

Edmund M. Reggie Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 5/24/1967
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Biographical Note

Edmund M. Reggie (1926-2013) was a worker for John F. Kennedy's 1960 primary campaign in Louisiana and a city judge in Crowley, Louisiana from 1950 to 1976. This interview focuses on the 1956 Democratic National Convention, John F. Kennedy's campaign trips to Louisiana, and Reggie's trip to the Middle East for the Kennedy administration, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Edmund M. Reggie

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Edmund M. Reggie– JFK #1
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	The 1956 Democratic National Convention
2	Support for Adlai Stevenson
4	Delegates from Louisiana
5	Friendship with District Attorney from Springfield, Massachusetts
7	Meeting with Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] about John F. Kennedy's [JFK] vice presidential bid
9	Trying to get Southern votes for JFK
10	Contest between JFK and Estes Kefauver
12	Vote for the vice presidential candidate
14	JFK attending a fundraiser in Louisiana
15	Belief that JFK would become president
17	Formation of the United Democrats [UDAL]
18	Support for JFK in Louisiana
20	Membership of UDAL
22	Visiting JFK in Washington D.C.
23	JFK's statement about separation of church and state
25	Importance of the Catholic vote in Louisiana
26	Inviting JFK to the Rice Festival
28	JFK's trip to Louisiana
30	Democratic gubernatorial primary in Louisiana
35	Crowd greeting JFK
39	Luncheon at Oakborn Country Club
42	Being late for JFK to crown the Rice Festival Queen
45	Discussing cattle with Jacqueline Kennedy
47	Arrival at the Rice Festival
49	Jacqueline giving a speech in French
53	Riding in the parade with JFK
55	Swimming with JFK after the parade
60	JFK's relationship with Jacqueline
61	Arrival in Lake Charles
62	Evelyn Gianfala's song supporting JFK
64	Jimmie Davis promising the Louisiana delegation to JFK
65	Issue of JFK's endorsement in the Louisiana gubernatorial primary
70	Governor Patterson's endorsement of JFK
71	Delegate votes for JFK
76	Being appointed co-campaign director in Louisiana
77	JFK's victory in Louisiana
80	Contact with JFK's staff during the campaign
81	Receiving anti-Catholic letters
82	Visiting the White House after JFK's Inauguration
84	JFK's Houston meeting with Baptist ministers
86	Trip to the Middle East

87	Visit to Lebanon
88	JFK's reputation overseas
92	Discussing the refugee issue in the Middle East
93	Last time seeing JFK
94	Ambassadors in the Middle East
95	Civil rights in Louisiana
96	Trying to reach a deal on civil rights with Jimmie Davis
99	Upheaval in Louisiana
100	Seeing JFK after the election
101	Robert F. Kennedy's popularity in Louisiana

Oral History Interview

with

EDMUND REGGIE

May 24, 1967
Crowley, Louisiana

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Could you begin by first telling us how you first came in contact with Senator Kennedy or members of his staff?

REGGIE: I didn't know Senator Kennedy. I didn't even know Senator Kennedy existed actually until the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1956. The Louisiana delegation sat right across the aisle from the Massachusetts delegation. And there was just some interest in

this man they called Senator Kennedy. And the first time I ever remember ~~of~~ seeing him ^{was} is in a film that he narrated. I think it was "The Pursuit of Happiness"; if I remember correctly. And it was a tremendous, I thought, a tremendous film, that he made an impact on us then. But I might say this, I went to the Convention as a delegate and as a delegate from the South I was ~~named~~ as one of the Southern liaison contact men, who kind of kept in touch with other Southern ~~delegations~~ delegations to see that there wouldn't be a walkout _o because, if you recall, the '52 Convention had the walkout or the threat, and so forth, and this time we kind of wanted to keep everything on an even keel and ^{to} keep everybody in the Convention. I was a [Adlai E.] Stevenson man and a great admirer of Adlai Stevenson. And when it came to the choice

of the vice president, I went to the Convention being for the key note speaker, Governor Frank ^{Clement}~~Clement~~ of Tennessee. Governor ^{Clement}~~Clement~~ had been in Louisiana. I had been chairman of the first Governor's Day Dinner, it was a fund raising Democratic affair and as chairman we had gotten ^{Howland}~~Clement~~ to address the group and the dinner. And he was fantastic, of course, we knew that he had ambitions to get on the ticket, and at that time pledged our support to him. And so I went to the Convention really being for him. And at that point it was kind of being for him against almost nobody because we didn't know what the situation was going to be and then later, of course, the move with [Estes] Kefauver.

But . . .

[Earl K.]

STEWART: Was Governor. . . /Long was Governor at that time?

REGGIE: Yes. Earl Long. Earl Long, with whom I had

campaigned throughout the state was the Governor, had just been elected and inaugurated in May, just a few months before. And Mrs. Long, his wife, was the Democratic National Committee woman, and ^{Camille Gracell} ~~Camille Gracell~~ was the National Committee man. And we had a pretty good delegation. ^{Camille Gracell} ~~Camille Gracell~~ and I, I think, did most of the job, most of the work in getting the delegates selected. So we went up with a loyalist group, didn't expect any ~~walk~~ walkout problems. We knew that we were in pretty fair shape there. ~~And~~ but after the very, oh, how long speech of Governor ^{Clement} ~~Clement~~ we realized that he could not make it. And, by this time, talk was getting to be pretty strong for this young man, John F. Kennedy. And after seeing that film at the Convention and seeing the activity in the Massachusetts

delegation right across the way from me,
and I might just add that there was a--if
I remember correctly, he was the District
Attorney from Springfield, Massachusetts,
I don't remember his name, but I have
relatives who live in Springfield and so
we got to be friendly through that medium.
He didn't know any of my relatives but he
knew some of the addresses that I knew by
heart.

STEWART: I can't think who it was. I lived in Spring-
field for two years.

REGGIE: Did you? I'm pretty sure he was the District
Attorney. And he was, of course, very pro-
Kennedy. And so we got to talking about
this and then the sit . . .

STEWART: It might--excuse me--it might have been
Eddie ^{Boland} Baldwin. No, he was probably in
Congress at that time. I'm sorry.

REGGIE: No. I met him, but I'm pretty sure it was not. I kind of want to remember his name as being and O' something.

STEWART: *Thomas J. O'Connor*
Not O'Connor?

REGGIE: Could that be it?

STEWART: It possibly could be. O'Connor was later Mayor of Springfield and ran for the U.S. Senate in 1960.

REGGIE: I don't remember, but my recollection at this date ~~was~~ that he was the District Attorney, and because of that, my relatives living there, we got this friendship going. Then, of course, we were interested in somebody that the South could take and because, as I tell you, we had had the experience of the 1952 Convention. So we saw more glamour coming, I don't know how, but it was coming pretty fast in this Kennedy thing. So *Camille Gradell*
~~Camille Gradell~~ and I both went to see Frank

Clement
~~Clement~~, and he knew that he was out of the running, and we told him that we were going to be with him and ~~that~~ if he insisted we had pledged to him and that we would try to ~~and~~ move the delegation to him. He released us, realizing, of course--he, I remember, he had a great big box full of telegrams in there, cartons of telegrams of congratulations after his key note address--and so that night when we were released we went to the Kennedy ^{is} hotel suite. And I remember ~~that~~ this ~~was~~ the first Kennedy that I met, and it was [Robert F.] Bob Kennedy. And the first reaction I had to him was, "This little fellow, this young guy here, doesn't even put brilliantine in his hair," you know. Dry hair, kind of bushy. I said, "Gosh, how can this young fellow say who's going to be the vice president of the United States?" But we talked with him

and told him that we wanted to be for Senator Kennedy, and Camile and I did. By that time former Senator William ^{FENZEL} Fiseille, who lived in at Monroe and ~~at~~ Shreveport, was a loyalist Democrat, he came up to the suite also with us, and he was a member of our delegation. And this was going to be of some assistance to us, if we could get his support, because he had been a large contributor to the state Democratic Party and he was interested in going with us, with Senator Kennedy.

STEWART: Excuse me, was this before Stevenson made the announcement of opening it or after? It probably was before, wasn't it?

