

Lewis H. Weinstein Oral History Interview –JFK#1, 6/3/1982
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Biographical Note

Lewis H. Weinstein, Lawyer, Member, President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity (1961 – 1968); Senior partner, Foley Hoag and Eliot, Boston (1979 – 1993); partner (1946 – 1979); Assistant Corporate Counsel, Boston (1934 – 1945), discusses fundraising for John F. Kennedy's [JFK] congressional and presidential campaigns, JFK's position on Jewish issues, and JFK's interest in housing and veterans, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

of

Lewis H. Weinstein

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Lewis H. Weinstein - JFK#1

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Oral History Interview

with

LEWIS H. WEINSTEIN

June 3, 1982

Boston, MA

By Sheldon Stern

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STERN: I wonder if we could begin with your earliest contacts, and perhaps your first meeting with Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] and your impression of him.

WEINSTEIN: I've written this down and if you want me to read it, I can, or I can improvise.

STERN: Why don't you do whatever makes you comfortable.

WEINSTEIN: In the late summer of 1946 my partner, Tom Eliot [Thomas Eliot] (by the way Tom Eliot was the grandson of Charles W. Eliot and shortly after held a congressional seat until Curley [James Michael Curley] re-directed it)... Tom Eliot's room was right next to mine - his grandfather had been president of Harvard - after he left us in the mid fifties went up to do the state reorganization plan called the Ba? Director of the Baby Hoover Commission that he called it then, and later went to

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Washington University in Saint Louis where he first was professor of government and then was vice-chancellor; and ended up as chancellor, which is the president of Washington

University. Well, Tom Eliot walked into my room with a tall, slim, really broad smile, all smiles, like wrinkles on his face and a young man, he must have been thirty and said, "Lou, meet Jack Kennedy, he wants my old seat in Congress." See, I was going to help him. Tom left quickly, as though he had performed his stint and it was almost as though he was trying to get rid of somebody because he was quite busy at the time.

I also met Jack's companions, Frank Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey], who later became a municipal court judge and whose nomination caused quite a stir in this community. It was withdrawn as I recall it, and Dave Powers [David F. Powers] who's now, by the way, a retired Boston municipal court judge - and Dave Powers who was Jack's man-of-all-trades at that time now is at the Library, the JFK Library.

Jack outlined his campaign, he listed the opponents, told me he wanted a smashing victory – I remember those words very much, very well. There was no Republican primary and the election would be determined by the results of the September Democratic primary. I was just charmed and enthralled by Jack Kennedy. I asked how I could help him. We talked about housing in

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which I'd been very active and particularly veteran housing problems. He said he didn't need much money but wanted a long list of contributors of only a few dollars, no more than ten, which could come from thousands of people. I told him I could help with housing and urban renewal and the veterans issues. I'd come back from the Army less than a year earlier. I was two and a half years overseas and three, more than three years in the Army and with federal, state and local taxation and with various facets of domestic and foreign policies. I thought I could get him a hundred or so contributors at five or ten dollars apiece and I asked him whether he had any Jewish voters for whom the freeing of the D.P. Camps, the emptying of those camps and the Jewish homeland, or commonwealth in Palestine, were key issues. He answered me that he thought he didn't have many Jews, if any, in his district but someday, he said, he'd like to discuss near Eastern questions with me and told me he had already had a visit from a group of Syrians in Cambridge about Palestine. I helped in his campaign. I don't recall how many of the five to ten dollar contributors I got for Jack but it must've totaled a thousand dollars or more.

He, Frank, Dave and others were constantly calling me and at the Kennedy ladies' teas, as they were called, Selma and I met Jack's mother and sisters and we became very fond of

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all of them. I also came to know Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] and Ted [Edward M. Kennedy]. Bob was always for the underdog and had strong views on practically every issue and didn't hesitate to express them. Ted was in his teens, but extremely alert and hard-working; but for ongoing charm and charisma Jack was absolutely tops. He was also clear in his thinking and precise in answering special questions.

After a few weeks of campaigning it was almost certain that Jack was top of the field of some ten candidates, as I recall it for the Democratic primary. Dave and Frank told me

how many flights of stairs they climbed in Charlestown, Cambridge and elsewhere with Jack and the crowd as they got at rallies and at the Kennedy ladies' teas. The district had been redistricted for an Irish-Democratic victory, undoubtedly at Curley's orders so that he could get rid of Tom Eliot - but during that term, shortly before the primary, he went to jail. Politics has always intrigued me and I could talk with you at some length about the blue-blood Brahmins who controlled Massachusetts until the Irish came around, especially during the potato famine and how there was a running battle between the two. I often discussed this with Henry Foley [Henry E. Foley], who was lace-curtain Irish and "shanty" Irish, a name that I would never use publically; and Tom Eliot who was really among

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the descendants of the very first Eliot and the Indians you may remember way, way back at the beginning of the arrival of the British to these shores.

Well, in any event I kept in close touch with Jack from that day when he first came, until several days before he left for Dallas. At that time there was a telephone conversation that I had with him about an earlier talk we'd had about the Soviet Jewish situation. He told me he was going to Texas and as soon as he got back, he and I would spend part of the weekend together and talk the whole thing through; and then of course I remember very well how I was in the middle of a conversation with the executive director, as he was then called, of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, which I was chairman of and I was also chairman of the Conference of Presidents, a major American Jewish organization. I was talking on the telephone when he said, "Wait a moment!" and then he told me that the President had been shot and was undoubtedly dead and later on we knew of course....

STERN: Let's go back to forty-six for a moment. Did you get any sense at all of the role of Kennedy's father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] in the campaign? Did you see him at all?

WEINSTEIN: I saw Kennedy's father several times and Kennedy told me that his father could have easily financed the campaign, but couldn't as a matter of law and that; but that his father was being talked to - but I got the very strong feeling that he wasn't his father's son for political purposes, although he loved his father dearly and he respected his father's views on many issues.

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For example, we talked about anti-Semitism. He said, "My father made some statements at one time that I'm not particularly proud of but," he said, "he has his life and I have my life and I know that on the Jewish issue there are numerous questions that I've talked to...let's put it several questions that I think my father was wrong...." But his father was always there. He had great love and affection for his father, and respect, but he didn't always share it.

STERN: Did you have the sense that his father was playing a major role in the campaign?

WEINSTEIN: I think he constantly talked with his father but I'm not sure and you undoubtedly know much more than I do on this issue because I never discussed his father with him except in his voluntary statements about his father during the original campaign, and I did meet his father. His father was at several of the Kennedy ladies' teas.

STERN: I was wondering about the origins of Kennedy's interest in Jewish issues. There was something you mentioned to me about having had a meeting with some of them leaning towards the Syrian position in Palestine.

WEINSTEIN: Yes, and I could come to that if you want right now.

STERN: O.K.

WEINSTEIN: First of all, I ought to tell you that there were two speeches that then Congressman Kelley [Augustine B. Kelley) made in 1947 which were very important, I believe. One of them was in the early part of May and the other was the latter part of May of 1947

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of the freshman Congressman. I was, at the time he spoke to me and until early...well until maybe the end of May 1947, chairman of the State Housing Board. I helped lobby through legislation of Congress a \$200,000,000 state housing program which passed by the way, strangely enough, by unanimous vote of both Houses in Massachusetts, and with the approval of the governor within...the Republican governor, Robert Bradford [Robert F. Bradford] who had beaten a Democratic governor who sought re-election, Morris Tobin. In any event, for the week before my resignation as chairman of State Housing Board we held a series of housing rallies. I'd established, or helped establish, recommending that, a Massachusetts Veterans Housing, an Allied Veterans Housing Council made up of all the veterans organizations. I joined the American Legion, was asked to become chairman of their housing committee and I said, no, that I'd rather be vice-chairman (that's always, I think, a more effective job because you can do many more things and you don't have to talk about them. Secondly, I was asked to become chairman of the Allied Veterans Housing Council and I said no there, too - I thought I ought to hold no office - but in any event, it was the Allied Veterans Housing Council that planned the series of rallies. At the close of the Faneuil Hall rally, I can't give you the exact date, I don't remember, it was earlier in May,

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and the Boston papers were full of it. I also recall a New York Times story, but have been

unable to locate it because I haven't looked at the original New York Times or the tapes, what do you call the....

