

William J. Hartigan Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 04/22/1964
Administrative Information

Creator: William J. Hartigan
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Biographical Note

Hartigan was a Massachusetts political figure, a White House staff assistant from 1961 to 1962, and the Assistant Postmaster General from 1963 to 1967. In this interview Hartigan discusses meeting John F. Kennedy [JFK] for the first time; working with Kenneth P. O'Donnell on JFK's 1952 Senate campaign; the Democratic Party in Massachusetts; JFK as a Senator; JFK's try for the vice presidential nomination in 1956; the 1960 Democratic National Convention; the 1960 West Virginia and Wisconsin presidential primaries; traveling with JFK during his 1960 campaign; working in the White House and traveling with President JFK; moving over to the Post Office Department; and JFK's assassination, among other issues.

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By William J. Hartigan


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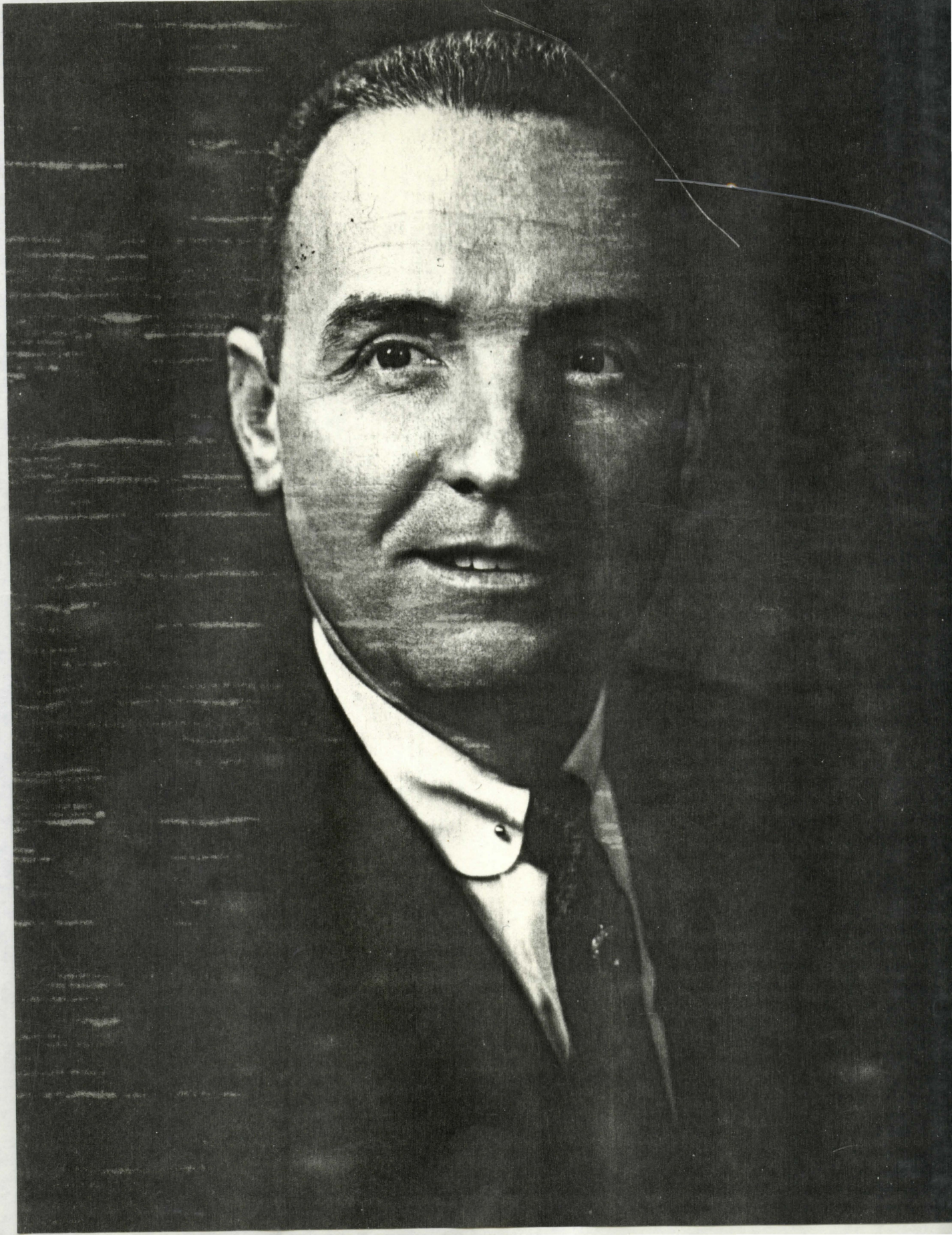

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William Hartigan



Oral History Interview
with

WILLIAM J. HARTIGAN

Assistant Postmaster General
Washington, D. C., April 22, 1964
for the John F. Kennedy Library
by Charles T. Morrissey

Mr. Morrissey: Mr. Hartigan, do you remember the first time you met John F. Kennedy?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes, it was at a meeting in his apartment on Bowdoin Street.

Mr. Morrissey: Do you remember when?

Mr. Hartigan: During the last year he was a Congressman. The exact date I don't know.

Mr. Morrissey: Sometime in 1952?

Mr. Hartigan: That's right.

Mr. Morrissey: The reason I ask is that I've seen in some of the newspaper clippings in the papers I went through before this interview that you first met him in 1950, and I've seen other accounts that you first met him at this Bowdoin Street meeting in 1952.

Mr. Hartigan: I think the first meeting for a political purpose was in '52. The meeting before that, I think, was in the year he was last elected to Congress, which would be '50, wouldn't it? That was not a political meeting, however, because he did not represent the district that I was in. Our meeting with him on that occasion was a social one. So both dates would be correct, depending on what you were using.

Mr. Morrissey: Somewhere I have seen a reference to a Revere Committee for Kennedy for Senator in 1950. Do you recall any such committee in 1950?

Mr. Hartigan: If I saw the article it might refresh my memory. I think, once again, that we are talking about the official starting as compared to the conversational starting. It is difficult to determine. But I am sure that there was a great deal of talk prior to the official meetings that he started having in '52 with various groups in various cities and towns; and they may have gone back even before '50, but, once again, it depends on the particular occasion you are referring to--whether it was an unofficial discussion of possibilities or the actual meetings after it had been announced that he was a candidate. I believe the Bowdoin Street meeting was semi-official because the entire representation from the city of Revere for the Democratic Town Committee was invited to this meeting. It was actually an official meeting and it was in conjunction with other meetings that he was having at that time while on leave from Washington. So, these dates may seem conflicting, but they really are not when you start to discuss them.

Mr. Morrissey: Do you recall anything else about this Bowdoin Street meeting?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes. The meeting consisted of about 35 people from the City of Revere, including our elected representatives from the city to the General Court in Massachusetts--they were all Democrats--and mostly members of the City Committee. It was at that meeting that the then Congressman Kennedy presented himself to members of this City Committee so they might have a chance to see and know him, and he wanted to meet them. The meeting lasted all morning, and as I recall it was a Saturday.

