

Leverett Saltonstall Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 1/05/1965
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Biographical Note

Leverett Saltonstall (1892-1979) was a Senator from Massachusetts from 1945 to 1967. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy's stance on domestic and foreign policy issues, his professional relationship with Saltonstall, and the Kennedy administration's relations with Congress, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

with

LEVERETT SALTONSTALL

January 5, 1965
Washington, D.C.

By Jonathan Moore

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOORE: Senator, I thought we might begin with just some random thoughts on your general assessment of your relationship, your personal relationship with Senator Kennedy and later on, President Kennedy. Could we just start off with some general thoughts?

SALTONSTALL: Well, our relationship, Jonathan -- first let me say I'm awfully glad to be in this interview with you because you worked for me in my office, and you were extremely helpful over a period of years and you've gone forward first to the Defense Department and now in the State Department. I'm glad to be with you.

MOORE: Thank you very much, Senator.

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SALTONSTALL: My relations with John Kennedy, President Kennedy, were always friendly. I can't remember that we ever had a disagreement or a strong difference of opinion. We generally voted the same way on the state questions -- always on state questions -- and generally on national questions until he really became an active candidate for President. Then, of course, he took a view that was perhaps

broader and more on a national scale than just how his vote would affect his constituents in Massachusetts, but even in those times we never had a strong difference of opinion and we never debated against each other on any problem on the floor of the Senate in all the years that we were together.

MOORE: Senator, many people have commented on the very close relationship which you had with Senator Kennedy and how unusual this was because you were of different ages and of different political parties. Could you comment briefly on that. Was it that close?

SALTONSTALL: Well I don't think it was quite that close. My first contact that I can remember with President Kennedy came when he and I served together on the Memorial Committee

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of Harvard University -- the committee assigned to suggest a memorial for World War II. Of course he was a courageous combatant in World War II. On that committee, of which I was the chairman, he was extremely helpful. He supported me in every way and we finally had a unanimous report from the committee after many different suggestions had been made to us. As a Congressman I really didn't come in close contact with him at all. I remember perhaps meeting him as one of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation but not much more. My first real contact with him came when he became a Senator, as I recall it. I know I took him up the aisle to be sworn. Later of course he became ill and while he was ill in the hospital in New York I called several times to try to see him when I was in the city. I talked with his father but actually did not get to see him in the hospital. We did contact each other through Ted Sorensen who was his Administrative Assistant here in Washington.

MOORE: So that on any bills which you may have sponsored during that period when Senator Kenendy was sick which would

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affect Massachusetts or perhaps New England, you carried the bat for him, so to speak.

SALTONSTALL: Well, on every bill that concerned Massachusetts in any way I always talked with Ted Sorensen and then, with his approval, acting for the then Senator Kennedy, I filed the bill in my name and his name and we worked together in that way. I did my business with Sorensen and I only had one what you might call disagreement with Ted during that period. I told Senator Kennedy about it afterwards and he smiled and simply said, "Well, that was Senator Sorensen acting at the time." So that anything that concerned Massachusetts we did together, and anything that concerned the Massachusetts legislature we did together. There were a number of matters

concerning the Massachusetts Port Authority and we always worked them out together. In fact, anything that concerned Massachusetts we did together.

He was very instrumental in the organization of the New England Conference of Senators. He really stimulated that conference. The first time it met, after I had talked with Senator Bridges, our Senior Republican,

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and he had talked with Senator Green, the Senior Democrat, we jointly gave a luncheon and that started those conferences. I think we can truthfully say that he was an active participant in the New England Senatorial Conferences as long as he was a Senator.

MOORE: Did he ever express appreciation to you for the way you had handled the arrangements you have just discussed with regard to Massachusetts or New England bills and their sponsorship during the period he was sick?

SALTONSTALL: Well, he may have thanked me once or twice but his appreciation in my opinion was expressed more in a negative way rather than in an affirmative way. In other words, when I came up for election he never that I know of opposed me and in one election, the '54 election, the men in his office, some of them, actively helped me. It was his method, I always thought, of expressing his friendship and his appreciation of our working together, particularly when he was ill. I appreciated it.

MOORE: Do you recall anything of the roll that Senator Kennedy

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played in your 1960 reelection effort when he was running for the Presidency?

SALTONSTALL: Well, when he was running for President in 1960, he did not come to Massachusetts until the very last day -- I think the night before voting. He never opposed me actively during that campaign. In fact, put it the other way around, he didn't help my opponent. I believe, if my memory is correct, that he didn't even have his picture taken with my opponent and he didn't appear on any platform with my opponent. When he came to Massachusetts I believe I am right in saying that he spoke alone and without any of the state-wide candidates with him, although I may be wrong in that. But in both the '54 and '60 campaigns when I was candidate, he certainly never said anything against me nor did he oppose me, but indicated that he hoped he and I would continue to work together.

MOORE: Did you spend a good deal of time personally with Senator Kennedy when you served together in the Senate, both professionally -- on the Senate floor, in his office, in your office -- and socially, or not?

