

**John B. Swainson Oral History Interview—JFK #1, 1/26/1970**  
Administrative Information

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John B. Swainson (1925 - 1994) served as the Governor of Michigan between 1961 and 1963, and as a member of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in 1963. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy (JFK)'s presidential campaign in Michigan, Swainson's experience as governor, and JFK's relatability to the American people, among other issues.

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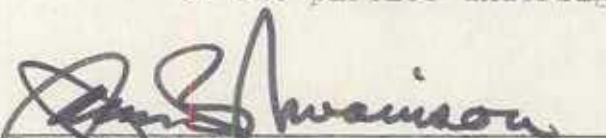
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John B. Swainson

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Oral History Interview

with

JOHN B. SWAINSON

January 26, 1970  
Detroit, Michigan

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: This is oral history interview #1 with Judge John B. Swainson of the Circuit Court of Wayne County, Michigan. Judge Swainson was former governor of Michigan, succeeding G. Mennan Williams as governor. Judge Swainson, let me ask you, as the way these interviews have a habit of beginning, when did you first meet John F. Kennedy?

SWAINSON: I think I had the first opportunity to meet John F. Kennedy, I think it was in '58, when I had the occasion to be in Washington at that time to a Democratic function sponsored by the Democratic National Committee. He was one of the senators that was involved in this particular meeting.

Subsequent to that, I think I had the opportunity to meet some of his staff, notably Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen], at a time that I was lieutenant governor of the state of Michigan. He, at that time, was visiting Michigan as part of a group of potential nominees, you might say, at our traditional Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner.

MOSS: Yes, was this the dinner in which everybody showed up?

SWAINSON: Everybody showed up. We had all of the would-be candidates at that particular time. I think this was in '59. In fact I think Mrs. Kennedy

[Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] was here at that time also, and this was sort of an unusual appearance for her.

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MOSS: Right. Do you recall your impressions of him at that time, as a politician?

SWAINSON: Yes, a very personable man. I think the thing that, of course, attracted persons of my relative age and activity was the similarity of backgrounds. And I certainly do not mean to imply by that, background as far as worldly goods, but backgrounds as having both served in World War II, both having had a chance to serve in public office, and both seemingly coming up to this decade of the sixties where we've had an opportunity to become familiar with the operation of government through legislative activities, and now thought ourselves prepared to take over the leadership, you might say.

MOSS: What can you say about the way he was going after the presidency at this point, in '59?

SWAINSON: Well, I think he was going after the presidency not so much outwardly as in the small detail things. He, obviously, had a sufficient staff that if he met someone for the first time, that person received a personalized note from him after her visit saying that "I was delighted to make your acquaintance and hope that I will have an opportunity to work with you or see you in the future." Well, many people I think discount this little personal touch, but it was very impressive to an individual, you know, as you read about his activities in other months, and, "I've got a letter with his name on it." You know. "He thought enough of our meeting to recall it." Well, of course, I think all of us that have had the opportunity of public service on a mass scale like that know that this isn't done so much by the individual as by a good staff. And I was impressed with the staff work that surrounded Jack Kennedy. This, I think, has impressed me throughout his career. He had excellent staff -- people that knew their job, did it very well, did it very much in the background, and had the thing that is so very important in any such endeavor, complete loyalty.

MOSS: Okay. Coming around to the Michigan point of view now, Governor Williams had been sort of running for the presidency himself. Did you see the beginnings of this? Do you know when he began to think seriously of the possibility of his candidacy for the presidency?

SWAINSON: Governor Williams? Oh, yes. As you know, I was the lieutenant governor to Governor Williams during his last term of office, and this gave me the opportunity to be the acting governor of the state on many occasions in 1959 and 1960 as Governor Williams took the

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opportunities to visit, say, the Near East and various areas of this country. Being the lieutenant governor, I was acting governor during his absence from the state of Michigan. It was no secret within the party that he was seeking, at least testing the wind to see if his candidacy would receive acceptability, you might say.