After this meeting was over, we had subsequent meetings with Ken O'Donnell because it was decided they would then form an official committee to be headed up by a Kennedy secretary, as they were called. It was through Ken O'Donnell that I met Mr. Kennedy. My first contact was with Kenny O'Donnell. He asked me if I would come into the headquarters that had been established on Kilby Street in Boston, which was one of the first Kennedy-for-Senator headquarters. At that time Kenny asked me if I would take on the secretaryship for the Revere Committee for Kennedy. Bobby was there and we met him. The Congressman was there and we had another talk with him. They gave the general outline of what they would like to accomplish and how they would accomplish it. They indicated the high level they wanted the campaign run on, and their eagerness to get young, active, well-

respected people in every community. Their interest wasn't in how much political experience the man had as it was in the respect he probably commanded in his community. This seemed to be the main point and as a result, if you will look over the original committee, I think you will find that most of them were not pros, but young working fellows, college fellows, many with young families, who had a sincere interest in politics.

Actually their interest was not so much political as it was in the candidate himself after they met him. After the first meeting, that was it. There was very little we had to do to convince them to go on this committee, particularly those who met him on Bowdoin Street who came from my city. They were all very enthusiastic about him. His personality and his own way of handling people made our jobs as secretaries very easy. We got an awful lot of credit for doing such a good job, which we were really not entitled to, but this is the way it goes. They give credit to secretaries and whatnot for getting Kennedy elected, but the fact of the matter is it was a magnetic thing on his part. Everyone he met was convinced. It was very simple to convince people who were doubtful. It was a matter of arranging for them to be at a function he was at and that was the end of that. His kind of candidate is very unusual and this type makes a chairman or a campaign secretary look good. But it's the reverse--we didn't make him look good; he made us look good.

Mr. Morrissey: How did you get interested in Democratic Party affairs originally?

Mr. Hartigan: I was one of the few who was in politics before going with Kennedy. I was a member of the School Board at the time. As a matter of fact I was the youngest member at that time to be elected to the School Board for the City of Revere and I had been very interested in politics for a number of years. I can remember when I was in the fifth grade in school there was a campaign fight in Revere for Mayor. It was dark--about six o'clock at night--and my mother came down looking for me; I was down there giving out cards at the polls. I have always been interested in politics and as I said, I was holding an elective office when Kenny O'Donnell called asking me if I would help them out.

Mr. Morrissey: Had you known Kenny O'Donnell previously?

Mr. Hartigan: I had known of Kenny, first of all because he was quite a popular football star and, of course, on this initial call I felt as if I knew him. But before our political friendship I had never known him socially. But we have become very close friends since then.

Mr. Morrissey: Were you involved in the brief effort to get the nomination for Governor of Massachusetts for John Kennedy in 1952?

Mr. Hartigan: I am not too familiar with that story. I have heard it many times and I am sure that in the course of your interviews you are going to be able to talk to someone who was actually there. I was not at the meeting and therefore can only tell you what I heard-- what is generally known among the group. But I cannot shed any light on this at all. Any information I might give on this probably would be filled with a lot of secondhand information. In general terms I know what happened, but, as I said, I was not there and I am sure you will be interviewing people who will be able to give you the real information.

Mr. Morrissey: Could you tell me what you did during the 1952 campaign?

Mr. Hartigan: The campaign was well organized, extremely well organized, from the headquarters on Kilby Street, and there was a great deal of organizational talent in the Kennedy group. Kenny O'Donnell was spearheading it. Bobby was chairman of it. Larry O'Brien was director of the organization and working for Kenny. Between Larry and Kenny they kept pretty close contact with the secretaries in each city and town.

The first objective, I believe, was to appoint a Kennedy secretary in each city and town throughout the State--over 360 odd cities and towns--and this, to a great extent, was accomplished. There may have been some towns that did not have one, but to a great extent this was accomplished. This was tried before, not in the exact same way, but I think many candidates have tried to organize all cities and towns on a state-wide basis, but they were never successful. I believe this was the first time that such an organization was ever successful in organizing each city and town separately for a state-wide campaign. I believe that to a great extent these organizations are still in existence. Even today people are referred to as Kennedy people as compared to being just plain Democrats. So you end up with this situation of Kennedy people and other Democrats. They were all young people and as happens with a young organization they are still around and are very active today. Many of them have gone on to political offices themselves. They have been elected to state and local offices. It was

a very fine organization, and brought forth some good political talent of its own, too.

Mr. Morrissey: In your opinion, what was the basic reason for such successful organization?

Mr. Hartigan: It goes back to what I previously said, I think, first of all, the biggest obstacle we ran into was that we were campaigning against Henry Cabot Lodge. The people we were trying to convince to vote for John Kennedy had nothing against Lodge. As a matter of fact, the statement was made many times, "why couldn't they both run separately? Why couldn't we have both?" These statements were made by people who were not really too deeply imbedded in politics and who felt that Lodge was a pretty strong candidate. But in spite of this, after meeting Kennedy, they generally decided that as long as they had to make a choice, he was the man they wanted.

I meant to go back in my previous statement and say that he really captured people when he talked to them. I don't think anybody who has ever sat down with him could ever go out and campaign against him. If they were committed, they probably decided that they would keep quiet. Most of them were convinced that he was good for the office. At least this is my personal feeling--that this man is really good for the United States Government and if we ever get this campaign off the ground and win it, then we've got a President on our hands. I think everybody even felt this themselves, and I am sure that right after his defeating Lodge this thought was uppermost in everybody's mind--our man was on his way and he was going to be there. And he was. I don't think that too much of it was mentioned among ourselves or between each other unless asked. When asked, I think everybody would agree. I am sure that I was not the only one who had the feeling that we've got the goods. The country has to have him, because he will be good for the country. This is a feeling I think most of them had and that made this desire to work that much stronger. It was a bad time for a Democratic Senator. You couldn't pass out the patronage, so we certainly were not doing it for that reason. I don't know of anyone who worked for Kennedy who ever got appointed to anything while he was Senator. Eisenhower was President at that time and patronage all went to Saltonstall or to the other Republican officeholders. It wasn't until several years afterwards when the then Senator became President that any Kennedy man that I know ever got appointed to a high position. As a matter of fact some found it difficult to get appointed to the State because they were for Kennedy.

I think there was a bit of apprehension on the part of some of the older Democrats at the time by virtue of the fact that a young man was able to take on the toughest candidate--Lodge. I suppose most of the old-line Democrats felt that, well, he will get a lot of exercise. They felt it was a long shot for him to win. I think, too, that these feelings quickly subsided because then everybody began to realize he was an unusual man; he was not just another candidate who happened to be lucky. So I believe this quickly squashed any real hard feelings that may have developed. If he were not a true statesman, they would have said, well, somebody else could have done it if he had had any encouragement to run, because Lodge was vulnerable. But Lodge was not vulnerable. Lodge was a very strong candidate. As time went on, however, people began to realize that they did elect a great talent. Then the party in the state became very well organized because the nucleus of a new reorganization was based on the Kennedy people, which is as it should have been. No fault there. As a result, I think while Kennedy was Senator we ended up with a strong Democratic Party with a good State Chairman and I believe as a result of it we have a very successful party in the state today.

Mr. Morrissey: Could you elaborate on this point about the Kennedy organization gaining control of the State Democratic Organization?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes. Massachusetts politics, because of the type of organization that we had in the state prior to Kennedy, was not an organized-controlled group. If the Governor was a Democrat, then he virtually controlled the Party. More often than not, he did not go through the State Committee for assistance and guidance in appointments. Regardless of who the chairman was, and, therefore, because of the weakness of the Democratic State Committee at the time, and lack of power on their part, the Governor, more or less, could, to a great degree, ignore them, or just give token recognition when it came time for fund-raising dinners and whatnot. They were very lax in that respect because everybody looked upon the Governor as being the top man and even fund-raising dinners without the Governor's efforts would not be successful. But the party was the instrument through which the fund-raising dinners were run.

