious when by some strange happening, at a picture-taking session in his office, a photographer from I think it was *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, a man's magazine to do with men's fashions, was there and took a picture of him, and it was on the cover of it. And he was absolutely livid at whoever had been responsible for the man being there. So he certainly didn't like that sort of thing to be played up, but I think he was always aware of one's appearance and very quick to comment to anybody about, you know, if they have their hair restyled or it was a new dress, he always noticed these things. And he might tease a man in his office for wearing a shirt that he would say was out of style. So he certainly was aware of how one should look, but he did not like it played up on his own behalf.

And he was a very good natured needler about various things. Once when he felt he was getting overweight and was going on a diet, he started a sort of competition in the White House offices

and would tell various people that he thought they should go on one too, and it would be anyone from Pierre to the secretaries in the office. And he'd say, "How are you doing on the diet?"

FREDERICKS: Was he interested in Mrs. Kennedy's clothes and appearance? Did he have favorites? What was his role in helping this image which was a very beautiful one?

TURNUE: Well, I think she decided herself but, I am certain, asked him if he liked various things. I think he always was very proud of her taste and how she

looked and, of course, was particularly proud in Paris where she dazzled everyone.

FREDERICKS: Pam, you mentioned Paris… Oh, but before we go to Paris, I want to ask you one more thing about press and press coverage. When you came into the White House, it was a transition period for all of you. Did you feel that there was some disruption in your press relations? Was there a little jarring and hitching until the press accommodated itself to a new regime?

TURNURE: No, none whatsoever. I would say it was very smooth moving in. There had been so much going on between checking on the well-being of baby John and plans for the house. I think the press is always interested in whoever is in the White House and that the beginning is the easiest part probably. It is later on as things begin to fall into a pattern or they perhaps come to expect more than they should on every occasion that problems crop up. But I would say the beginning is always a very glowing and happy period. It's later on when perhaps they are left without major things to write about that they start to look to the little things. Mrs. Kennedy was always very actively involved in something, and her press was about things she did. The Fine Arts Committee was a very important thing, and the press was a great help on that and followed all of the changes made in the White House.

FREDERICKS: Well, I remember there was a series, oh, I think of eight articles, wasn't it, by Marie McNair or Maxine Cheshire -- no, I think Maxine Cheshire did

those -- with beautiful color prints of the rooms that certainly called it to the attention of Washington readers to the White House. Did you work with her on that?

TURNURE: Well, that's a very funny example because it just showed how if one is inside on something, one gets one impression, and if one is reading it, one gets another. That particular series of articles was very upsetting to those of us who worked on it, but apparently it made a very satisfactory impression on the reading public. But it is one of those cases where the reporter felt there must be more beneath the surface than had been given out and did spend a great deal of time trying to ferret out another…. I think we are just going to have to erase this whole thing because I am not going to get into it.

FREDERICKS: Well, let me…

TURNURE: I tell you I don't think it serves any useful purpose if I get into it because the things are too small and too technical….

FREDERICKS: I understand, I think, what you have in mind, and I think this again, as you

say, just serves to prove a point that the reader and the press person are not always of the same mind. And where you might have expected antipathies to be aroused by how much a piece cost or the finagling for this or that, I think you probably got an absolutely fascinated response from your readers because…

TURNURE: We did.

FREDERICKS: … everyone furnishes a home.

TURNURE: And we were aware of the things behind the scenes that went on, but in this case I just felt that there was some misrepresentation on the part of the reporter to get some of the information for the article. One of the great challenges of working on a project like this is that you want to have something absolutely perfect before it is unveiled, and it is frustrating to the people who are working on it if a reporter goes in and finds out in advance, say, something

like the Blue Room is now going to be basically white. Timing is very important on this, and this was one very sensitive area where Mrs. Kennedy was desperately worried that, you know, this would become a Truman balcony for the Kennedy Administration. And yet they had gone through their plans thoroughly; they had done their research; there was no reason why the room had to be blue; this would be a much more beautiful room if it were white with blue curtains and blue upholstery. But it's the sort of thing that just makes you frantic if you're working on it, and it comes out ahead of time.