MOSS: Now he announced on the 2nd of March, 1960, that he would not seek another term as governor. Had he discussed this previously with you?

SWAINSON: Yes, he had discussed this particular possibility with me without relating to me his particular final decision in this regard. But earlier that particular year -- I believe in February -- we had a meeting at a place that we call Haven Hill here in Michigan. This is a part of the old Ford estate, near Milford, Michigan, where people in the legislature, people holding public office were asked to consider what we would advise Governor Williams, taking into consideration the options that he had at that particular time. And although he.... This would be the nature of the discussion. It was no personal discussion behind locked doors, saying, "John, what do you think I should do?" We all sort of anticipated that he would -- and, as you know, he did -- make the decision he was not going to run for governor at that time. That was certainly a definite statement.

MOSS: All right. In between this time and your state convention on 7 May 1960 you had the Wisconsin primary. Do you recall the impact of the Wisconsin primary on Michigan Democrats generally?

SWAINSON: Only insofar as it meant that Jack Kennedy was a viable candidate. But I must confess that at that time my thoughts were much more limited to Michigan and the possibility of myself being elected at a primary election -- selected, I should probably say -- as a nominee of the party.

MOSS: You and Jim Hare [James M. Hare] were jockeying back and forth at this point, weren't you?

SWAINSON: At that time Jim Hare was the secretary of state and I was the lieutenant governor. We were seeking the nomination. I was completely immersed in that particular campaign. In fact, so immersed, as it turned out, that I did not have the opportunity to be in Los Angeles at the time of the [Democratic] National Convention, but I'm sure I was very well represented by my wife, Alice, who enjoyed that very much.

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MOSS: About the state Democratic convention. You attended this, I presume?

SWAINSON: Oh yes.

MOSS: And a favorite-son resolution for Governor Williams was passed, but it was for any office. Was this to keep his options open? Or why?

SWAINSON: More or less. I think the main purpose of the resolution was to show that the entire Michigan Democratic Party was behind Governor Williams for whatever he wanted to do.

MOSS: And yet at the same time there was a professional poll of Michigan Democrats indicating about 63 percent for Kennedy.

SWAINSON: That's right. I think he'd captured, by that time, the imagination of the Democrats -- the style of his campaigning, the ease with which he seemed to be able to move around. But there was a yearning there more than anything else, and I think this was reflected in the poll.

MOSS: Was he capturing any of the Democratic Party principals?

SWAINSON: No, I don't think so at that time. We were awaiting leadership on the part of Governor Williams, which, as you know, was forthcoming in June.

MOSS: Okay. The West Virginia primary came almost immediately after, on the 10th of May. Can you assess the impact of this, particularly on the state feeling for Hubert Humphrey and so on?

SWAINSON: Well, there's always been a very closeness to Hubert Humphrey in Michigan. And yet I think many of us, as much as we felt an alliance with Hubert Humphrey, felt that the things that were being said and described by then Senator Kennedy were much more to our feeling -- the new generation, the New Frontier, the younger person. I think it was more identified with our feeling in the party.

MOSS: Now between early May and the 2nd of June, a decision was evidently made, at least on the part of Governor Williams and on the part of others in

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the party, to endorse Senator Kennedy. Do you know how this decision came about?

SWAINSON: No, I'm not aware of that, particularly. As I say, I was completely immersed at that time in my own struggle for the nomination of the party for the office of governor. And although I would be extended the invitations to meet, say, at Mackinac Island, I was not able to take advantage of those



invitations, because I had set my own schedule some weeks in advance, where I hoped to be, and to cover the state in my own behalf.

MOSS: So you were not at Mackinac Island?

SWAINSON: I was not at Mackinac Island.

MOSS: And you were not at the convention in Los Angeles?

SWAINSON: No.

MOSS: Okay. Do you recall the sudden trip of the Democrats to Georgetown, the black liberal Democrats to Georgetown to try to nail Senator Kennedy down on a few things?

SWAINSON: Only as much as I read in the media in this regard. I was not privy to that either.