Kennedy immediately recognized this. He had a very fine knowledge of Democratic organizations throughout the country. I think he realized that ours was really not functioning as a policy group. There was a great deal of complacency. The office of State Committeeman of Massachusetts requires the man to go on the ballot and run as the candidate. There were many districts where

we could not even get candidates to run for them. After the election was over, the vacancies were filled by asking friends to do a favor by becoming a Democratic State Committeeman. Kennedy recognized this and decided after he was elected that this would be the next step in building a very strong party in the state--one that we could be proud of and one actually with meaning. He encouraged his people to become active in party politics and to become interested in helping to build a very strong Democratic Party. Being the top Democratic officeholder in the state, as United States Senator, he felt, I am sure, that the obligation was his to do whatever he could do to build a strong party. He felt that he was responsible for at least making an attempt to build a strong party. So, once again, besides being an excellent statesman, he was a good party man and he had his organization take steps to try to build up a strong, good, hard-working organization. Various secretaries and members of the Kennedy organization ran for State Committee eight years ago. Most of us have been on ever since. There is another election coming up a week from today and to a great extent the majority of them on that Committee, I think, are Kennedy people.

So the first step he took in reorganizing the party was to get active, interested people elected to the State Committee. Once they were elected, a meeting was called and we organized and elected a chairman which was a popular fight at the time. The newspapers gave it quite a bit of publicity. Pat Lynch was elected Chairman. He was a very strong supporter of the then Senator Kennedy and today is still concerned with Kennedy programs and policies. Pat is now Collector for the Port of Boston. He was the central figure in the controversy over the Chairmanship of the State Committee with some members of the Committee supporting the position of Congressman John McCormack, who was supporting William Burke, a former Chairman of the State Committee. So it was a typical party fight, and healthy, as usually they work out pretty well. At least when we are on the winning side it works out well. Perhaps those on the losing side feel differently for awhile.

There has been a lot of talk about scars from that fight that never healed, but I don't think that is true. Certainly the Speaker of the House went out of his way to support the late President Kennedy and these stories were renewed with the advent of the Speaker's nephew running against Teddy for the Senatorial nomination in 1962. Once again, I think it is too easy to add two and two and think you get four. I think there was a lot more to it than that in '62. They had two strong young active Democrats who understood politics and who were attractive and they decided the only way to solve it was to let the people decide who they wanted.

When you stop to think of it, this is the American way to do it. Somebody wins; and somebody loses. The people made the decision and that was the end of it. Of course you will always have a group trying to build into these things situations which really aren't there, or at least we can't find them when we start looking for them. They seem to give the impression that there has to be something wrong when two active candidates decide to run against each other. This isn't always the case. Sometimes they both feel that they could do the job and this is the American way. We lose sight of its being the American way when we commence to evaluate improperly and feel there has to be a feud now between the Kennedys and the McCormacks because it is the second time they have clashed politically. But if we stop to analyze, what are they clashing over? The Chairman of the State Committee was certainly not clashing because Pat Lynch knew McCormack as well as he knew Kennedy. But the fact was that Kennedy was the candidate we were trying to keep in office as a Senator, and each was entitled to his opinion as to who should be Chairman. From my knowledge, Pat Lynch was just as fair and just as friendly with Speaker McCormack after he was Chairman as he was before.

So really there are no scars there. I am sure anyone who would interview Speaker McCormack now would hear him say that he is very friendly with Pat. But it's the least informed people who start to evaluate something and come up with the wrong answer. Then this is spread around and if you have opposition newspapers--the Democrats have quite a few in the United States--then they commence to elaborate on it which is fair game, I suppose, and some who read a newspaper feel as if they must believe everything that is in it. But opinions can be changed. I think for the most part people read and evaluate it the way it should be. But the first stages of evaluation, I think, are by the people who are not completely informed, but get just enough information to be dangerous and not enough to be helpful.

So the splits that were talked about I think are mostly superficial. I don't think they are nearly as deep as we are led to believe. This was proved by the actions of both men after these things were over and even the actions of the Speaker and the President during the campaign for the Senate between Eddy McCormack and Ted Kennedy. There were no hard feelings between these two men at that time. I think this was proof that both men had great principle and did not subject themselves to such a petty type of thinking.

Mr. Morrissey: Am I correct in saying that you were elected Vice Chairman of the Democratic State Committee?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes. When Pat Lynch was elected Chairman I was elected one of the Vice Chairmen and held that office until Mr. Kennedy was elected President. I went through two State Committee campaigns from the time I was elected the first time until the time the Senator became President, and I am still on the State Committee today serving the last few months of my eighth year. I will be on the ballot next Tuesday for reelection.

Mr. Morrissey: Let me go back to the 1952 campaign again. Specifically, what type of organizational work did you do in that campaign?

Mr. Hartigan: Each secretary was responsible for the Kennedy activities in his city or town in addition to whatever other assignments that Ken O'Donnell or Larry O'Brien felt you could handle for them. The primary responsibility was right in your own city or town. Line of communications was direct. It was not unusual for the Congressman to call you direct at your house and ask you to do something. As a matter of fact, it would be an exception if someone other than he, or someone very close to him, called. There were many self-acclaimed party leaders who would call and say this is what we are going to do because the Congressman said so, but they did not know that this was not the way he did business. As I have said, very often he would call himself, or Kenny O'Donnell would call and this was the official channel through which we operated. So immediately the candidate established the direct communications between the candidate and the secretaries. There were very few levels in between that we had to go through unless it was absolutely necessary if he was not around. But if he was around, he was very readily handy to the secretaries.

So whatever instructions they sent down we carried out. We were responsible for organizing women's teas which became famous during that campaign. We were responsible for getting literature and the story of our candidate out to the people; the reasons why we felt a change was needed; keeping the candidate's activities in the forefront of all the people in the city; maintaining a headquarters in the city; promoting registration, for even if a person was for you 100% he couldn't vote for you if he wasn't registered.

Organizing for the election was a continuous thing. Telephone campaigns were in vogue at the time; recruiting batteries of women to organize these telephone calls and participate in them; taking names from election rosters and affixing telephone numbers beside them to make it easier for people to call. We found that if

we gave a list of names to a housewife who had a few hours in the morning while the children were away at school, she would generally spend most of her time looking up numbers. So we did it in phases. We had a group of people in the headquarters actually affixing telephone numbers to these election sheets and then giving the sheet to the woman with the phone numbers already on it. Because of this she was more encouraged to use it. We tried to spread them around. If you gave somebody a hundred names to call, she wouldn't be as enthusiastic about starting as she would have been had you given her only ten. She would do them and have a feeling of accomplishment.

So all the little ideas that were filtered down from the candidate and his advisors were simple and the impression I got was that these ideas were coming from a man who actually understood the average person and I think this proves it. Some of the best known candidates in the world don't understand the thinking of the average person. We found out that this little gimmick of not giving too many names to one person to call was effective. You can always go back with another list, you see. And they get enthused because they feel they have accomplished something. If you gave them a hundred and they did ten, they would always feel that they were only ten per cent effective; they would feel ashamed and wouldn't want to see you any more. I think this type of psychology reflected a man who actually had a basic understanding of human nature. This to me proved it conclusively.

