

Joseph F. Feeney Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 11/22/1976
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Biographical Note

Feeney, Chief Justice, Boston Municipal Court (1986 - 1991); Associate Justice, Boston Municipal Court (1982 - 1986); Aide to Speaker John W. McCormack, Massachusetts, discusses Kennedy's labor legislation in Congress and John McCormack's support during the 1960 presidential campaign, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Joseph F. Feeney

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Joseph F. Feeney – JFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

with

JOSEPH FEENEY

November 22, 1976
Boston, Massachusetts

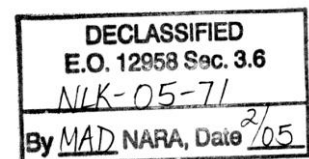
By Bill Hartigan

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HARTIGAN: General, I want to get a voice level, but I also want to apologize to you for getting a mix up in the previous tape that we did back in October 5th and have to come back here again and take up your time to redo. The second cassette worked out so we'll just pick up the first one.

FEENEY: Bill, I'm delighted to see you always, you know that, and let's see if we can discuss some of the history of the Kennedy era and hopefully we can make some contribution which might be of assistance to students and scholars in the future.

HARTIGAN: This is Bill Hartigan, the date November 22, 1976, and I'm in the office of Judge Joseph Feeny on State Street in Boston. Judge Feeny has been active in Boston city politics, Massachusetts state politics, and national politics for as long as I can remember and before this interview is over he may tell me how that lengthy time has come out in years. Judge Feeny has been a confidant and advisor to former Speaker of the House of Representatives John McCormack [John William McCormack]. Judge Feeny's association with Congressman McCormack goes back before the congressman became the Speaker. He was a friend of the late president's since his first arrival in Washington, D.C. as a freshman congressman. He also was a close friend and member of the President Kennedy's [John F. Kennedy]



congressional staff and President Kennedy's friends in the early days of that Congress. Judge Feeney, when and where did you first meet President Kennedy?

FEENEY: I first met President Kennedy when, after his return to Boston after World War II. As I recall, the first time I ever met him, his late father brought Jack into the Speaker's office. He was then, John McCormack was then the majority leader. And he came into John McCormack's office, room 1408 in the federal building, which office the Speaker still has now as speaker emeritus and introduced Jack to us at that time, to the Senate. And, of course, as you remember, at that time I was the Speaker's chief Washington secretary. I later met the president after he had indicated he was going to run for Congress when the.... He came in to talk to Mr. McCormack in the Boston office and with him, at that time, as I recall it was Bill Sutton [William J. Sutton] and he discussed with the speaker his aspirations and the Speaker indicated to him that he would be happy to be of any assistance possible. Subsequently, Billy Sutton contacted me with reference to different members of the various labor organizations who were familiar in that congressional district and we made several meetings for Bill Sutton with the labor groups. And that was in Jack's first--the president's first congressional fight.

HARTIGAN: Who were the people that surrounded the then Congressman Kennedy in the early days of his activities in Congress?

FEENEY: Well, the principal person I knew with him at that time was Bill Sutton who later became his secretary, one of his secretaries in Washington, with Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.]. And Billy was our principal contact with him at that time. He also had with him at that time, Mr. Kane [Joseph Kane], as I recall it, was a part of his clan, if I recall correctly. Do you remember Joe Kane?

HARTIGAN: Uh, hum....

FEENEY: And, uh, was Bob Morey [Robert F. Morey] around at that time.... Fiddles. Yeah, Fiddles was around at that time, Fiddles Morey, yeah.

HARTIGAN: Did.... Weren't you one of the ones they contacted seeking your joining their staff at that time?

FEENEY: Oh, uh, that came afterwards, Bill, some time later after he had been elected to Congress. The then political editor of the *Boston Herald*, Bill Mullins [William Mullins], who I am sure you remember, used to write a column for the Herald at that time, when Congressman Kennedy had been elected to Congress for the first time. Evidently, he was concerned about a staff with Washington know-how, and Bill Mullen recommended me to Jack Kennedy and when Jack came to Washington, he came to see the majority leader-- John McCormack at that time, and he also came to see me and asked me to have lunch with him and told me that Bill Mullins had recommended me very highly to

be his secretary and asked me if I were interested. At that time, I was going to school and I was with John McCormack and indicated to him that I would like very much to be of assistance to him, but

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I felt that in view of my commitments to the Speaker that I would be happy to help the then congressman in everything possible but I preferred to stay with John McCormack because I was going to school at that time and, uh, as a result, we developed a much closer relationship. And I recommended to him, Mary McCarthy, who was secretary in our office, to Congressman Kennedy as a very efficient young lady who President Kennedy hired because she had worked in John McCormack's office for a number of years and she served him for all the time that he was in the House of Representatives, and she was a very efficient and competent member of his staff. And we maintained our close relationship from that time on.

HARTIGAN: What from your perceptive point of view what was your impression of him as a congressman when you first met him?

FEENEY: Well, I think my first impression was that, as I indicated before, was his humility because he obviously came from a family that was well known. The late John F. Fitzgerald [John Francis "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald] is his grandfather and the ambassador is his father, and his own excellent background, a record as a war hero in effect, but yet he was.... There was a complete lack of ostentation about him and I think that he had a marvelous facility for putting people at ease and was able to relate to people. I think the principal factor that impressed me was his complete lack of ostentation.

HARTIGAN: Were you in a position to observe him with reference to his similarities and/or his differences with reference to the other freshman members of his class in the Congress?

FEENEY: Oh, I think so, I think in....