FREDERICKS: You really didn't receive negative letters on it, or did you?

TURNURE: We did get some, yes, because the Blue Room was suddenly going to be white. And we wanted to wait until the room was done so that it could speak for itself. And as soon as it was opened, everyone raved about it and said how could it have been that dreary blue before and, you know, what a great change it was. But we did suffer through the period until the room was finished because everyone pictured sort of white wall-to-wall everything which, of course, wouldn't have been appropriate.

FREDERICKS: Well, this was simply an instance of where your struggles with the press were really painful to you and to Mrs. Kennedy as well.

TURNURE: And yet the public was unaware that there was any problem.

FREDERICKS: Was the President interested in this series of articles at the time? Did he….

TURNURE: Yes, he was. And he was very much interested in the whole restoration

program, and very proud. He would take state visitors around and show them what had been done, and really was up on everything. He knew the history of things that had been collected. Another important decision was to stain all the floors a very dark color. They had all originally been very light wood, and the President came down one night after dinner with Mrs. Kennedy and saw a sample on the

[-26-]

floor and said, "I think that's absolutely right." You know, "If it's right, we should do it. And we can take the criticism of people who resent change, saying how could you stain the floors which were put in in 1952." So he was a great champion of her efforts and very, very proud of what she did there.

FREDERICKS: Well, did he have any especially favorite piece, Pam? Was any room more interesting to him than another?

TURNURE: I think he was probably most fascinated by the Lincoln Room. They both were. That was the room in which they lived, first of all, when they first came to the White House because the private quarters were in a complete state of upheaval and had to be redecorated and the furnishings moved in. And then his sense of history prevailed there, and this is the room he most often showed to people.

FREDERICKS: Pam, while we are talking about the restoration of the White House and the President's interest in it, it occurs to me that this would be a time when you really were very hard at work with the press and the press relations because of the beautiful television program that was made, I believe by CBS.

TURNURE: Well, this was, I would say, really a milestone in Mrs. Kennedy emerging as a person of great talent and great ability. This was really the American public's first opportunity to take a close look at her and, of course, most important to her, to take a close look at what had been done to the house. And this was the project she cared about the most, the restoration of the White House. In the same way that she would have done anything to help her husband's candidacy for the presidency, she felt the same way about the restoration of the White House. And they were at a stage where they still needed help, more funds, more objects, more paintings, more furniture, so this was something she had never done before, and yet it was presented to her as something that she could really spell out and do in the way she wanted to do it. It wouldn't be a production prearranged by somebody else. It would represent exactly how she wanted to do it and what she wanted to show in the House. So they were a very good team to work with.

[-27-]

We spent, oh, I'd say three or four months mapping this out, and there was always the moment of thinking, "Well, maybe if the library is finished, we can still have time to put that

in." And, of course, the problems of working ahead and having to tape ahead. But she really threw herself wholeheartedly into this project during the tour, and the President was very interested in it but really wanted her to be the leading lady in it. But he was asked to participate in some way in it because they felt this was an historic program and that it wouldn't be complete if he didn't come in for a moment. So it finally was agreed that he would come in, and he asked me to get some material, the curator to get some material and history of the house and things for him to study. And he really did his homework on it, too, as to what he would say. And we spent a whole day working with Mrs. Kennedy taping the program. Then at the end of the day the President had a press conference, and he was to come right over after that and join her in the Treaty Room and to say a few words about the restoration program. He came over from a particularly grueling press conference and was still keyed up and in that same intense level that he had been on in the press conference, and he went through the taping.