And the tea aspect of this proved to me that he had an idea of people's feelings. He understood that women like to be taken into these things, but they like to be invited in a dignified way. These teas actually represented a lot more than teas--they represented a method by which he was able to get women interested in politics. Up until then they thought politics was just for men and was a dirty thing. He made a dignified thing out of it by virtue of the fact that he had his sisters and his mother attending the teas. Immediately the impression went out to the women that, my goodness, if his fine mother and sisters are attending these teas they must be something nice, unlike the cheap type of politics we were used to in the past. In that respect, psychologically, he hit a very responsive note with the women and these teas became very popular. They were handled in an extremely dignified way, as I mentioned, because printed invitations were sent out to the people and they felt as if they were being invited to a nice affair. He added a personal touch to the routine because he attended every one of them with his mother and sisters. The teas were strictly for the women. Women were appointed pourers and they felt that this was a great honor, and it was. Even to this day when I go into a meeting, women will come up

and say, "I was a pourer at the first tea we had here." Here after all these years have gone by this is one of the biggest things for these women from that day to this.

You analyze these political tactics and they reflect a man who just understood people and he made a wonderful thing out of politics and as a result I really think that he deserves credit for having interested a lot of people who up to that point felt that politics was the worst thing anybody could get into with its corruption and all. But his being in it and allowing his family to participate with him showed that it is not a corrupt thing as they had thought--it is a wholesome and needed thing and we can thank him for many of the fine candidates we have in the field today.

Mr. Morrissey: Did you devote any special efforts to getting absentee voters registered?

Mr. Hartigan: There was a special program on absentee ballots at the time, but this is always the case where absentee ballots are permitted. They are not always permitted--in this election they were--and there was a real concerted effort to get the absentee ballots out.

Mr. Morrissey: As you recall, before election day in 1952, did you think your candidate was going to win?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes. I was completely convinced that we had a strong fight on our hands, but you sensed the people were accepting him. I noted that the opposing candidate had a rally, which was the old type method of campaigning, in the same city hall shortly after we had our tea there. This tea in the Revere City Hall was an area one; it included Chelsea and Winthrop, surrounding cities. But you couldn't get in the City Hall. It was like an opening night of some show, and people came in their finest dresses and just felt really proud of this. We had the Hall decorated with flowers--a very strong and enthusiastic supporter of the late President was in the florist business--and he let us borrow these potted palms which were arranged down the middle of the hall, and it made it real attractive-looking and beautiful flowers were all over the place. I think it impressed people so much that he won through this type of exposure and through the ability to sense just what pleased people and just what was needed to make them respond properly. So I was not surprised that he won. As a matter of fact I would have been surprised if he had not won.

But continuing my story--after the tea, the Lodge people had a rally in City Hall and we had a man go up there and attend to take a head count. We don't usually admit those things. He came

back, and he counted 50 people, including those who accompanied Lodge to the rally. He counted only 50 people, and this was a current United States Senator holding a public office, who, up to then, was extremely popular in the city. As a matter of fact, he is still popular today. People said they did not have anything against him, they just happened to like Kennedy better.

I think the campaign was run on a fairly high level for such a hard-fought campaign. Afterwards, I wasn't surprised that Kennedy won--I would have been surprised if he hadn't won from the way he handled himself; the way he handled the people who worked for him, and nobody felt that he was working for anybody but him. This was another capability he had which is difficult for a candidate to get across. Candidates need assistants. They need lieutenants. They need people who can instruct others, to lead people. But you just never got the feeling that you were working for his lieutenants. He made you feel that you were working for him. You understood he had to have lieutenants bearing his word and bearing instructions from him, but there was never a quarrel from that day to this as to who the "number one man" was. This I never ran across and I don't think anyone could ever cite an instance of a quarrel or a battle over who was going to be the second man to the candidate. This just never existed. It was spontaneous and everyone accepted it. When he was in your area, he left no doubt that you were representing him in your city. His assistants and Lieutenants traveled with him, but in your city it was you and the candidate, and he made no bones about it. He answered every single letter I ever wrote him and I am sure he did likewise for others. After he was elected, he still treated the men as his secretaries in their various areas. They were carried on the rolls as his secretaries. He kept us informed on activities in the Senate. You remember the case of the St. Lawrence Seaway which was a controversial issue in the New England area, and as a matter of fact I think he was the only member of the Congressional Delegation from the New England area who was for it. He sent a very fine report and position paper to each secretary because we were commencing to get inquiries about it. He cleared up the thing in a fine manner and I think, because of the way it was handled, there was little impact on him. It was handled honestly and forthrightly and he took the issue right to the people.

So he continued to use his secretaries as compared with political organizations that fall apart after the election is over. Nobody was appointed to anything because there was no patronage. We remained as Kennedy's secretaries and he continued contact with us. If he was making a speech in your area, as United States Senator, the secretary was notified. We met him at the airport, rode with

him to the function and rode back with him afterwards. The secretary was always notified when he was in the area. He made the secretaries feel that they were a part of this organization. I think to this day everybody still feels that he is a big wheel in the Kennedy organization because, to him, you were. No contribution, time-wise or effort-wise, was too small for recognition. A wonderful thing was that people, like Kenny O'Donnell, handled situations in the same way. Never once, that I am aware of, were any of the secretaries allowed to be up-staged or ignored in any way. If it did happen, I am sure it could be traced back to the secretary's outgrowing his own breeches. But this was very rare. To this day you can go through the State and find people still active.

Mr. Morrissey: Were you involved in the Senator's brief campaign in 1956 to get the Vice-President nomination?

Mr. Hartigan: I was in Chicago during that time and I think that everybody was enthused about it. It was one of those things that the Good Lord knew best what was to happen. It was one of those situations that got moving but we were very fortunate that we lost it because I don't think that at that time the ticket would have won and it would have exposed Kennedy to certain things that he was not entitled to. For instance, those who harbored the belief that religion was the factor could have then commenced to prove the point that the Democrats would have won if we had not had a Catholic on the ticket. We could not have argued effectively against this charge by virtue of the fact that we would have been looking at defeat figures.

So this was a fortunate situation as it turned out because I think we have proven that the country has grown up and religion was not a factor that would defeat a man and I think, too, that everybody was happy about it--everybody from all faiths. This could have had serious ramifications, plus the fact that defeats never really help anyone and it would have labeled him a defeated candidate. It would have labeled him a weaker candidate than people thought he was.

It was the best thing that ever happened when he was not nominated and, once again, I am sure you will be talking to others who will be able to give you a more accurate approach to the mechanics of this attempt at the Chicago Convention in 1956 than I can.

Mr. Morrissey: Did you campaign for the Senator's reelection in 1958?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes.

Mr. Morrissey: Any specific recollection of that?

Mr. Hartigan: We used pretty much the same format as we did in the previous campaign. The biggest problem we had was the fact that people thought it was not necessary for us to campaign as hard as we were campaigning against an unknown Republican candidate. This is generally what happens in politics--people feel that their man is so good everyone must feel the same way; therefore, we don't have to work so hard. Of course, this is exactly the time you get defeated. On a Wednesday morning after the election you find out that a popular candidate was defeated and nobody knows why. Well, the why is that everybody was complacent and felt his help was not needed because he was doing such a good job. It's always the guy who is doing such a good job, you notice, where the upset comes in. They really can't imagine how this very effective officeholder was defeated by an unknown. The fact is that the unknown kept working hard and the supporters of the candidate who is supposed to be the favorite sat back on their hands and did nothing. They lost by default and everybody is weeping and crying and saying "if we had known, we would have worked harder."