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SALTONSTALL: No, not so much. We did our business together over the telephone to a great extent. I was in his office several times and he was in my office several times, particularly on Cape Cod National Park matters and we talked on the floor of the Senate frequently. Before he became a candidate for President he used to come and sit down beside me and we talked over affairs there. In fact some of the Senators joked about us sitting and talking together. Then when he was very active and very busy I used to go up the aisle and catch him on the floor of the Senate by his seat and consult with him on whatever was on my mind.

Outside of the business of the Senate he invited me several times -- Mrs. Saltonstall and myself -- to small receptions at his house where he, and I think before he was married, his sister, were living. Then I can remember going to one dinner party with him and his wife after they were married and after dinner going to the theater with them. He came to our house on several different occasions when we had the Massachusetts Delegation there.

MOORE: What was his relationship, Senator, within the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation? Did he have any

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special friends, or did he sort of keep the same relationship with everybody, and was it a stand-offish one or was he usually close with the members?

SALTONSTALL: Oh, I wouldn't call it a stand-offish one at all but I don't think he was extremely close with any of the Massachusetts Congressmen on either side of the aisle. As far as I know, and I know very little about that really, his relationships with them were pleasant and cooperative and certainly not stand-offish, but never in my opinion particularly intimate.

MOORE: Who were his closest colleagues in the Senate as a whole and was he popularly accepted?

SALTONSTALL: He was popularly accepted, Jonathan, in the Senate as an able, bright, intelligent, younger Senator. He never asserted himself, particularly when he was not actively involved in some subject under discussion. I suppose his closest friend in the Senate in those days was George Smathers, Smathers of Florida. On the Republican side, he got along very well with the members of his subcommittee

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even though he disagreed with them on labor questions and on some of the educational questions. But I never saw him be aggressively personal in any way with any member of the Senate. There were reports that in Committee meetings he sometimes became more aggressive but I never served on a committee with him and never came in contact with him in that way.

MOORE: But you would say that he was careful in his early months in the Senate to behave as a junior Senator and that to some degree this was responsible for his fairly wide acceptance in that body.

SALTONSTALL: Absolutely. He never over-asserted himself on the floor or in committees, even after he almost received the Vice President nomination in '56. I never heard anything about him in any way except as a junior Senator who was doing his best to make his point of view clear and forceful.

MOORE: Would you say that, aside from his popularity in the Senate, that he was a man of unusual influence within the Senate, given his place of seniority at that time?

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SALTONSTALL: Not particularly, except on some of the labor questions towards the end of his service in '60. He handled himself extremely well on the floor in the great labor debate -- I guess it was 1960. It was a long debate in the hot summer months and it lasted at least a week, if not longer. He had Mr. Archie Cox, if I recall correctly, sitting beside him and he handled himself exceedingly well in that debate. He did so well, in fact, that I went up to his desk and congratulated him upon his ability in answering questions and in the way he was debating the subject. The bill passed the Senate. Afterwards they had a very difficult conference with the House but finally got together upon the bill that became law.

MOORE: When Senator Kennedy first became a Senator after you had led him up the aisle to be sworn in, did you feel any competitiveness or aggressiveness in your own relationship with him?

SALTONSTALL: No, I don't think we were ever competitive. Certainly I didn't feel as competitive with him as perhaps I did with my former colleague Senator Lodge at times. Of

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course, occasionally, whoever your colleague is, there will be a little feeling that he is getting an advantage in publicity and one thing or another by making a public statement or putting in a bill. But I never had that feeling with John Kennedy at all and in debates concerning

Massachusetts matters we generally advised each other that we were going to make a speech and were on the floor together to do so.

MOORE: Why do you think that he acted this way? Do you feel that he just wasn't about to take on a very well-established and very highly thought-of legislator and representative from Massachusetts, or do you think that there was a natural personal tendency to get along and like each other?

SALTONSTALL: Well I know I had the feeling towards him that I liked him and trusted him. When he gave me his word he lived up to it, and I hope he felt the same way towards me. In fact, I don't remember that he ever went back on his word to me in any shape, way, form, or manner. Where he did change his point of view once in a great while, and

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I can't remember any specific instance, he told me so.

MOORE: Did he ever ask you for any favors on appointments --

SALTONSTALL: Never!

MOORE: -- or anything of that sort?

SALTONSTALL: No.

MOORE: -- or any particular piece of legislation, for a vote, amendment, or anything?

SALTONSTALL: I can't recall that he did as Senator. Now he did ask me where he was supporting a bill from a committee to go along with him if I could. In several instances I remember specifically that I said that I felt the bill should be amended a bit and I couldn't go all the way that he wanted me to go.

On appointments, when he was a Senator and General Eisenhower was President -- in all those eight years he never objected to any recommendations that I

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made for Postmaster or for judgeship or any other Massachusetts appointment. There was only one Postmastership as I recall -- yes -- only one, to which he did object. That was in the Postmastership in Worcester. He told me that he didn't personally object but that the two Worcester Congressmen did object and that therefore he felt that he had to stand behind them. Finally we worked that one out and my man was confirmed.

MOORE: Can you recall anything characteristic about Senator Kennedy's appearances as a legislator in the U.S. Senate representing Massachusetts before various problem groups such as labor union meetings or workers' meetings when there was a possible strike, or when a given piece of legislation was coming up? Do you remember, did you ever appear with him before such a group, and can you remember how he acted?