[INTERRUPTION]

FEENEY: I think Bill, with relation to other members of his class, he was obviously looked upon as a leader. Even from day one, he obviously had the leadership qualities. So many of the other members associated with him were enlightened members of the house, as I recall, he and George Smathers [George A. Smathers] and, uh, Torby Macdonald [Torbert H. Macdonald], and all of them were the younger group of congressmen who brought a new and fresh viewpoint to the House after World War II. And I think that he was recognized in the House as a "comer" almost from day one. I very frankly must say that I think, as I watched him in the House--because, as you know, I was assistant legislative clerk of the House and then legislative clerk of the House afterwards, and he.... Therefore, I had to be on the floor with the private and consent calendar on the first and third Monday and Tuesday of every month. On the actual floor of the House of

Representatives, so I had an opportunity to see all of the members in action on the floor of the House, and I think that the so-called seniority rule and the necessary cannon rules of procedure frustrated Jack Kennedy somewhat, in my judgment. And I think this is one of the reasons why he ultimately went to the Senate, because the leadership position in the House in those days were held, as you remember, by people like Sam Rayburn [Sam Rayburn] and Joe Martin [Joseph William Martin, Jr.] and Mike Mansfield [Mike Mansfield], who was the Whip under John McCormack, and Wilbur Mills [Wilbur Mills] was ranking member Jere Cooper, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and they were people who had, members of Congress, who had considerable seniority, years of seniority, and as such, they were recognized as the powers that be in the House. And to

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break through that elite group, if you will, was a difficult task to ask of any freshman congressman.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall of any members in particular that he turned to for advice, or associated with?

FEENEY: I think he always had a, despite publicity to the - some publicity to the contrary, I think he always had an affinity for Mr. McCormack, as he called him, he knew the warm, close relationship, as you do, between Mr. McCormack and Mr. Joseph Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] and I think Jack Kennedy respected that relationship and I think he developed a close relationship with Mr. McCormack and when the chips were down he would talk to Mr. McCormack. I think he had a excellent relationship with Mike Mansfield, and also with Wilbur Mills, and with George Smathers, I recall, but through the years in the House and Senate, I always felt that closest relationship was with Torby Macdonald.

HARTIGAN: You mean when Torby was in the House and he was in the Senate?

FEENEY: Right. And even in the House and the Senate. I think that was a, in my judgment, a closer relationship than with anybody else.

HARTIGAN: That was more of a friendship deal rather than a colleague.

FEENEY: Right.

HARTIGAN: In terms of the freshman members of his class, who did he...?

FEENEY: I recall, at that time, I'd have to go back to some of my notes that I had at that time, I would say Smathers. Smathers was there at that time, was probably one of his closest friends.

HARTIGAN: Hale Boggs [Thomas Hale Boggs] was in the Congress at that time....

FEENEY: Right. Oh yes, I know that he and Hale Boggs were always very friendly. Hale Boggs was on the Ways and Means, as you recall. Jack was on the Labor Committee, if I recall, at that time. I'd have to check that, but I'm pretty sure he was.

HARTIGAN: Did, do you recollect that he had any mentors, so to speak, while he was a freshman, that he sought their help.

FEENEY: I think.... He....

HARTIGAN: Other than.... I know he had one with the Speaker, but I think...

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FEENEY: Oh, Phil Philbin [Philip Joseph Philbin] was very, he was very friendly with Phil Philbin and Congressman Philbin from Clinton, and, uh, Harold Donohue [Harold Daniel Donohue] was there about that time, as I recall it and he had a good relationship with them, as I recall, and uh, over on the Senate side, as you recall, David Walsh [David I. Walsh] was there at the end of World War II when we were down there. But, oh, I think that Jack's friendships in the early days were House people, members of the House, and looking back he cultivated those people who were helpful to him and at the same time out of pure friendship, as I recall. I remember he was very friendly with Wilbur Mills, as I said, and John Fogarty [John E. Fogarty] became a very close friend of his, from Rhode Island, as I recall it.

HARTIGAN: So, most of the members of Congress that he sought in the vernacular of being mentor to him would eventually become leaders of either the House or the Senate, as time went on.

FEENEY: Right. Those were the people he developed a friendship with, as I say, because he was a kind of a leader himself in that respect. He was certainly not a follower.

HARTIGAN: Uh...

FEENEY: And at the same time, he didn't, he was not one of those who was jumping on his feet every day in the House. I think he was by nature almost shy at the beginning, but nevertheless, he.... Because of his vast experience, being in the Navy and in Europe with his father, he has a grasp of foreign affairs that very few freshman congressman had and uh, I think it stood him in good stead. If you recall, even while he was at school in England, he wrote *Why England Slept* as I recall it.

HARTIGAN: What are your recollections about the committee assignments that he sought out when he went to the Congress?

FEENEY: As I recall it, he went to the Labor Committee, way back in the beginning. He was active at the, as I recall, he was on the Labor Committee, Labor and Education Committee, and I think this formed a pattern for him that was an area of interest to him all of his career. If you recall, he, later in the Senate, he was very much interested in the Landrum-Griffin bill and.... Jack Kennedy on the Senate side made some of the proposals which was in fact a labor reform act and he had the courage to make the recommendations that would create a new attitude, if you will, by the American public towards labor. And, I think this special interest of his began when he went on the Labor Committee in the House of Representatives because I think that when the Taft-Hartley, the so-called labor management relations act, was enacted back in 1947, he opposed the passage of the so-called Taft-Hartley Act. And, if you recall, in the 80th Congress, they had, Hartley became chairman of the labor committee in House and Taft [Robert A. Taft] in the Senate and Hartley's [Fred Allan Hartley, Jr.] name went on that bill. Some of the rules of conduct to be observed by labor and management, which were part of that bill, were opposed by Jack Kennedy, as I remember, and I think he took an active part in the debates concerning that bill.

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HARTIGAN: Do you recall any, uh.... Were you, were you available, or were you aware of any of the frustrations that he enjoyed, or put up with, while he was struggling through his freshman term as a Senator?