This type of feeling was never allowed to develop in the Kennedy organization, which was a very wise thing, and for that reason the campaign was run the same as we ran it before. I think this is the only way to run a campaign. If you run it on how popular you think your opponent is, then you are liable to short-change yourself. The best thing is to run your own campaign to win it, using all the enthusiasm you have at your command and all the help you can get. Run every campaign like you felt you were behind. This is the way we ran the second one and the results, of course, show that he probably polled more votes than any candidate ever polled against an opponent.

Mr. Morrissey: In what ways were you involved in the Senator's efforts to get the Democratic nomination for the Presidency?

Mr. Hartigan: I was a delegate to the National Convention in Los Angeles and worked with Mr. O'Donnell before the Convention and was responsible for a couple of states--I think Maine was one of them, and I forget the other. But the states were broken down and divided among those who were working with Kenny O'Donnell and keeping pretty close check on the delegates in the states assigned to us and reporting at a meeting every morning results of activities with the delegates the day before, polling whenever possible, keeping track of the doubtful ones, finding out when they decided and how they decided to vote. This was the type of approach they used. Bobby conducted meetings every day for these reports and I think it was an excellent system and proved effective because it gave them a current daily tabulation of just where every delegate was. It was just plain hard work at that point.

The real strategy work, of course, was done by Bobby and Kenny O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien and the candidate himself. It was very encouraging and gratifying to be working for such an organization and see how effectively they worked. Success, of course, always makes you feel good, too.

Mr. Morrissey: I have a note that you were the contact man between the Kennedy organization and the delegates from Maine, Kansas and Arkansas.

Mr. Hartigan: I had a list from my own file. There were overlapping states, and, frankly, I forget the exact ones. Was that from my file?

Mr. Morrissey: Yes, they were in the papers I went through.

Mr. Hartigan: Well, that was it. It was a matter of keeping track of the delegates from these states to see if there was a need of the candidate visiting, or perhaps one of the strategists, Mr. O'Donnell, Mr. O'Brien, or Bobby to visit the delegation. If they were planning a caucus, we would be alerted to that. We became friendly with the delegates, got to know them; they got to know us and they had our contacts where they could get us any time of the day. If they did decide to caucus, they would let us know about it and keep us informed as to whether they wanted the candidate there or not, or if somebody else should be there. This was the type of work that was done and it was very effective.

Mr. Morrissey: Could you tell me more about the intricate communications setup at the Convention--the use of walkie-talkies and whatnot?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes. They had several walkie-talkies. This is not a unique thing; they have had them before. In fact they were in Chicago.

The floor was quite crowded at Los Angeles, as you can imagine, and they had a central control point and we also had a monitoring system in each delegation and throughout the floor. Then we had portable walkie-talkies, one of which I gave you for the Library. And at strategic points in the delegations there were phones so that if a man was wanted on the phone, by the candidate or anybody else, he could be reached. At the headquarters point each candidate was assigned a section for his own secretariat at the convention hall. The telephone stations throughout the hall would know about it and, generally, the man you were looking for could easily be found and directed to the nearest phone of ours that we had installed in a delegation and could be very quickly contacted and apprised of whatever they wanted him apprised of. This was very often necessary.

these phones and communication systems on the floor served a great purpose when the leaders (such as Bobby Kennedy or Kenny O'Donnell) were on the floor. Everybody wanted to see Bobby or Kenny and they could only be in one place at a time. The system was very helpful in getting these people around to where they were needed without wasting time because it was a considerable distance between the floor and the central office that we had assigned to us and also between delegations. It is a tremendous hall and you just couldn't cover it without some kind of electronic communications. It served a purpose all right.

They weren't technically as effective as we would have liked. There was a lot of steel in the construction of the building and we found that there were some dead spots when using the walkie-talkie or other type of equipment and this was an obstacle. After several checks were made, the people started to understand that it was not the fault of the machine; it was only that reception was bad in such a building.

Mr. Morrissey: I read in one of the newspaper clippings in your scrapbook that you went to Governor Meyner of New Jersey to see if you could persuade him to vote for Kennedy on the first ballot.

Mr. Hartigan: Pat Lynch was Chairman of the Massachusetts State Committee at the time and he was a Navy buddy of Meyner's and Meyner was not on the bandwagon. I was with Pat when he got word that Meyner was still wrong. Several people had talked with him and Pat felt that he would like to speak to Meyner. I was friendly with one of the delegates in the New Jersey delegation, Neal Gallagher, who is a Congressman and I told Pat I knew Neal. He had been in our hotel and I had met him on other occasions and I said that possibly Neal could make arrangements for Pat to see Meyner and being an old Navy buddy maybe he would want to talk with him to find out just what was on his mind. We contacted Neal Gallagher and he made arrangements for Pat to talk with Meyner. This was at the time that the balloting was going on--it was that late when Pat finally got to see Meyner. Actually it was Pat who was trying to see Meyner and we did it through Neal Gallagher.

Obviously, he did not go along with us and I do not know what the conversation was between Pat Lynch and Meyner, but maybe it is something you would like to talk to Pat Lynch about. But it was not successful. He may have told me, but I just don't recall what the answer was. I am sure he told me, but I just don't recall, except for all the words that were spoken Meyner's answer was still "no."

Mr. Morrissey: Going back to the period between the 1958 election and the time you went to the Convention in 1960, were you involved in the

Senator's effort to win some of the primary battles and that sort of thing?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes. I spent a little time up in Wisconsin. Pat Lynch and I went out there and rendered whatever assistance we could in the campaign. I was up in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, with Chuck Spalding and for a short period of time in West Virginia. Whatever "off time" I had I would go down to West Virginia to help out.

Mr. Morrissey: What kind of work were you doing?

Mr. Hartigan: At that time, I was working for an airline, American Airlines, and was not available full time in that particular fight. I went down there as often as time would permit during the West Virginia primary.

Mr. Morrissey: At the time of both these primaries in Wisconsin and West Virginia there was much speculation about whether Kennedy's Catholicism would hold him back from the nomination.

Mr. Hartigan: That's right.

Mr. Morrissey: What's your recollection of this issue at that time?

Mr. Hartigan: Well, in West Virginia I recall a street tour he made in Charleston and the crowds that came out to greet him were so tremendous and this was an area where religion was supposed to be a very serious factor. It was inconceivable to me that anybody would take the time to put himself out to go shake the hand of a man like that and give him such a spontaneous reception as he walked down the street and then not vote for him. One would have to re-evaluate the religious aspect in an area like that and begin to wonder, "where is it? We know it's here, but why isn't it showing?" If they were that bitter, then there would be some kind of resentment expressed by not showing up or something.