SALTONSTALL: Yes, we appeared together several times before large delegations but mostly we'd see the delegations separately in our offices and if I recall correctly, we sometimes,

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I won't say always by any means, told each other what we were going to say to these groups. I don't recall that we did that so very much but I do know that we did discuss some of the more difficult questions together and several times we wrote joint letters -- on tariff questions, for instance -- or spoke to the Tariff Commission and wrote substantially the same letter.

MOORE: Did he perform very effectively before groups of this sort on the instance that you did appear with him?

SALTONSTALL: I would say he was effective, yes.

MOORE: Was he effective at the beginning or did he gradually achieve this?

SALTONSTALL: No, I think he did well from the beginning because he'd had considerable experience as a Congressman before he became a Senator. I can't recall that he ever became agitated in any way. In fact, he always kept his patience and his sense of humor and as a whole the people who came down here liked him.

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MOORE: On the Cape Cod National Seashore Park legislation, Senator, during a period of Kennedy's intensive political work in preparation for his fight for the nomination and then the eventual campaign that he put so much in, why do you think he committed so much of his staff to such a project -- such a small conservation project as this -- when there was so much else on his mind at the time for which he would have gotten a lot more credit and a lot more publicity?

SALTONSTALL: Well I think the Cape Cod National Seashore Park meant a lot to him and his family. They were down in Hyannisport -- he knew the Cape, he

loved the Cape and he was very much interested in it. He was in the whole project from start to finish. Of course as President he was very influential in getting that bill passed by the Congress. It was the first such seashore or recreation project, as I recall it, that was passed. There were several others pending before the Congress but Cape Cod was given top priority and went through, and he signed it as President. I don't know whether it ever would have gone through if he hadn't been President and everybody in Congress knew he was mightily interested in it.

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MOORE: You think he really had a great affection for Cape Cod and the ocean beaches.

SALTONSTALL: Oh, I think so. We never went into that very much. We both agreed that we should do our utmost to get the project through. Of course, there were some compromises, changes in alignments. You know yourself, Jonathan, as you had a great deal to do with the bill. The final draft of the bill as it went through was very much your work and that of one of Kennedy's assistants -- Holborn. We -- Kennedy and I -- finally agreed upon the draft of the bill right here in this office with Congressman Hastings Keith.

MOORE: Yes, sir.

SALTONSTALL: Senator Kennedy was here, Keith came over, and we had quite a long discussion. Keith was a bit worried because it was in his district and there was a good deal of pulling and hauling, but we finally agreed upon a bill that day and filed it in our names and Keith put it in the House hopper.

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MOORE: This was not a meeting that was held for publicity purposes just before the filing. This was an actual meeting in which you knocked out the final dimensions and the actual substance of the bill.

SALTONSTALL: That's right. Kennedy and I agreed that we would put it up to Keither as a do or die proposition and that we hoped he'd go along with it in the House. He did.

MOORE: So you and Senator Kennedy were more or less in agreement on the bill before this meeting was held.

SALTONSTALL: Oh, yes. We agreed -- we agreed really on the draft worked out after various compromises, after various letters. Former Attorney General

Biddle put up some suggestions and others made various suggestions -- some of them good, some of them not so good. But we finally agreed it was this or nothing so we put it in.

MOORE: And Senator Kennedy felt it was very important to get the Congressman from the Cape area, regardless of his party, on board, was that it?

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SALTONSTALL: Well, I won't say that Kennedy did that any more than I did. I think I was more interested in getting Keith on it than Kennedy was. But we agreed that we would stick together and we persuaded Keith to go along. And, I want to give Keith great credit too because it was a tough one for him as there were many different opinions in his district.

MOORE: Well, I think it was the toughest for him than for anybody.

SALTONSTALL: Oh, of course it was.

MOORE: I also recall, Senator, that on the rather prolonged effort to get the National Defense Education Act amended with respect to originally both the oath and the disclaimer and then eventually just in terms of the disclaimer, President Kennedy -- Senator Kennedy -- played a rather important role in this effort, particularly at the end. I wonder if you recall anything in particular.

SALTONSTALL: Well I recall that we went along together. I had the same feeling; we received the same letters from college presidents in Massachusetts on repealing the oath and the

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disclaimer affidavit. If my memory is right, and I'm not so clear on this, Senator Kennedy was in charge of the bill and was the floor manager. There was a great deal of debate as some of the western Republicans and southern Democrats especially were against repealing the oath and the disclaimer. Then Senator Prouty of Vermont filed an amendment which was finally adopted. I believe that Kennedy and I had some conversation on that, that he did not want to take the Prouty amendment. But he finally did. You were on the floor with me and the time as my Legislative Assistant and I would like to have you say what your memory of that incident was.