MOSS: Okay. We'll move on then to some other things. Let me talk a little bit about your own race. What kind of a race was it that you were running against Jim Hare? What were the issues and the problems?

SWAINSON: Well, at that particular time, we had a fiscal crisis in the state of Michigan. The legislature had enacted an increase in the sales tax that was going to expire as of June 1961, and this became an issue as to whether that should be kept on or should be allowed to expire as the legislative act provided. We had the issue of revision of our constitution, which was debated. These were, I think, the main issues to be considered. Of course, we had a complete gamut of the usual issues: the development of your highway system or continued development in our case, since we, at that time, had John Mackie as our highway commissioner; your conservation problems; your mental health problems; your educational problems and the fact that as we went into the sixties we obviously knew from our birth rate that if we had more and more children that we're going to be in need of educational facilities. But mainly it was the issue of those taxes and how best to develop the revenue that

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you would need for a modern industrial state.

MOSS: It's my understanding that many of the Democratic Party principals thought that Jim Hare had the inside track on the nomination and he was going to win the primary.

SWAINSON: Yes, I think that is a very fair statement. In fact, I didn't see it myself but it

was related to me that there had already, at that time, been drawn up a bumper sticker. It had the name of Williams and McNamara [Patrick V. McNamara] on it and a blank for the other name, but the blank was of such a nature that it wouldn't have accommodated the name of Swainson.

MOSS: Yes, I've heard the same story. Was there any help for any of the candidates, coming either from the state party or from the national party in the primary?

SWAINSON: Well, not so much in the primary. The state party was very scrupulous in remaining neutral. It remained for each of us as candidates to inveigh upon people to be of assistance to us. And I think I probably became more successful in this regard. [Interruption]

MOSS: ... talking about the campaign after the primary. Now, the presidential campaign opened with the then Cadillac Square Labor Day presentation of Senator Kennedy to the people of Detroit. There must have been some kind of coordination between your campaign and the national campaign.

SWAINSON: Oh there was at that time.

MOSS: Who was handling this?

SWAINSON: I was the nominee.... You mean on my behalf?

MOSS: Yes. And on...

SWAINSON: I would say Joe Walsh [Joseph A. Walsh] was the one that was handling it primarily on my behalf. He was a close personal friend to Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] at the time, who, as you know, was traveling with the President. Obviously, the Sheraton Cadillac, the presidential suite, was made available to Senator Kennedy. We were in attendance. We each had our own schedule. We each knew what we had to do, where we had to be, but demonstrated

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to the public a closeness that was more than just a demonstration; we felt it.

I have a reminiscence about that particular occasion because it was my first opportunity after his nomination and after my own nomination to actually be physically together, you might say. I know it was a tremendously warm day and an exhausting day. After he had delivered his address to a very enthusiastic and crowded group of persons in Cadillac Square, we repaired back to the Sheraton Cadillac. He closeted himself in a bedroom of the suite, while all kinds of people were milling around. I was uncomfortable because of the warmth. And he sent out, "Come on in John," sort of thing. And there he is

completely nude in the bedroom, having had the opportunity to take a shower or a bath and completely covered -- when I say nude, he had a sheet over him -- and ordering a steak; a very Spartan type meal.

His doctor that was traveling with the campaign was warning him at that time about overexposure, becoming exhausted, and you'd better do this and that. And, of course, he was, like most of us, saying, "Yes, I agree with you, I agree with you," but you go on doing your own thing. I remember particularly his being on the side of the bed eating the steak and having a cold bottle of beer and at the same time chatting about mundane things, you might say, as any two persons would chat about finding themselves in the same sort of occupation, which is gaining votes.

From there, of course, I think we went on to the state fair grounds, and from there into the motorcade going up to Flint. From Flint, I think we went on to Muskegon. Just a completely exhausting sort of day.

MOSS: Backing up. There was some difficulty, wasn't there, about his Sunday night arrival? You weren't sure he was actually going to make it. He was going to stop in California first, or something?

SWAINSON: Well, I don't have any particular recollection of that. It's one of those things that if this were the case they probably wouldn't tell me. My own campaign...