Then they had a few friends in for dinner that night, and they asked if they could look at the tape. And the call came that evening after he had seen it that he felt his role hadn't been up to her role and that he could do much better and that he really looked pale next to her performance and he'd like to do it again. So they arranged to tape it again a few days later. But he was so proud of her in the way she handled this narration job and was calling the next day to see what telegrams had come in and what the press reviews were on it, and he really was proud as though he had been a part of the entire thing.

FREDERICKS: Pam, what response was there?

TURNURE: Oh, great. Just overwhelming. I can't tell you how many tens of thousands of letters and wires we got about it, and the money came in, everything from children sending in their allowances to quite sizeable contributions -- several thousands of dollars from the American public. I think we answered mail on the program for six months after it was shown.

FREDERICKS: Gracious! Can you give just a rough estimate of what your total intake was from public response after the program?

TURNURE: It would be difficult to guess that figure, but I would say in thousands of dollars.

FREDERICKS: Thousands of dollars came in after that?

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: Did CBS make any contribution for the privilege of having done this?

TURNURE: They did make a contribution, but it was not in connection with this. We

got many corporation contributions, but this was not a part of doing it. Actually, the program was pooled and made available for showing to NBC and ABC.

FREDERICKS: I see. Who first thought of televising the White House, and was it construed as a means to arouse public interest or as simply to….

TURNURE: Actually, they came to us. Perry Wolff, the producer of the program called me and said he had an idea and would like to see me. And he came down in September that year, and we discussed it. And I thought it was a marvelous idea, and I did a long memo to Mrs. Kennedy saying I really thought it would be a very important thing to do not only for herself but for the restoration program. She said she would discuss it with the President. She sent me a note back saying that yes, he thought it was a good idea and would I get to work doing the groundwork on it and then to pick a day for it. And it was from September to January before we were ready to do it.

FREDERICKS: Heavens!

TURNURE: But one of the reasons for the delay was that they were working on the house, and they wanted to be able to show as much as possible and yet have it

at a good time of the year, but there was this agonizing note would a room be finished and could they do it on the television program?

FREDERICKS: It all went very well. Pam, I am going to leave the White House now to ask you about the trips abroad. I believe that the first trip that the President made was to Canada, was it not?

TURNURE: Yes, I did not go on that trip, but it was the first trip Mrs. Kennedy took, and there she really…. It was quite a brief visit so she was mainly with him. I think she went to an art gallery and to a Canadian Mounted Police exhibition and was very warmly received even though she hadn't been out on this intensive schedule by herself.

FREDERICKS: I see. But you did go in 1961 on the trip to France and England, did you not? In June?

TURNURE: Yes I did. And that was, of course, when she really emerged as an individual in her own right.

FREDERICKS: That was the trip on which the President went on to Vienna afterward,

wasn't it, for negotiations with Khrushchev?

TURNURE: That's right.

FREDERICKS: And had stopped to check with De Gaulle on his way, and he and De Gaulle produced a united front, as it were, on the Berlin situation at least. How did the President react to this trip and what effect did he and Mrs. Kennedy hope to create together? What kind of teamwork was there on a trip abroad of this sort? I take it that this was the first really major foreign policy plus personal appearance?

TURNURE: Yes, it was. I honestly couldn't talk about the effect they wanted to create because I never heard them discuss anything like that. I think

they would go as themselves and hope that it would be a successful visit in terms of whatever negotiations he might have to make and just seeing the people. The President always enjoyed these trips, but I believe he had some reservations about how much they meant, in all honesty, in terms of a lasting thing. They meant a great deal to them because the response, you know, was a very heartening thing, but I don't believe he thought this was the most satisfactory way to solve the world's problems, a three day visit to a country.

FREDERICKS: No. Was Mrs. Kennedy aware of the political purposes of his trip? I don't mean aware in the sense…. Obviously she knew what they were, but she was keenly concerned with that or was the haste of the trip and the demand of the public appearances such that she really…

TURNURE: Obviously, the President and Mrs. Kennedy discussed these things personally, but her public role and the one which she set for herself was to be at his side but not to speak on these matters. This was his role. He was the leader both of the nation and as far as their family was concerned. I am sure she was very much interested in what he was doing, but they reserved this for private moments, these discussions.