MOORE: Well, my recollection, Senator, was that the Prouty compromise which was offered there at the end, struck you as a very common sense way to break the roadblock and get the legislation through, but when you went to Senator Kennedy and asked him privately what he thought of it he was quite resistant to

taking it. Then I recall that after an off-again-on-again conversation between you and Senator Kennedy privately, during which time you made it clear to him that you thought it was a pretty sensible way to

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get the thing through, he eventually came around and accepted your viewpoint. The Prouty compromise was agreed to and the bill carried; Senator Kennedy received full credit for the amendment to the act since he had filed the bill, and as you just mentioned, was in charge of the bill at the end. I can remember that at one point Senator Kennedy thought you might have been trying to find a way out of his dilemma for yourself rather than acting on the merits of the issue and emphasized that a lot of Republicans were already behind the bill. YOU made it quite clear to him, very emphatically, as I recall, that you weren't worried about that, that you had been with him on the bill from the beginning and that you were entirely judging substance and looking for a good way out of the impasse that at the same time wouldn't undermine the whole thrust of the effort to amend the act. And I can remember that at this point, when you did make this clear to the Senator, his somewhat skeptical approach to the Prouty amendment just died away. His face brightened as he saw the humor in his original reaction to your approach, and then he went right down into the well and settled the issue.

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SALTONSTALL: I think that you give me more credit than I deserve on that, but I'm glad to hear it.

MOORE: Senator, can you remember the nature of the first contact you had with President Kennedy after he was actually elected President? Do you happen to recall when you first saw him, or perhaps even heard from him -- maybe it wasn't face to face -- after he became President-Elect?

SALTONSTALL: Well, no I don't. The first I remember of Senator Kennedy was President was when he was sworn in and Mrs. Saltonstall and I were invited as a Massachusetts Senator to the luncheon in the Old Supreme Court. I recall clearly walking to the head table with Mrs. Saltonstall and being greeted with a very pleasant smile from both him and Mrs. Kennedy and congratulating him, and he congratulating me on being there.

MOORE: You mean on being there as a re-elected Senator?

SALTONSTALL: As a re-elected Senator. That's my memory of our first contact after he was elected in November. But now that you've got me thinking about it, I do recall that on Election

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night in 1960 at about midnight at our house in Dover Mrs. Saltonstall was amazed to answer a phone call from Hyannisport for me. I went to the phone and it was the President-Elect, who asked me how I had come out and when I told him he congratulated me. Of course I in turn congratulated him and told him that I looked forward to serving with him in his new capacity.

MOORE: I recall, and I may not recall this correctly, that you once said that you'd said that you'd seen more, or dealt more, heard more from Kennedy when he was President than you had from Eisenhower when he was President.

SALTONSTALL: Well I think I had more telephone calls from President Kennedy. Of course I didn't have more contacts because when Eisenhower was President I went with the Leadership every Tuesday morning to the White House. I never missed those meetings except twice I think in eight years. Of course when President Kennedy came into the White House we Republicans just went there when there was a bipartisan meeting concerning some crisis and he wanted to talk with us. But I did talk with him a number of times

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over the telephone. He was very good to invite us to dinner -- to some of his White House dinners -- several times. He was always very courteous and pleasant whenever I met him, both he and Mrs. Kennedy.

MOORE: You remarked in your earlier interview, Senator, for the Kennedy oral history project, with Mr. Lynch, that you recalled the President in both of the two crises during his presidency which affected Cuba -- the first Bay of Pigs crisis and the second missile crisis, and I was very interested that you mentioned that you found the President much more self-confident, much more assured, much more relaxed, if you will, in the second instance than he had been in the first. I wondered if you might comment just a little bit more about that. Why do you think this was the case? I was struck by the fact that the Bay of Pigs, much more of a local affair, didn't involve the national security to anywhere near the extent of the missile crisis, involving the security, indeed, of the whole world. I wonder what further insight you might have into why he was so much more confident and self-assured.

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SALTONSTALL: Well, I think the first one, the Bay of Pigs, came on him very quickly after he was President and it was very difficult to know what the United States should do -- whether it should participate in the air attack, and when the Cubans were actually landed in the Bay of Pigs, what our position would be, or

should be. I think he was disturbed we had taken some part in that failure and that as President it was his responsibility. It was a very difficult decision for him to make, and he did make it -- for us not to participate or allow any participation in the air or in other ways. I recall very clearly that he read to us the letter of one of the officers in the Marines who had been working with these Cubans, which described their training and whether or not they were ready to participate. In the mind of this colonel it was now or never. If they did not go in now, they would lose their momentum. In other words, just as in a football game, they were ready for the game and the game had to be played then. Of course that came at a time just after he was President and was a very difficult decision for him to make.

The other decision, later on, when the Russinas were placing the missiles -- I'm told that he had a number of

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Cabinet meetings and much discussion -- I think he was more confident of his position then and was confident that he was capable of living up to the tremendous responsibilities of the office of President. The decision was made and he made it with confidence that he was doing the right thing. It gave me a feeling that he had his feet on the ground, that he knew where he was going, and with a great deal more self-assurance than he had the first time, although in both instances he was clearly the President of the United States, acted as the President of the United States, and lived up to his responsibilities as President. Every man who was in that room, I think, felt the same way.

MOORE: Senator, how did you feel that President Kennedy performed as a President in terms of his relationship with Congress? Do you think that he was unusually resourceful in this field? For instance, do you think that his own congressional experience and his acceptance and influence with Congress during the period he was on the Hill himself helped him with his congressional projects, or not?