MOSS: You met him at the airport, did you not, Sunday night? There was quite a crowd?

SWAINSON: Yes, I believe I did. Oh, a tremendous crowd.

MOSS: Do you recall an incident of the two of you being on top of a panel truck and the crowd all pushing around?

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SWAINSON: Well, I don't have a specific recollection of that. I recall that and I've often said since that time that if there's ever been a picture of Kennedy taken in Michigan, you'll see me right at his shoulder. Of course that was to my benefit, as the Democratic nominee for the office of governor, with the popularity that Senator Kennedy enjoyed, to completely identify with him. Of course, as it turned out we were both of a relative age -- he at the time being forty-two, I believe, and myself being of the ripe old age of thirty-five. So these very things that were being hurled at him to challenge his qualifications at that relatively young age were being the same things said to me in Michigan.

MOSS: What were the chief problem areas in that race as far as issues, candidate identification, so on?

SWAINSON: Well, as far as the national race of course, his Catholicism was something being discussed here in Michigan.

MOSS: How serious was that in Michigan?

SWAINSON: I don't think it was as serious in this particular area as it was in some of the other states. But then, that is not to say that in our Saginaw Valley and our western part of the state that this was not being discussed very thoroughly, being followed very carefully. His relative youth was always being discussed. He obviously had enjoyed a number of Democratic successes at that time, but I think the state was far from being considered a safe state for Democrats. Both of us had the unhappy experience of not being supported editorially by every paper in the state but one. We were both looked at askance by the editors at least.

MOSS: Now, you won your election -- I have a note here -- but about forty-one thousand votes, which was somewhat less, for instance, than McNamara won the senatorial election. How did this leave you as a governor? Did the narrowness of the election mean anything as far as your ability to get things moving in Michigan?

SWAINSON: No, not necessarily. We had had a number of close elections up to that time. This was not really...

MOSS: The '58 elections were close too.

SWAINSON: Yes. This was not necessarily significant. My

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problem, obviously, having been in the senate and limited in my campaign to a senatorial district, and then as lieutenant governor, of course, I was riding along on the coattails of Governor Williams at that time and not necessarily able to speak out on my own.... This didn't bother me. I had a very good rapport with the legislative body because I knew each and every one of them, having been a member of the senate for two terms.

But, of course, as we proceeded at that time, any governor, and particularly a new governor, would be tested. We had a two-year term and it afforded the legislature an opportunity to outwait you in many instances. As you put forth a program, they wouldn't necessarily with any alacrity jump to support it or to turn it down. They waited for public reaction and would go home. Things seemed to drag there for a while.

Our biggest challenge was, of course, in the area of revenue. We had the increased sales tax expiring as of June 30 and a recommendation to the legislature of a complete departure from the position that Michigan had enjoyed for so many years of relying primarily

on the sales tax, and the advocacy of a state-wide income tax. They were not at all enthusiastic about adopting that particular course of action. Although I think each of the legislators knew, from various studies that had been conducted, that this is what we would have to do eventually. But who was going to get the blame for it became the primary issue.

MOSS: Backing up a little bit, something that I left out. What was the Michigan reaction to the choice of Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] as a vice presidential nominee?

SWAINSON: Well, as you know -- and which has been well publicized - it did not meet with any great enthusiasm from the Democratic delegation at the National Convention. Particularly, at that time, as I recall -- the thing's been shown on many occasions since then -- G. Mennen Williams very vociferously saying, "No, no, no." That caused us a little bit of consternation because when President Kennedy selected President Johnson as his running mate, that was the end of the argument; it was over with. I think every pragmatic person at that time said, "Fine, let's go on from here," although there was a residual of bitterness within the Williams' group, you might say.

MOSS: Did you or others try to get in touch with the delegation at Los Angeles to tell them to cool it?