FREDERICKS: Now what was your role in the trip to England and France and Vienna, and how did it go?

TURNURE: I went to England and France. We split up. Tish Baldrige [Letitia Baldrige] and I were together in France, and then she went to Austria, and I went to England, so we covered both parts at the same time.

FREDERICKS: Pam, we have been talking about the trip in June of 1961 which the President and Mrs. Kennedy made to France and England and to Austria

for the much heralded and awaited discussions with Premier Khrushchev. Do you recall the President's having any reactions conversationally that you heard concerning either President de Gaulle or Premier Khrushchev?

[-31-]

TURNURE: Well I think that the trips to France and to England were very satisfactory experiences with the added measure of the excitement over the response to Mrs. Kennedy. I do know that the President's back was starting to bother him quite a bit, and by the time he left Vienna to come to England, he was in some pain. And by the time he got back to the United States reflecting on the Khrushchev talks, I'd say, as far as I know, this was a pretty low point in his Administration and that he was discouraged by the talks with Khrushchev and did mention on several occasions about what the bomb meant and what it meant in terms of the children -- and being a great family man, his own children, but also all children -- and how unfair it would be to future generations for this to happen. And I think he was quite low and depressed when he got back from that trip.

FREDERICKS: Did he ever say anything about Khrushchev as as person, that he was difficult to talk to, or that his manner was…

TURNURE: He was very tough, very tough. And unbending and cold.

FREDERICKS: After that trip of the President's as I recall, there were other trips abroad: in '61, again to Columbia and Venezuela; in '62 Mrs. Kennedy went to India in March; and in June the President went to Mexico. His most recent trip in '63 was in June, and this time he went to Ireland, Italy, and Germany at the time, for the Berlin wall situation tension was very high, and he had, as I recall from the papers, a very triumphal personal appearance in Germany and particularly in Berlin with his statement, "*Ich bin ein Berliner*." Could you recall some of your memories of that trip?

TURNURE: Well, I think that the trip to Germany started out at a marvelous pace not to be expected really in advance, and the reception in Cologne and the reception in Bonn were quite overwhelming and really set the pace for the important part, which was the trip to Berlin. I was there on the trip helping out Mrs. Shriver [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] who was acting as the President's hostess. Mrs. Kennedy's sister, Mrs. Radziwill [Lee Radziwill], also came on the trip. So I was

[-32-]

working with them and going on side trips with them, but I did have occasion to be together at the house a couple of times where they were all staying to see the President. One night was in Wiesbaden prior to going to Berlin the following morning, and he asked a number of staff people and his sister-in-law and his sister and myself to come for dinner in his suite. And we were sitting at dinner that night and talking about the trip to Berlin, and he turned to a

member of the party who was fluent in German and said, "Now, I really want to have some special message to give to the Berliners tomorrow. It will mean so much, and I want to end with a very stirring ringing phrase." And then he suddenly said, "*Ich bin ein Berliner*." He made her write it out, and then he'd say it, and she would correct his pronunciation. And he spent about ten minutes during the dinner just going over it and perfecting it, and he said, "I will do this tomorrow." He called somebody and said, "I want to work in this phrase." And the whole thing just evolved very quickly, but the meaning that it had…

FREDERICKS: He wanted to put some really personal…

TURNURE: Yes, he didn't just want to make a speech about the principles and ideals of the East and the West but something to show that he personally identified…

FREDERICKS: I think that the USIA [United States Information Agency] film on his trip to Berlin shows very clearly that his instincts were right, that….