STERN: Microfilm.

WEINSTEIN: microfilms that are up in the Boston Public Library, and I will one of these days. Let me just tell you what happened that day. I met the then Congressman in his Bowdoin Street little apartment, by the way in which I was once locked alone, which is another story. I met him there and we walked down Bowdoin Street to Beacon Street towards Faneuil Hall. I showed him a telegram which had arrived that day from the National Commander of the American Legion to the State Commander, in effect stating that the state of the American Legion had to withdraw from the Allied Veterans Housing Council. We can do all the work we have to ourselves. We don't want to be with certain of the new veterans organization and on housing, we have a program and the state will follow the national program. I read it to him and I said, "Do you know what the signatory is?" He said, "No." Well it was either he or his predecessor because they were both very active in opposing the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill [Robert A. Taft, Allen J. Ellender, Robert F. Wagner], or the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Bill, whichever was the majority at various periods in the Senate. One had been the president of the National Association of Homebuilders and the other one was the president, or the executive director rather of the National Real Estate

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Boards. In any event, he listened carefully and asked me what the pluses and minuses were. I said, "You've already made statements about the Legion and its opposition to the Federal legislation, saying you disagree with them. I think this is a good time to refer to that.

The pluses are that a lot of veterans need homes. The Legion has not been able to get very many veterans of World War II, although they're now starting a big drive for them and I think the pluses outweigh the minuses. The minuses being that there will be some veterans who won't like the attack on the American Legion, but I think, my own analysis would be that it would be better for you politically and of course better for you from your own point of view, as you've expressed it purely apart from politics, to go after the Legion."

We had to force our way through the mob - there was no television at that time, but we forced ourselves. We had loud speakers and they asked people, please, not to prevent the others from coming in. We forced our way in, saying hello to many people we knew, got up to the platform and we started the meeting almost immediately and on the dot of the announced time; and after each legion's president was introduced to me, he was allowed only one sentence, although some of the sentences could have been broken down into five parts or more. In any event, finally when it came to the main speaker; all I said was how happy I was to introduce a freshman Congressman from Massachusetts for whom we know there'll be a very important future career (was all I said) and he got a tremendous hand, just as he had gotten cheers as he came in, and the people all stood up and cheered and he had to quiet

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them down.

When we walked down there, Lou showed me this telegram, "Let me read it to you" and he did and he said, "You know who the signatory swore to watch that telegram and the whole crowd answered, "Who?" and he said this one, the predecessor gave their organizational affiliates. He said, "You know, the American Legion hasn't done a damn thing for the veterans since World War I, if ever!" The crowd cheered and then he told them how he'd opposed the Legion on his views on federal public housing legislation and how he'd continue doing so. He said, "How many here need homes?" Every hand went up whether they needed a home or not and you could hear the crowd from the outside after they had quieted the crowd on the inside and he got a tremendous hand; and as we walked out he said, "Did you see a New York Times reporter here?" I said that no, I hadn't, but I had talked to one earlier that day. "Well," he said, "there were plenty of Massachusetts reporters."

And of course, the next day I walked into the Federal Express at South Station - that was the way you did things in those days. There were no planes running as frequently as they now do. There were some planes, but it would have taken three or four hours to get to Washington. This way you slept overnight. In any event he was very pleased with that night, and the next morning he called me and he said, "Did you see that headline?" I said, "Yes, I did." He said, "It was great!" And we remained on very good terms.

Right after that meeting, as I recall it, I called him about being a speaker at the New England Zionist Region

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Convention which was going to take place May 27, 28, something like that, the end of the month in the Hotel Bradford in Boston and I said I'd like him to speak. He said, "Lou, I have a problem with that. I told you about Syrians and I've read a lot of material on it including the McMahan letters." And, he said, "I've got to do more thinking about that, but don't count on me. I hate to do this, but I really want to feel confident in my position and I don't feel that I can support the Zionism at this time. "Well," I said, "I won't take that for a complete answer yet." I wrote him, I sent him material, and finally he said to me one day that was maybe a week and half before the convention, more than a week before the convention he says, "I'm coming down to Boston Friday. Let's have lunch together. I'll bring a couple of people with me. You bring whoever you want with you," and I said, "Fine, I'll make arrangements." We met at twelve o'clock. I remember Dave Morrissey was there, I mean Dave Powers and I think that Frank Morrissey was there and I also think he had one of his Washington people with him. I know that we had Ben ? who was a very wise person. He was president of the Association of Jewish Philanthropies, later the Combined Jewish Philanthropies and very active. He succeeded me as president of the Brookline-Brighton-Newton Zionist district when I left the army. And, I also had with me Morris Michaels from the, Boston Lawyer, who was then president of the New England Zionist Council. At five o'clock everybody had gone except us two, the Congressman and myself. He said, "Lou, you convinced me. I think every doubt has been erased."

I had

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previously sent him the, an article about Felix Frankfurter that appeared in the Foreign Affairs magazine, which I thought was a masterpiece because he had talked with Abdula, King . He talked with many others and they all appeared in this article how they, Abdula had said that we will welcome the Jews back to their ancient home. That was the statement in there and he talked about the peace conference, the San Remo conference, the Versailles, San Remo, he had been present and that was a very persuasive argument against the McMahan theory and against other statements and for what had been the battle for declaration and he gave a rousing.... He said he'd come. I said, "Should I send you a draft?" He said, "I know it now well enough. I don't need a draft." And he wrote his own, but he sent me a copy of it which disappeared; but I've gotten a copy of the speech from your Ms. Desnoyers [Megan Desnoyers] who did a beautiful job in finding it. They couldn't find it at first over at the library. I suggested they look in the Powers' file and sure enough it was in the Powers' file, so I'm told, and I have it with three or four, I think four pages of insert, maybe only a sentence from one of these handwritten pages which he stuck in – a,b,c and so forth and you know, the speech talked about how strongly the United States needed an independent Jewish commonwealth in the Near East; how Palestine would be the fulfillment of our obligations to Jews in the holocaust, but more than that, his theory wasn't as emotional as yours is

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talking to the crowd there, which cheered him continuously. My emphatic, basic reason is the security interests of the United States. We want a strong ally there and I see no other than a Jewish commonwealth. He referred to commonwealth. The word Jewish state hadn't appeared yet and it wasn't until the next year that Israel was established. Now that tells you the two main speeches and I say the papers were full of it the next day and I don't know if anything appeared in the New York Times, but the Boston papers which I got from the library, those clippings were very full, and you must have all of those.

STERN: Yes, we do. Did you have any...Can you recall any other contacts while he was, in the subsequent four years that he was in the Congress?

WEINSTEIN: We talked very often and I know there was correspondence, but I had an over-enthusiastic secretary who, on her own, threw out all of the mail until about '52. Maybe there were one or two letters. I remember there was one when he was sick in a hospital bed in New York. Maybe you can help me on the period when he was in the hospital in New York. But he wrote me from there saying how dull and dreary a hospital bed was even though he was kept busy reading.

STERN: That was when he was in the Senate.

WEINSTEIN: Maybe that was in the Senate, but I remember that and I don't have that letter; but I remember it very well because he had written a rather short letter. He wrote a lot in handwriting. Maybe one day I'll find it.

STERN: Ya, I think we do have a copy of that. I saw it yesterday.

WEINSTEIN: If you could send that to me I'd love that.

STERN: I will.

WEINSTEIN: I'd appreciate it. Now ah...

STERN: I tell you, why don't we move up to the 1952 campaign.

WEINSTEIN: Well, the 1952 campaign I know I was on a small finance

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committee of his, and I know he spoke a number of times of his gratitude for what I had done. He later referred a number of letters to the help that I've given him since 1946. But I was on the campaign committee and I know we met quite a few times and I saw Bobby and Ted again during that campaign; and I had been through, during these years, not quiet about my concerns about arms for the Arabs for Iraq particularly, and no arms for Israel. Israel had been established in '48 and I know I was talking with Robert Cutler at that time and whenever I spoke to Cutler, who was a Boston banker, for whom I had acted in his last years as attorney and who wrote a book called No Time for Rest. Whenever I went down to see Bobby I usually go down to see, he was the National Security director and he recommended to Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] the establishment of the National Security Council that he played quite a role and we got somewhere with him out not enough. General Marshall [George C. Marshall] had become Secretary of State under Eisenhower, you remember the Marshall speech at Harvard, and I knew General Marshall slightly and Bobby Cutler in a few instances brought me in there.