SWAINSON: No. As I say, as I recall that night that the

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nomination occurred, I had traveled a goodly number of miles and was watching very intently the proceedings, but didn't feel it incumbent upon me to call up anybody and say do this or do that. I was completely enamored of President Kennedy, and I thought his strength on the ticket would overcome any lack of strength that people felt in regards to President Johnson. I couldn't really understand that either because we knew that one of the great difficulties that President Kennedy would have would be in the so-called border states and southern states. If this would add strength to the ticket, I was all for it because I think -- as it was shown -- President Kennedy was the president.

I had the same sort of dilemma, you might say, in some regards after I had succeeded in the nomination and the secretary of state had not. What do I do regarding the secretary of state who would have to receive his nomination to continue as secretary of state at the convention of which I would be the prime figure? And I could have indulged myself, I suppose, in some hurts or imagined hurts from that primary campaign, things that are said, and ask him not to be a candidate or suggest somebody else to be nominated. I think that would have been a tragic mistake, and perhaps in the light of the limited number of votes I received in the plurality, might have been the difference leading to defeat. It doesn't do one much good to win the nomination and fail in the election. So, after considering this for some time, we asked Jim Hare if he would not again be a candidate for secretary of state.

MOSS: Were you in on any of the consideration as to whether candidate Johnson should come into the state and campaign?

SWAINSON: I made it very clear that I thought that he should come in. And yet there was a remaining bitterness, I think, on the part of both principals to this. I would say in that regard both Governor Williams and President Johnson. It wasn't possible at that time. But after I became governor, and President Johnson was the vice president, I went out of my way to assure him that he should come into the state; he would be most welcome. And the times that he did come in, I made myself completely available to him.

MOSS: Okay, now after the election -- you are now governor of Michigan, Governor Williams has gone on to be the assistant secretary of state for African affairs -- how did you cut the patronage pie? Who had the decisive voice, or what kind of consultations did you have?

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SWAINSON: Well, we set up a committee here in the state of Michigan, consisting of myself, our national committeeman, our national committeewoman, our senior senator at that time, and Phil Hart [Philip A. Hart] also, as well as a representative of our congressional delegation. And I'd say very basically that mine was the voice as to which way we would go on any particular jobs that emanated out of the federal government that we would discuss. We'd reach a conclusion and I would have a veto power over anyone, but chose to exercise it very sparingly because of many of the persons that I had known were also people that the Williams people had known. We'd all worked together, and there was no great feeling one way or the other, except that on an odd occasion there would be one person I would favor over the other. I found that this group would always accede to my wishes in that regard.

MOSS: You never had anybody forced on you that you didn't want?

SWAINSON: No.

MOSS: Any feeling that Governor Williams was sort of reaching back every once in a while?

SWAINSON: No, absolutely not. Governor Williams was most gracious at the time that he vacated an office that he'd held for twelve years. He certainly made himself available at any time for advice or consultation, but never once attempted to retain the reins of leadership.

MOSS: Okay. Following your term as governor, there seemed to be a disintegration in the Democratic Party in Michigan with the Romney

[George Romney] candidacy coming up against you, this kind of thing. To what do you attribute this? Maybe not a disintegration but a decline.

SWAINSON: A decline, certainly. That was a very hard-fought campaign in 1962. The issues, of course, were much the same as they'd been in 1960. Revenue was still our greatest problem. Romney seemingly had his most potent issue in the issue of "time for a change." Not that anything was wrong, not that there was any scandal or corruption alleged or attributed in any way, but time for a change, give me a chance sort of thing. That seemed to be very attractive and attractive to a lot of people who at that time were at least nominal Democrats during Governor Williams' long tenure -- and again during mine -- but this was a very

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attractive thing.

I think it was a very skillful campaign waged by Governor Romney. He started out two years earlier being chairman of the Citizens for Michigan Committee and then into the constitutional convention as though that was the greatest and most pressing need that we had in the state. They clothed themselves with the practical cloak of independence. And I think any group of people when they are being put down, as it were, by their friends, "Well, you're a Democrat, you wouldn't vote for anybody but a Democrat," loved to grasp this, "I want to do what's best for the state." They would suggest at least this posture of independence only to find out very shortly that they'd sort of been taking into camp. He was really Republican all the time. This was a device to gain election, rather than a....