REGGIE: I think it was before. It was before. That is correct, yes. It was before. We were hopeful that he would do something for us, or at least throw it open. I remember, and it was before. So we, I remember meeting

Governor [Abraham] Ribicoff, that was the first time I'd met him, I remember meeting him in the suite. And I really don't--maybe John Bailey was in there, but I don't remember that too well. But we talked with him and talked with the Senator and told him that we thought we might be able to get some Southern votes, because then ~~at~~ ^{by} that time it was going to be apparent we were going to be facing the Kefauver. ^{thing} And so I had some, as I said, on that liaison committee, although it was a kind of a quasi-nothing committee, I had some contact with members of the other delegations, so they said, "Welly if you think you can go, let's go." So Camille and I chose up sides, kind of. He took some delegates and I took some from other states, and we worked all night. I remember getting back

to my hotel room, it was pretty late in the morning. It might have been six, maybe seven o'clock in the morning. And my wife was there, we were staying at the Palmer House. Our delegation was housed there. And the closer we got into the thing, the more exciting it was for me because it looked like we were really going to have a change. And we could sell Senator Kennedy because of Kefauver's vote on the civil rights thing. So we could make him more the darling of the South, Kennedy was more the darling of the South, if you can believe that now, than Kefauver. And the Kefauver people started with some kind of business about some ~~kind of~~ agricultural vote that the Senator had taken. That was not right. That was about the only two issues

that I remember that we could jockey for
~~him.~~ But an interesting thing in our
delegation was that after the campaign
Gravel and I both campaigned very, very
heavily for Earl Long and we had put the
delegation together, but Earl Long and us--
well, we had become a little estranged from
him, because it was his political strategy
to sever himself from anybody he felt he
owed anything to and that way he could be
his own governor and I ~~fix~~ guess, maybe,
there was a lot of strategy to that, ~~good~~
a lot of good strategy to that, too.
But somebody in the delegation from Baton
Rouge was related, was a kinsman of Kefauver,
and so Earl Long started out for Kefauver,
feeling that we were still for Frank ^{Clement} Clement.
Well, in the mean time, we were getting out ^{our}
delegation for--quietly, away from Earl Long--

we were getting them for the Senator, for Senator Kennedy. I think Earl Long was at the races most of the time, or something, at any rate, he was away from and out of touch, so when the caucus . . .

STEWART: Trying to support you?

REGGIE: ~~XXXX~~ Yes, one of those kind of things. He

STEWART: ~~XXX~~ told me the story yesterday.

REGGIE: Yes. Yes. So he was out of touch and so when the Senator came down to visit on that morning, ^{to} for breakfast, we had it all locked up. So when our delegation, ^{to} Earl Long, ^{and} was shocked ~~in~~ amazement, went with Kennedy, ⁱⁿ there was no ~~Clemet~~ votes, ~~in fact~~, we went for the Senator. And well, we stayed with him and I know, I remember when he lost, he was across the aisle at that point, a few feet away from me. No, ^{loss} not, not ~~to~~ lose, I mean at that night after

the ^{loss} lose when President [Harry S.] Truman was on the platform with Adlai Stevenson and then Averell Harriman and then Kefauver, and at that point the Senator was across the aisle from me, not at the vote count, So we started shouting, we wanted Kennedy, so I went over and got him and a few of us led him on up to the platform and later he was to tell me that he watched the films many times, and he said everytime he saw us going up there he thought we were going up to win. He said because it was just so close. But we--the Convention, of course, came to a conclusion and I remember walking out of the hall with him at the end, and I remember this very, very, vividly, my wife and Senator Kennedy and myself. Now this is a man that four days before, we didn't know, but I just felt something, I can'tt express it. I just

felt some sense of real ^{with Tom} exhuberation, just being around him. I was really taken with him, completely. I asked him where he was going and he said well, he thought he was going to go rest up awhile, and I later found out he ~~was going~~ had gone to Europe, and we left and said, in our parting at the Convention Hall we said, "Well, let's stay in touch." And sure enough, we did stay in touch. We got him down here for a fund raising dinner during the campaign and we brought him into the ^{Vanderbilt} Festival at OPELOUSEAS, and he was a great attraction, we just brought him in that day in a plane. And incidentally, they gave him, he was presented by the king of the festival with the prize winning bushel of sweet potatoes, a crate of sweet potatoes. He told me later that he carried those sweet potatoes all over the country before he ever

got home, because when he left here he was on a thing, and he said ~~really~~, he doesn't really know/what happened to them. I don't know whether he ever got them back home or not, but anyhow, they stayed with him quite a bit of way, and it was a kind of a joke. He later referred to that trip to me, he called it ~~the~~ "Opoloosa," instead of App *Opelousas*, but I know that he kiddingly talked about his great strength in ^{"O} ~~Opoloosa~~, ^{since} when he campaigned in Louisiana. And we got through the campaign, and of course, ~~everywhere~~ everywhere we went after the Convention we visited relatives of mine in New York, Vermont, and Massachusetts, everything was Kennedy. He was the great. . . . It wasn't Adlai Stevenson, and it was't Kefauver. It really was Kennedy. From that point on, I felt that he would be President of the United States. And I might

tell you this, just by way of a little aside, in our family for many years--we're Catholic-- and in our family we say the Grace before meals and we always add a Hail Mary, from that Convention on, when we got back every member of my family including my mother's household, my mother and my sister, and my two other brothers and my household, every meal said the Hail Mary three times a day for, praying really for his success.

STEWART: Is that right?

REGGIE: Yes. We all felt, ^{I say "we all"} as I said, Camille and I and Vick Bussi felt that he was going to be the President of the United States and that he really deserved it. And we stayed in touch and we were--we took ^{the} a beating in this state, we lost the state in '56.

STEWART: In '56?

REGGIE: We lost Louisiana. We carried it, incidentally, in '52. But we lost it to [Dwight D.] Eisenhower in '56. I was a--this area's campaign manager for the Democratic Ticket. I was their master of ceremonies, I remember, at the platform, on the platform in New Orleans when Adlai Stevenson made his visit. And I couldn't help but just compare the two men in my own mind. I remember he was very interested, and at the very last minute checking his script, his speech, and I just couldn't help but think how much warmer John Kennedy would be, and so we, after the defeat of the Party in ^{our} out state, we started rebuilding it. We formed small groups like, little splinter groups, like the United Democrats of Louisiana, called it UDAL. We got some good young men interested in it. This

young group really turned to be a John Kennedy group. They were not the regular professional elected politicians.

STEWART: Was this by design or by accident? Or was it . . .

REGGIE: No. I think it was--it wasn't really designed to form a John Kennedy club. It turned out to be that way because all of us had the same ideas about this young man that we could identify with, you know. ^[Russell B.] Senator Long, as the time went on, became a Lyndon Johnson man. Although, Hale Boggs' position was never really too clear we understood generally he was a Lyndon Johnson man ^{as} and the 1960 Convention drew nearer. I remember talking to Senator Long, ~~he~~ had an assistant of his drive us around the state Capital, several blocks around there, And ^{for} we rode, oh/ I guess, ~~for~~ nearly an hour, and he was trying to ^sdisuade me from Kennedy. And said that he just couldn't make it, ~~and~~ it was just foolish and we ought to all stick

together, and Lyndon Johnson has a close relationship with him, it would mean a great deal more for Louisiana. But we were unyielding. By that time we were in pretty good shape party-wise, we had a pretty good following and there wasn't really a city that we didn't know somebody that would help us.

STEWART: Lee's back up just a minute.

REGGIE: Sure.

STEWART: Was there any idea in putting together the delegation that went to the '56 Convention of who they were supporting for vice president?

REGGIE: No. I don't have any recollection of that.

STEWART: This wasn't a factor at all in selecting people?

REGGIE: No. No, the big factor that we had there, it was a pretty foregone conclusion that we were all going going for Adlai Stevenson. Harriman

had no support in our delegation, if I remember correctly. But the vice president was not--my best recollection was that we didn't have any.

STEWART: Were many of the people who had been delegates to the '56 Convention, did they switch over to this, or did they become active in this United Democrats group?

REGGIE: Yes. Yes. Some of them spearheaded with us. And, of course, we recruited some others. The great number of them were from south Louisiana, which is more Democratic than north Louisiana, and of course, more Catholic than north Louisiana. Our United Democrats, and we had the Young Democrats also, which we revitalized. Sometimes we had small numbers, but we talked pretty big. We got some good press *releases* and made ^{us} it sound a lot stronger than we were.