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SALTONSTALL: I don't think they helped him as much as he might have made them help him, as much as I think President Johnson is doing at the present time. Now President Kennedy as a Senator took an interest in his committee work and on bills where he was the manager. He was extremely effective in knowing his subject and in debating his subject on the Senator floor. As President, he had a number of good ideas, perhaps a number of very far-reaching ideas, and these he would send down in the form of messages. After the messages came, in a number of instances, he didn't follow them up as aggressively as he might have. He let Congress take the responsibility for acting or failing to act; I think President Kennedy will go down in history, on the domestic scene, as a man of many ideas for improving the lot of the less-privileged United States citizen.

MOORE: You were very active, sir, in the whole national defense area, particularly through your service on the Armed Services Committee, and I

wondered, although Senator Kenneyd did not serve on the Committee, what your experience with him was during the period he was a

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Senator, in this very critical area of national defense. Did he have unusual interest in it, or what?

SALTONSTALL: No, I don't think he had unusual interest in it. I think as a former member of the Navy he took a great deal of interest in national defense while Senator. But the Armed Services Committee and the Appropriations Subcommittee for Defense matters were my committees. He certainly did not oppose ideas, that I can recall, that I advocated on the floor of the Senate, or that our Armed Services Committee advocated on the floor of the Senate. I can recall that he differed with me on one subject of defense -- I forget now whether it was manpower or airplanes or the amount of the appropriation, but when I made a speech very strongly supporting the Armed Services Committee or the Appropriations Committee, and knew he didn't agree with me, there was some talk that he would make an opposition speech, but he did not make it, even though he had prepared it. In other words we never -- neither he nor I -- ever opposed each other on the floor of the Senate. Now we sometimes differed, of course, in votes, but we never actively spoke against each other.

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MOORE: But you would say that in the issues of national defense which came before the Senate, either in terms of testimony before the Armed Services Committee or in testimony before the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, he did not play a particular active role but more or less let the Committee take the lead and went along with what they decided.

SALTONSTALL: That's right. That's right. He always -- as far as I can remember -- he did support a bigger defense where there was any question as to whether it would be bigger or less.

MOORE: In terms of the budget.

SALTONSTALL: In terms of the budget and in terms of what our equipment should be, for instance, in terms of B-36's or in the additional number of Marines, and so on.

MOORE: You don't recall that he got into some of the very sophisticated debates or deliberations, either in committee session or on the floor of the Senate, with regard to deterrence and the shape that our deterrence policy should take.

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SALTONSTALL: No, I don't remember that as a Senator he ever did.

MOORE: Were you consulted on Secretary McNamara's appointment, sir, during the period when President-Elect Kennedy was thinking about his cabinet?

SALTONSTALL: No I wasn't at all. I don't recall that he ever asked me any questions about any of his Cabinet appointments or in fact any of the appointments that he made. I think -- I've always been told second-hand that he asked Mr. Lovett to do that job and that when Mr. Lovett said he couldn't do it because of his health, Mr. Lovett suggested Mr. McNamara. After the President had appointed him and before he was sworn in Mr. McNamara came down here and made a courtesy call on several of us who were on the Committee. He certainly came in to see me.

MOORE: Senator, you were very active in the foreign aid legislation field, both during the time when Senator Kennedy and you serve in the Senate, and also afterwards when he had become President and during which time he got into the real rough and tumble of foreign aid appropriations

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to a much greater degree than he ever had when he served in the Senate. Can you recall anything significant about your relationship or about how he behaved or performed on the issues of foreign aid with Congressman Passman, etc?

SALTONSTALL: Well, he was opposed to Congressman Passman in cutting down the foreign aid recommendations that he submitted. He realized, I think, as we all did, that all appropriations are somewhat of a compromise but he didn't want to be overrun by Congressman Passman and he called a number of us on the Senate committee to the White House to discuss the questions with him. In fact, he called us one by one. One year I recall very clearly going up to see him in the upstairs sitting room to discuss the appropriation bill with him and he also called me several times on the telephone. I always supported foreign aid. I've *always* supported foreign aid. I told him I'd help in any way I could, I made some suggestions as to what perhaps he could do in seeing certain people and when I thought it was possible for the Congress to act, with the Passman group on one side and the Senate group on the other, so

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that I did try to help out in that way. And in the conferences with Passman and the House committee I always supported vigorously the Senate position which was relatively speaking

the President's position. In fact, Senator Hayden as Chairman, on one occasion at least that I can recall very clearly, asked me to take the lead in stating the position of the Senate on the differences of opinion between us. In another instance I know that I went over to the House to see Congressman Passman to try to get together on a compromise.

MOORE: And you did that with President Kennedy's knowledge?

SALTONSTALL: I assume he knew. In any event I did it to try to support the Senate position which was the position of President Kennedy.

MOORE: How well do you think he handled Congressman Passman and the whole foreign aid situation?

SALTONSTALL: Well I think that Congressman Passman was very difficult -- he is a difficult fellow to get along with on foreign

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aid problems. I don't think that President Eisenhower was able to do much with him and I don't think President Kennedy was able to do much with him.

MOORE: Do you think that President Kennedy gave enough priority to really working hard on the foreign aid issue? As you look back over the record, at least some said that the -- during the period he was President -- the foreign aid bill really got more of a cracking than it had even before that.