MOSS: Who were your most serious defections?

SWAINSON: Well, I think I'd have to say the ones that were hurt the most would be some of the leadership in the UAW [Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America].

MOSS: Specifically?

SWAINSON: Well, I would have to say Leonard Woodcock in his movement over towards the Citizens for Michigan as not being all bad and some of the other people within the UAW in this regard. But he would be the most notable one. And I think that when you come to that election in '62, it isn't that I lacked the support of the UAW, but that they themselves had taken a *comme ci comme ca* attitude you know. They're both good guys. Of course as it proceeded after a negotiation with the American Motors [Corporation] while George was president of it and seemingly the UAW won at that time a profit-sharing proposal, I suppose they found themselves in a position after lauding the man on one occasion a few months earlier for the profit-sharing provisions of the contract, where they couldn't really be heard to say, "But don't vote for him for anything because he's a bad man." They were sort of neutralized, I would say, in that 1962 election.

MOSS: What was Sid Woolner's [Sidney H. Woolner] role at this point?

SWAINSON: Well, if I recall, I think Sid Woolner at this point was the deputy to the highway commissioner, was he not? I know he had been in my office when I first became governor because he was in need of having

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three more months to establish his tenure for retirement as a state employee. I was very happy to accommodate him in this particular desire. Then he moved on into John Mackie's operation and became immersed in that. I was not that close to him. Of course you must understand, at the same time, I had a completely enthusiastic group that came into office with me, and we were developing a staff and a rapport amongst the staff that didn't admit for concern with a lot of other things going on, I'm sure.

MOSS: Yes. Well let me ask you on this point -- you had the sort of group that was around Neil Staebler and Millie Jeffrey [Mildred Jeffrey] and Helen Berthelot and so on, and now you have your group. Was there any friction here?

SWAINSON: No, I don't think you could really call it friction. I was part of that group too. Yet we found a situation where when we are making appointments to various commissions, we weren't talking about somebody from the opposite party that you would just simply send a letter to -- "I wish to thank you for your service to government. However, when your tenure comes up, I have chosen to appoint so-and-so and so-and-so." But at the same time you had to give credence to people that felt loyalty to me personally, that worked very diligently during my election campaign, and certainly should be recognized. So we found ourselves at the time, without any animosity, suggesting to one or the other that more than one person should be given the opportunity of governmental service. "You have been on this commission now for a period of six, seven, eight years, and I'm sure you will understand when so-and-so is going to be appointed." You know, and basically, I'm sure they did. Although I'm just as positive that there is some resentment, you know. But then the Williams' regime couldn't go on forever. A new head had been elected. And certainly I felt this very strongly. How do I identify, or create my own identity, you might say. And I had to do this in many instances.

MOSS: A similar sort of question: Was there any difficulty in the locus of initiative, I guess you would call it, between the labor groups and the Democratic Party? Who was calling the shots? Is it the UAW organization, the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations], or is it the citizens party, as it were?

SWAINSON: As you know, a coalition had been formed in the latter forties, had



proceeded all through the

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fifties. As I was elected in 1960, I established a complete rapport with Gus Scholle [August Scholle], who at that time was the president of the Michigan AFL-CIO, and was certainly also acquainted with the hierarchy within the UAW. But I have always been impressed -- and sometimes it's hard to have this publicly accepted -- that they always ask, "What do you thinking? What do you want us to do?" and would enter into a discussion with that attitude, saying, "We have confidence in you, but tell us how you want us to do it."

Now that isn't to say that we didn't have some disagreements, because we certainly did. I have had disagreements at the time I was in the Senate on procedures, and I've had disagreements other times where we've been able to resolve those disagreements. I think perhaps the one disagreement that again had an effect on my election was my veto of the so-called Bowman bill. Gus Scholle was completely pragmatic. "You just don't do it. You alienate too many people," people within their organization, that would never have time to understand what you are doing. "It is an awful price to pay." I felt just as sincerely that I would have to be completely honest that we could not have some people paying the tax and some people not paying the tax by an accident of residence. When people are earning their money doing the same job at the same time, at the same place, why should one escape taxation and the other be taxed under any income tax, and at that time, as you know, it was the city of Detroit income tax. So there was a disagreement there.

