

David P. Highley Written Statement – JFK#1, 05/06/1964
Administrative Information

Creator: David P. Highley

Interviewer: Charles T. Morrissey (written statement)

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Biographical Note

Highley was John F. Kennedy's [JFK] barber in Washington, D.C. In this written statement Highley discusses when he first met JFK as a client at his barbershop in 1947; JFK's courteousness; Highley's impression of JFK; and Highley's reaction to JFK's assassination.

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Oral History Interview

Of

David P. Highley

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Mr. Morrissey,

Theses OK

David P. Highley

Statement of David P. Highley to Charles T. Morrissey
For the John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Collection

On the afternoon of May 6, 1964, I went to the Senate Barbershop in the United States Capitol to talk with David P. Highley, who had cut John F. Kennedy's hair from the time Mr. Kennedy was a Congressman to the time he was assassinated.

Mr. Highley told me that Mr. Kennedy first sat in his barber chair in January, 1947, when the future President had come to Washington as a freshman member of the Eightieth Congress. For the next fifteen years, with very few exceptions, Mr. Highley continued to serve Mr. Kennedy in this capacity. The few exceptions usually occurred when Mr. Kennedy was away from the city -- in Wisconsin, for example, or in New York.

"Mr. Kennedy was a gentleman in every way," Mr. Highley recalled. He always extended a friendly "Hi, Dave," as a greeting and never forgot to say "Thank you" very generously when the haircut was completed. He never complained about anything. When Mr. Highley was called to the White House to cut the President's hair he occasionally had to wait until the President was free from the pressing business of the day. If Mr. Kennedy was unduly delayed he would not forget to apologize to Mr. Highley for keeping him waiting. This sort of

courtesy was characteristic of Mr. Kennedy's considerate nature, Mr. Highley declared.

The future President rarely talked while sitting in the barber's chair, unlike many other Senators and Congressmen who enjoyed talking about baseball or other subjects. Usually he would read the newspapers, especially the editorials, or busily apply himself to writing out notes on a pad of paper. He was able to relax thoroughly while sitting in the chair, Mr. Highley said. There was no sense of tenseness about him. But he was also a man of vigorous activity; after about ten minutes in the chair it would become apparent that he was thinking about places to go and things to do. As his barber Mr. Highley felt he should have Mr. Kennedy out of the chair in about ten minutes at the most so he could return to the matters which required his attention.

On the afternoon of the assassination, November 22, 1964, Mr. Highley was walking on F Street in downtown Washington when he heard the terrible news from Dallas. He was overwhelmed by shock and grief, he told me, and on the day I talked with him in the Capitol he said he had not yet adjusted himself completely to the reality of the tragic event of November 22nd.

Charles T. Morrissey
May 7, 1964