When I go down there I also talk to Congressman Kennedy either in person or on the telephone, and we talked about numerous things. We talked about Israel. We talked about Algeria. Algeria was in a ferment. I had been in Algeria for a whole year during World War II, although I also went to Morocco and Tunisia during that period and I knew Algeria pretty well. I had been admitted to the Moslem bar of Algeria, which asked people elsewhere also to recognize the high respect

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to which the ?, the Arab name for judge, held me. All that meant was the purely honorary membership, although it didn't say so. I have the membership and I have it on my walls with a French translation, which was written in Arabic, which I never learned myself how to read or write, but I spoke street Arabic quite well. Now if you ask specific questions about that

Congressional period, then I'd be glad to answer them and tell you a little bit more about the Senatorial period.

STERN: Okay, why don't we talk a little more about the campaign, if you can remember anything specific that you did. I know for example that Senator Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge] was quite popular with Jewish voters in Massachusetts and was thought to be a bit of a problem for Kennedy because of his father's reputation, whether justified or not; and I know one person told me in the past that there was a major effort made to woo Jewish voters in '52.

WEINSTEIN: There was, and we made a major effort to undo what Lodge was doing. We even took advantage of the fact that Senator Lodge had led the opposition to Justice Brandeis [Louis D. Brandeis], and we quoted from Senator Lodge's grandfather and so forth, but we did have...I can recall twenty or thirty politically known Jewish names who signed the letters, including myself and I usually drafted them all. I had a hand in drafting all those Jewish letters. I liked young Senator Lodge and I think he wasn't a bad senator, but we were all out to get Jack Kennedy in there because we thought he was much better, he would make a much better senator - as he did. And we prevailed in '52. Was it again in '58?

STERN: Yes.

WEINSTEIN: '58. I don't know whether Kennedy was...Lodge was the opponent there, I think he was.

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STERN: No, we'll get to that in a minute. What specifically did you do to counter Lodge's popularity among Jewish voters?

WEINSTEIN: Well, numerous advertisements and a big letter writing program. We found that if one person would undertake to write say twenty letters, twenty names and we had a form prepared, we didn't have the beautiful word processor you have now, but we had them pretty well covered so that we could save a lot of typing and there would be "Dear Joe," written in handwriting and the last name, a little footnote in each case. A written footnote was very important, asking for money and asking for help for Kennedy. And, if we had twenty people we may have had 300 roughly letters, personal letters going out and asking them in turn to write letters - but whether it worked or not we don't know - but I know that I was in every part of the state during that campaign, '52. From Newburyport to Pittsfield, from New Bedford to Springfield and so forth, and we worked very hard.

STERN: Were you with him at any of this...

WEINSTEIN: I was with him during the number of his speeches and I spoke a number of times when he wasn't there also, one or two times while he was there. He always referred, sometimes when he'd write me later he'd refer to '52 to now, and sometimes he'd also refer to '46 to now, but I find that I have no letters, I think, through '52, but '53 refers to events before '53. I think we helped with Jewish voters and I think he helped with Jewish issues, issues that are considered Jewish, like arms,

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trying to stop arms to the Arab countries; and I remember one day when he called a group of us together in the White House, I think it was '62 when he announced arms for the Hawk missiles. Israel, I'll tell you about that...

STERN: Okay, we'll get to that. Is it true for example that Congressman McCormack [John William McCormack] was very popular with Jewish voters, and that he was extensively used in the...

WEINSTEIN: Congressman McCormack certainly was. Congressman McCormack helped Kennedy a great deal and since I was a close friend of McCormack's through all the years after I became settled in Boston in 1930. Before he became a Congressman and so forth, I know that there was a warm feeling by McCormack towards the President, which was exemplified by his public statements in support of Kennedy and also by his work quietly with Kennedy on certain issues.

STERN: I wonder if you can recall, or if you had any part in the what has now become a fairly well known struggle in 1956, when Kennedy tried to oust Onions Burke [William H. Burke, Jr.] as the head of the Democratic State Committee and take over the state committee.

WEINSTEIN: I remember that, but I don't recall any detail to that. All you have to do is prod me and after you've gone from here, I will remember certain things and if I do I'll telephone you.

STERN: O.K.

WEINSTEIN: But I remember was it Jabba Burke? I think his nickname was.

STERN: Onions.

WEINSTEIN: Onions. Well, there were two Burkes then, because I always think

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of Jabba Burke. I recall Onion Burke. I don't know whether it's the same person or not, but he was chairman of the State Democratic Committee - and I know that he was a tough hombre and that Kennedy was a great guy at satire and giving him the needle - and I remember a couple of meetings when I was there when he made Burke's face turn completely red as a result of what he said in his very witty manner.

STERN: That's very interesting. What about the whole general question of Kennedy and Israel in the fifties. Were you generally happy with him as a senator in terms of his position on Israel?

WEINSTEIN: Well, I think he took strong positions. I don't think it was a major issue for him. I tried to make it an important issue and I think generally speaking that was so, that he considered an important issue when he spoke out. I remember the time in '56 of the Sinai war that he made certain statements that we had to give greater assurances to Israel for its withdrawal. Golda Meir was then foreign minister of Israel and I remember one speech of hers which referred in some way to the efforts being made in the Senate. She may have mentioned Kennedy by name, but I'm not sure of that. That ought to be researched, I'm sure. I remember the feeling he had. You couldn't expect Israel to withdraw and not to be hurt. England and France could change their positions as the results of President Eisenhower's pressures, but Israel couldn't rely so much on American assurances unless they were specific and detailed and he wanted specific and detailed assurances. I remember a statement by him in the Senate at that time.

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STERN: There was also a series of letters in '57 about the issue of sanctions, U.N. sanctions against Israel.

WEINSTEIN: Yes, and I think he was active in that.

STERN: That's right - and you spoke to him and he read to you over the phone, I gather from one letter, a speech he was going to make opposing the U.N. sanctions against Israel, and you must have been involved with him in that.

WEINSTEIN: I was involved with him in that; and you know I'd pick up the telephone and I had very little difficulty getting through with him, to him, but I hated really...I knew how busy he was. He always responded. I always got him and he sometimes would call me from a distant place. I do remember something that happened in 1956. I think it was '56 when he wrote me, it may have been...when he wrote me about...no, it was 1958, in the '58 campaign. At that time he had problems with the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], but I do remember his opposing U.N. sanctions, that is he wasn't a member of the delegation, but in the Senate spoke out against U.N. sanctions; and I don't remember that

there were any...there were U.N. statements, but whether there were actual sanctions. I would think there were no sanctions, but there were statements, maybe a resolution by the U.N. that may have snaked through, but I think in the Security Council you didn't have that miserable situation that you have now, or that you have of course in the Assembly, the General Assembly of the United Nations, and he was a very strong advocate of Israel, but not as strong as he later became in his short term as president, because there you could make policy. In the Senate, he was advising and recording himself and pushing, pushing, and pushing; and yet I think no one in the presidential campaign doubted where he stood on Israel...and I don't think they even felt

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that way in 1968, in '58 when he ran for Senate.

STERN: Ya, when did it become apparent to you and to people from your circles here in Boston that he would get elected president? Of course the most popular version is that once that he lost the vice-presidential nomination narrowly in '56, it was very clear that he was going to go for the presidency in '60.

WEINSTEIN: I'm sure it was before then because I would kid him a little bit one of these days and say, "Mr. President," those days, and he laughed and said, "Don't be so anticipatory, Lou" and, but there's no question when

I told that to him, probably even before '56, maybe '54 or '55 (he was a senator, he had years yet in the Senate); but I talked to him about that and I said that it's about time we wiped out that Al Smith situation of 1928. I was at law school then, but I worked for Al Smith and I remember making a speech in Worcester for Al Smith as a law school student; but I was awfully upset by the Al Smith situation and I would refer to that in my various talks as his situation has changed very much now... [Interruption]

STERN: We were talking about the...apparent that he was going to run for president.