TURNURE: Absolutely. There was an overwhelming crowd, an overwhelming response. And from there he went on to Ireland which was a very sentimental journey and one which meant a great deal to him I think. And that became more sort of going away for the weekend. And this was a trip that was to show affection on both sides and nothing to be gained either way. Nobody wanted United States aid for this or that, so it was a very relaxed, marvelous trip, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

FREDERICKS: Did he enjoy meeting his relatives or at least his kin?

TURNURE: Oh, very, very much and very, very proud of his Irish ties and associations.

FREDERICKS: Any particular stories on that? Any jokes or laughs afterwards telling about it?

TURNURE: Oh, endless conversations afterwards. Again a great example of his thoughtfulness was that he arranged for the old staff members from his Senate days -- and there were many Irish girls, girls of Irish descent -- to go over on the trip, and he was always thinking of something of this kind. What could he do for the people who served him? And so it became a great, sort of really a club who had been on the trip to Ireland, and it came up many times in conversations reminiscing about the trip.

FREDERICKS: What part of it did he enjoy the most in his reminiscences of it?

TURNURE: It is difficult to say because of the many contrasts between speaking at the universities and being in Dublin and then going out to the family. I

suppose going to the town from whence his ancestors came, Wexford.

FREDERICKS: Pam, yesterday with Nancy [Nancy Tuckerman] we covered almost all of the rest of the summer of '63, the highpoint being the tragic death of Patrick Kennedy, and we discussed also the autumn plans for the campaign and the change of pace in the White House thinking and planning, and talked even a little bit about the plans for going down to Dallas and Mrs. Kennedy's confirmation to the press that she would indeed campaign with her husband, and we left it at that. Pam, can you pick up from there?

TURNURE: Well, the highpoint of the trip on Mrs. Kennedy's part I think would be the speech she made to the Mexican-American group in Forth Worth. And I was concerned with working on that and working out press coverage on that speech. Except for that one speaking engagement on her own she would be accompanying the President wherever he went. It was quite a grueling schedule, and there was some concern about whether she would be able to keep up, and she said yes

she would. The one thing that she thought she might not be able to do was the early morning breakfast at Fort Worth before they left for Dallas, but she was able to get ready, and the President made his comment when he came into breakfast that she would be down soon, it took her a little bit longer than most of them, but she ended up looking so much better.

From Fort Worth after breakfast we motorcade to the airport and flew to Dallas, which actually was a very quick trip because in air miles it is just about five minutes away. So it took longer to get up in the jet and come down than it did to fly there. The whole thinking took about twenty-five minutes. And we were met at the airport in Dallas, and I can remember reading on the plane a copy of the *Dallas Morning News* which had a terrible advertisement in it: "John Kennedy, Why Are You Coming to Dallas?" And everybody was horrified at it, and people had some qualms about going to Dallas but never thinking that anything major would happen. It was simply because of what had happened to Adlai Stevenson on his visit, and it was known to be a city where some erratic people lived, but no one ever thought of anything serious happening.

I was on a bus in the motorcade with Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln and Mary Gallagher, who was on the trip, and Dr. Burkley [George G. Burkley] and Elizabeth Carpenter, from Johnson's staff, and Jack Valenti, who met us at the airport and was looking after us to make sure we got to the luncheon and got a seat and so forth. And I can remember everybody commenting in the motorcade about how wonderful the crowds were, it was very exciting, and thinking, "Well, it really takes the President to change people because there couldn't be a more welcoming, friendly group?" and how marvelous it was. And all went along well until we got to a point where I looked ahead, and it looked like it was where the highway crossed over railroad tracks and around the square where the Texas Book Depository is, and we were far enough back in the motorcade to be halted to a complete stop when the shooting took place.

FREDERICKS: Did you hear shots?