And, of course, after we completely thrashed it out, I said, "I feel very sincerely that I have to do this, I can do nothing else." There was a complete acceptability of it. And they went out, expended their time trying to justify why it was done.

MOSS: On a little different subject: how serious was the movement to have Nancy Williams run for congressman-at-large? Do you recall at all?

SWAINSON: Not very serious at all. In fact, I don't even -- as we sit here now in 1970 -- recall it being seriously advocated at all.

MOSS: I ran across a few letters in the papers that indicated that this was a possibility. I have a list of White House appointments from the White House files. I wonder if you'd look at them and see if you can recall these instances: a June 28, 1962 meeting with the President.

SWAINSON: Yes, I can recall that particular meeting. In fact, this picture we have on my little credenza here came out of that June 28, 1962 meeting -- the

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purpose being to establish a relationship through pictures that could be later used in a campaign. I can't remember any specific things we were speaking to the

President about at that time as they affected Michigan, but I'm sure that it was more than just taking pictures. I think we were discussing his program of that time and how best to gain support for some of the portions of that here in Michigan. October 5, 1962, actually we're back into the campaign situation at that time.

MOSS: Right.

SWAINSON: And that would be a meeting at the airport to welcome him into Michigan. Again October 6, we were in front of the hotel and they have since placed a marker on the Sheraton Cadillac Hotel indicating that October 6, 1962 is the last time that President Kennedy visited Detroit.

MOSS: Do you recall the Friday, November 9 off-the-record meeting?

SWAINSON: Well, of course, that was immediately after the election, I think the election was November 6 in that year. At that time the results were known in Michigan that I had not succeeded in gaining reelection, and...

MOSS: Staebler made it, though, as congressman-at-large.

SWAINSON: Staebler made it. Everybody made it except John Swainson that particular year. And that again was something that had to be analyzed. But then I was the only one that really had a candidate running against me, you might say. I was traveling to Washington -- I think more than anything else to kind of get away from the campaign and to go down to see some of the people that worked very hard. Henry Zon from Washington was an advertising man that helped us in the campaign.

I took the opportunity to call the President from the airport, and he graciously invited me to come up to the White House. He said in a very nice way, "I'm sorry you didn't make it." I said, "Well, I'm sorry too, but I want to assure you that no part of your program caused my defeat," and discussed the situation as it obtained here in Michigan at that time -- the biased press support of George Romney, extending up to and including *Time* magazine with his picture on it just before the election, and he was everything good and gold that had ever come out of anywhere and could really cure all of

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the problems that beset Michigan at the time. I know the President was sort of in the doldrums of his own program at that time. And I wanted to take the occasion to say, "Look, my defeat had nothing at all to do with what you're doing on the federal level, your program, because Romney, in recognizing this, practically endorsed it. So this is a personality thing that I had to face. He was better able to present himself, with all the help that he had, as a man that could cure anything. After all," he contended, "his whole life has been given to leadership, and he's been well trained in all of these things." So that was the meeting.

Let's see, there's another Tuesday, May 21, 1963 off-the-record meeting with the President. The only thing I can recall in this regard in the chat with the President was that they had thought that I might enjoy service on the Securities and Exchange Commission at that time, and did make this suggestion to me. If I would be interested, they felt that they could make this an appointment. I told them at that time that I was not, that I thought my roots were in Michigan, that I didn't know quite what I was going to do, but I'd never really been interested in that particular area, and that I'd like to have a chance to think about it. But I didn't think that I would be interested.