FEENEY: No, I didn't have, as I indicated to you, I think that he felt that the House was difficult to move to enact legislation which he favored. I think that if he.... His continuing interest in the field of education was evidenced at that time because he sponsored legislation to improve the education of our young people while he was in the, while he was on that particular committee. And, as you know, he did evidence his interest in, you know, housing, rent control acts and the school lunch program which was part of the educational scene at that time. He opposed the reduction of it and he was an advocate of it, he was an advocate, too, of the improved housing and I think sometime in that first years there, he had indicated, aid to Italy at that time.

HARTIGAN: He, uh....

FEENEY: There was evidence in foreign affairs....

HARTIGAN: What you're saying is that he was in favor of liberalizing labor laws, but he had his own ideas with reference to them rather than a strict run of the mill. Is this correct?

FEENEY: Right. Yes, and he developed from the very beginning some strong friendships that stood him in good stead later on when he ran for the presidency, because, if you recall, labor strongly supported him when he was

a candidate for president. But I think that in the.... His opposition to the Taft-Hartley was based on his belief that the bill was unfair in some sections of the bill and he felt that there ought to be freedom for the working man to organize and bargain collectively without restrictions. And he felt that from the very beginning that labor ought to have an equal voice with the management in collective bargaining and he didn't feel that the Taft-Hartley bill was fair in that respect.

HARTIGAN: He, uh, he was very concerned about distinguishing between a play of words in some of that Labor-Management Relations act of 1947, for example. He was concerned with reference to health and safety versus welfare and interest. They were, they had a vast difference of meaning as far as he was concerned. Do you recall the battle over that?

FEENEY: I really don't recall the details but what, as I recall it, I remember very vividly, because I had always been interested in labor and labor relations problems and coming from a laboring family, I followed that particular bill. And he, as I recall it, Jack Kennedy was opposed to the idea of destroying labor which he felt the Taft-Hartley act would do. He thought that it was unfair to require the working people to do certain things that we didn't require management to do. I think that was one of his basic

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premises which he argued and he felt that Taft-Hartley was placing legal restraints on the American working man. And I think you'd probably have to go back to the debates on that particular bill to uncover the details on his position.

HARTIGAN: In 1947, he was also, in his first year in Congress, he was also concerned in the housing and rent control bills. Do you recall anything from your experience?

FEENEY: Well, I remember the, uh, you'll recall, there was a great deal of talk about increasing the housing available for the public housing. And I think, if you recall, there was a congressman from Michigan, Wolcott [Jesse Paine Wolcott], who was rather conservative and he was opposed to housing as I recall. I remember that Jack Kennedy was on the opposite side, way back then, to Wolcott.

HARTIGAN: The veterans' housing was an issue on that about that time too, wasn't it?

FEENEY: I think Jack Kennedy was a strong voice for all matters that concerned veterans and I think if you'll check the record of the House in those days, that Jack Kennedy did support veterans housing and he felt that as a veteran himself, because of his own personal knowledge, he felt that the country owed veterans a great obligation and he was recognized by a veterans organization as a leader in their fight. And I think he had a close personal interest, don't you agree, in veterans affairs?

HARTIGAN: Also, in 1947, the aid to Italy, you mentioned it previously, do you recall anything more in detail about...?

FEENEY: No, except that if you recall back then, about.... Strangely enough, that was about the time, if I recall, Peter Rodino [Peter Wallace Rodino, Jr.] came to the House and he developed his reputation at that time, and he became a friend of Jack's through the years, as I remember. Peter was one of those who led the fight to try to save Italy from communism by the so-called Letters to Italy, and Congressman Rodino of Watergate fame, and he came to the House about the same time Jack did, as I recall. And there was a whole effort by the Congress, at that time, to provide aid to Italy to prevent Italy from going communistic. And as I recall it, Jack Kennedy was one of those who was in the forefront of that. And I think his pragmatism was apparent, too, because, as you recall, the congressional district that he had at that time, have a large, or a relatively large Italian population, with the--and he represented the North End and he also represented East Boston, the Hartigan stomping ground.

HARTIGAN: In 1948, Judge, the Speaker and the then Congressman Kennedy had some concern about the air cargo situation in 1948. Do you recall any of the details on that?

FEENEY: You mean the government subsidies for airlines?

HARTIGAN: Air cargo?

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FEENEY: I don't recall specifically....

[INTERRUPTION]

FEENEY: Bill, with reference to.... I pointed out to you earlier, Jack Kennedy had been looked upon by the veterans' groups as one of the leaders in behalf of veterans rights in the Congress and, as I recall, at that time, many of the veterans of World War II, who had been flying in Europe were and in Asia, had, uh, were engaged in, or trying to begin the business of carrying cargo by air and, Jack Kennedy at that time was contacted by them and he made an effort, as I recall, to try to help the so-called veterans air freight lines that were beginning to be--going into business. And he and Mr. McCormack joined in a effort to force the Civil Aeronautics Board to grant certificates to these airlines and he indicated that in one of Jack Kennedy's speeches, he indicated that the Civil Aeronautics Board, at that time, gave enormous subsidies to, in the form of mail pay through the certified lines, whereas, the veterans air freight lines should be given certificates by the government to add their freight planes to the fleet of airplanes in this business and, uh, Mr.

McCormack joined with him in that battle in the House and he, Jack Kennedy, was the one voice in the Congress who was shouting loudest to see that they received their fair share.

HARTIGAN: It seems as though the then Congressman McCormack, the...

FEENEY: He was the Majority Leader.

HARTIGAN: The Majority Leader...

FEENEY: As a matter of fact, he was the majority, Minority Whip at that time, because Sam Rayburn had had to step back to become the Minority Leader when the Republican party took control of the 80th congress and Joe Martin became the Speaker.