WEINSTEIN: I felt that he was the presidential nominee. I even thought of something for 1956, but then of course came the vice-presidential thing and I felt that was a very good thing that he was defeated. He obviously...it was going to be another Eisenhower sweep. He was a grandfather, father image, and I knew Eisenhower quite well from my having served on his staff in Europe.

STERN: O.K., what about some of his major 1957 activities in the Senate; I know that you wrote him a letter praising his Algerian speech.

WEINSTEIN: Yes, I had previously talked to him about Algeria and I had

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told him of my year in Oran or Algiers, as it might be, mostly in Oran, which was a very large city, and where the big port of Mers,

Il, Kebir [Interruption]

STERN: O.K., we are back again on the issue of when it became apparent that he was going to run for president.

WEINSTEIN: I remember that I talked to him about Algeria. I said I know about Algeria and I thought the feeling was such that with de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle], I don't know when de Gaulle came out for Algerian independence and the attempts to kill him...that was a little later. I know some of the people who were in opposition of him. One of them had been a very close friend of mine, a high-ranking officer named Revier, which in French means retreat, and he was actually demoted. I think he was marshalled out, or whatever the word is of the army at the that time. We did talk of Algeria and some detail in one long telephone conversation...and I thought, that must cost the federal government a lot of dough, but it was an important issue.

STERN: How about the civil rights bill in 1957? Kennedy got into some real hot water about this jury trial amendment. I don't know if you have any recollections of that.

WEINSTEIN: I remember it but I can't give you all the details. I was very active at that time in the civil rights movement. I sponsored the legislation and was head of the Massachusetts Housing Council for equal opportunity in housing, over the opposition of a former client of mine, and I also had employment in education very strongly in the whole fifties and sixties period. I know I frequently went to Kennedy on these issues. I've forgotten now the jury trial issue, if you could refresh my memory.

STERN: Well the basic question was that many of the liberals in the

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Senate, led by Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] were concerned that jury trials in the South would not be reasonable because there would be no blacks on the juries. Eventually there was an amendment to force the admission of blacks onto the juries.

WEINSTEIN: I've forgotten what Kennedy's position was and mine was on that. I know it was an issue, but I'd have to refresh my memory through documents of the period and so forth.

STERN: He did get into problems though as a result of that and I know that in '58 came this letter he wrote to you in which he asked, I'll quote to you. He claimed that there was...He asked if you could arrange a meeting with Kitty Kaplan and he claimed that...

WEINSTEIN: Oh, that I know. Yes...

STERN: That the National Organization of the NAACP...

WEINSTEIN: Did that deal with jury trials in the South, among other things?

STERN: Well, that was, I think, one of the things that lead to this. Let me just quote to you. He said that that organization, meaning the national board of the NAACP, is engaged, quote,...

WEINSTEIN: I know that letter!

STERN: "...in a continuing personal and political vendetta directed against you."

WEINSTEIN: Ya, and he asked me to arrange a luncheon appointment with Kitty Kaplan, who was then president of the NAACP, a white Jew in Boston, who is a very close friend of mine. The letter came when I was on reserve duty of two weeks. My secretary, then secretary, I think maybe it's the same one, called me at Fort Devins [Interruption]. My secretary called me, then read me the letter. I then put a call into Senator Kennedy and I said, "If you'll forgive me, I think this is a wrong approach."

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I said, "No white president, although he's very useful for fundraising and even for political purposes, can do as much for you in this case because Roy Wilkins, (I think that Roy was then the secretary and the chief professional of the NAACP), isn't going to listen to Kitty Kaplan on an issue like this. But," I said, "I have another suggestion." One of my very good friends, Arnie Aronson [Arnold Aronson], formerly a Bostonian, now in New York and the assistant executive director of the NCRAC [National Community Relations Advisory Council] of which I became chairman in 1960, but it was very active at that time, is a very close friend of Roy Wilkins and he is secretary of the leadership conference, the...What is the word I'm looking for? The whole group of organizations together. When you have a whole group working for one goal. I said the leadership conference is chaired by Roy Wilkins and Arnie Aronson's secretary and they're very close friends. As a matter of fact, when Roy Wilkins died, at Mrs. Wilkins's [Aminda B. Wilkins] request, Arnie Aronson gave the eulogy. That's how close they were. This happened much later of course, only recently, but I knew how friendly they were. And I said, "Let me call Arnie Aronson with your permission and then

after I've called him I'll call you back. I called Arnie and I called the Senator, and he called Arnie again, and it was all resolved because it had obviously been a misunderstanding. Roy Wilkins met with the Senator and everything was straightened out; and I got a letter back later in which I was told that there was no need for this - and that second letter on this issue I gave to Kitty Kaplan's son-in-law. I

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see that some of President Kennedy's letters are selling for \$3,000 up and I gave him that letter. It's hanging on Mort Grossman's wall. I know I saw it there. He called me before that letter. I didn't need that letter to tell me how pleased he was because he telephoned me and he said, "It worked out beautifully and you were right." I said, "I'm wrong very often. So don't always take my advice. Weigh it carefully."

STERN: I know that Senator Kennedy asked you to serve in his 1958 re-election campaign finance committee. I wonder if you could talk a bit about that. That was the race against Vincent Celeste.

WEINSTEIN: Well, I knew it was...I knew Celeste would be just shattered. I knew it would be a strike in a bowling alley, but I also knew that it was very important that he have a tremendous victory because '60 wasn't very far off behind. I know I worked very hard on that. My partners were very generous with my time; Henry Foley and Eliot had left us by that time. I know that just as I had taken off a couple of months to be both president and campaign chairman for the local Jewish philanthropies, that I also must have taken off at least a month, if not more, just working full time on the fundraising. I not only...I made many long distance calls. I remember they were charged to me personally, and considered as campaign contribution; and I know that I talked to people in California, Chicago continuously, as well as of course New York, and I spoke at a number of parlor meetings, many...quite a few in Massachusetts and maybe half dozen or a dozen through the country and we raised a lot of money.

STERN: Financing was a major issue in the campaign because Celeste kept referring to Kennedy as, "that millionaire's son," and claiming that he had no money - that he, Celeste, had no money.

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WEINSTEIN: But a lot of Republican money was being pouring into Massachusetts, not the way, for example, that money is pouring in for Senator Kennedy's re-election; but it was a big factor and I had learned how to be a fundraiser through my Jewish activities, as well as my political activities, general political activities, when somebody would give me a \$500 check and I'd say, "can't you change that to \$1,000?"

STERN: And I know he wrote you a letter at the end of the campaign, thanking you for your substantial part; and did you feel satisfied that he had won by a margin which would project him....

WEINSTEIN: I would....It was a great margin. I've forgotten the numbers...

STERN: It was three quarters of a million votes, I think.

WEINSTEIN: It was a great margin and undoubtedly was a great, great boost towards his election; and I know by that time it was clear that he was going to run for president very soon, and undoubtedly in 1960....By the way, if you have copies of some of those, I don't know whether....there are some that you've referred to that I don't have copies of.

STERN: Okay. I'll go through them all...

WEINSTEIN: And what I wrote to him I don't know at all, because all mine are gone. You could help me a lot.

STERN: Just on a purely personal level, I found an interesting little exchange in '57 in which Senator Kennedy helped to get a job for your nephew. Did that work out?

WEINSTEIN: That worked out. My nephew has it proudly in his living room. My nephew was then at college at the time, as I recall it, at Harvard. He went to such great detail, I was amazed, and my nephew was amazed because you think you know him so well and he'd take all this time out. I said that I have never kidded you about my knowing him, but I didn't think he'd do as much as he did. He's a busy man. Dictating that letter must have taken him ten minutes.

STERN: Yes, I was quite surprised by that. In '59, you had an exchange with Kennedy about the Eisenhower administration's attempts to reduce aid to Israel and his efforts to stop that. Can you recall that?

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WEINSTEIN: I recall those and I recall the....that I generally send copies of these letters which weren't really confidential to the president of the Council of Jewish Federation. I was then, I think, a vice-president, that's of all the 800 communities in the United States and Canada who deal with fundraising and planning and so forth. And also, the general aid to Israel and also for the NCRAC, now called the NJCRAC [National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council], of which I became chairman in 1960 and he was...