TURNURE: I didn't hear anything -- yes, I did hear something that sounded like firecrackers. And I can remember thinking we must be there because this looks like the entrance to something. I had no idea of what the

[-35-]

building looked like where we were going for the luncheon, but I thought we must be there, and I turned to Evelyn Lincoln and said, "Do you think we've arrived. Look at all the crowds coming forward." Everybody surged forward, and she said, "No, I don't think we've gone far enough. I think it's further away." And then pretty soon we started picking up speed, and we went through, what seemed to me, quite a long way, and then we got to the place where the luncheon was to be, the Trade Mart, and I do remember Evelyn Lincoln commething that "That's strange" because all the people were still lined up outside the building, the expectant crowds, and had the President gone in, obviously the crowds would have dispersed. And they were still lined up behind the police barricades, and no cars were there but our motorcade, which included most of the press.

Just about everyone except the first few cars went around the back of the Trade Mart where we were to go in to get our seats. And we rushed in thinking that perhaps we were late or something, you know, that's why people were still standing around. And I went up to a man -- we didn't have tickets, but we were supposed to be shown in -- and Jack Valenti and somebody else from Dallas explained who we were, and the man said, "I'm terribly sorry, but you can't come in." And we said, "But we have to go to the luncheon, we're traveling in the President's party." And he just said, "I'm sorry, you can't come in." So we all got out our White House passes, and he said, "I am sorry, but you can't come in." And we said, "Well, what are we supposed to do?" And he said, "Well, I don't know, but we're not letting anybody in this way."

Just at that moment a local reporter who had been on the telephone dropped the phone and came rushing up to us and said, "Is it true? Is it true that the President's been shot?" Well, nobody could believe it. I just said, "You must be kidding. Of course it's not true. We've just been in the motorcade with him, and, you know, he's in there speaking." And he said, "No, he isn't. No, he isn't. He's been shot! He's been taken to the hospital." We still didn't think that it could be. Even if that could happen, it couldn't possibly be anything serious because things just don't happen like that to the President, to our President. But still you instinctively wanted to check, so I ran outside to see if I could find someone. And at that point the press had come, and buses were starting to mill around, and it was really a very confused scene.

[-36-]

I went up to someone and said, "Is it true? What have you heard?" And they said, "Yes, we think it is. He's been taken to Parkland Hospital." And Evelyn Lincoln was with me, and our first thought was, "That's where we belong. We must get ourselves there." It

wasn't that far away, and we really didn't know how to get there, but we just wanted to go to someone and ask them to help us. So we found a state trooper, we explained who we were, and we felt our place was at the hospital to be there, anything we could do to help. And it still never occurred to us that it could have been fatal. And the trooper found somebody who was driving by in a car, and he asked if he could borrow the car, and he got us in the car and got a motorcycle escort and got us to the hospital and went all the way through with us to help us get inside.

We walked in, and the first person I saw was Mac Kilduff [Malcolm Kilduff]. I went up to him, and I said, "How is it?" And he said, "They called for a priest," and he put his arms around me and I knew right then and there -- that was all. But still nobody had said anything, and we kept hoping that it would be different. And so we asked if we could go to Mrs. Kennedy, wherever she was. And they said, well, they'd take us to wait in the chaplain's office. We didn't know where…. I mean it was just like coming into this crowded room of reporters. We were in the hospital, we had no idea where we were in relation to anything else, and a terrible feeling of not being able to be some place to help as one can help. We went, and we sat in the office with Liz Carpenter and Jack Valenti, and they were, of course, concerned to be with the Johnsons, feeling there must be something they could do to help. And finally we sat, and there was just nobody around to ask, and we decided we would find somebody, so we went out and we explained to a doctor or a nurse who we were, and could they get us nearer to the area.

Well, we finally got down to where the Secret Service were, and they said, "Yes, come in." Just at that moment the Johnson's were coming in, and it sort of again confirmed it because they looked so grief-stricken and…

FREDERICKS: Coming into the hospital from….

TURNURE: Coming into this area where the operating room was and where Mrs. Kennedy was waiting, just from outside.

FREDERICKS: I see.