HARTIGAN: So, the then, the former Speaker of the House, Congressman McCormack and this freshman Congressman Kennedy, in fact, in this particular instance, took on the certificated airlines in order to establish an all freight operation.

FEENEY: Right. And to help the veterans of World War II to go into the cargo business by air.

HARTIGAN: Who were formally nothing?

FEENEY: No.

HARTIGAN: There's a Housing Act of 1948. Are you familiar with...?

FEENEY: Well, as I indicated earlier to you, he felt that the, again, the veterans organizations were you know, like the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Disabled American Veterans and the Catholic War Veterans, the Marine Corps

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League, and the Italian-American Veterans and all the rest, were before the Congress advocating veterans housing for returning veterans and getting nowhere; the American Legion had not been as enthusiastic as it could have been. And Jack Kennedy was one of those who was enthusiastically in support of veterans housing which inevitably passed and, as you know, he also was in support of low cost housing way back in those days.

HARTIGAN: There was a very important, in 1948, a discussion with reference to the air parcel post act. What do you recall about that? The reason I ask is that today it seems to be a big issue with reference to the post office's problems and it seems as though this problem has been going on for quite a while and the former president had some interest in it even back in 1948.

FEENEY: Well, back there, looking at the record, he was opposed to HR6773, which was the bill at that time, but he said not because he opposed the principle of parcel post being carried by air but he opposed that particular bill because of the way the bill had been drawn. And he felt that the parcel post under that bill would be carried according to the airmail letter rates instead of being carried according to cargo rates, and therefore the difference was not as he felt in the interest of parcel post being carried by air. And he felt that the, again--in fact, it was at that time that the veteran airlines or air freight carriers not being certified by CAB and none of them would have been eligible under this particular bill and he felt that to carry parcel post, he felt that the veterans airlines would be obliged to carry cargo only and he offered amendments to the bill to permit the cargo carriers to be compensated and they would have a priority in connection with the air parcel post. And he pointed out too, that his so-called "veterans airlines" were willing to carry the parcel post for 20¢ whereas the big airlines were to be given 65¢, and he felt that because of the discrimination in the bill that that particular legislation was voted down.

As you know, from your own experience in Washington, there are many times when legislation is offered that seemingly advocates a particular policy. Sometimes that particular bill is not in the best interest of all our citizens, it appeals to or protects a limited group and the defeat of that particular piece of legislation might be in the best interest in the public interest because once it's defeated then you would get a bill that might be more equitable and provide a fair share for all our citizens rather than a select group.

HARTIGAN: Would you say...

FEENEY: That was Jack Kennedy.

HARTIGAN: I was just going to say, you seem to think that he was always digging into that aspect of all the...

FEENEY: Oh yes. The public interest, I think, was a paramount consideration. I think one of his great traits was the fact that nobody owned him and that he could afford to be an advocate for the public interest, and I think this is one of the reasons that even though he himself came from a "sheltered background," his efforts were usually for the little guy, the person who, about whom Harry Truman [Harry S. Truman] spoke when he said,

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"The average citizen doesn't have anybody to lobby for him." And as Truman was an advocate for the average man I think that Jack Kennedy in his first years in Congress was looked upon as an outspoken advocate for veterans and for labor and, you know, as evidenced by his relatively few speeches compared to some of the other members, were for people, for things that were much needed at the time, you know, the labor reform act, housing, and school lunch program, and Income Tax Reduction Act of 1948....

HARTIGAN: All gut issues...

FEENEY: Yes. Not only that but issues for little people that would benefit the little guy, so to speak. There was no evidence of him, even though he came from a wealthy family, to be the advocate of entrenched wealth.

HARTIGAN: Also, in 1948, there was a, quite a bit of debate going on with reference to government subsidy for the airlines. Do you have any recollection on that issue. It's still going on today, of course.

FEENEY: Is that so? Well, I think if you look back on that particular legislation, because I know it's a field in which you're interested, but the record indicates that the then Congressman Kennedy was espousing the cause of the veterans companies and indicated that they deserved a chance to develop the new air cargo business which he felt that they had pioneered and he felt that the certificated airlines were grabbing the larger share of the pie and not willing to share it with the little people and he....

HARTIGAN: It's also interesting to note that he leaned heavily on General Eisenhower's [Dwight D. Eisenhower] positions with reference to building the strength of the airlines as a reserve for the future laws.

FEENEY: Uh, huh.

HARTIGAN: In 1949, we start off with the policy towards China, which the record seems to indicate he may have been a little bit on the opposing side of the, his own party, at that time, is this.... Am I correct in...?

FEENEY: Well, the record indicates that he was concerned at that time because he felt the United States had an interest in a non-communist China whereas he felt, and said so, that the failure of our foreign policy in the Far East rested with the White House and the Department of State because he thought that they were losing sight of the interest of the United States because of the criticism of the non-communist China leadership at that time. And back in those days, when he addressed the House he indicated, as I'm reviewing the record, that the Congress should assume the responsibility of preventing the onrushing tide of communism from taking over all of Asia, which I think was a far-sighted view way back in 1949. And, as we now know, he criticized the Lattimores [Owen Lattimore] and the Fairbanks [John King Fairbank] because he felt that they didn't take into consideration the problem that was confronting the non-communist China. He felt that too

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much attention was being paid to their weaknesses, whereas the more important factor to, he felt that should be combated was the possible takeover by the communists, which ultimately was the inevitable result.

HARTIGAN: On the.... Also in 1949, the National Labor Relations Act. I believe that he and Nixon [Richard M. Nixon], it was probably one of their first times that they had speeches, opposing speeches.