SALTONSTALL: Well, perhaps he asked for too much. I don't know, but Congressman Passman would cut the requests way down. Then the Senate would put back substantially what the President had asked for and then there would be a compromise. That happened a number of years, and I was invariably active in that effort.

MOORE: Was Kennedy involved in the last phases of the appropriations struggle on the foreign aid issue, or for that matter, on other issues during the period when he was President? Was he an unusually good tactician, was he resourceful politically in dealing with the Congress the

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way President Johnson is reported to be now, or not? Was he as interested in this?

SALTONSTALL: I don't think he was so much interested as President Johnson has shown himself in Congressional compromises and ironing things out. President Kennedy took rather the position that he'd submit the bill and then hope or expect Congress to do something about it because of the public interest in it.

MOORE: So during the period that President Kennedy served in the White House, you would say that his staff was more active in the Congressional relations field than he was personally?

SALTONSTALL: I think that's a very accurate statement. I think the difference between President Kennedy and President Johnson is that President Johnson does it more himself, on the telephone and with personal interviews, and President Kennedy relied more on his staff and on the leadership in the House and the Senate.

MOORE: How about President Eisenhower in that same respect?

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SALTONSTALL: Well President Eisenhower in my opinion was more like President Kennedy. He did not take such an active part although he -- of course -- never submitted as many proposals as President Kennedy.

MOORE: Do you recall anything particular about the Test Ban Treaty and the President's involvement in that, or his commitment to the whole idea of achieving some progress in the field of arms control and disarmament?

SALTONSTALL: No, I can't say too much about that, Jonathan, through personal relations with President Kennedy. I was asked to go to Moscow with three or four members of the Senate to witness the signing of the Treaty. That was the personal effort of Mr. Rusk. I don't think I was the first choice -- I know I wasn't the first choice to go, but when Rusk asked me I took it up with Senator Dirksen and Hickenlooper. They said they had no objection to my going as a member of, as a Republican member of the Senate, and I went. After the Treaty was signed, President Kennedy, as I recall it, asked us to the White House where we had a meeting with the Chiefs of Staff and discussed what

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provisions should be set up so that we would be protected if the Russians didn't live up to their agreement, just as far as we could be protected. This was important in order to get the Senate to consent to the Treaty. And it did!

MOORE: Did you consider President Kennedy, or just John F. Kennedy as a man, more as a reflective person or more as an active person -- more of an activist, or more of an intellectual?

SALTONSTALL: I would say he was more of an intellectual. Perhaps he became more of an activist, if you want to call it that, when he began to campaign for

reelection and go round the country. He was a man of ideas, he was a man who liked to talk ideas and have men around him who were intellectually capable and well educated and thoughtful citizens, men with whom he could discuss how to better the life of the average American. I would give him that point of view rather than the point of view of trying to steam things through Congress.

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MOORE: Did you consider him a moody person, or a fairly buoyant one? Was he -- did he give you the impression that he was really profoundly enjoying himself most of the time or did he take on some political tasks as a weight, as a burden?

SALTONSTALL: Well I would say that he was enjoying the responsibilities of the Presidency more than considering them as a burden. Of course there were some things that he had to do that must have been a burden to him. But I was not in close enough contact with him to see it except through the eyes of a Senator.

MOORE: Apart from enjoying politics, was he a -- did you consider him a partisan person, did he enjoy partisanship?

SALTONSTALL: Well, he was elected as a Democrat and he believed it was his duty, or responsibility, to build up the Democratic Party strength and to appoint Democrats, or where he had to appoint a Republican, a Republican who would be friendly to his point of view, I wouldn't call him an

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extreme partisan President by any means, but he certainly was a member of the Democratic Party and the leader of the Democratic Party. And he was a good organizer, too. I saw his efforts to build the Democratic Party in Massachusetts. He did it too well to please us Republicans.

[TAPE II]

MOORE: Senator, at the end of the earlier tape you were just saying that Kennedy had showed his great organizational ability in building the Democratic Party in Massachusetts. Would you comment a little further on that?

SALTONSTALL: Well, the Massachusetts Democrats have always been strong in the cities. For a Republican to win we were supposed to get 40 percent of the vote in Boston, at least 50 percent of the vote in the 39 other cities, and then hope to get about 65 percent of the vote in the various towns of Massachusetts. The Kennedy organization,

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when he ran for the Senate and later on after he really took control of the Democratic Committee in Massachusetts, steamed up Democratic strength and registration in the various towns and built it up to even a greater degree in the cities. In his campaign in 1952, of course, he held a great many of the so-called "tea parties" in which his mother and sisters participated throughout Massachusetts, but his greatest effort was in additional registration, particularly in the towns and the strongholds of Republicanism in Middlesex County.

MOORE: When was it that he took over control of the State Democratic Committee? While he was still a Congressman, or after he had become Senator?

SALTONSTALL: Oh, he didn't -- not when he was a Congressman. I think that he gathered strength throughout the time he was a Senator. Of course, he built up enormous influence through his being a candidate for President in 1960 -- in '58, '59, and '60.

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MOORE: Given the fact that he was a Democrat, did you personally consider Senator and then President Kennedy a fairly moderate fellow or did you think that he was more persistently liberal than moderate?