I remember we had a meeting in Jennings once of the seventh district Young Democrats, which is this congressional district. I think, maybe ⁱⁿ we were twenty, but ^{release} the press you would have thought we were throngs there, you know, just pouring out. But we were able to get public officials to give a little respect to the Democratic party and almost, when election time came in south Louisiana, they had to go along with us. It was a matter of not any choice. It was a matter of the people wanted the Democratic candidate. Now, I must go back to the summer of--I'm going to refer to this note here, that I wanted to. . . . The exact dates. Well, one Sunday afternoon in the summer we had an appointment to see-- it was the Sunday afternoon after a very large fund raising dinner, I think at the Shoreham Hotel. It was a tremendous dinner. There was

an upstairs and a downstairs. It was with all the Party faithful and notables. We went to the fund raising dinner, several of us from Louisiana. And we had an appointment with Senator Kennedy at his house. At three o'clock in the afternoon we went to his home on N Street, ^{of I remember} I forget, yes, N Street. And there I met Mrs. Kennedy for the first time. Marshall Field was there and his wife. Marshall Field was in one of the living rooms and we were kind of separated by a little arch way, or maybe a little something there. Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Field were in the other. Governor [J. Howard] Edmundson of Oklahoma was there. ^{and} One or two other persons, I don't remember. But they finished with their business because our appointment was then ~~starting~~ starting and that was the first time I saw Mrs. Kennedy, ^{and} the first time I had been to

their home and the first time I had met
Stephen
Steven Smith. I ~~stnk~~ didn't know Steve
before then. And they were very cordial
to us. At that point I remember very well,
his
this was shortly after Look magazine state-
ment on the separation of church and state.
I remember it was a short statement that . . .

STEWART: I¹ was in 1959.

REGGIE: 1959, the summer of '59.

STEWART: Right.

REGGIE: And he was cathhing hell from the Catholic
press about the statement. Everybody, it
seemed had to pop off, every diocesan news-
paper in the United States had to be a big
man and jump on Senator Kennedy, and so we
discussed that. ~~I remember he said, "Well,"~~
I remember, he said, "Well, what do you do
in a case like that?" you know, he was just
a little perplexed. I offered my solution,

I said, "We^{well}'ll get a big churchman to make the same statement, and to affirm what you said." And then you'll no longer be the target, but the churchman." The newspapers then will be taking a shot at this big churchman and they would never do it. So they they would shut up. So the idea appealed to him immediately. Now, of course, he may have had the idea before and maybe he was just skillful enough to let me think that it was my idea, but he immediately told Steve to contact the Archbishop of Boston. Shortly after that, if you recall, I think, before the ^{Lantern} Lantern Club, the Archbishop did make the statement. And it did cause the thing to subside. I like to think that that was one small contribution that I made to some strategy, but . . .

STEWART: Was this a factor in Louisiana, ~~or was what. . . .~~

I'm not at all familiar with how liberal or conservative the Church is . . .

REGGIE: It wasn't. Well, I knew that our strength for Kennedy in Louisiana was going to depend upon the Catholic region of Louisiana which is south Louisiana. And that, incidentally, is the traditionally loyal Democratic section of the state, the fundamentalists are in ~~the~~ north Louisiana, the Protestant group, and they're generally the anti-Democratic Party group. So if we were going to carry this state, we couldn't afford to fall out with the Catholic vote. So, now this was important as far as we were concerned, that he not have a war-- in the Church, we were going to catch enough hell about him being a Catholic and then much less for the Catholics to turn on him. So we were--I was--and I think all of us here in the state were concerned about that, that

possibility. And at that meeting at his home that Sunday afternoon we had--I invited him to come to the Rice Festival in *Crawley* . The Rice Festival was held in October of 1959. And without a moment's hesitation he said, "Yes." And just about that point, I remember ~~he~~ had to see the Fields off at the door, and so I told Camilè, I said, "Boy, he's coming to the Rice Festival."

STEWART: Had you thought of this before . . .

REGGIE: Oh, yes, I had thought of it. I knew that I was going to invite him for it. I had the idea that we had so many times thought of Louisiana as being New Orleans. The Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson, would for the '52 and the '56, ^(campaign) make his ceremonial visit to New Orleans as though that was going to take care of Louisiana. But I felt that the votes really were going to have to come someplace

else and we might as well go where the votes were for him, and move to the position of strength, and work from that position. So I went up prepared to invite him, and he said, "Oh, certainly." ~~And so when he got back, Camilé—oh, before~~ before he'd got back, I told Camilé that he's coming to the Rice Festival. He said, "Well, I didn't understand him to say yes. I think that. . . ." Camilé just didn't believe that he was going to come. So we had several other fellows therewith us, and so when he got back I said, "Now, I understand that you are going to come." He said, "Yes." He said, "You just tell me when it is." I said, "You know, we're going to get a crowd for you of fifty thousand people." And he laughed, you know, because Crowley is a small town and at that

time was about fourteen ^{or} fifteen thousand. And ~~he said,~~ he laughed about a crowd of fifty thousand. I knew that traditionally our Rice Festival got a crowd of--we always inflated the figure--but it always got a crowd of about thirty-five to forty and I figured with him coming we could ballyhoo it up to fifty thousand. And I thought this would be a good exposure for him. So he accepted and said, "Work out the details with Ted." So I did, I worked out the details with Ted Sorensen. His visit to Louisiana was primarily for the purpose of the Rice Festival. In connection with it the night before, he came in, I think, from Nebraska, he flew in in the Caroline, and he came in. I remember we stayed and we had a fund raising dinner at the Roosevelt Hotel, and we stayed in the same suite that

he had stayed in on a previous visit when Ted had come with him for the Yambilee-- that's during the '56 campaign, and it was the most prestigious suite there, the international suite at the Roosevelt. He, I remember we had a little entertainment after. Camile had arranged to have one of the French Quarter pianist-singers sing the little ditty about him and it was very funny and he had a real kick out of it. The afternoon of the dinner, coincidental with his being there, the news--the television newsmen, or some group of news gatherers, I don't know exactly, my records would reflect the name of that group, was in convention in New Orleans and so we worked out an appearance there for him. I remember very well, he walked there from the Roosevelt Hotel, it was at the St. Charles Hotel, he ~~walked~~ walked with

De's MARRIAGE

Phil Demorety^l who was the executive vice president of St. Mary's Dominican College, and Phil went over with him, and I think his appearance there was a real, ^rof course, where ^{ever} you exposed him, you know, he was fantastic. But maybe I'm getting ahead on my story.

STEWART: This hadn't been planned at all, this appearance?

REGGIE: That appearance had, but just coincidental. When they found out he was coming and their convention was coinciding then we worked out the arrangements for his coming.

STEWART: I see.

REGGIE: I might say now, that we're talking now in terms of 1959. At that point, Louisiana was embroiled in its own Democratic Gubenerial^{material} Primary. Camile Gravelle^l had been my very dear friend, went with ^[de Lesseps S.] Chet Morrison^{who}, and I thought that I was going to go with Morrison

with him. I didn't. I went with Jimmy ^{Jimmie} Davis. Camilé had strong feelings and we had a parting of the ways temporarily there. And we were a little on the outs, maybe more than a little, to such a point that we couldn't work together for the Kennedy visit. And, of course they realized it and ^{Phil DesMaries} Bill Demoret was named as kind of the Louisiana liaison man for that visit. [Lawrence F.] Larry O'Brien, that was the first time, I ever heard of Larry O'Brien, Larry came down and we set up what the schedule was going to be. I think Pierre Salinger was just going on the John Kennedy staff then because they said that they had a press man now, somebody, this man named Salinger. I remember speaking to him about the trip on the telephone. He was just a newcomer to that phase. But when the trip plans were made known to the Senator, I think he got excited about it and then he planned

for Mrs. Kennedy to ^{meet} him in New Orleans, which she did. Incidentally, her clothes got lost, her suitcase got lost and so she wore the same clothes during the whole visit. And so, after the dinner that night in New Orleans they went out together, they hadn't seen each other for a while and I think, just to be very nice, I said, "Do you want any of us to show you the French Quarter?" And he said, "No, I think we can find it." Really, they were kind of anxious to get rid of us anyway. So they went to Lucky Pierre's, I remember that very well, listened to some music there, and they made through the rounds ~~at~~ the Vieux Carre. And the next morning ~~at~~ we had two plane loads coming to Lafayette. My father-in-law, Frank, was going to be the host at a luncheon, and after the luncheon we were going to bring him

here for the Rice Festival, which was in progress that day. So Mrs. Kennedy didnt get up early enough to go with us. But Steve did. Steve and Camille and Senator Kennedy and myself went in a limousine to a Knights of Peter Claver Hall, a Negro group met there, and I remember they had some beautiful red roses ^{that} ~~there~~, they were going to present to Mrs. Kennedy and he accepted them for her, and he made a very nice talk to the group. It was not a large group, just filled a comparatively small room, it was not a large thing. ~~And~~ I remember he referred to Franklin Roosevelt in his talk, and I had been a Franklin Roosevelt admirer since I was a child, so I liked that part of the talk a great deal. He made a very good impression with the group. We left because we were coming in

on the Caroline, and we had chartered another plane, a Trans-Texas DC-3, because we had planned to bring into the Kennedy ~~XXXX~~ ^{thing}, the Kennedy visit, all of the governor candidates and were able to do that. We had ~~Jimmy~~ ^{Jimmie} Davis; we had ~~Jimmy~~ ^{[James A.] NOE} Note, who was Earl Long's candidate; and we had ~~Chuck~~ ^[Edo Leary S] Morrison. They were the main candidates. We had them on the same plane and, of course, this took some jockeying, you know. We had Congressman ~~T. Thompson, who was~~ T.A. Thompson, ^S who was our congressman in the seventh district, and Edwin Willis, who is the congressman still from the third congressional district. We had planned to have them introduced, Willis ~~xx~~ in Lafayette, since that's in the third district and Thompson introduce Kennedy here in this district. It ~~was~~ worked out very nicely.