FEENEY: Well, if you recall, Nixon way back in those days was very much the conservative and I don't think there's any doubt in anyone's mind looking over his record in the Congress both in the House and in the Senate, that he was anti-labor and he was a strong advocate of the so-called Taft-Hartley act. And he and.... In 1949, he opposed the Taft-Hartley Act but he felt that it made the government an inept and prejudiced participant in labor management relations and he was a member of the Labor and Education Committee at that time, but...

HARTIGAN: I think you were talking about his first discussion or debate with, also ex-president Richard Nixon.

FEENEY: Well, I think I pointed out to you that when there were efforts to amend the Taft-Hartley act, they felt that.... Nixon questioned Jack Kennedy at that time about supporting the so-called Lesinski bill, Congressman John Lesinski, was a member of the commission and the.... Congressman Kennedy indicated that he would support it and he supported an amendment that would require the communist affidavit to apply to employers and employees. If you remember that bill, the way it was written, the communist affidavit only applied to require employees to file a communist affidavit, it did not require the employers to do it. And Nixon questioned Jack Kennedy on the floor of the House as to, if that were the only amendment that Jack Kennedy would support and I, as I indicated to you, I thought Jack Kennedy gave him the, replied perfectly when he said that he would support any amendment that he felt was reasonable and at that particular time he felt that was the only amendment that he considered reasonable, and it was a good putdown. I think of Richard Nixon who was noted to be, at that time, very strongly anti-labor, whereas I think we all agree that President Kennedy was pro-labor. I pointed out to you, I think, he had this strong feeling of being fair to everybody where he felt that if you have a communist affidavit required of employees then it should certainly be required of employers, to treat each one in fairness.

HARTIGAN: Were there any other pieces of legislation, I guess we're up to 1950 now, '49 and '50, that you felt would be of interest in this particular interview?

FEENEY: Well, I think that it's significant, as I pointed out, that Jack Kennedy's sphere of influence was, in the House, was related to those matters of which he had

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know how, because of his service on the Labor and Education Committee. But as you go on from those years, you note that he was concerned and interested in the minimum wage legislation and then after that he went on to talk about the housing bills and advocated that kind of legislation.

In the early 50s, of course, he spoke about housing and very much interested in it and I think that he, it was about 1951 as I recall it, that he made a speech on the floor of the House that supported the resolution that would provide for the unification of Ireland, and in this era of 1976 that we're talking about it, way back in 1951 Jack Kennedy made a speech on the floor of the House where he said that Ireland's fight, for national unity and independence was over 700 years old and it was a fight that cannot be considered won until the six counties of the north are reunited with the twenty-six counties that now comprise Ireland, Eire. And he felt that a free, united, and integrated Ireland would provide an important bastion for the West and he felt that it was important for the United States. So, if his, if Jack Kennedy's suggestions had been adopted at that time, it would have meant the saving of the lives of many hundreds of people who have died in the so-called trouble in this era, would have been saved and I think it's....

HARTIGAN: A little bit of foresight.

FEENEY: It certainly is, particularly significant looking at it in 1976. But I think that his service in the House up until 1952 indicated his interest in the field of education and labor, more so than anything else and he, he participated actively in '51 and '52 in the House, but if you recall at that time, he was running, he ran for the United States Senate in Massachusetts and was elected in November of '52 to the Senate, so in that year, he spent considerable time in Massachusetts, campaigning, and he pulled off the victory that very few people thought he could achieve by defeating Henry Cabot Lodge.

HARTIGAN: Did Speaker McCormack ever discuss with you, either during Jack Kennedy's tenure as a congressman or afterwards about evaluating him as a congressman? Did he ever discuss him?

FEENEY: Yeah, I think John McCormack had an affinity for Jack Kennedy and looked upon him in a sense as a bright young man, as such because of.... I think there was a warm feeling of friendship between them but I think John McCormack's relationship was more attuned to his father's relationship than it was to Jack Kennedy as such but I think they had a basic feeling of respect and friendship because John McCormack was one of the leaders of the team so to speak. A team player in the sense that he was a militant Democrat who cherished the aspirations of the Democratic party as the fighter for the underdog, because he had come through the depression and had been a member of Congress through Franklin D. Roosevelt days and he had lived under and served in public life under the Republican administrations of Harding [Warren Gamaliel Harding] and Coolidge [Calvin Coolidge] and Hoover [Herbert Hoover], whereas Jack Kennedy did not have the benefit of that experience. And I think that he was one who felt that Jack Kennedy would, could not change the House rules, so to speak, as I am sure Jack Kennedy wanted to do because Jack Kennedy was much more of a mover who felt that the pace

probably was not as fast as he would have liked and I think that's one of the reasons that Jack Kennedy felt he would want to go to the Senate where he could make more of a contribution to the public interest than he could in the House.

HARTIGAN: How close really was the Speaker and the president's father?

FEENEY: Well, I think a good indication of it was that he.... When the ambassador, I would say almost every time the ambassador came to Washington during the years, fifteen years that I was there with the, intermittently, with the speaker, Joe Kennedy would visit with John McCormack. And I recall when the offer was made to John McCormack to be the candidate for the United States Senate in the year Joe Casey [Joseph E. Casey] was the nominee. John McCormack felt Joe Kennedy should be the nominee of the Democratic party in Massachusetts and offered to support Joe Kennedy if he would be the candidate. And I think there was a very warm and personal relationship between John McCormack and Joseph Kennedy. And I think it's evidenced by the fact that in Jack's campaign for the presidency, Joseph Kennedy talked to John McCormack almost every Monday of the year. He would call John McCormack around noon time. It would be interesting if records were available to indicate that, because I recall that happened.

HARTIGAN: What about the Ambassador Kennedy contacting Speaker McCormack prior to the campaigns of the Kennedy brothers? Do you recall any such contact?