SALTONSTALL: Well no, I would say that as a candidate and as a partisan in an election, he gave everything he had and put out strong arguments. In some of them, like in all campaign arguments, he was rather excessive. I think the greatest example of that was the so-called "missile gap," where he argued strenuously that there was a missile gap. But when he became President and Mr. McNamara dug into it a bit and the President dug into it himself, he found there was no missile gap. We who had followed the affairs with the Defense Department in the Eisenhower Administration were very clear that there was no missile gap. There certainly didn't prove to be one when the President and Mr. McNamara had a chance to see things for themselves.

MOORE: Would you feel, though, that both in terms of his own personal philosophy, intellectually on the one hand, and on the other in terms of his basic political *approach* with

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other politicians -- governors and Senators and people in the Cabinet -- that he pursued a fairly adventuresome course, or one basically more towards the middle-of-the-road?

SALTONSTALL: I would say it was more adventurous. I think a lot of his messages to the Congress were more adventurous, to use your word, or idealistic and imaginative as to what should be had rather than perhaps what could be had. I think that he was intuitively a natural liver of politics, a lover of government, and, if you want to call it, a great psychologist. He understood how to handle people when he talked with them and was able to put across his personality, which was a gracious personality and a very pleasant one. I think that's the reputation that he left -- certainly one whom people liked to come and see, to talk with, and whom they respected as a man of intelligence, education and broad understanding. As I look back upon my contacts with him, I remember that he generally greeted me with a pleasant smile and a twinkle in his eye and usually opened the conversation with some humorous remark which showed that he knew what I had come to say to him. I believe that this

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is the general impression that he left upon all people with whom he had to deal as President. Certainly his sense of humor and his ability to show pleasure in meeting people helped him in his relations with the leaders of other nations who came to the White House or whom he went to see. I shall never forget the reported opening of his talk in Paris when he said, "I am glad to be here as the husband of Jacqueline."

MOORE: There has been the suggestion by some, who either knew him well or who have poured over the published material available on President Kennedy, that he had deeply in his own mind a certain skepticism about how much government, how much the organized institutions of mankind could actually accomplish in the way of human progress, in the way of solving the great problems of which fact mankind. He would participate in these efforts vigorously, and he would speak grandly but deep down within himself he had a very heavy misgiving as to how much progress could actually be brought about -- how much could be accomplished. Did you have any special thoughts about that?

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SALTONSTALL: No I haven't. I really didn't see that at all.

MOORE: Oh, you didn't see that skepticism.

SALTONSTALL: No I didn't see that -- no sign of it. He never in any conversation with me indicated skepticism. I wouldn't have thought that, either, in his manner or in what he said publicly.

MOORE: You felt he was basically a hopeful person --

SALTONSTALL: Yes.

MOORE: -- that organization and energy and the application of resources could --

SALTONSTALL: -- could accomplish.

MOORE: Yes. Could actually accomplish a good deal. Please excuse me for using the opinions of other people as an aid to asking certain questions. It has been said about

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President Kennedy that he had great personal popularity. All his polls, for instance, show this. He demonstrated this clearly when he appeared before large gatherings of people -- tremendous popularity. And yet it has been said that he had a lack of ability to translate that popularity into strong support for his actual programs in a very practical way, as apart from a strong image. Do you have any comment on that? Did he try hard enough or was he willing to risk this great popularity, to place it on the barrelhead, so to speak, to really go for broke on some of the programs he believed in, or was he reluctant to do this? Did he fail in some of his congressional programs because he was attempting to nurture and sustain this great political popularity?

SALTONSTALL: No, I don't think so. It would be unfair to say that he tried to hold back to keep his popularity. I think, as I've said before, that it was rather that he was a man of ideas and he wanted to get those ideas across. He was a man who believed that we could improve things in this country for the great number of our citizens. He never in Congress, in the Senate, that I can remember, tried to buttonhole

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people for votes, so to speak. He really relied on the strength of his position or his ability to argue on the floor of the Senate. And I think he took more or less the same position in the Presidency. My contacts with him came on foreign aid appropriations mostly and on one or two other appropriations in which he was very much interested, but I wouldn't think he showed either skepticism or a desire to hold his popularity, or anything like that. I think it was more his nature, that he was involved in a great many things, and that he was a man of ideas, and reading, and so on, as opposed to President Johnson and the way the latter does things today.

MOORE: You mean you think that President Kennedy spent his time and resources in coming up with a program and in presenting an idea and then he'd more or less like to let it go to work itself.

SALTONSTALL: That's right, and President Johnson, you see, has carried a number of those ideas of Kennedy's forward.

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MOORE: Yes. And you -- what do you think about President Kennedy's congressional record in terms of his programs? Do you think that, given the fact that he was a new President, and given the fact that he was elected by a very slim margin, do you regard his congressional record as being a pretty good one under the circumstances?

SALTONSTALL: I think it's reasonably good -- I wouldn't say it was awfully good; I'd say it was reasonably good. And I think his ideas have been, as I say, pushed through CONgress later by the ability and energy of President Johnson in carrying out what President Kennedy suggested.