¶ We got to Lafayette and we had, I thought, the

thing really layed out beautifully. As he got off the Caroline we had a red carpet out at the airport for him. When he and Jackie got off ⁷ they were just really taken aback with it. There were a lot of high school students who came from school. I remember had some of them ~~happened~~ ^{parochial} to be ~~parochial~~ school children because they were girls wearing uniform, I think the Mt. Carmel brown and white ^D ~~and~~ ^{as} she got off the plane some child got up and came up to her and presented her with two ^{camellias--} ~~camellias~~ and Lafayette is a very beautiful flower city and its ^{camellias} ~~camellias~~ are beautiful, ^{camellias} presented her with two perfect ~~camellias~~. She was just taken with them and seemed to be most appreciative. As she got off the plane and he got off she looked up before he did, and we had an airplane going

around with a streamer on the tail end which said, "Welcome, Senator Kennedy."

STEWART: Well, you didn't miss anything.

REGGIE: And she was really taken with that, you know. So she showed it to him and, of course, the Mayor was there to present him and the radio people were there, but not television. The radio people were there. I don't remember if TV people were there, but I know that they were interviewed by radio ^{in a} radio transmitter car. Coming out of the airport, this is the kind of fellow, I just can't tell you, there standing in the shadow was a former third congressional district congressman, who went to the Congress the same time Jack Kennedy went to the Congress, and I said, just as we went by, I said, "That man over there is Jimmy DeMagio." ^{Donnenquay} And he served in the Congress with you." And so he went over to him and

I introduced them, and, of course, he picked it up immediately, named what Congress they served together in, you know, ~~and~~ there was this man, kind of, you know, on the side-lines, had had his year, you know, and had been defeated for the United States Senate and was an outsider. But here was this bright John Kennedy making him feel like, "Boy, I remember when we were back together in the Congress." Just as we left there I introduced him to my oldest brother, Emil, and I said, "Jack, I want you to meet my brother, Emil," ^{or} ~~and~~ something to that effect. And he said, "Hello, Emil." And he sounded like, you know, God, darn, he'd been waiting to meet Emil, you know, for all week. But not phony, this is the thing that I want to say to you, it wasn't the usual thing that people associate with the political clap-trap or the insincerity. It was just--he

meant it, I think he meant that he was glad to meet my brother, or he certainly made us feel that way. Well, we got out from the airport, we had twelve white 1958--because the '59s were not out--'58 Cadillacs, all white, four door, exactly same model, and we had them all marked, who was to ride in each automobile, each of the governor candidates and all of the protocol was worked out. We had a man with an electrified megaphone who announced where everybody was going to go, so we had it well organized except for one little thing, a state representative who was the Speaker of the House, drove up in a black Cadillac and he wanted his in the deal, so I remember, our public relations man went to him and said, "I've known you all my life, I have great respect for you, I know you're a friend of my father's, but I'm begging you,

please don't put that black Cadillac right in the middle of a dozen white ones."

The white Cadillac idea, I think, really fascinated Jack Kennedy. It was a kind of a little special touch, you know, so we went from there to the Oakborn Country Club where we had a very beautiful luncheon. There were ~~maybe three hundred and fifty, or four hundred~~ ^{350 or 400} guests. Steve Smith and Larry were in the group and they were taking care of everything. I remember Ed Willis had just voted against something that Labor didn't want him to vote for. Ed was introducing the Senator, and he talked on and on, and ^{Vick Bussie} ~~Dick Bussey~~ was there ^{it} at head table with us and ~~there~~ was a great ^{Vick Bussie and to} big apology to the AFL-CIO for his vote. So finally I wrote him a note and said, "That's enough, Ed, we've got to go." We were due in Crowley at two o'clock for the crowning of the

queen, he was going to crown the Rice Festival queen. So finally, I just tugged at his coat and said, "Please, stop." He finally stopped and introduced the Senator. I couldn't eat, I was too nervous, but the Senator ate all of his dinner and ate all of mine, his salad and mine.

STEWART: Really?

REGGIE: Yes. Jackie was excited, and she ate, I thought, pretty well. But I said to myself, "Gee whiz, when I run for office I loose weight. This guy's going to gain weight." if he eats like that." You know, if he can eat like that during the campaign, it's really something. And we had a very delightful luncheon, as I said, my father-in-law was the host for it, ~~and~~ we had balloons all over the hall with his picture on them. I have one in my desk here, still, I keep as a memento of it.

a picture of him and it said, "Welcome, Jack," and they were on sticks. She was taken with that, you know. People came up and talked to him and it was a remarkable ^{number} of them ^{who} had read the book Profiles in Courage, and it seemed that that was the most--that was the closest link ~~that~~ they felt with him, was the book Profiles in Courage, they talked with him and some ~~the~~ people ~~that~~ talked pretty intelligent about it. They commented, you know, I remember a bank president from Lafayette, Walter Schrader came to him and said, "I didn't understand why you brought [William Howard] Taft in, and why you did this." And you know, talked to him from an analytical standpoint, like the book had really been read, it wasn't just small talk. And of course, he was just, I can't tell you, he just took everybody. Grant never took

Richmond like that. So in the big, big hurry we left the Oakborn and Steve and Larry and ^{Lidrey,} our photographer [^] because we had ^(two) photographers assigned to him, who took pictures all during the day, of everything [^]. Well, this woman photographer was in the State Police car, which was the lead car and then we had motorcycle men, well, that was the most dangerous ride I've ever been ~~know~~ through in my life. We drove at speeds up to ^{110.} ~~a hundred and fifty ten.~~

STEWART: Really?

REGGIE: Yes. It was a terrible deal. I had been told that he didn't want sirens, and so, because he didn't want the fuss, you know, but we just had to make it because we had a television schedule for the ~~evening~~ crowning of the queen, ^{and} we had a radio schedule to make and we just couldn't ~~do~~ the contest was over and you had to crown the

queen at the end of the contest. So we had a radio contact to the platform from ~~the~~ us every instant, so they knew ~~where~~ where we were and how much time they had to stall for, we had the judges bring the girls out another time and another time. Everybody just ^{strained} ~~screened~~ themselves for us. The master of ceremonise) on the platform, byt ~~the~~ way, is the present congressman, he was not the congressman then, he was just a practising attorney here, Edwin Edwards. And we kept and he him posted, /kept the crowd going. Well, I sat behind the driver in the first white Cadillac, which was behind the state police and ~~everything~~ we had these motorcycle men, also. Jackie sat to my right, in the middle, on the back seat, and T.A. Thompson, who wore a white suit that day, and was getting progressively drunk as the day wore on, and we had martinis before lunch, and he must

have really had the martinis pretty good because he was feeling no pain by that time. The Senator sat in the front, he wanted to sit next to the driver. We were having this terrific drive and everytime we got in the curve he would look back over his left shoulder and look through the rear view window and to see the twelve Cadillacs, those white Cadillacs, it was a fantastic sight. And I mentioned to you about the siren, he gave us--he said, "Sure, go ahead, this is. . . . We've got to get there." So we had the state champion motorcycle driver in the state police, a fellow named Veyon, I think, who was absolutely the craziest man I've ever seen in my life. We couldn't stand to look out. I know Jackie put her hand over her eyes, she couldn't look, none of us could stand it, he at these fantastic