FEENEY: Oh yes, I recall, if we're talking about Chicago in 1956 when Jack was a candidate for vice president at the convention. Joseph P. Kennedy and John McCormack spoke many times that time and John McCormack was a workhorse for Jack Kennedy on that floor, and I recall, I think you and I discussed that a way back when, he, John McCormack, was responsible, in my judgment, for the state of Texas delegation declaring for Jack Kennedy at the '56 convention against a southerner who was Estes Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] and that was mainly due to the efforts of Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], who was then in the Senate, and a member of the platform committee from Texas by the name of, strangely enough, Vann Kennedy [Vann M. Kennedy]. And that combined effort of Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson and Vann Kennedy and John McCormack, who had a great influence with the members of Congress who were on the Texas delegation: Congressman Gildea [James Hilary Gildea], Congressman Albert Thomas, Congressman Mahon [George H. Mahon], they were all close friends of McCormack and I'm sure that his efforts with them--because I was with him when he made those efforts in the House and in, at the stockyard amphitheater at that time, when John McCormack worked very hard with the Texas delegations and other delegations. I remember his efforts with the New York delegation when Carmine DeSapio [Carmine G. DeSapio] and people, Bob Wagner [Robert Ferdinand Wagner, Jr.] and people like that, Congressman Keough [Eugene James Keough] of New York who, Jim Delaney [James J. Delaney], all of these people were close friends of John McCormack. He was an enthusiastic advocate of John Kennedy.

HARTIGAN: Were you aware of contacts that the.... Were you aware of the fact that....

HARTIGAN:the speaker and Ambassador Kennedy were conversing during the 1956...

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FEENEY: Oh, yes...

HARTIGAN: Could you tell us something about...?

FEENEY: ...by telephone. Well, I was with John McCormack when he had several telephone conversations from time to time with the ambassador. As to the actual conversations I was obviously not privy to that. But I know that he had mentioned that he had talked with Joseph P. Kennedy and I'm sure they touched based quite frequently and compared notes at that time.

HARTIGAN: Was the ambassador in favor of Senator Kennedy becoming the vice presidential candidate under Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson]?

FEENEY: As far as I know, yes. And, if you recall, Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] was active in that effort and Torby Macdonald was a member of Congress at that time and Torby was on the floor with us at that time. And I think that laid the ground work for his effort in 1960. I think that the fact that he came so close to winning the Democratic nomination and lost so graciously, enabled him to be presented to the American people as a hard fighter and at the same time a gracious loser. I think he made a great impression on the leaders in the Democratic party at that time.

HARTIGAN: Judge, you are aware of the fact that some of the newspapers or magazines, the media in general, had indicated that Speaker McCormack was the reason that Senator Kennedy did not get the nomination in Chicago in 1956 because of the sequence in which he recognized the delegations on the floor. Would you like to comment on that?

FEENEY: Well, first of all, it's absolutely not true. I appreciate the fact that there were articles written that indicated contrary, but if you recall, Bill, the... Bob Kennedy sent a telegram to *Time* magazine in which he criticized *Time* magazine for their publication of a story that Bob Kennedy said was completely untrue and false. And John McCormack also took *Time* magazine to task for what he considered to be an incorrect recitation of the facts. Now, I was there with John McCormack at that time and I know of my own personal knowledge of the tremendous effort that he made for Jack Kennedy. The question of recognition was not John McCormack's to make because Sam Rayburn was in the chair. Now, I was the emissary, if you will, John McCormack sent to the platform because I had been acting as counsel to the platform committee, and one of the special counsel to the platform committee at that time, and worked on the drafting of the platform with the speaker, Dick Neustadt [Richard E. Neustadt], had who, Professor Neustadt of Harvard, who had worked with President Truman and George Feldman [George Jay Feldman], who was counsel to the platform committee at that time, and all of that group

knew of the tremendous effort that John was making for Jack Kennedy. At one occasion, I recall where he definitely.... Congressman O'Neal [Emmett O'Neal], former Congressman O'Neal of Kentucky, had a discussion with John McCormack and indicated that they could pick up some votes for Jack

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Kennedy and John McCormack asked me to go to the platform and ask Sam Rayburn to recognize Kentucky, which I did and the tremendous effort that John McCormack made, as I indicated to you earlier--Texas and in the Michigan delegation, I know there was a hassle at that time, and John McCormack made considerable effort with the Michigan delegation to vote forward for Jack Kennedy. And there were many other delegations that he contacted because I was with him and I know of my own personal knowledge that he did it and there was nothing that was left undone by John McCormack to try to win the vice presidential nomination for John Kennedy at the 1956 convention.

HARTIGAN: In 1960, Judge, the presidential campaign in which John F. Kennedy was nominated, could you recall some of the activities that the Speaker engaged during that time with reference to his colleagues throughout the country?

FEENEY: Right. I think that...I recall in particular an incident when John McCormack, long before the convention, weeks before the convention, he was guest on what was then a very popular radio program in Washington called *Capital Cloakroom*, and I'm sure from your days in Washington you recall it, and they had, it was on CBS, and they had people like Charles Collingwood [Charles Cummings Collingwood], Eric Sevareid at times, others who would be the so-called members of a panel who questioned leading members of the Congress with reference to affairs of the day. And on that particular program, before the convention, in '60, John McCormack was asked about his ticket for the coming convention and he said publicly at that time, that he felt the strongest ticket the Democrats could offer would be Jack Kennedy for president and Lyndon Johnson for vice president and I think that the so-called experienced pros of that era felt that he, his reasoning was somewhat far fetched. But John McCormack pointed out to them that he felt the combination of a Democrat from Massachusetts who had the charisma of Jack Kennedy and supported by a southerner from Texas, Lyndon Johnson, would make an almost unbeatable combination. And, as I recall it at that time, the members of the press who were present didn't feel that such a ticket would be put together and subsequently Sam Rayburn suggested to John McCormack that he ought not to be making public statements of that nature because such a ticket was impossible. As I remember it, John McCormack felt that Lyndon Johnson had waited too long before he began his campaign and that Jack Kennedy, by going into all the primaries, had in effect, had a head start on the nomination and would be difficult to overcome. And he felt he told Sam Rayburn that Lyndon Johnson had waited too long and told Sam Rayburn that he felt that his ticket was the only one that could win. And as it turned out, he was right.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall any of the activities prior to the convention from a parochial

point of view within the state of Massachusetts in terms of the choosing of the delegates to go to that convention in Los Angeles.