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(BEGIN SIDE TWO TAPE ONE)

WEINSTEIN: I don't have copies of my letters, but I remember vividly that there were many more telephone conversations than there were letters, and that I had very little difficulty getting through to him. Very often they'd say, "He's making this speech on the floor right now, he'll call you back." And he did. It was about that time that I was pushing him very hard also, on housing and equal opportunity in housing, and then, when he made that campaign speech....

STERN: We'll get to that. I was going to ask you about this Council of Moulta? How do you pronounce -M-O-U-L-T-A - speech, and the incident in which you were locked in his apartment?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, yes. It was the Moulta speech. I was trying to think of that congressman's name. But I remember it vividly. They called me one time - what year was that?

STERN: I believe '58.

WEINSTEIN: '58. If you have any correspondence on that, I'd like that, too. But, I got a telephone call from him on Sunday. No, it was Frank, it was Dave Powers who called me, and he says, "Can you get down here to Bowdoin Street?" I said, "When?" He said, "In the afternoon." I said, "Sure." I said, "We have a dinner appointment tonight." He said, "That's alright, you'll be through." And I came into town, we then had a car for the first time, as I remember it, and I drove into town, and I went to Bowdoin Street. I came into the room, it was a very small

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apartment, the living room wasn't very large, I think. If it's as large as this room, I'd be surprised. There was a bedroom off it and there was also a kitchen off it. I came in and there were quite a few people, maybe eight or ten people in there. There were two in the room with him, his bedroom, off the living room. He was sitting on the bed, I remember him, a couple of chairs were there. He threw me the manuscript. He said, "A couple of things in here I think Ted has wrong," referring to Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen]. He said, "Look at pages four or five," whatever the pages were. I says, "Sure." I went to the kitchen, and closed the door, and I worked on those pages particularly, then I read the whole speech and made a few other suggestions, always page eight with a yellow fool's cap pad beside me where I'd write down....

STERN: What was the, what was the...

WEINSTEIN: The issue was, the issue was generally Israel, but also, somewhat, something on civil rights. But, I've forgotten the speech, I've let him have that speech, because he adopted apparently, and I saw the speech as it appeared in the Congressional Record pretty much as I gave it, if not completely as I rewrote it. There were two or three pages where I think, which was very rare for Ted Sorensen, were wrong historically and with a matter of accuracy as well as substance, and I changed two or three pages into probably a page or a page and a half. He said, "Cut it if you can, too" and I remember I did.

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Which gave the accurate situation and which I think was more forceful from his point of view, as well as accurate, as distinguished from some minor errors that wouldn't have sounded correct in print, I assure you.

STERN: Yeah, right.

WEINSTEIN: He was very fond of Moulta, and I think it was a going away speech, or least it was a fundraising speech, for Multer, and he was very fond, was it Abe Multer [Abraham J. Multer]?

STERN: I don't remember.

WEINSTEIN: But, I, but he called him by his first name. I was working there and I finished, I opened up the kitchen door and the place was empty. Everybody was gone. Well, so I wrote a note to him and I said, "This is a fine way to treat a guest, especially when he's doing something for you," and left it on the table. Then I tried to go out, the door was locked. There was a strange lock, because you couldn't open it from the inside and I wondered what would happen in case of a fire. But, I finally was able after probably ten or fifteen minutes. First I called my wife, and I said, "Don't worry, I'll be a little bit late, but we won't be late for the dinner, because I'm going to try to get out of here." She was hysterical with laughter. She says, "Locked in? I'll try that sometime." I remember she said that. [Laughs] I finally got the superintendent by calling information and saying, "Is the superintendent's number there?" And I called

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him, and he came up and released me. So, I added a note, "I was even locked in here, but got out." I got home, and within a few minutes I got a call. "My God, I'm terribly sorry." He said, "We thought you walked off with the manuscript, and I was sore as hell, because that was the only copy of the manuscript that I had. I'd have to get a hold of Ted, do a lot of work, and so forth." And, he said, "I like what you said, I'm grateful to you, I really haven't read it carefully, but..." I remember this very clearly. I know we got to our dinner engagement on time.

STERN: In January of 1960...

WEINSTEIN: And then, as I say, I saw the Congressional Record, I think he sent me a copy, but I don't have it, and I would like it.

STERN: Okay. In January of 1960, Kennedy asked you to help raise money for his presidential campaign...

WEINSTEIN: And, I did.

STERN: And, you, of course, did serve on the Massachusetts Citizens for Kennedy. I wonder if you could go into detail about...

WEINSTEIN: Well, I remember, I remember that he had expanded his entourage a great deal, there were many more people, he had people from all over the country with him. I remember West Virginia was a problem, I remember there were

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other states that were problems, and he had people there, and he would ask me for Jewish names there...

STERN: Did you work at all outside of Massachusetts?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, I worked outside of Massachusetts, but not to the same extent that I had worked in '58. One, it was a little bit different, there was a whole new crowd in there, and he was very much busier. I didn't want to intrude. I volunteered to work in West Virginia, and he telephoned me. He said, "I think we're alright here. Only in Wheeling would I need your help." I remember that. Then, he wrote me a note afterwards, saying I was right about my prediction when I wrote him a note congratulating him on the, you have that in the paper-type thing...

STERN: Yes.

WEINSTEIN: ...on his West Virginia victory and he said I was, either in that letter or ?, he said, "You're a good political prophet." I said, "I wish I were...."

STERN: And you worked throughout the campaign?

WEINSTEIN: I worked throughout the campaign, but I would say, from the time point of view, I worked very much more in Massachusetts than I did outside. I remember a trip to New York, where a group of us met with a group of national prospective donors. I remember a flight to Chicago, but I really don't

think it was anything like my '58 campaign, where I really practically took a month off.

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STERN: Did you see him at all when he appeared here?

WEINSTEIN: I, when he appeared here I was usually with him, or backstage and then disappear in the crowd.

STERN: There was a huge rally just a couple of days before the election.

WEINSTEIN: Oh, yes, I remember that very well. There's a picture, I think, somewhere of that, although I don't know, I don't recall, can't find it. Because, it was a tremen-, we had one in the Armory.

STERN: That was the one.

WEINSTEIN: That was the one. I remember that vividly, because, the backstage accommodations were very small. It was a terrible crowd. I know that he picked me out of the crowd, we walked through the ?, he said, "Gee, this is just great." The rafters practically came down with the speech he made, and the applause he got. I remember that Armory speech quite well. I also remember the speech that he gave the night before the election, a national speech.

STERN: Faneuil Hall, wasn't it?

WEINSTEIN: It was in Faneuil Hall, and I remember before we went up, he said to me, "Do you remember when we first talked here?" He was very good on that sort of thing. He was a great guy on wit; wonderful story, I remember some of the stories he tried out on me. He tried out a

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religious story on me one time about Vat '69, and I, it was very clever, and he finally used it. I said, "Gee, I think you'll make some of the Catholics sore on that," poking fun at the Pope and so forth...

STERN: You don't remember the story?

WEINSTEIN: I remember the story somewhere. I've seen it somewhere. I think I could find it for you. I know where it is, it's on Political...because I saw it there afterwards. I said, "My God, he tried that out on me one time, I told him not to use it." I said, I don't think I told him, I don't think I said, "Don't use it." I said, "You better consider that very carefully and you know the impact better than I do." And, he did use it. It was about the Vatican and Vat '69 and so forth.

STERN: Were you surprised by how narrow the election was? How close the election was?

WEINSTEIN: I thought he would do better, but I should have known from the Nixon Checkers speech that Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] was a very dangerous guy, and very, could, you know, get weepsie, get people to feel weepsie. Eisenhower was listening carefully, I know, to the speech because Bobby Cutler told me about that. He said he was very surprised when it went over as well as he did, because Eisenhower himself was moved by this speech. He said, "Gee, that wasn't the kind of speech when he began," Eisenhower said to Cutler. "That wasn't the kind of speech I wanted him to give." And, by God, when it was all through, he said,

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"Really, that was a very effective speech." But, I was surprised because I thought Kennedy would do more, but there were still Catholics themselves, and people had anti-Catholic feelings. I thought his speech in Texas to the ministers was one of the greatest speeches he ever made. That undoubtedly helped him, but I was surprised by the low plurality.

STERN: Did you attend the Inaugural?