MOORE: Yes. Senator, you mentioned earlier that President Kennedy, during the period he was Senator, had, I believe, chaired a committee of Senators who were looking into the question of who were the five best known Senators in the history of the Senate. This project flowered into one in which the pictures of the five

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most famous, or greatest, Senators were selected by this Senatorial group and were hung in the ante-room to the Senate Chamber.

SALTONSTALL: That's right. That was started by President Johnson when, as Majority Leader, he had a heart attack and was in the hospital. There were these five vacant places in the Senate lobby and at Johnson's request the resolution was put through to have pictures of five Senators placed in those five spaces. The great question was who was to select them. President Kennedy, as a Senator, was made chairman of that subcommittee. The committee sent out notices, asked for suggestions, and came forward with the five that they believed were the ones that should be painted into those places. *Profiles in Courage*, the book by President Kennedy, I think stimulated the selection of him as chairman of that committee. I recall very well one of the times that I was in his office. We were discussing some other question. He apologized for keeping me waiting a few minutes. While we were talking one of his aides brought in the remarks that he was to make as chairman of that selection committee

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when the paintings were to be unveiled downstairs in the lobby. I went down with him to the unveiling. I watched Senator Kennedy -- and I respected him for it -- take his prepared statement and then stand up and use a little bit of it and then extemporize mostly on these five men and why they were selected. I thought that it was a good bit of quick thinking and

extemporaneous oratory. I recall all this very clearly because I was in his office when his assistant handed him the remarks he was supposed to make.

MOORE: And he only just -- took a quick look at them?

SALTONSTALL: He took a quick look at them and then went on his own.

MOORE: Senator, during the period that John Kennedy was in the Senate, did he take much leisure with his fellow Senators? Did he spend time, for instance, in the Senate Dining Room, or did you ever see him in the gymnasium, or was he always on the go? Was he too busy for that kind of more casual activity?

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SALTONSTALL: Well he was pretty busy. I saw him very very little. He had lunch, as I recall it, in with the Democratic Senators in their room a number of times, but I wouldn't say a great number of times. I think he was pretty much on the go. I can't ever recall seeing him over in the gymnasium, although I probably did. His brother Ted was often there before his accident, but I can't recall seeing John over there when he was a Senator, although I might have.

MOORE: Throughout his career in Congress, Senator, and most importantly of course, as President, do you think that his greatest contributions were made in the domestic or in the foreign field?

SALTONSTALL: Well I would say it's hard to make a comparison. I would say he built up our foreign relations extremely helpfully, particularly on his trip to France and England and Ireland and Germany. He drew tremendous cross and he handled himself very well, with the help of his wife who certainly was of great assistance. In the domestic field it was rather his idea that he stimulated and will

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be remembered by, in my opinion.

MOORE: You think he had more immediate effect in foreign relations in terms of international understanding and that type of thing than he did in terms of domestic programs?

SALTONSTALL: That's right. I think he established a very firm position with Khrushchev and made it clear that Khrushchev couldn't ride over him. I think that he

established a very pleasant position with de Gaulle, who is a very difficult man, and certainly with McMillan in England. I think his personal relationship with the leaders of other countries was very helpful to us as a whole.

MOORE: Did you feel that he established that relationship you just mentioned with Khrushchev in that first meeting he had with him, or over a period of time?

SALTONSTALL: No, in that meeting abroad, in Vienna I think it was.

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MOORE: Do you feel that when President Kennedy became President that our foreign policy started to devote more of its time to -- in the direction of the underdeveloped, non-Western world than it had? Do you think he was more preoccupied outside the European sphere than he had been the case under President Eisenhower, or not?

SALTONSTALL: No, well --

MOORE: The reason I asked this question is that I recall while he was a Senator his great interest in such areas as India and Africa and I wondered if you had any general observation on that.

SALTONSTALL: No I don't think I have. I can recall that speech he made about Egypt and Africa on the floor of the Senate. He made that when he was really becoming a national candidate for President. He made several other long speeches along those same lines when he was on the floor of the Senate, always in the late afternoon. When he had a long speech he waited until the active business of the Senate

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was over and then he made it. He always received considerable publicity because of the position that he held. I would say that he did develop and stimulate, perhaps, our interest in Africa and certainly in India, but it was a growth building right up through the Truman and Eisenhower years.

MOORE: You think it was a natural evolution --

SALTONSTALL: It was a natural evolution.

MOORE: Why did he give his major speeches when the chamber was empty, would you say?

SALTONSTALL: Well that's customary in the Senate. You can always make a long speech, but that doesn't mean that other Senators who have a good deal of business in their offices have to sit around and listen. They can read the speech later so you make it at the end of the day. It helps the Senate to get its business done, but allows you an opportunity to get your ideas before the country.

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MOORE: Senator, that's all I've got on my mind. Did you have anything else you might want to --

SALTONSTALL: Well I appreciate very much, Jonathan, your questioning me and I hope ultimately this might be a helpful addition to the Kennedy Library.

MOORE: I hope so too, Senator, and as we look over this interview we've just held, after it's typed up, if any more ideas come to your mind, we can have a little follow-up.

SALTONSTALL: Right. A little follow-up.

MOORE: Thank you very much, sir.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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