FEENEY: Well, I didn't think there was any. There wasn't very much. As you know, Mr. McCormack was chairman of the state delegation and, there wasn't any great problem because the ticket was, the delegates were unanimously for Jack Kennedy. It was unlike state delegations in the past, in your day and mine when there was always a bitter contest between different factions. But in the '60 Convention, as I remember

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it, there was no problem because everybody from Massachusetts went out there with the idea that we were going to nominate Jack Kennedy for the presidency and he would go on to win. It was a hometown effort, if you will.

HARTIGAN: What part did the Speaker, if any, did he play in the selection of the vice president. He was very friendly with Rayburn and very friendly with Lyndon Johnson.

FEENEY: Oh, yes. And, as I recall it, the Speaker, Jack Kennedy had sent for the Speaker, had asked him to come to his suite and to discuss the question, the question of vice presidency, in the hotel. And I accompanied John McCormack to the president's, the then candidate's suite, and I recall very vividly that we went up to the floor and John, we were ushered into John Kennedy's suite and he was then Senator Kennedy and Bob Kennedy was very active at that time and there were several others, Hy Raskin [Hyman B. Raskin], as I recall, that name ring a bell with you?

HARTIGAN: Yes, it does, he was from Chicago.

FEENEY: Right. Hy Raskin was there, if I recall, at that time. And I think Torby Macdonald was thereabouts, and I remember he went in to talk with Jack Kennedy about the vice presidency and I know that he spoke very strongly that Lyndon Johnson would be a strong candidate and I'm sure he recommended that I know he recommended that to President Kennedy. And I recall he left the president and went down to talk to Sam Rayburn and he was back and forth on the phone to Jack Kennedy several times.

HARTIGAN: Did the Speaker discuss this with Lyndon Johnson during the trips back and forth from one room to the other? In other words, did he at any time talk to Lyndon Johnson about him becoming vice president?

FEENEY: Oh, I'm sure he did on the telephone but not when I was with him. I know that he did talk with Sam Rayburn.

HARTIGAN: Was Sam Rayburn's attitude friendly towards this suggestion of Lyndon

Johnson being the vice president?

FEENEY: Uh, not initially, as I recall it. Not initially. But I think he accepted it at the convention. But his first reaction was that he felt very strongly that Lyndon Johnson should have been the candidate, not Jack Kennedy. And made no bones about saying so, I might add. And, as you recall, your own service down there in those days, Sam Rayburn was the very strong-willed person who had no hesitancy in speaking his mind to anyone. He had great affection for John McCormack and I think John McCormack worked with him on almost any problem. They had a very warm relationship which enabled them to say things to each other that probably would not have been said to others.

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HARTIGAN: What was Sam Rayburn's feeling, if you know, towards John Kennedy?

FEENEY: Well, I think that anything I saw was a very warm feeling. But, of course, Sam Rayburn, I think you'd have to agree that Lyndon Johnson was more like a son than confidant to Sam Rayburn than anybody else. I think his first love was Lyndon Johnson, and probably because of, a fellow Texan and Lyndon Johnson always paid great deference to Sam Rayburn as the Speaker and I would say that because Lyndon Johnson had great affection for the House of Representatives. He spent a lot of time there because he had been a congressional secretary and had been a member himself. I think that Sam Rayburn had a great warm relationship with Jack Kennedy because Jack Kennedy had great respect for those people and showed it. He deferred to them in many respects. Don't you agree? I mean he...

HARTIGAN: He had respect for authority is what....

FEENEY: Yes. Well, he had respect for, and for Sam Rayburn, and those people who.... And I always felt that he considered them in the same era, if you will, or category, as his father. And he linked them as a generation apart from him and as father figures. And I don't know what caused me initially to create that illusion, if you will, but I always thought that's the way Jack Kennedy treated them; that they were an older group who were in a position to give sage advice and counsel but not necessarily to be followed. He had his own independent thinking to do, which he did, and he listened very carefully because these people had been through the political wars. They had gone through the New Deal era and the Depression and all the rest whereas Jack Kennedy came afterwards.

HARTIGAN: I always had the feeling that he was envious of their experience and wished he had it at his age?

FEENEY: Right. Well, he had...

HARTIGAN: Which was an impossibility, but I think...

FEENEY: Of course, but don't you agree that he considered them...

HARTIGAN: He had a high regard for anybody with wisdom and experience and...

FEENEY: ...who had gone through the so-called political wars.

HARTIGAN: I agree with that.

FEENEY: He loved politics, I always felt. It was more... His vocation was public service but I think he enjoyed politics and he loved the combat of the political arena. He, I think, loved the challenge of outwitting opponents.

HARTIGAN: There has been something said about the contacts that the president's father,

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Ambassador Kennedy, made to friends of his in Los Angeles, the Speaker being one of them, during the convention, particularly with reference to the vice presidency, were you aware of any that activity?

FEENEY: No. I was not privy to.... You mean with reference to selecting the...?

HARTIGAN: There has been some indication made that...

FEENEY: Oh, I know that John McCormack....

HARTIGAN: ...that John McCormack spoke with the ambassador, the ambassador called John McCormack with reference to...

FEENEY: Oh, no question about it.