So the only conclusion I had was that they were expending a great deal of effort to shake the hand of a man they were not going to vote for and this would have been contrary to political logic. It rained some, but people kept coming up to shake his hand and it didn't seem reasonable to go to the trouble of coming out to shake hands with him and then turn around and say, "well, I am not going to vote for him anyway." This was the reasoning going through my mind at the time and I am sure that others felt the outward expression of opposition was lacking. It was at that point, I think, that most people sensed the religious issue was there, true. You would be less than honest with yourself if you said it wasn't there in the minds of certain people. But it was not there to the

degree that most people thought it was. I think the religious issue was overrated. I also think many Catholics overrated it. Maybe because I am a Catholic and the Catholics felt free in telling me their fears of the religious aspects, whereas non-Catholics did not. Most of the people who talked to me were worried about it, and one would begin to wonder if maybe it is a factor. But it just didn't seem to balance out with the types of receptions he was getting. Still, it was sometimes difficult to believe that it wasn't as serious as people were making it out to be, even though we couldn't prove it by demonstrations, nor prove it by lack of crowds of people showing up.

I think, too, another factor was a lot of people by that time were recognizing his abilities. Very few men in public office possessed the talents he had. Among these was his writing ability. He was an author and this made him known for things other than just being a pol. I think his intelligence was recognized to a great extent at that point. Profiles in Courage was widely read and was a popular seller and to a degree made him somewhat of a celebrity, too. And by virtue of the fact that his father was an ambassador and being from a very attractive family a lot of people were basically honest in wanting to know about him through his writings and his speeches. They made a sincere effort to know more about him. That was another of the reasons people came out to see him and to listen to him.

Mr. Morrissey: What kind of work did you do in West Virginia and in Wisconsin?

Mr. Hartigan: In Wisconsin we were up in Eau Claire and it was a matter of getting people out to the polls, naturally. It was a type of political setup that there were no Democrats or Republicans, as was witnessed by the recent election they had. It was a matter of taking voting lists. Actually it was the simple ABC's of election day activities--going over the voting lists, making sure that people were out to the polls; dispatching automobiles to pick up those who couldn't get down to vote.

On election day I recall that Chuck Spalding and I decided that we had an awful lot of idle cars around headquarters and we decided to actually send them down the streets to ring door bells without calls because from the list you didn't know what they were anyway, and on the basis the more you get out the better shot you would have at it. So, that was what we finally resorted to. We

just dispatched drivers, with runners, to streets and neighborhoods in Eau Claire and had them ring door bells and ask "have you gone to vote yet?" If not, "would you like to go?" If they were not ready we would make a note of the time they expected to be ready and offer to come back for them.

This served two purposes in my mind. First of all, I was a little bit concerned about it from a public point of view. These cars with Kennedy signs all over them standing doing nothing didn't give the impression of activity. Even if we were just ringing door bells, the cars were at least moving around other areas with the name on them, plus the fact that they did pick up quite a few people that way.

As for West Virginia, as I said, I went down there whenever time permitted and centered my activity around simple campaigning and headquarters detail work, buttons or anything needed. In other words, there are no glamorous jobs in a campaign like that. It's a matter of working and getting it done.

Mr. Morrissey: Moving ahead to the campaign against Nixon, what did you do?

Mr. Hartigan: I worked in the National Committee under Mr. O'Donnell. I had charge of the transportation for the campaign and I accompanied Mr. O'Donnell on the campaign wherever he went; made arrangements and saw to it that the press requirements, transportation-wise, were taken care of. I kept in close contact and in communications with the advance men in the field; the motorcades and the transportation setups and requirements; and hotel arrangements. That was basically the story. Wherever the candidate went, or O'Donnell went, I was there with them.

Mr. Morrissey: Do you have any specific recollections on anything that happened on these travels?

Mr. Hartigan: I noticed that we would usually land the plane I was in ahead of the one the candidate was in. We had two planes accompanying the candidate's plane--one for the photographers and one for the press. It was planned that the photographers' plane would land before any of the other planes to allow the photographers to set up their cameras to catch the candidate arriving. So, we provided the photographers with this arrangement and also that they would be the last ones to leave so they could photograph his departure. I rode on the photographers' plane and because it was the first one to land it gave us those extra few minutes to make a real quick check to see that everything was all right and that arrangements were carried out right. It also gave us a chance to

make last minute changes if necessary. More than once, as a matter of fact, we landed in rainstorms. Rain was pouring when our plane landed, pouring when the press plane landed, raining when the Caroline came in, but as soon as the door opened, it all stopped. This happened on many occasions. I don't know what it proves, but he brought a lot of sunshine with him.

Mr. Morrissey: Any recollections of any specific problems which arose?

Mr. Hartigan: We had no mishaps, number one. We had only one mechanical failure on the plane causing any delay at all. We set up a different system--it was the first time this system was used in a Presidential campaign.

Previously, with the advent of the airplane, they would charter a plane from a commercial carrier for the press and one for the candidate, and they chartered it for segments. If they wanted to go to Chicago, they would charter it from Washington to Chicago and back. Then they would charter again for a segment from Washington to Florida, or wherever he was going. When we arrived in Washington after the Convention, with Mr. O'Donnell and Dick Maguire, they asked me to make the transportation arrangements and set up some kind of a system. After reviewing records of previous campaigns, I found that they were spending a great deal of money for this particular type of operation. So, with that, I asked all the carriers interested in this political business to come to the National Committee for a meeting, and they did. They were prepared to go through the same routine they went through before--getting their share of the segment. But we had decided that we were going to try something different and requested that the carriers submit their rates to us for leasing the plane from that day until the day after the election.

Of course the carriers weren't too happy about that. Only one carrier responded in the positive that they actually could give us a plane for this particular time--I think it was about three months. It would be completely turned over to us with the same crew and go wherever the candidate's plane went. The reason for the change in the system was that our candidate had a plane at his disposal which gave him a great deal of flexibility, more so than in past campaigns where the candidate still had to resort to chartering one, too. So, with the flexibility he had, we had to keep up with him and the only way we could do it was for us to have one also. American Airlines finally said they would let us charter a plane for three months. Before we had even signed the contract, the Press Department under Mr. Salinger was trying to get an idea on how many press people would be traveling with us and when we got his figures, press and

the photographers, plus the staff, we found that one plane was not enough. We went back to American and they finally agreed to give us two DC-6's.

Throughout the whole campaign we had a standard entourage of two DC-6's and the Caroline and this system actually paid for itself because the press was billed for the use of the plane and we based it on the regular airline rate, because the theory being that they would have had to pay that if they were going to go to Chicago to cover the story anyway. This way they were getting more value for their money since they were right with the candidate every place he went and all their arrangements were made and we thought that this was a fair charge, and they did also, because we never had a single complaint about the charges and this allowed us a little bit of flexibility, money-wise, because we were able to do some little extra things for everybody on the trip. It was strenuous enough as it was. We had meals on board for them and we made whatever arrangements we could to make their lives more pleasant and, based on this type of charging, it cost the National Committee very little. During past campaigns, bills for transportation were tremendous. So we started on this new concept of leasing instead of chartering segments. It also allowed the press and those traveling with us to get to know the pilots, the crews and the stewardesses who were on the same plane all the time. The stewardesses got to know the whims and peculiarities of the different people and it became a more pleasant trip than it might otherwise have been. They all agreed that it was. We made a few mistakes, but for the most part we did all right.

We were particularly interested in the reports coming back from these press people who had to switch off from one campaign to the other. We got an insight as to the impression they had of the Nixon people and the way theirs was handled. They remarked that ours was far superior and they enjoyed being on ours more than they did on the other. Whether this helped us in the election, I don't know. At least we had a happy press.

Mr. Morrissey: Do you have any other recollections of the '60 campaign?