WEINSTEIN: I did.

STERN: You want to talk about that?

WEINSTEIN: Well, I know it was a snowy day. Freezing. I know that I didn't bring earlaps with me, and I'd had an experience as a boy and, which froze my ears and every time it was cold, my ears hurt. And, I know, one couldn't get a cab, we didn't come down by car. I found a Bostonian who did have a car. I went with him, but I know that we went to the White House afterwards. I went to one of the Balls at night with my wife. We, it was a great, exhilarating day. Very cold, and very difficult for me because of my ears. We had fairly good seats, so we could see him and watch him. I didn't come near him, excepting at the White House and the Ball he yelled out to me, but otherwise....

STERN: I was just going to ask you if you got a chance to talk to him at all? Just any impressions...

WEINSTEIN: Really, not that day. I did, he called me probably within a week after he was in the White House. He called me, and I was, I forgot what he talked to me about. I think

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it was about the NCRAC, because he said, "I've got an invitation, and they sent me a congratulatory letter. How shall I address it to you?", he said to me. I said, "You send it back to the address it came from, or send to me here." He said, "Lou," he said, "I'm still not getting it over. One of these days you and I will have to talk." He asked me at that time, that first telephone conversation, he said, "You know, I was thinking of you in some kind of subcabinet position. I was forced into the Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] /Labor Department appointment." He said, "He's a great guy, but I know who could do a better job than he could." That shouldn't be publicized, I'm telling that to you confidentially.

STERN: Okay.

WEINSTEIN: And, he said, "I'm thinking of you for an Undersecretary's job." I said, "I want to stay right here in Boston, but please call me whenever you want me to do a specific job. Give me something that will take a little more time, where I won't have to live in Washington. I gave up the opportunities in Washington when I came back from the Army, and I'm happy with the results. I'm a free man.

STERN: Did he ask you to possibly join Bobby's staff at, in the Attorney General's Office?

WEINSTEIN: He had suggested an Assistant Attorney Generalship, but only very, and he included it along with a few others. I said, "I really would prefer to remain in Boston." I think it was a mistake now, but, in any event, I wouldn't have been a lawyer.

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STERN: Yeah.

WEINSTEIN: I had been offered judgeships, that is, trial court judgeships. I felt I would be better off as a lawyer, although if somebody had offered me a more important job, a circuit court job, he never offered me one, I don't know how many vacancies he had, and I never spoke to him about that, and he never spoke to me about a judgeship. That went through my mind when he mentioned the Assistant Attorney General's job. He did not ask me to be Solicitor General. Whom did he appoint as Solicitor General?

STERN: Cox. Archibald Cox.

WEINSTEIN: Cox, who was a very able guy. I knew Archie Cox quite well, because I'd already joined the Law School faculty, Harvard Law School faculty, as a part time teacher of trial practice. I knew Archie even before that.

STERN: I assume once he became President that the frequency of your telephone calls with him must have declined.

WEINSTEIN: Very, very much less. It was rare, I'd say rare, although I needed him a bit about that phrase, 'stroke of the pen.'

STERN: I was just about to ask you about that.

WEINSTEIN: Because I had been very strong with him about housing. Housing had been a very big part of my life. I'd been involved in it for a very long time. He said, "I'll do it one of these days," but he didn't do it, as I remember, until about either early...

STERN: November '62.

WEINSTEIN: November '62. It was strange that the list of names was not

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alphabetical. After Governor Lawrence's [David Leo Lawrence] name, he had my name, and he called me. I thought he was going to name me chairman, because that's what he once told me. I remember he called me one time and said, "Lou, Governor Lawrence hasn't got a job and that's the best place I can put him. You don't mind?" I said, "Not at all." We had a small, three man executive committee, three men, one black from Illinois, and this I'll go off the record on, please, he was later indicted, he was a State Treasurer or something like that, I don't remember whether he was convicted, his name was Jones. I know him very well, there's a picture of him behind, there's a picture with Governor, with President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], who reappointed the whole committee.

STERN: Were you disappointed with Kennedy's delays on the Housing....

WEINSTEIN: I was disappointed, because he was so easy. But, I know he was having trouble with a lot of Southerners, and he wanted to keep friendly with all the Southern Senators. But, I was really disappointed in him on that...

STERN: I gather that you drafted a...

WEINSTEIN: I drafted an order.

STERN: ...an order for him which...

WEINSTEIN: I drafted an order which he didn't use, but, he used some of it anyway, and the final order was done. I know I didn't realize I had a big certificate of my appointment, very fancy – Secretary of State and the President appointed me to this Commission, that I didn't know I had until we moved from across the street here to this office last December. Then I found it. But, I remember when we were sworn in, and I

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remember the little talk we had privately, he asked me to stay after Governor Lawrence and the group went to the, another room...

STERN: This is May '63, when you were appointed to the President's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity and Housing, which is after he had signed the order?

WEINSTEIN: He had signed the order, but he didn't appoint anybody. I felt he should have appointed the Commission the same time he signed the order. What's the use of an order if it can't be implemented? I didn't think the Department of Justice could really implement it as it should. And, as it later on, without the need of any order, in all the legis...all the litigation that took place later under the Attorney General's direction.

STERN: On a minor note, there was a birthday reception for him at the Commonwealth Armory in 1961, which I think you were involved in...

WEINSTEIN: Oh, I was there, I was involved in that. I was involved in some fundraising for that. I don't know whether it was deficit fundraising or whatever it was. I remember that I was one of the quote machers quote – a Yiddish word with a non-Yiddish ending that means 'people involved heavily in it.' I was a ?, another Yiddish work meaning a stirring spoon, activating people, and we raised quite a bit of money, and it wasn't difficult while he was president.

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STERN: Yeah, I can imagine...

WEINSTEIN: And I didn't work as hard either, because I didn't have to.

STERN: What about your work on the National Community Relations Advisory Council? How did that relate to your relationship with him?

WEINSTEIN: That was involved in Israel. That was involved in equal opportunities, civil rights, and civil liberties. That was involved in church-state relations, and many other issues. It's really the Jew and the non-Jewish world, and what the relationships are. One of their annual program books, we made a program plan which was suggestions to the communities as to how to act and suggestions to the national organizations. We were made up of, at that time, probably six national Jewish organizations. It's now thirteen, it grew. It now includes all the major organizations involved in community relations. I wrote a lot of letters during that time, maybe not all to the President, but to various people who knew that I was friendly with the President. I think we accomplished a great deal during that period of it. Also, a great deal during the Johnson period, because Johnson had more time and did involve himself very heavily in civil rights particularly. The start was given to... On Jews in the Soviet Union, I had a number of talks with him. He said we've got to find the right time for it, and I said you know it's getting pretty bad, there are murder trials going on, they call them economic trials, but the defendant is always a Jew. He's charged with black market or something else like that, he's always convicted and executed. They're murder

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trials, in which the defendant is murdered and not the murderer. And, I said to him that he had to do something and of course I said there's been just a trickle, a few people a year coming out of the Soviet Union really, and we talked about that on two or three occasions over the telephone. Once in person. I remember that before he went to Dallas I talked to him and he said, "When I get back, let's devote part of a weekend to that."

STERN: Yes, you met with him at the White House, I think ten days before he left Dallas on the topic of the Soviet Jews.

WEINSTEIN: Do you have a record of that?

STERN: Yes.

WEINSTEIN: If you can get me that, I'd appreciate it. I've written... I'm about to write on that in my next chapter (chapter 9), which deals with Jewish and personal matters. These reminiscences I told you about.

STERN: Yes. On the....

WEINSTEIN: Ten days before.

STERN: Ten days before.

WEINSTEIN: And, that's fascinating, because I told that to people, but I couldn't give them a date. And, you know, they think sometimes when you tell stories that you may be manufacturing them. I never manufacture

stories.

STERN: What about the background of your appointment to Equal Opportunity and Housing. When did he first approach you about it?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, he told me, he says, "If I appoint you, will you be willing to take the job?" I said, "Sure, so long as it's a non-paying and full-time or heavily time requiring job." I

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said I'd be glad to do anything you wanted. I think he turned it over to Bobby, and Bobby was pretty busy, and I think somebody from the Attorney General's office may have gone ahead without maybe even seeing my draft. I don't know. There was some similarities there.