speeds, I can't tell you how fast he was going, would stand up on the seat of the motorcycle, how it didn't blow him off, I can't tell you. And then lie down on the back and drive in the left lane and ^{to} meet the oncoming traffic in a two lane highway, motioning them off, and, of course, they didn't know where he was coming from and you could see these cars, you know, just make these mad darts. How we got through without killing ourselves, or killing somebody, ~~xxxxxxxx~~ is a living miracle. It's the worst ride I've ever been in in my life. She was very interest@d in the brama cattle that we had and we were talking about, I remember, about them mixing braman cattle, you know, the sacred cow of India with the Black Angus and she asked a very sensible

question that I didn't know. She said,
"Well, when they're crossed, what do they
look like?" I said, "I don't know. I know
they've been crossing them here for years,
but I don't know what they look like." I
"Do they ~~look like~~ look more like the
Angus than not?" But Thompson kept on and
he was getting ^{I mean,} ~~He~~ was just absolutely
terrible ⁱⁿ the back seat ^{it} was an ordeal having
him and, of course, ~~was decided it was just~~
but the Senator was just so kind ⁷ about the
whole thing, you know, and I think she was
a little less indulgent. ⁹ But we got to
Crowley and we pulled around the court
circle and as planned the Crowley High School
band was playing "Dixie." After it was over
I asked several people, I said, "Well, why
didn't the band play louder?" They said,
"My god, the band was playing with all of

it's might." But there was a fantastic crowd that you can't imagine. It actually enveloped us. He and I walked up the platform together. When we got up he turned to me and said, "My God, the South has risen again." Out there Time magazine, Life magazine, Time carried their lead political story of the week. They had a reporter with them, and they carried they carried a police estimate of 97,000. Our estimate was a 120,000 some odd thousand, our police estimate was. So to give you an idea, if we were off, we still had a fantastic crowd.

STEWART: And the normal crowd is ~~about~~ forty or fifty for these things.

REGGIE: That's about right. We always say it's more but the truth is ~~that~~ about thirty-five to forty-five, something like that. But we had

televised his picture with the stalks of rice ⁱⁿ and little promos on the television stations around the state, saying that Senator John F. Kennedy would be here. And people came from everywhere. He was presented with a rice hat, and although later I've read some writers who said that he didn't want to wear the war bonnet ^{that} ~~but~~ the Indians ^{chief gave him} and he didn't do certain things, he wore the rice hat, in fact, we have photographs . . .

STEWART: Did he really?

REGGIE: Oh yes, we have a photograph of it right there.

STEWART: That is unusual.

REGGIE: HE did wear it. And we had a hat ^{with} of grains of unmilled rice ~~gr~~ glued on and he wore the hat and made a talk, and just before that we had called on Jackie at the Oakborn, at the luncheon, to make a little talk and she spoke

a few words in French, which was a real great surprise. But on seeing the size of the crowd, he said, "Well, Jackie will say something." And she said, "No." I think she got a little cold feet on the thing, I couldn't blame her, it was a fantastic crowd. So he said, "No, she'll speak." So I had to do the introducing and ~~Camile, I told Camile, I said, Camile said,~~ "Introduce Jackie." And I said, "Well, she says, 'No.'" He said, "Well, he said, 'Yes.'" So I said, "Okay." So I, in my introduction said that we had all heard a great deal about the Irish in John Kennedy's history but something that had not been said a great deal was the French in Mrs. Kennedy's bloodlines and that it was our great pleasure to present Jacqueling. There's a picture with of him with the. . . .

STEWART: Just let me stop.

REGGIE: So I introduced her, and I shall never forget that beautiful young woman stepping up to the microphone, in a very, soft soft voice said, "Bonjour mes amis." I can't tell you what else she said, because I couldn't hear, but when she said, "Bonjour, mes amis," you could just hear the screaming. When I tell you screaming, it was just unbelievable, the applause, the ~~xxx~~ shouting, it was just something out of this world. Although I don't speak French, those who translated it said she said she was very happy to be here in south Louisiana because her father had told her when she was a child that Louisiana was a little corner carved out of France, and France planted here. and she had a great love for France and since she herself ^{was} half, you know, French ancestry that she was glad to see for herself ^{that} what her father said was true, that this was the

beautiful part of France. Well, I'm telling you, it was something else. ~~She~~^{He} made a very nice talk. I had written Ted ~~and~~ setting out everything, you know, about everything, all the background, the socio-economic factors, he didn't do anything with that. He didn't talk about any of that, he talked about General Winfield Scott, and that was his old thing that he had used several times I had heard him. Said, General Winfield Scott, when going around the country checking the pulse to see if he was going get the votes said he was going ~~x~~ around to see about hospital facilities or something. He was kind of unlike Winfield Scott, of course, everybody certainly knew he was running for the Presidency. He crowned the queen and Time magazine reported erroneously that he conservatively did not kiss the queen. We'll show you pictures of him kissing the queen. They said he didn't but he did.

And they showed in Time a photograph, that was their political photograph of the week of him crowning the queen, but the writer said not kissing her. And is it time for you to change?

STEWART: No, that's all right. I just have to--It goes the ^{other} way.

REGGIE: Oh. And so we started out after his talk^e which was a very good. We had staged a little bit of theatrics ourselves. We had banners across the road saying, "Welcome Jack Kennedy," and "Welcome Senator Kennedy." We had a group of young people ~~walking~~ with placards in the audience . . .

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

REGGIE: And they would hold up placards and some of them you can read in the pictures. Stuff like, "Jack Likes Jackie, Jackie Likes Jack, We like Jack and Jackie, We love Jack and Jackie" ^{or} and something like that. We like

rice, we like gravy, but we sure love
Jack Kennedy." We like our coffee black
and love Jack Kennedy in the white House."
And all this kind of stuff. Some of
the merchants in town, one merchant ~~in~~
particularly, Emil Joseph, who was a local
haberdasher, had his window dressed up and
had ~~a man~~, had a great big photograph of
Jack Kennedy blown up in his window and
we had four ^{manikins} ~~mannequins~~ saying, the East
loves Jack Kennedy, the west and the north
and the south. And going through ~~in~~ the
parade, my wife rode in the car with us,
with Senator Kennedy and his wife, we had
a chauffeur, and that was the first ~~fixy~~'59
Cadillac that I'd seen, it was a '59 cadillac
convertible that they had brought in especially
for it, it was just a brand ^{new} ~~new~~ automobile,
~~and~~ we led the parade and the people were just,

you just couldn't hear anything, it was just unbelievable, screaming and everything. They would run out to the car, many of them, and talk to her and this was a very interesting point to me. They would talk to her in French, and she would just give them some little, thank you, or something like ~~that~~ that. I remember one lady running out to the in the crowd, and this was planned by this woman unbeknownedst to us, and brought her some pralines that she had made and pralines you know, is a south~~ern~~ Louisiana confection. It's a sugar and pecan confection and so we came on through the parade and after that was over we went to my home to where we had a reception for him and ~~he~~, of course, he had met all of my family at the luncheon earlier, and we had a reception there. We had invited, I think, something like ~~nine~~⁹⁰⁰ hundred people. And I guess, maybe, ~~twelve~~¹²⁰⁰ hundred came,

Much more. Because the whole Lafayette crowd came over, I guess, a couple hundred from there along. And we started out with a receiving line in the house and then finally we just couldn't do it, it overcame us. So we finally went in the yard and had a receiving line in the yard. And he took a swim. We had police protection for him to keep people away. I remember a photographer came up and a television station wanted to film it and I stopped him and he said, "No, no, let him." So Phil ^{DesMARAIS} ~~Demoret~~ and Steve and Jack and myself took a dip after the parade and Jackie and my wife rested. And we swam a little bit and he enjoyed that, it was to give him a little rest period. I remember when we were dressing, he borrowed a bathing suit of mine, and when we were dressing we talked about Thompson. I said, he said, "It looks like your congressman


had a little too much to drink." I said, ^{today}
"Yes, ~~I~~ ~~said~~ ~~But you know,~~ he's kind of developed
a little drinking problem, "which he had .
~~You know~~
And he said, "It's very easy in Washington.
a fellow comes up and he doesn't know any-
body really ~~and~~ and gets a good staff
to take care of his correspondence and he
can find a little ⁶⁶cuppy hole and kind of
just get lost." But we had a swim and
generally they gave him a little privacy
and we have the films incidentally.

STEWART: Oh, do you.