I think it was at that time that Kenny O'Donnell told me, "At one time you know the President's father served in this capacity, and this isn't something you take lightly." But we were still quite, I would say, both physically and psychologically depressed from that very strenuous campaign, and I was sort of getting reacquainted with the family. Our children were quite young at the time. I didn't feel I wanted to move them into the Washington situation. If I were going to consider anything, I was more attracted towards perhaps an opportunity to serve in the foreign service in the capacity of ambassador, consul or something to, hopefully, one of the Scandinavian countries, which I thought would be more to my liking. But that I think is the sort of discussions we had, not particularly about the latter, but at least about the former, as far as service on the SEC.

MOSS: Okay. Now as -- I see we're getting close to the end of the hour here. Let me ask you to think about the period in terms of what somebody in the future might want to hear about it, and what particular perspective you can bring in a remark or two about the whole career of John Kennedy or any particular incident that you think is especially significant and unique from your point of view.

SWAINSON: Well, I think that President Kennedy brought to this entire land a sort of resurgence of confidence in the average citizen. Certainly I felt

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an identification with him, much more so than a political identification. I felt almost like I would towards an older brother. He didn't higns with grace. He was master of the quip. Things were very serious, but not so serious that you couldn't laugh at yourself over something you'd said the day before, the week before, the year before that might not have proven to be an accurate assessment of that situation, but then this happens to all of us.

I think that this perhaps was best demonstrated at the time of the tragedy of the assassination. Particularly in my own family. I never knew how deeply my, say, father felt. He couldn't have felt worse if one of us boys had been assassinated, my brother or myself. And, as I say, I felt like a brother. I think other people identified here. That, perhaps, was not so apparent during his lifetime, but certainly was apparent at the time of his death. I think that there was a tremendous physiological let down at that time, which was not enhanced particularly by the fact that President Johnson succeeded President Kennedy. Seemingly we went back to the old style, ho-hum sort of approach to things. There was no ho-hum approach

while President Kennedy was at the helm. And that isn't to say that he was most successful either, but there was a feeling that "I don't care, he's my guy."

MOSS: Was there any practical application of this in Michigan? For instance, let me ask the question this way: Was there anything that you accomplished in Michigan between 1960 and 1962 that couldn't have been accomplished had Ricahrd Nixon won the presidency?

SWAINSON: Well, without doing some research on it -- and that's probably a very bad thing to say -- I couldn't put my finger on any one thing. We were certainly successful in some new departures from the way things had been going before. By this I mean we had a proposition before the people in the spring election in 1961 to allow various municipalities to sell bonds and use the proceeds of the bonds to aid business in becoming established. This was almost unheard of. I think another departure was executive orders that I had the opportunity to sign dealing with equal opportunity employment for everyone doing business with the state of Michigan. It might or might not have been implemented and it had been somebody else.

I think, more than the very substantive things, there was the feeling of let's try something, let's move off in new directions. We've had all the old arguments before us for many years, but maybe there's something new to be done here. Again, this, more or less in the advocacy of a complete change in our funding for the state of Michigan. Governor Williams

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was quite aware of these things all during his tenure, that eventually we'd have to go to an income tax, but could never quite bring himself to coming out full sled saying, "This is my program and here are the bills to back it up. Let's get the debate started." Whereas this didn't bother me, and maybe retrospectively I should have been bothered by it. But I don't think people felt that public service was something to be continued on and on without accomplishment. We wanted to accomplish something. I think this was the feeling of having John F. Kennedy as the president, that you could move off in new directions. So if we enact them and enjoy the office, we'll do something else. But we're not going to condition our responses on the effect it's going to have on our reelection.

MOSS: Okay, is there anything else you want to add at this point?

SWAINSON: I can't think of anything. I think this discussion has been very thorough. As I say, I felt a camaraderie with the President that is very difficult to discuss at times. We were never that close in a private situation, but there was an understanding. You're talking to a person who has had the same background of having been in the service, having been in the legislative body, having done the same things you've done. You don't have to draw large discussion and identifications or anything, you

know what you're talking about. I think that was about the sum and substance. There was an identity.

MOSS:               Okay, fine. Thank you very much, Judge Swainson.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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