HARTIGAN: ...to the choosing of a vice president.

FEENEY: Yes. Oh yes. I know that of my own knowledge because, as you recall, I was with John McCormack all the time out there and almost every place else because, fortunately for me, he had no children, so I accompanied him almost everywhere, and...

HARTIGAN: Would you have assumed that this was...

FEENEY: Oh, I know he spoke to Ambassador Kennedy all the time.

HARTIGAN: I know, but would you assume that this was in the light of the ambassador being in favor of Lyndon Johnson as a vice president in as much as I suppose

he assumed that Speaker McCormack was the, was very close to Rayburn who would be the one who had to put it together.

FEENEY: Oh, I think that's a fair assumption because he recognized the close relationship between McCormack and Johnson and Rayburn and the fact that McCormack had publicly stated his position when it was not the most popular position to take, that he was for Kennedy-Johnson ticket. He said it weeks before the convention, and said it publicly on CBS, which was in, you know, for a man who was Rayburn's right hand man, was a rather courageous position to take, because there was no doubt in everybody's mind that Rayburn was for Lyndon Johnson for president.

HARTIGAN: Were you aware of any of the input that the Speaker had, Speaker McCormack I'm referring to now, with reference to the organizing of President Kennedy's administration?

FEENEY: Oh, I know he was consulted, you know, with some of the people that were involved, but I would say that.... You're talking about his cabinet people and

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the...?

HARTIGAN: Well, in general terms he was, for example, we note that incoming presidents usually like to discuss their organizing of their administration with the leaders of the House and Senate.

FEENEY: Well, if...

HARTIGAN: In as much as you had a president and a Speaker from the same state...

FEENEY: I don't think that, very honestly, I don't think that there was that much of consultation with John McCormack about people that were to be selected on the cabinet level. I think that, as I recall, the early days, I know that in the so-called transition period, Clark Clifford [Clark M. Clifford] was handling some of the details, and I know that people like Professor Dick Neustadt were working on the group, and I guess Dick Maguire and people of that caliber, but John McCormack, as I recall it, had little input into the selection of those cabinet people. I know Jack Kennedy and he talked about legislative matters and proposals that Jack introduced but, as you know, I would say that Jack Kennedy had much more complete knowledge as to the so-called intellectual strata than did John McCormack and he did not consult with John McCormack, that I know of, with reference to the selection of the cabinet. I'm sure that when they had the meeting of the legislative leaders, they were informed as to who would be selected or who would be served and.... But I know, from my own knowledge that John McCormack made no recommendations.

HARTIGAN: Just backing up a bit, Judge, what were your observations, what observations could you make with reference to the various staff members that worked for Congressman Kennedy, Senator Kennedy, President Kennedy. You knew most of them.

FEENEY: I think I knew them all. In the congressional period, I recall you know, Ted Reardon was the first secretary, Billy Sutton was the assistant secretary and Mary McCarthy in his congressional office, and that staff didn't change as you recall, they stayed with him most of the time that he was in the House. And then when he went to the Senate, Ted Reardon became his administrative assistant over on the Senate side, but Ted handled the office part of the senator's office. On the legislative staff side, he picked up people like Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman] and others later on. I think the best addition he made to his staff was when Ken O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], went with the McClellan Committee and later on was his appointment secretary at the White House. I always felt that Ken O'Donnell had the combined attributes of being a very astute political sage as well as a person who had an ability to get along with people, who could say no without antagonizing anybody in probably the most difficult staff position that the president had. Of course, Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] had had longer experience in the House way back in the days when he was Foster Furcolo's [John Foster Furcolo] secretary and then he worked up with the Senator and then in the White House, headed up the congressional liaison staff and Larry O'Brien developed a very, and always had, a close personal relationship with John

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McCormack as Majority Leader and as Speaker. And I think that Larry touched base with John McCormack almost every day of his life, when he was doing legislative liaison work for President Kennedy. I think they had a high regard for John McCormack, the staff people, but I think of that all of them, John McCormack had an affinity for Ken O'Donnell. Kenny was the Speaker's favorite member of the Kennedy staff.

HARTIGAN: Are there any other areas that you can recall that we to you may have missed, as I mentioned to you earlier, this is a retake of the original meeting we had, the second cassette came out well, it covered the local activities. Do you recall anything else we should have for posterity that we haven't already covered?

FEENEY: I probably will think of five thousand things after I leave you here, Bill, but....

HARTIGAN: Put them down and we'll come up and re-tape. It's always a pleasure to meet with you.

FEENEY: I think back of Jack Kennedy in the House and in the Senate and in the White House and I've always believed that the thousand days that he served were only, in my judgment, a prelude of greater things to come. I think that he was building the foundation for the enactment of legislation which would have been enacted

because he had been developing an excellent relationship with Congress. I think he understood the Congress as well as anybody. I think that much of the legislation that he sponsored and advocated became law under Lyndon Johnson, not so much because Lyndon Johnson was a more but pragmatic president but because Jack Kennedy had laid the foundation for the need for this legislation. But, I think more than anything else, I think Jack Kennedy's contribution to the country and to the Democratic party was his advocacy of excellence, the need for people to be people who respect our government, and to create in our government the desire for the very best for all our citizens. And as I said earlier in our discussion almost constant efforts to be fair to everybody in his desire to improve the lot of the little guy, the common man, if you will, even though it sounds rather trite to say it at this late stage, I think that he had a great desire to help little peoples.

HARTIGAN: Do you think we've just about made it, Judge? It's interesting to note that this re-take we're doing, is on the 13th, is that right, the 13th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. And I also want to on behalf of the oral history department of the John F. Kennedy Library, thank you for the, all the time you've given us in getting this information down on tape and also the patience you had with us coming back a second time and if....

[END OF INTERVIEW #2]

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