REGGIE: . . . of the swim on motion pictuer, ^{the} We got them ^{ten}
from the television station. They made an
extra set for us. And then we went in the
house and he was going to soak in the bath
tub after the swim. They were using my
daughters bedroom and the bath, it's like
a little suite. Doris, my wife, left Jackie
in the bedroom, going to the kitchen to get

Jackie a bowl of fruit. Jackie in the meantime left the bedroom to go to some other part of the house to do something else. [So Jack came to the bedroom, we'd gotten out of swimming, and then told Steve to go and get a brief case, they wanted to check something. So Steve went to get the brief case in another part of the house, my wife and my mother then were returning to the bedroom to bring the bowl of fruit and the door was closed. We have sliding doors. So they knocked on the door, Jack was undressed, knowing it was Steve with the brief case, opened the door, my mother knowing that it was Jackie, or my wife, they opened--he was naked as a jay bird. So he grabbed the fruit with one hand and closed the door with the other. My wife says that my mother, ~~was~~ who is a very deeply religious woman who goes to mass and communion

every day, made the sign of the cross,
in Lebanese, made the sign of the cross in
Arabic very quickly, of course, knowing
that that would dispel ^{Beelzebub} ~~Bezezebub~~, you
know, and make it all okay. But it ~~was~~
was one humorous thing, you know. We
had--when he was in the White House we had
talked about, you know, she should really
go on "I've got a Secret," because that's
quite a secret, you know, she had seen
him in his birthday suit.] But we had this
tremendous crowd and people, I just can't
Can't tell you the way people just took to him,
just unbelievable now. And, now let me
brag about out ^R crowd again, because I am
proud of the crowd that came. I talked
with some of the ^E people of his staff and
they believed like I ^{do} believe that this was
probably the largest crowd that he had prior
to the nomination. You know, you get a hundred

thousand or better in a city of fifteen
thousand, it's really something. I mean,
you've got to have something, and he had
it. And so after the reception, we went
to the airport, but he would not leave
the house, and of course, ~~the xxxxxxxxxx~~,
~~and xxxxxxxxxx impression~~ this made quite
an impression on me, ⁱⁿ it was all the ^{hubub,} hubub
because he had another engagement in Lake
Charles, a dinner that night, and this
impressed me a great deal. ^{y--} He wouldn't
leave the house until he went to see my
mother, it was not only Doris, but he went
to see my mother and kissed her good-bye
and ~~thanked~~ thanked her for everything. And that
was a real human touch, you know. He really
didn't have to do that. And ^{it} they were just
both so very, very 

nice. One of the blown up photographs was
Country Club
brought from Oakborn/to Crowley and he
autographed it for my father-in-law, which
he keeps in his office. And it was one of
these grateful kind of autographs, you know,
it was not just a cold "warm regards" thing.
We went on to the airport, to the Crowley
Airport, by that time the airplanes had
moved over from Lafayette. The airport in
Crowley is about eight miles from the city
so, again, the Cadillacs, you know. He and
Jackie were sitting in the front seat and
I swear, they were just like little love-
birds. They were really. . . . Almost to
a point of embarrassment, on my part, kind
of felt like. . . . You know, I kind of
thought, well, you know, after all, this
fellow, I mean, you can't go around just
whispering to your wife and chuckling, pecking

her on the cheek. I mean I kind of, to be perfectly frank with you, I thought maybe the Boston conservatism and, you know, you read so much about them being so, you know, . . .

STEWART: Sedate.

REGGIE: Yes. Yes. That kind of thing. But they really were. Of course, they were lonesome and they hadn't seen each other, and he had been on the trail quite a bit. But we flew together in the Caroline to Lake Charles, and of course, he was met there with a fine group and they had a beautiful dinner and he made a talk and he borrowed my cuff links that night because he had forgotten his cuff links. And he returned them, he's a good borrower ^{to} so he returned them. He headed on back that night, I think, to someplace in the Midwest maybe. . . . I did remember, but I don't remember now. Maybe Nebraska, or Wisconsin or somewhere. And that was a great highlight.

STEWART: I got the story yesterday of the song that . . .

REGGIE: At the airport?

STEWART: This is . . .

REGGIE: ~~John Fellows.~~ [EVELYN] GIANFALA

STEWART: ~~John Fellows,~~ yes.

REGGIE: Yes, that was a little thing that I really forgot to tell you.

STEWART: It was cute, she told me.

REGGIE: It really was. We eliminated, in the song she eliminated all the other candidates.

You know, Hubert Humphrey was too windy; and Adlai had had his try; and she went through all of them, just dismissed all of them. And there he is listening to the song. There's a photograph of him, and if you don't think he was enjoying it.

STEWART: I was looking at that.

REGGIE: Up, the top one. The top one.

STEWART: Oh, yes, yes.

REGGIE: And he was thoroughly enjoying that song.
And when they got to Hubert and she talked about Hubert Humphrey, and how she dismissed him, she really chuckled then. That was real good, you know. And, of course, she dismissed L.B.J. [Lyndon Baines Johnson] and all of them. I left him in Lake Charles that night and I had a driver who drove me back home. We were all knocked out by then. We had just been, we had been touched, ~~and~~ moved, excited, and I can't tell you what, but it was a great, great, experience. Then we set out to continue this thing. I'm of the opinion that that's why he carried the state of Louisiana, that trip. He made no visits into this state, except ^{Texarkana} Texacana, which we really don't count as Louisiana. I saw him during the campaign at ^{Texarkana} Texacana.

I had seen him, by the way, incidentally, at my home we had a private meeting with ^{Jimmie} Jimmy Davis. And Davis, in my bedroom, promised him, and he told Davis, I said, I kind of gave the preface because I had the arrangement with Davis because that was the root of my support, was that he would have a delegation that would be favorable to John Kennedy and so he promised that.

STEWART: Davis did.

REGGIE: ^{Jimmie} Jimmy Davis promised him in my bedroom. ~~that~~

I remember we had a chaise lounge and Jack was on it and had his foot ^{propped} propped up on it and Davis was sitting there and kind of a solemn kind of a fellow, ^{very quiet} kind of quite, and he said, Jack said, "Governor, I don't want you to stick your neck out." He said, "We're going to go into the primaries. If we don't

make a show, we don't want you to hurt your-
self." And he said, "Nor, would it do us
much good if you jumped out and said, untimely
from the South, that you were for me." But
he said at the time, he said, "We can work
out the timing on it." Now ^{Jimmie} Jimmy Davis wasn't
elected yet, you understand. I understand
that the same thing was done with Morrison.
So later after his election, Jimmy ^{TE} Davis was
to repudiate that on the grounds, and this
was something that I never quite understood,
on the grounds that Camile, who was ^{for} ~~for~~ Morrison,
had tried to get the Kennedys to get ~~the~~
~~COPE~~ ^{COPE} of AFL-CIO to withhold an endorsement
of Morrison. No, to endorse Morrison, I'm sorry,
and to withhold any endorsement of Davis. This,
~~everything~~ everything then started turning.

And then ^{Bussey} Bussey was then moving to Davis' side and had indicated that that was true. I asked him specifically and ^{he} had indicated that ~~that~~ that was true. And then the story had even gotten so fantastic . . .

STEWART: Wait a minute. ^{COPE} Geke was helping Morrison you said.

REGGIE: Yes.

STEWART: But ^{Bussey} Bussey was for Davis?

REGGIE: Davis. And had convinced Davis that there was this. ^{and they used it,} And Davis used this as a release. Very frankly, I don't think anything like that every happened. I took a trip to Washington and I saw the Senator and I said, "Now this is what they're saying." He said, "Camil  called me. And he said, "why the hell he put me in the thing, I don't know." But he said, "He did call me and he said he talked with Jim McDevitt and said, 'Are you making an endorsement?'" and they told him that

they were not, or something to that effect,
in the Louisiana primary. And he just called
Camile back and reported that ^{to him} And the thing
that got blown up and got him^f all involved
in the thing, but I think that it was really
used. Because I remember, Steve was in the
Esso Building then, and I remember him getting
Steve on the phone and he said, "Steve, now
what did we tell them?" ^{Steve} He just recited
exactly the conversation, and he said, you
see, he said, there was nothing to it. I
wouldn't mix up anything. And he said, "
another thing, he said, if I couldn't stop
an endorsement of ~~x~~ a thing like that, then
I would be in pretty bad shape." ^{Which was}
true, if he had had ^{hadn't} ~~xxx~~ that much influence
at that stage in the game, then he would
be in pretty bad shape. But I think it was
a Davis dodge because ^{Case} Davis was to become

an ultra-conservative, and it was a Davis
dodge. I remember he got flabergasted at
it, irritated, Kennedy did. He stuck his
foot up on his desk, just like this, and
he said, "If Jim Davis"--he didn't say
^{Jimmie} Jimmy, we never called Davis, Jim.

