

James Francis Reilly Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 1/14/1964
Administrative Information

Creator: James Francis Reilly
Interviewer: Charles T. Morrissey
Date of Interview: January 14, 1964
Place of Interview: Washington D.C.
Length: 7 pages

Biographical Note

James Francis Reilly (1908-1980) was a District of Columbia political figure and a member of the Post Office Advisory Board. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy's attempts to win the support of the Washington D.C. delegates during the 1960 Democratic primary and Reilly's appointment to the Post Office Advisory Board, among other topics.

Access

Open

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed October 27, 1965, copyright of these materials has passed to the United States Government upon the death of the donor. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any

concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

James Francis Reilly, recorded interview by Charles T. Morrissey, October 27, 1965 (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Gift of Personal Statement

By James Francis Reilly

to the

John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library

In accordance with the provisions of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 as amended (63 Stat. 377) and regulations issued thereunder, I, James Francis Reilly, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, and for administration therein by the authorities therefor, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

3. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

4. The donor retains to himself during his lifetime all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. After the death of the donor, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

Signed

James Francis Reilly
James Francis Reilly

Date:

October 23, 1965

Accepted

W. Arnold Brown
Archivist of the United States

Date:

Oct 27, 1965

James Francis Reilly– JFK #1
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	First time meeting John F. Kennedy [JFK]
2	Hubert Humphrey's losses in West Virginia and Wisconsin
3	JFK visiting a group of delegates that opposed him
4	Discussing vice presidential nomination with JFK
5	Being appointed to the Post Office Department Advisory Board
6	Reilly's son's admiration of JFK

Oral History Interview
with

JAMES FRANCIS REILLY

January 14, 1964
Washington, D.C.
by Charles T. Morrissey
For the John F. Kennedy Library

One of a Series of Interviews with Members of the Post Office
Advisory Board.

MR. MORRISSEY: Mr. Reilly, we are interested in your relationship to John Kennedy and the Kennedy Administration. Could you tell me what this relationship was and when it began?

MR. REILLY: Well, when the late President was a member of the House of Representatives, he was a member of the Committee for the District of Columbia, and I had the opportunity on one or two occasions to meet him. This never developed into any kind of an intimate relationship between us.

The next time that I talked with the then Senator Kennedy was on March 18, 1960, when I was coming out of the Senate elevator

and I ran into him and Senator Barry Goldwater, a Republican of Arizona, as you know. Senator Kennedy had given a speech the night before, St. Patrick's Day, before the Irish of Providence, Rhode Island, and Senator Goldwater had made a speech before the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick in Washington, D.C., of which society I was then President. And we had a very pleasant talk about what Senator Kennedy had said in Providence and what Barry Goldwater had said in Washington.

The next time that I talked with Senator Kennedy was when I was an elected delegate from the District of Columbia in 1960 on the so-called Senator Hubert Humphrey slate. As it appeared that Senator Humphrey, after his defeats by Senator Kennedy in the Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries, was not going to be nominated on the Democratic ticket, some of us in the District of Columbia delegation had made up our minds that Senator Kennedy would be the

strongest and most logical Democratic candidate for President. Prior to that, on June 14, 1960, Senator Kennedy came to the home of Mrs. Polly Shackleton, who also was a Humphrey delegate. I never will forget how Senator Kennedy, unaccompanied, walked into the garden of Mrs. Shackleton's home before a group of about 29 or so members of the delegation; alternates and delegates. It was not exactly a Kennedy delegation: there was a group for Senator Humphrey all the way; there was a group for Senator Stuart Symington; a group for Adlai Stevenson; and a group for Senator Lyndon B. Johnson. Senator Kennedy came there and for over an hour and a half he stood in the middle of that garden and frankly answered friendly and unfriendly questions. I was very proud that immigrants from Ireland could produce a person like Senator Kennedy. As a matter of fact, I said to the Senator, "Senator Kennedy, I have one or two observations that

I would like to make. Number one is that I disagree with you when you say Senator Lyndon B. Johnson would not accept the vice presidential nomination as your running mate in November. I think he will take second place on your ticket." And the Senator said, "No, I don't think so. If anyone thinks Senator Johnson doesn't like me now, wait until we get to the convention in July." And I said, "Well, Senator, you and I have a lot in common. My ancestors come from Ireland as do yours." I also said, "Really, the only thing that separates us is twenty-seven million dollars." And he said, "Mr. Reilly, it's not quite that much."

Then I had the great honor and privilege at the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles in July of 1960 to be able to cast the deciding half-vote in the District of Columbia Democratic delegation; that gave the delegation for that day, at least, to Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts. It

subsequently was abrogated because the delegate who was absent came back the next day and they discharged themselves, that is, discharged the delegation from the unit vote rule.

In September of 1960 I had the honor of being appointed by President Kennedy and confirmed by the United States Senate to the President's Post Office Department Advisory Board of which I am still a member. I think that the inspiring and driving force with respect to my service, at least, and I think to the majority of the members of this Board (which has been a most active Board), was the leadership, the energy, the inspiration, and the dedication of President Kennedy. The Advisory Board has issued two reports: a report on research, developing the mechanization of the United States Post Office Department, which has been widely distributed and complimented. That was issued on February 8, 1963. On April 30,

1963, the Board also issued a report on equal opportunity in the Post Office Department. The Board has continued to meet and for myself, personally, I would say that my energies and devotion to this Board has been because John F. Kennedy appointed me to this Board. Of course, I must say, in passing, that as long as I remain on the Board I hope to give this same devotion and dedication to President Johnson whom President Kennedy so wisely selected personally as his running mate on the ticket in 1960.

MR. MORRISSEY: Do you have any other recollections which might help to characterize the man, as you remember him?

MR. REILLY: Only a very personal one, Mr. Morrissey, which I'm not so sure you may want to have among your permanent record of President Kennedy. But I have a son, one of my seven children, James Francis Reilly, Jr., who in February of 1960 became convinced that John F. Kennedy, in his mind, was going to

be President of the United States. Jimmy put Senator Kennedy's picture in his bedroom window and I think that if you drove by my house today, you would still find that picture in the window of my son James' bedroom. My whole family, my four daughters, my two living sons, and my wife -- their dedication and devotion to him and to his memory is as alive as it was on the morning of November 22.

MR. MORRISSEY: Anything else?

MR. REILLY: That's all.

MR. MORRISSEY: Thank you very much.

MR. REILLY. Thank you, Mr. Morrissey.