Mr. Hartigan: There were a good many. I had a son born while I was on the campaign. I think it is interesting to note that there was a tremendous amount of cooperation among the people themselves. True, each one of us had his own function. But everybody was able to double in brass in helping each other out. Andy Hatcher traveled a great deal with me in the photo plane. He was Pierre Salinger's assistant. Andy and I got to be very good friends. As was the case at the time my wife had the baby, I was in Buffalo, heading

toward Boston on the campaign trail. I finally had to break out a day ahead of time because my wife wasn't feeling too well. Everybody was willing to take over and fill in the gap. We were all willing to help each other. It was a great display of good people organized to achieve a common objective, electing a great man President of the U. S. A.

Once again, it goes back to the feeling we had in the old days--nobody was dictatorial in handling his responsibilities. O'Donnell was actually the keyman of the whole thing. Yet, everybody seemed to be working as a well-organized group. There was no friction; there were no arguments. I never heard an argument during the whole trip and this says a lot. My interpretation of it is that they must have had a great deal of respect for the candidate, number one. This he earned--and a great deal of respect for Mr. O'Donnell, whom he personally put in charge, because there never was a question when anything was to be done and nobody seemed to worry about the late hours and lack of food in many cases. Several days we ate only sandwiches--we were never anywhere long enough to stop for a meal. So I think this was a good reflection on the candidate and also on Mr. O'Donnell, who had to take all of it. Everybody, I think because of the respect they had for the two of them, acted in a responsible manner. They acted with a great deal of dignity and I don't think that anybody could accuse any of the Kennedy people of appearing in any way whatsoever obnoxious to the public. They were all polite. They were all considerate. And I think they all felt that anything they did would reflect on the candidate. I, myself, felt that I would hesitate to get into any kind of controversy that would reflect on the candidate. For that reason everyone restrained himself without showing restraint.

Mr. Morrissey: What was your job at the White House?

Mr. Hartigan: I went to the White House with Mr. O'Donnell and worked under him. Among other things my work covered transportation--planning the President's trips and accompanying him on these trips.

The general White House housekeeping type of thing was also one of my duties; the White House Budget; keeping an eye on this to be sure we were not overspending our travel allowance. This was done through some very capable career people who worked at the White House. But it was a matter of getting the information from all these various people in the White House and keeping Mr. O'Donnell posted on just what the situation showed--general liaison between Mr. O'Donnell and the housekeeping units of the White House, such as communications, telephones, and Secret Service Agents. In many instances, try whenever possible to keep as much of the insignificant type of problem away from

people who didn't have the time to handle--getting it done without bothering them.

Space in the White House and the Executive Office Building came through my office--assigning offices to new appointees who came in and this was always a problem, because everyone wanted to be in the President's office. Next to being in the President's office, they had to be in the West Wing; if they could not get the West Wing, then they would take the East Wing. They would concede to an office in the Executive Office Building across the street, but very reluctantly.

This seemed strange to the Kennedy people, for they didn't care where they stayed. They were not used to this type of so-called prestige that everybody wanted because we were just hard working people who, given an assignment, to do it without so-called public recognition. Few in the Kennedy Administration had public recognition because they didn't want it; they were satisfied with the reward of helping this great man and the least publicity they got, the happier they were about it. For this reason you might find that you are overlooking a lot of people because of the lack of publicity about them and they probably could lend some information toward this library bit.

Mr. Morrissey: Could you mention any names in this regard?

Mr. Hartigan: Offhand I can't, but I am sure we will think of someone.

Mr. Morrissey: Do you have any specific recollections of the arrangements for the President's trip to visit Khrushchev in 1961?

Mr. Hartigan: Andy Hatcher and I went in advance of the group to make sure that the arrangements were in order. We went to Paris first to set up an office in the Embassy and worked with our Embassy people, the Secret Service advance detail, the French Security and the French Foreign Office, making sure that arrangements were made, and keeping the White House advised back in Washington on how the arrangements were going, and what the procedures would be when they got there so they could have up-to-date information.

Raising questions when need be and getting answers from an official source for the White House was a big item. I wasn't experienced in State visits, but was quick to find out that sometimes foreign offices, both our own and others, get over-enthused about them and forget some of the details that the President might like to have done. And we found ourselves questioning, by virtue of the fact that we knew what he liked and what he had requested, and yet it didn't show up in the protocol.

Therefore, we were faced with the problem of how to get it done; keeping the White House informed on problems that would have to be solved through other channels when we could not solve them.

We went from Paris over to London to advance the christening of Princess Radziwill's child. The President and Mrs. Kennedy were to be godparents. We came back to Paris and waited for the group to arrive and stayed with them the first two days and then Andy Hatcher and I moved on to Vienna.

We did the same things in Vienna--ran routes, checked traveling time on the routes for the motorcade, checked the protocol of the two visiting dignitaries because in a sense this was a different type of visit because it was not a visit to the head of that state. It was a visit of two heads of other states coming into a third state.

One of the problems was who was going to enter the Schoenbrunn Palace first without embarrassing one or the other--was Khrushchev going in first, or was Kennedy going in first? There were all kinds of suggestions--from both entering together to causing mechanical delay in the car so as to make one a little bit later than the other. All these suggestions came from the Austrian Government.

As a matter of fact, at midnight the night before the President arrived, we were at the gate of the Palace, where the reception was to take place, with our Secret Service men, Jim Rowley headed the detail, and the entire motorcade dress rehearsed it, with the Austrian Police leading us from the airport. So we went to the airport and went through the whole bit. But when we got to the Palace gate, the Chief of the Police Department and the representative of the Protocol Office of the Austrian Government, asked, "who goes into the gate first?" They were out there at midnight--all these cars and motorcycles lined up and they were measuring the gate to find out if it was wide enough to accommodate both cars so they could enter at the same time. We finally mentioned that this certainly couldn't be the first time this ever happened--two Heads of State visiting at the same time. They said, no, back in the 18th Century five princes from five different countries met at this same Palace in Austria and, protocol being much stricter then than it is today, they had the same problem. I asked how they solved that problem. He said that they decided to build five different doors and the five princes would enter the five doors at the same time which meant they officially entered at the same time.

But, anyway, as it happened, Khrushchev arrived first. I was at the Palace at the time, so I don't know what caused the delay

but President Kennedy was a little bit behind the schedule so there was no problem. All the fears of the protocol people were unfounded because there was no terrible scandal over who arrived first and there was never a question. I don't remember reading in the papers as to who arrived first and why.

Mr. Morrissey: Do you have any other recollections of this trip or the Ottawa trip?

Mr. Hartigan: The Ottawa trip was not too long. This was the time the President planted the trees. We had a very fine reception from the Canadian people--just like American citizens coming out to greet their President. The ceremonies were colorful and beautiful. He was well received in Ottawa.

Mr. Morrissey: Was that the occasion when the President hurt his back?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes, when he was planting the tree--that's right. Other than that the trip was a success.

In the Vienna one we had a very interesting experience when we were making arrangements to go to church on a Sunday while we were there. That was the day that the first meeting took place between Khrushchev and President Kennedy. It was to take place right after church.

We contacted the priest of the church to make arrangements and their customs, even though it was a Catholic church, are a little different from the ones here. Normally in the United States for such arrangements we would go to the parish pastor and explain that the President would be going to church on Sunday and that he didn't want any unusual recognition--no more than any other parishioner. And the Secret Service men would like an opportunity to look at the church, etc., in order to set up security measures. There was no need in making any remarks about his being there. Just go along with a normal mass. This had worked out fine.