STEWART: His real name is ^{Jimmie} Jimmy, isn't it?

REGGIE: He used to be called James H. Davis, but
now he calls it ^{Jimmie} Jimmy Davis, his whole office
says Jimmy. But nobody ever calls him Jim.
But he stuck his foot up on his desk like
this and said, "If Jim Davis wants to make
that kind of deal, you just tell him I'll
get the nomination and I'll be President of
the United States." And you know, that really
took me. I said, you know, that's really
okay, I mean, I like that, you know. So I
said, "Okay, that's good enough and we'll just
proceed on that basis." So I came back and

ried to talk to Davis, but there was no more talking. I mean, he wanted to be out of the Kennedy thing anyway. I think much of that, I frankly tell you, I think much of that came ~~from some of the officials~~ and from some of our elected officials who were for L.B.J. Russell Long was an L.B.J. man and Russell Long was a Jimmy^E Davis man. They had to release Davis from that commitment, and, of course, find a good reason, that was it. I think that was the patsy in the deal. So the delegation was named, it was a terrible the delegation in/'60 Convention. Oh, I've got to go back to this. The Wisconsin primary, we were all so excited about it, everything, and we had mixed feelings, of course, after he came out. I got ten friends^{here} after that here, to put up a hundred dollars^{too}, and I brought the thousand dollars and gave it to Ted and said, "My God, don't go to West Virginia," you

know, but if you do, at least, this is from Crowley, with love and kisses." And so each of the fellows got a Dear first-name-letter you know, which they treasure very much.

And he went to West Virginia and ~~Indiana~~ from that point on I guess they were just. . . .

You know the whole story. And I was a delegate to the Convention, but my judgeship came up at the same time, and I got through the qualifying time until one minute to five when it closed and I drew an opponent at one minute to five, one minute before the closing, so I had to stay here, so I resigned from the delegation, but I spoke with Bobby several times and with others, and kind of stayed in touch during the Convention.

STEWART: Did you ever feel that, or did anyone ever mention all the embarrassment that had been

baused by Governor Patterson's endorsement?

REGGIE: Yes, of course, I was aware of it. The untimeliness of it made him look like a Southern. . . . Yes, I was very familiar with it. And we left the Convention and just as soon as the Convention was over, we had a true-to-form, I guess, political thing here in Louisiana. Hale Boggs quickly went up to Hyannis with Frank Ellis and got Jack Kennedy to name Frank Ellis his campaign manager. Ellis was not for Kennedy before the Convention because I had spoken with him, ^{He} was a former Democratic National Committeeman.

STEWART: He had been for Johnson.

REGGIE: He was not for Kennedy. I don't know who he was for but I had talked to him, because there was a news report that ~~had~~ appeared in the paper, and he told me he didn't know where they got that from because he was not for John Kennedy.

But they got him named, which completely took them^N, as far as the campaign was concerned, a new turn. Because then the old establishment was taking over the campaign. Not the United Democrats and not the Young Democrats and not the fellow that had been working ~~for~~^{four} years and the campaign then started typical--it started to be a Canal Street, New Orleans, ~~typical~~ campaign. The public relations people were New Orleans people and the campaign was being conducted in New Orleans and that was going to be the end off^{it}. The other sixty-three parishes counted nothing. So I kept working on this end, as much as I could, but, you know, when you don't have any status, you don't have anything. And the State's Right^{and} came up with a deal, they wanted to have unpledged

electors. So I was a member of the State Central Committee, Frank Ellis was not. So Frank Ellis got somebody's proxy to help us in the fight. We won by one vote. You know the whole story about that. It was an exciting day, coincidental with our winning it, Senator Long's assistant was in the back of the legislative ^{hall} where we met, ^{and} called Washington for the Senator to tell Jack Kennedy what he had done, let him know what he had done, but to tell him that he had handled this situation very well. We didn't see him. It was an exciting thing, ^{it} was almost to the point of having a heart attack that day, *it was just too much.*

STEWART: How did you get most of the reluctant votes? What kind of leverage really did you have to get to these people or was that really an individual thing?

REGGIE: Those who held public--those who held jobs with the state we couldn't, because Davis was for the unpledged electors. For example, Dr. [] Kern was the director of the Charity Hospital in New Orleans, but Dr. Kern is a loyal Democrat that voted with us on the State Central Committee many times. I knew him and I knew we could count on his vote. When I went to him he said, "Sure." *But then he* *me* And I came back to ~~him~~ *me* and said, "You've got ~~a~~ *to* release ~~now~~ *me*, the Governor told me." So I went into the Governor's office and his executive secretary was Chris Favor, *FAVOR* and you must understand that I went--I was part of their group, we never had any falling out at all, so I knew that they were playing to get unpledged electors, I knew that because of the north Louisiana heat and the conservatives *sm* in the Davis camp. So as a

point of strategy, I had a cussing match
with Chris ^{Faver} Faver and told him that if he
appeared on the floor, if he called any-
body off that floor another time, that he
and I were going to have a fist fight in
the Governor's office. I never had a fist
fight in my life. And we had--feelings were
running very, very high. Of course, I wasn't
going to fight him, I don't think ^{D =} and it was
just a matter of some kind of strategy
to get him to ^{at least} ~~have me~~ stop, you know. Then we
needed a crucial vote. So we needed ^{time} ~~to~~, so
we started sending people in there for them to
start stalling and I remember a Sheriff
[] ^{Wagel} Wagel of Ascension Parish,
set out--we had to sent for him to come down
and talk to his member, and we got that vote
and that was it. And a fellow named Carl ^{Levent} Levent

Steffen from Shreveport was against us and he had a proxy, a fellow by the name of [Carpenter. Of course, ^{Kent Steffen} Steffen got up and said that on this point his proxy did not indicate to him what he should do. In a sense, this was such a crucial thing he ^{refrained and when he} did that that was the vote, so then we had them. Roy ^{Terris} , the state comptroller from ^{Abbeville} was, of course, in an area like this where the Kennedy feeling and the Democratic feeling ^{was} were so high he voted with us against the administration that he had just been elected with. They had threatened to cut his appropriation and they did, for his office. And so we came out of that all right. That was the first test in the South, if you remember correctly. So we came out of that all right.

One day the phone rang, and it was Frank Ellis, during the campaign and he said, "Eddie,"--nobody calls me Eddie, but he said, "Eddie, I want to appoint you as the co-campaign director for the state of Louisiana for the Kennedy-Johnson forces." I said, "You what?" I hadn't heard from him, you know, since the campaign. "Yes," said he, "I want to do it." So, I said, "Fine. What area do you want me to work in?" And he said, "How about you taking-- and letting me handle New Orleans and you take the rest of it." Well, of course, that was all right with me because he could stay right there on Canal Street with his crowd and that was okay. So my job then was made very much easier. I could then move with some degree of responsibility and I got people

that I had been working with them for four years and put them in positions of responsibility. State's Righters did what we had hoped they would do. They put that third unpledged electors thing in because they said Nixon wasn't any better than Jack Kennedy, so that split their vote. And although Kennedy got only fifty-one per cent of the total vote his percentage against the Republican was the largest in the nation, but that split is what helped us. We made a good campaign and I was so silly, I didn't think there was any question in the nation. why? because it was so good around here. And we had worked it well for four years. I saw him in Texarkana, in fact, they put me in the receiving line. You know, when he got off the Caroline, you know, the usual thing, and he was saying, he said this is the attorney general and this is so-and-so, and all of Texas and Arkansas.

And [^{Orval}Orville] Faubus was there, he got to me and he said, "How are you?" or something like that, you know. And he came back and said, "What ~~in~~ the hell are you doing ~~ere~~?" You know, it was kind of a double take. He was caught completely off. . . . So we talked and I was on the platform with him and he said, "I guess we have to plan a visit into New Orleans." I said, "Well, if your promise not to tell anybody, don't come, but don't ~~t~~ell them that I said don't come." Because all of my workers wanted him to come, and if you get up and tell them, well you don't want him to come everybody just feels that we need him, You know, but we really didn't need him. I mean he could have been used someplace else. So I said, "We really don't

need a thing." He said, "Well, how about talking to Ted?" I said, "I've already talked with Ted." He said check with Salinger and I talked to him about the ^{Tidepools} Thailand thing," he said, "well, talk with Ken O'Donnell." I didn't know who Ken O'Donnell was at that time. So I talked with him and I said, "The oil people are giving us hell on the ~~twenty-seven and~~ ^{27%} ~~one-half per cent decrease in~~ ^{depletion} allowance." And he said, "Well, we'll work out something and I'll be in touch with you." And I never heard from him again. I called the National Committee several times. I talked to a sister, I think, of his and she'd promised to give ^{get} some message but I guess they didn't have any message to give or something. I don't know. At any rate, I never heard any more

about it, and he never visited Louisiana. Except if you would have called Texarkana a Louisiana visit, which ^{it} really wasn't. His sister was with him, Mrs. [Patricia Kennedy] Lawford. It was a hot day. He had a good crowd--nothing like our Rice Festival crowd I reminded him--but we had a good day. The election came and that was it.