TURNURE: We walked in, and the first person I saw was Mrs. Kennedy sitting on a folding chair and everybody just waiting around and people sitting in various cubbyholes. It was a sterilizing room, and the room looked like -- I don't know exactly what it was, but it was all….

FREDERICKS: Sort of a utility room?

TURNURE: Yes. With people waiting all through the corridor. And I went in with Mary Gallagher to the sterilizing room, and Clint Hill was standing in

there, and again he looked at me, and you just knew everything was over. But it wasn't until Dr. Burkley came in and said, "I would like to get the best undertaker in town," that we knew definitely.

FREDERICKS: He used the phone in the room where you and Mrs. Kennedy were?

TURNURE: Mrs. Kennedy was across the hall but I thought so close that I couldn't believe it. I guess, I don't know. That was the first time I had heard anybody really say something that confirmed it. And then we went back over to sort of wait with Mrs. Kennedy, but nobody was really saying anything.

FREDERICKS: She knew? Before you ever saw her?

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: Was she aware of your presence or was she just totally….

TURNURE: Oh, it's so hard to say because there were so many people around who came up and put an arm around her and spoke to her, but it was all very difficult to say. The one thing she wanted to do was just stay there outside the door of the room where he was, and she wouldn't budge. And we sort of waited on chairs around her until it was time to go, and then we were told, you know, it was

time to go. And we all went out and jammed into cars and motorcaded to the airport. Then it was surprising, it was so funny because, having come in with all these crowds, then going out seeing no one, nobody. It had been the gloomiest morning when we left Fort Worth, a big rainstorm and black clouds, and then cleared up when we arrived in Dallas. And then when we were going back, it was a beautiful, blue, cloudless day, and nobody standing outside, nobody watching the motorcade. And the airport, of course, had been sealed off when we got there. There was nobody there. Just the people to help load the plane and then sitting on the plane with all the shades drawn, sort of sealed off from the outside world. And you knew things were going on, other people's lives were going on, but on that plane time had really stopped.

FREDERICKS: Well, the President, the new President of the United States took his oath…

TURNURE: In the cabin of the plane before we took off.

FREDERICKS: And Mrs. Kennedy was on his left, I believe, at that time.

TURNURE: Yes. And he came in and asked everyone, Mrs. Kennedy's staff members and everyone who was on the plane, to come into the cabin and to be there

for the swearing in.

FREDERICKS: You speak, Pam, as if all this had an air of unreality to you, that there was something quite nightmarish about the sequence of scenes here. When you talked to the other people, did they share this feeling?

TURNURE: Oh, I think that people still do. I think it is very difficult to put in any kind of real perspective because it was so unnecessary and, you know, something that we will never be able to quite believe.

FREDERICKS: Did you see at any time the doctors who were in the hospital?

TURNURE: I did. But I don't really even remember them. I can remember somebody coming out with the brown paper bag -- obviously it had the President's personal effects in it. This was long before we were ready to leave the hospital. I can remember somebody coming out with the hat Mrs. Kennedy had ripped off her head, she had on in the car. It had a hair pin and a large strand of hair which she pulled right out of her scalp in the haste to get the hat off so she'd be free to help. It just seemed to be a time of unnecessary waiting and everybody trying to sort of wait for the right moment, and yet agonizing waiting, and nobody quite knowing who knew what and who had said what and everything stopping.

FREDERICKS: Mrs. Kennedy was on the same plane that you were then on the way back. You were all on Air Force One together?

TURNURE: Yes.

FREDERICKS: And after the swearing in ceremony, did she then retire?

TURNURE: Not retire, she just went to sit back in the…. She sat up for the whole trip in the farthest back cabin where the casket was with Kenny [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien]. The new President was in his cabin, and the rest of us were in the seats just in front of them.

FREDERICKS: Well, I think that really completes the picture, Pam. We did the hospital last night starting from Nancy's first word of it. So thank you very much for completing the taping and giving us more insights.

[END OF INTERVIEW]