We wanted to use the same procedure in Austria. The State provides church buildings for the various religions and there is actually a civil ceremony that takes place when a dignitary visits a church, even to attend a Catholic mass, which would not be the case in the United States. This was new to us and we went back to the Austrian representatives of protocol and they advised us that the local officials must be at the church President Kennedy attended. And they made quite a civil ceremony out of having all the dignitaries sit up in the sanctuary, up on the altar, and they have seats up there. Well, this was another thing that is not done here.

So, after a great deal of discussion we finally convinced them that this was not the way we would like to have it; it's just not the American way of doing it. When a man goes to church it is a private thing to him and we could go along to a certain extent if they wanted to have the civil dignitaries come into the church. But the President certainly wouldn't be sitting on the altar any more than he would be back in his own country and we would prefer that he sit in the pews like everyone else--which he did. But this was a little bit difficult for them to understand because it is their custom to do it that way.

I have had opportunities to talk with priests since then because the question was always in my mind. The churches--the buildings themselves--are the responsibility of the government. It must keep them in repair, too, for these various religions. So, being a public building, in addition to being a church, the civil officials do take part in religious ceremonies when they involve a dignitary. It was quite an experience.

Mr. Morrissey: Were you in Key West when the President went there to visit with Harold Macmillan?

Mr. Hartigan: No, at that time I was over here at the Post Office Department.

Mr. Morrissey: Were there any other trips that the President made while you were....

Mr. Hartigan: We had the visit with Nixon down in the Keys. We went down to vacation at the President's home in Florida and went over to visit Nixon.

Mr. Morrissey: I notice in your scrapbook that you attended the Orange Bowl game in 1961 with the President. Any recollections of that?

Mr. Hartigan: No, nothing unusual. It was a very enjoyable day. We enjoyed the game. It was the first time I had been to the Orange Bowl and I was very much impressed with the whole thing. The President enjoyed it very much and we had a wonderful day.

Mr. Morrissey: When you were in the White House, were you involved in the President's decision to return gifts sent to him that were valued at more than twenty-five dollars?

Mr. Hartigan: Yes; however, I was not in on the discussions of the decision. I think it was one of those things, according to my understanding after talking with people who had been in the White House for a good while, and to the Secret Service, and they raised the question to me as to what

is the President going to do policy-wise about these gifts now starting to flow in? This was new to all of us and the problem was turned over to Kenny O'Donnell and what discussions went into making a decision, I don't know. It just came out that something had to be done and this would be the best way to do it.

Mr. Morrissey: Were you involved in the effort to get the Kennedy coat-of-arms for the President?

Mr. Hartigan: No.

Mr. Morrissey: When did you come over to the Post Office Department?

Mr. Hartigan: I came over in August, 1961. Then I left to campaign with Teddy and then came back again in 1963.

Mr. Morrissey: Why did you leave the White House to come over here?

Mr. Hartigan: This position in the transportation field was open and with nobody handling it, no appointee in it, this is the field that I came from and I was recommended by the President to the Senate for the job and that was it.

Mr. Morrissey: What have you devoted most of your time to in this job?

Mr. Hartigan: The main subject, of course, is transportation and we also have the International Services of the Post Office Department. At the present time we are spending most of our time on the international phase because we have a meeting coming up in May that will run through July 9. It will be a six-weeks meeting. It is the Universal Postal Union Congress which meets once every five years, consisting of 125 countries. It is utilizing most of our time right now. The international bit comes in phases, preparing for these meetings, this particular one being a big one. Then we have two a year that we must attend between the Congresses. So, I find myself periodically devoting a great deal of time to the international phase.

But the distribution of mail throughout the country is the main subject and we are continually reviewing, experimenting on new and cheaper ways of handling; utilizing the various modes of transportation to do a particular job. And this has been quite time consuming and interesting. Any spare time I have I devote to politics.

Mr. Morrissey: I understand that President and Mrs. Kennedy are godparents....

Mr. Hartigan: Of my son Billy. William Jr. Yes, that's right. It is a very fine honor. Of course, he was a Senator at the time and the President and Mrs. Kennedy have sent him a gift every single Christmas from his first Christmas up to and including this past Christmas, which was after the assassination. It just shows you that great people

generally are great in all ways--not just in one. I think it is one of the basic reasons why he was such a loved man throughout the world because basically he understood people and people are the same the world over. Languages change, but personality and a smile are interpreted the same way in all languages. That was the reason the world was so shocked at the assassination of the President.

The last international group he met at the White House, incidentally, was the group of foreign postal people who were here for an international postal meeting which the United States was Chairman of and the President agreed to see them, and he talked with them. I had some photographs of that meeting. Did I give them to you?

Yes, they came over yesterday.

Mr. Hartigan: We checked out recently and found that that was the last official international group he had seen before he left for Texas and those people have written and sent telegrams. This happened while most of them were on their way back home, and upon arriving home they heard the sad news. In the book of telegrams, you just seem to sense the feeling of each one of them. I don't know if you saw them or not, but that would be material you could use. They felt so close to him because it was such a short time before that they had seen him. I decided to send copies of the memorial magazine that was put out by Life to the delegates who visited him at the White House, plus photographs that they were in, and everyone of them responded that they would keep these very fine treasures in memory of the President. So he did leave a great impression on everybody.

Mr. Morrissey: Were you here in the office when you heard the news of his assassination?

Mr. Hartigan: No, I was coming out of a restaurant walking back to the office and a cab driver mentioned that Kennedy was shot in Texas and I thought he was joking. When I got back in the office all my staff was in the office with the radio turned on. I called Jim Rowley, the Chief of the Secret Service, and asked him if he knew anything. He said he was expecting a call from Texas and he'd let me know. The Postmaster General called an emergency meeting downstairs in his office. They had the TV on down there and were waiting for a report from the hospital. And the phone call came for me. It was Jim Rowley. The call came through the Postmaster General's office and he told me that they had officially got word that the President was dead. They were still talking on the TV about it. A few minutes later, they announced it.

Mr. Morrissey: Any other characteristics of John Kennedy that you would like to mention while we have a little bit left on the tape?

Mr. Hartigan: I just want to mention the feelings I have personally. I am sure there are many people who can tell you more intimate things about him than I can. The Good Lord every once in a while gives us somebody in history, a unique type individual, who is sent down to us to do a particular job at a trying time. At least the way I read history. I feel that he was one of those individuals. I also think these things happen for a reason. And in his death there will be good coming out of it for our country and other peoples of the world. Of course, the family will never forget. And close friends will wonder about the price that had to be paid.

I think we have already seen some changing of minds among people who thought that Kennedy was not doing the right thing, but who now are beginning to realize that his policies and his actions were just what the world needed. And I think, too, that he is accomplishing this in his death. I don't think that the Good Lord allows people that great to pass away, that way, in vain. And I think something good will come out of it. I am sure that some good has already come out of it.

Mr. Morrissey: Is there anything else you would like to put on the tape?

Mr. Hartigan: No, that's all I can think of unless you have something else.

Mr. Morrissey: I can't think of anything else at this time.

Mr. Hartigan: OK. If we can be of any further help to you, let us know.

Mr. Morrissey: Thank you very much.