STERN: What exactly were your duties on the....

WEINSTEIN: Our duties were to stir things up. We had no powers as such, because none - you read the Executive Order and it's very limited. It's a catalytic agent, and that's what we were. But, we became very active and the mere fact of our existence permitted us to talk to the National Association of Real Estate Board, the National Building, Home Building Association, whatever the full title was, and to talk to them knowing that, if necessary, the Attorney General will get after them. That gave us a pretty strong pan, and I know I'd been chairman of the Housing Committee of the NCRAC, and Bob became vice-chairman of the whole group and then chairman. We wrote a book called Changing Neighborhoods. We also wrote a book - when I say 'we', I mean staff people. I also played an important part because it was, all of these things were part of me so I could just sit down and dictate, and then maybe just correct a little bit of the first draft that I had. I played a big role of that in Massachusetts. Massachusetts passed legislation before the Federal Order. I played a big role also in the FEPC - employment opportunities as well as educational opportunities. I was on the State Committee, appointed by the Commissioner of Education. I worked on all these things,

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but this was a job for the NCRAC, and I used that, I think, quite effectively. We formed many...the word I was looking for before was coalitions. Labor...we had a Civil Rights Coalition nationally. We also formed coalitions at the state level. We'd start with women's groups, with the League of Women Voters, and National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of Catholic Women, and so forth. We'd also go to all the civil rights and civil liberties organizations, a lot of help from the black organizations, the NAACP, the Urban League and so forth.

STERN: How did the work on the Committee change when Johnson became president?

WEINSTEIN: I think it became a little bit more pushed by Johnson's civil rights group. Many of them were the same people who had been under Kennedy. You remember that Mike Feldman, who had been under Kennedy and remained under Johnson. We talked about Soviet Jewry before, and I was able, while I was chairman of the NCRAC and chairman of the Conference of Presidents of American Jewish Organizations, to hold the first big rally under Johnson for Soviet Jews. A two day rally. We overcame the objections of ?, then President of the World's Zionist Congress. They weren't so much objections, they were, "not now, but later," and "I have more diplomatic skills than you have." That sort of thing. And, also even from Israelis, because I think they were talking with the Soviet Union at that time in intimate terms. I was the last person in the world to try to tell Israel what to do on the international scene, or its

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security scene, but I would do that in private. They didn't want us to hold the conference either, and they wouldn't send us a speaker. They finally sent us observers, and we kept them informed. Levanon, who was the direct representative of Ben-Gurion [David Ben-Gurion] in the Israel Embassy with whom I talked. He told me they were wrong. They should have encouraged us instead of trying to discourage us.

STERN: What is your general assessment of Kennedy and Israel, for example the decision to supply the Hawk missiles? There were a lot of differences, for example, over the use of the United Nations.

WEINSTEIN: I was, I understood what went through his mind, I think. He wanted to be re-elected. He went to Dallas for that very purpose. He wanted to have Southerners' support. He knew that he would have difficulty. Fulbright [J. William Fulbright] was a thorn in his side. Fulbright was about to be named Secretary of State. You may remember that, that was his first choice. There was a barrage of telegrams in which I played a key role, because we worked with that coalition on the Civil Rights issue, but I also worked on the Israel issue, because we knew that he was extremely friendly with the Arabs. In all my telegrams on the Civil Rights issue, but privately I was also working on the Israel issue. So, Jewish national office holders or private citizens that had strong feelings. I knew he must have had a barrage, I never knew how many, of telegrams on the Fulbright proposed appointment. It

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began even before he became President, the name of Fulbright was linked with him. But he was worried to some extent of how much support he would have for legislation in Congress. I remember that in many of the bills he proposed came through with that very narrow margin. He drew up in his own election by a narrow margin. Therefore, he was playing it a bit, I felt,

too cautiously. I think, for example, the position on the Soviet missiles in Cuba, he really showed tremendous strength. I think that I've read everything that was published on that issue because I was listening with baited breath to everything that came from Washington. I think he was hesitant and I understood that. I would try to tell my Jewish or black friends that they had to play along with him on these things because it was still tight, and '64 was facing us. They knew that, and I think we were probably a little too gentle with him during that period, because I think he was ready to take a stronger position. It was a tough position, however, to be in, that he had. I understood, I think, his position very well. Therefore, probably was a little bit softer with him than I would have been later with Johnson. With Johnson, you could talk tough, and he would listen. He was appalled. Kennedy was appalled, but he was also a gentleman, compared to Johnson, by a long shot. I think that Kennedy was the brighter of the two, by far, was the better educated of the two, by far, better cultured of the two, by far, but Johnson was willing to take risks much more than Kennedy was. I think on Vietnam, people blame Kennedy for the advisors, the American advisors, but

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I think he was very much more cautious than most people attribute, especially in view of the pressures put on him, especially by some French authorities who had had their own problems with Dien Bien Phu, and so forth. I think that, and I was cautious on Vietnam, I once talked to him about Vietnam, and I said, "You know, the French got out of there, and the French were glad to get out of there just as they were glad to get out of Algeria." When did they get out of Algeria?

STERN: '62.

WEINSTEIN: '62. I said that was a big price, leaving Algeria, but they were ready to take it, and I think we ought...they left...I know they didn't want to push us in, but I think we've got to be awfully, awfully careful. I said, "If I were President, forgive me for using that phrase, I said to him, but I would not get involved in Vietnam."

STERN: What did he say?

WEINSTEIN: He said, "I have to play it by ear, and I appreciate what you've told me." That I remember, I have to play it by ear.

STERN: That's interesting. Did you feel, for example, that supplying the Hawk missiles, which he took quite awhile to agree to, that he was being too slow? I know, for example, that there was a lot of pressure being applied by the Kennedy administration on the Palestine issue; the Israelis were very tough on it, and wouldn't bend very much.

WEINSTEIN: Well, the Israelis knew, they had had kibbutz attacked, they had had towns attacked. I remember it very well. I was

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in Israel in '56. I'd been there in Palestine in '35, and Israel was a big part of my life. I was asked to head national Jewish organizations and eventually when I became chairman of the President's Conference, we had four or five pro-Israel organizations and ? right there. Just as we, a big part of our Council of Jewish Welfare Federation money went to Israel. Our national, NCRAC worked to a large extent, to a very large extent, also was pro-Israel. So, I was involved in all these things, and I think he was slow. It was part of his very cautious approach to some problems. He was not cautious when he finally came to a decision on the Soviet Union. He was ready to take that step. He was cautious, but he was decisive. I think he was less decisive on many of these other issues, largely because he wanted to be sure of his rear guard. I think he was watching that closely, not only for his re-election, but also because he thought he would be defeated by a Congress that might go the other way.

STERN: In June of '63, June 17th, to be exact, he sent you a telegram asking if you could meet at the White House, if you could attend the June 17th meeting at the White House with Civil Rights leaders. Do you recall if you went?

WEINSTEIN: I remember I went, but I can't recall what the issue was. I don't recall one telegram when he asked me to come when I didn't come. I became very ill in '65. I had a malignant prostate, and as a result of that operation and complications, I was out off and on for about a year and a half. I was in, I was out. That was under Johnson, where I had to miss a number of meetings. But, I never missed a meeting,

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as I recall, of Kennedy's. You'll have to refresh my memory on that.

STERN: Well, I think that the basic questions were involved in the new civil rights legislation that he was just submitting to Congress. This was just after a speech, a few days, the speech was June 11th, and the meeting was June 17.

WEINSTEIN: I think that....

STERN: And the March on Washington was coming up as well.

WEINSTEIN: Well, we worked on the March on Washington very closely, the NCRAC, and I was chairman, as I told you. We had communities all through the United States. We had no Canadian representatives, we had the Council of Jewish Federation. And, I remember that I was in the March on

Washington. I remember the presidents of organizations led the big parade with “civil rights for all,” you know, whatever they...canvas, no, cotton, the thing we had in front of us. I was there, and I’m sure I went to that conference, but I, if I saw the telegrams and some documents, I know they’d come back, because lots of things come back.

STERN: Yeah.

WEINSTEIN: One thing leads to another, to another.

STERN: I also noticed that you had some correspondence with the President on immigration reform and on passport reform.

WEINSTEIN: Yes. That I wrote to him on. I was very strong for an abolition of the National Origins Quota. I told him about the fight on the Johnson bill, which he didn’t know, and I said how it was licked with strangely enough James M. Curley one-term, part of a term in Congress, which he....

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STERN: Can you elaborate on that a bit?

WEINSTEIN: Well, yes, the National Origins Quota came into existence as a result of legislation that was enacted, as I recall it, in 1915, 16, somewhere around there.

STERN: Yeah, Harding [Warren Gamaliel Harding] signed it.

WEINSTEIN: And, Harding, well then it was later, because Harding didn’t come in until 1921. He came in in 1921, was elected in 1920. It was something, there was a very restricted portion in the original bill, and then, it was so supposedly alleviated by the National Origins Quota, because then, instead of all coming from England by one quota, it became divided into nationalities. But, of course, that did restrict Russian origin people a great deal, especially since people who didn’t consider themselves of Russian origin, Poland and the Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, were part of the Russian, because it was then Russian, so that you got very few out of the demands by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, to come in. To me, this was a dreadful thing, because I came as an immigrant myself at age sixteen, fifteen months, in July 1906. My father had been over here as a boy, went to high school, but he came back, and married the girl with whom he had been corresponding, and I was born there. He had come out, back here, ahead of my mother and me. It was personally moving, because I saw immigrants at our home in Portland, Maine, always took refugees off the ships - Greek, Italian, particularly, as well as Russian. We, so it was a personal thing with me, as well as a strong national thing, after all what did Emma Lazarus’s poem and the Statue of Liberty mean?

I became heavily involved and I wrote legislation for the NCRAC on that, and we took a big row on that. We fought on that, both while he was in Congress and while, after he became President. I thought he was slow on that, too, but I understood what he did on that, and I had to be very defensive with other Jewish organizations on that. But, if you want to fight more, please do, I personally can't, because I tried to put myself exactly in his position, and I couldn't be aggressive on that. Although, I always talked to him privately, but I would let others play the key role. The Chairman of our Immigration Committee, whom I would introduce to him, or telephone him that so and so was part of a delegation, now you be very nice to him, because he's an old friend of mine. I remember that he would feel strongly about his, and I do, too, but I'm trying not to hurt you on this.

STERN: Johnson, of course, finally achieved the change.

WEINSTEIN: Johnson finally achieved the change, but Johnson didn't have the problem. By this time, Democrats were in more strongly.

STERN: Of course, that would be '64.

WEINSTEIN: Until Vietnam, '64 was a great victory, and Kennedy made that, and I think Kennedy's caution helped make that. Once Johnson was in there, even at the very end of '63, in that short period, he made a turn, in '64 was a great year for civil rights.

STERN: Sure.

WEINSTEIN: But,...

STERN: Did you have any connection with the efforts that Albert

Schwartz [Albert B. Schwartz] was involved in, to change passport....

WEINSTEIN: Yes, I remember that. The name Albert Schwartz I had forgotten until you just mentioned it. But, I know lots of Schwartzes. But, as I remember, Albert Schwartz, was he in the State Department?

STERN: He was Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs....

WEINSTEIN: Yes, because I remember what he looks like, but I had forgotten that, and I was involved in that, and I talked to Schwartz over the telephone a number of times, I'm positive. He knew how I felt privately; he also knew that I didn't want to push Jack Kennedy too far. I hope this part about pushing Jack

Kennedy too far isn't coming back to haunt me, because a number of people told me that privately. I thought in the long run, we'd be better off, if he were re-elected, and could control Congress. I felt it would be great in four years coming up with him as President. I felt it in my bones, it was indubitable. Who ever thought of an assassination? I know it never flashed through my mind, when I read, obviously, if you have Lincoln [Abraham Lincoln] books around the house. I think I have every book on Lincoln ever published, unless it was some privately published. I'd often sit down, before I went to sleep, go to bed - I didn't usually read in bed, but I slept, even after my wife had gone to bed and I would read. I read of this assassination, that train ride from Washington back to Springfield. But, I never associated it, never thought of it, assassination, never once.

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STERN: Did you have any contact after President Kennedy's death with Bobby Kennedy, and his campaign in '68?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, I did. I spoke for, to Bobby Kennedy, I don't think I have very much correspondence from Bobby. I have maybe a few letters. I talked to him quite a lot. I know he asked me if I wanted to come to Washington, and I said thanks very much, but I'm....

STERN: In what capacity? Do you remember?

WEINSTEIN: He did not mention it. I remember I wouldn't let them talk too far, because I was afraid I might be tempted, you know. I wanted to take a firm position.

STERN: Did you work on his campaign at all? In '68?

WEINSTEIN: I worked on his campaign. I didn't work as hard as I worked on the Jack Kennedy campaign, because I didn't know Bobby as well. And, Bobby seemed to have his different group. I liked Bobby very much. I knew his wife...

STERN: Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy].

WEINSTEIN: Ethel. I remember seeing her last summer down at the Kennedy compound. She greeted me and seemed to remember me. I wasn't as close to Bobby as I was to Jack, and I've become very close to Ted. I think I talk much more to Ted, first of all, it was a longer period. Because I campaigned for him in New York. As a matter of fact, there was a group of four of us, who took on a press conference for him in New York, where Ted wasn't there. The Sunday before the New York election. I remember it was Rabbi, and Bob, Bobby Abrams,

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the New York attorney general and Al Dershowitz, and myself. I was the last minute replacement for the fourth guy, whose name I forget, who was a cleanup man. Later on, Al Dershowitz told me that I won the New York primary for him. I said, "No, it was you, Al." All of us, I think contributed very heavily, and I got a lot of calls after that bit was broadcast, televised and so forth. People said, "You mean you were in New York and you didn't call me?" I said, "I flew up and flew right back."

STERN: That pretty much completes my questions. Do you have anything you would like to add?

WEINSTEIN: Well, I have some personal letters from when he lost the baby, when they lost the child, and a number of things that he called me and spoke to me about. When I finished the CJA campaign in 1957, where I got a letter from him saying it was a great campaign, and I didn't ask for it. CJA, it was at that time. We merged, AJP and CJA. I had been president of CJP and I was senior vice-president of AJP; I was going to become president when I recommended that we merge both, then I wouldn't take the presidency.

STERN: Just one last question. I wonder if, has you...

WEINSTEIN: Are we still on?

STERN: Yes. Has your perspective on Kennedy and Kennedy as President changed at all in the last twenty years? Do you think differently of his presidency than you did then? In the light

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of what's happened subsequently?

WEINSTEIN: Let me say this. I've thought often of why I didn't do, given the extra push that I might have turned him to more, to earlier, more positive action on a lot of the issues that you and I have discussed - on civil rights, on immigration, on passports, on everything. Particularly on Israel. Sometimes, I wish I had done more, but I really think the strategy he planned for himself was sound. Even though I wish he had done more, I understood why he didn't, and I decided I wouldn't personally push him. I did push him on a few things, that he came through. I was very vigorous, really fighting him way back when he was a freshman in Congress, because there I felt he was so wrong, and it was such a mistake to get him on the Arab side. Not only was I thought he surely going to become Senator, that I knew, I even thought beyond that. I said, "This is wrong." And there I pushed him, and he finally wielded, but it was a hard fight. I felt I could push him to other things. But, I felt in the long run it was better for this country, it was better for Americans, it was also better for Jews if he were President, with a strong feeling of security as President, and a Congress you didn't have to worry about. So, that I

don't think I would change my position, although I might be less knotted down, tied down to that position now than I was then. I really knew that when the time came, when the crunch time came, he'd come through. And, Israel somehow managed to survive, but with great losses. I don't think I'm responsible for the losses, but every so often I get blamed for why I didn't

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do more about death camps. I didn't know about death camps until three or four days before we liberated the first death camps. That was taboo. I remember when Dave and I, who was on the staff of Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt], sent someone to talk to me intimately, and I asked him. "We hear rumors about these places liquidating Jews, that the final solution was not just this but that. Not just getting rid of Jews on occasion, but really methodical, scientific ways of murdering them by the thousands. I didn't think of tens of millions. You know, you can blame yourself and have a guilty complex. I try to overcome that, but sometimes I don't.

STERN: Well, thank you very much.

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