STEWART: Did you have much or any contact with people in Washington during the campaign?

REGGIE: Yes.

STEWART: With O'Brien or . . .

REGGIE: Yes, we stayed in touch with Larry. I stayed in touch with Larry and I stayed in touch with Ted. Those were the two people that I think I stayed closest in touch with, Ted Sorensen. I was a presidential elector, then when the election came and we carried the state-- then thefantastic

campaign started on us personally.

STEWART: Oh, really?

REGGIE: To get us to switch. I can show you the most scurrolous, ^{the} filthiest, the vilest, letters that you've ever seen in your life. Anti-Catholic letters were just unbelievable: "How can you vote for this man who is a servant of the hydro^a-headed monster, Catholicism?" *and* "How can you let him bow his knee before the pope of Rome?" And I heard from them. That was my first experience of seeing the number of retired military people, particularly, retired Admirals and generals, people like that, who were just adamant in this. And we had files of letters that were--not counting just ^{the} form ones, you know, that you can tell different groups were sending--but we were all bombarded with a tremendous campaign not to cast our votes for him. Of course, that

wasn't even in the cards. We had ten loyal people on ^{it} him and it was my great pleasure and great honor to be the first one to sign. There's a photostatic copy over there. I signed first. I was a president elector at-large. It was really some campaign.

STEWART: Did you go up to the Inauguration?

REGGIE: I did not.

STEWART: You didn't?

REGGIE: I said, "What's the use?" ^{Maybe} I mean, that was the wrong thing, but I said I'll just get mashed up with a hundred people, and so. . . .

With a hundred others, a million other people.

And so we, I went thirty days after the

Inauguration and went to the White House and

saw Ralph Dungan who had been down here and ^{knew all of}

^{our crowd} knew all of our situation. That night I found out what

Frank Ellis called me. It appeared that
Chep Morrison talked with Bobby and said--
and I had not been a Morrison man ever--
but talked with Bobby and said, "Look, the
campaign's going to hell down there," ^{of} some-
thing to that effect, "and we need somebody."
So I think Bobby suggested me and said,
"Yes. ^{it would be good.} ~~Would he do it?~~" So then Bobby called
Frank and said, "make the change." So Frank
said, "Well, I'll appoint him, ^G rather than
Bobby." But I never got that information
from them. They just let Frank get the
whole thing. I begged them, I just begged
them to please let me go someplace else
during the campaign because I just felt
so useless. Of course, they kept saying,
"No. No. We need you here." I wanted
to . . . ^{Des MARAIS} ~~Demoret~~ got Missouri. I wanted
to go on a deal like that. I just didn't

want to be here. I mean, I was absolutely. . . .
What I was doing was nothing. You know. I
just felt that all of our people that we had
we couldn't pull together. That fellow had
haken over the campaign and anything we were
doing was going to be a kind of a split, wasn't
working out well. But we worked it out and
things came out good and everybody was happy.

④ Shortly after the campaign, right the next
day, I think, Frank Ellis started his campaign
to become Secretary of the Army, and then
Secretary of the Interior, and got all kinds
of endorsements and became head of the Civil
Defense, which they shortly thereafter moved
over to the Secretary of Defense and made
him a federal judge, and he's now retired.
But we made, in Louisiana, I think we made
the most sensible move, in that we really didn't
campaign a great deal in north Louisiana.

We didn't spend much of our funds in north Louisiana. I've often wondered what the National Committee does with the money they get, because we didn't see any of it in Louisiana, I want you to know that, not a nickel.

STEWART: Is that right?

REGGIE: I didn't, certainly not in this part of the state. We raised our own, we put ^{on} our own television. I ran the Houston talk before the Baptist ministers.

STEWART: I was going to ask you about that.

REGGIE: I ran it ^{would say} I ~~was there~~ about ten times, til/ ~~me~~ I knew the questions better than he did. You know, and I knew his answers better than he did. And, of course, in the last two weeks we played the hell out of it.

STEWART: Did you?

REGGIE: Oh, yes, we did. 

REGGIE: We really put it to good use. We felt that--
what we were going to ^{GET} do it to take it all
over the country on the thing, and we put it
to very good use. And that was an excellent
thing, it helped our Catholic vote here,
helped us get together, helped many Protestants
come to us. So it played a two-way deal.
We had many parishes in this area that
carried ^{percent} 75, 80 or 85% for Kennedy against
the two other slates, you know, that's
pretty good.

STEWART: It is.

REGGIE: And, of course, the Kennedy thing still
continues. I just took a political poll
and they got a preliminary figure yesterday
and while Johnson is in the field of--well, do
you want. . . .

STEWART: No, That's well. . . . No. Let me ask you
a few other ^{questions} wuattionss.

REGGIE: All right.

~~STEWART:~~ ~~No. That's. . . . Well. . . . No, let~~
me ask you a few other questions.

REGGIE: All right.

STEWART: Did you ever consider joining the Administration
at all?

REGGIE: Yes, I did. I did, but I have six children
and I have a fairly decent living here. I'm
not wealthy, ^{but} and I figured to live in any
kind of style that my family is used to living
in would take a fortune up there, and so I
never pursued anything. I did, at Bobby's
suggestion, I went to the Middle East.

STEWART: I was going to ask you about that.

REGGIE: That was Bobby's deal. Bobby called Mr.
Bowles, Chester Bowles, at the State
Department, he was then Undersecretary, set
up an appointment and Camille and I went over
to see him. And he was, of course, set up the
whole thing. And I went as an American

specialist and I visited five Middle Eastern countries. I went to Lebanon, which is my ancestral home. My grandmother was living then and I took my mother with me. And my father-in-law is also from Lebanon, I married a Lebanese girl, and he came, and my wife, of course. And we went to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The President sent a photograph to the President of Lebanon which was a, you know, an autographed photograph of him was just like. . . . I can't tell you, what it was worth in the Middle East.

STEWART: When was this?

REGGIE: It was in 1961, 1961. From May until the end of July. There's a picture of the presentation to the President of Lebanon, *FUAD CHEHAB*, who was the President at

that time. And that's the photograph of the President autographed to him. It was in a nice silver frame, and really treasured. The reaction to my visit, I had a nice, very good ^{of} warm reception. I had a lot of relatives there who were excited about our visit. There's pictures of the airport visit. They put me on their shoulders. I think we had about five thousand people at the airport.

STEWART: Really?

REGGIE: Yes. Anything for John Kennedy was everything, anything for John Kennedy. They, in the mountains, ^{of} were there was no communication, when they got ~~were~~ reports of his election, they lit bonfires from, you know, mountain top to mountain top to let one another know. That was going to be the signal if he won and that's how they carried--they just absolutely adored him. And there was no place that I went that

he wasn't really tremendously well respected. In Egypt we didn't get as much of a greeting as we ~~did~~ did elsewhere, but in the other countries, ^l it was very, very well received.

→ What else? Where are we now?

STEWART: Did you see him when you came back?

REGGIE: Yes, yes, I did. I saw him. And, of course, he had a great sense of humor with me. He always kidded me, you know, about that, all my extraordinary dealings ^{for} with the government. ^{or something!} You know, and we talked about it and kind of de-briefed a little bit and ^l . . .

STEWART: Was this an official trip? Or was it a partial official trip, or just what was the status?

REGGIE: Well, you know, we never did really get that ground rule layed. I certainly didn't supercede any ambassador. I don't want that, I don't mean to infer that at all. We never. . . I was always entertained by the embassies, you know, and they took me in tow, the

ambassadors or the charge d'affaires, as the case was in Saudi Arabia. But ~~it was~~ I spoke to various groups, intellectuals mostly, the college crowd, and the supreme courts if they had such a supreme court. ~~I~~ I speak Arabic and I thought I did until I went there. But when you're on it a ¹⁰⁰ hundred per cent of the day, you know, it's awfully tough. But it was very helpful, because it opened some doors that I don't think would have been open to me. We always had our political briefing before I went with the political officer and then later one with the ambassador. They always said things that, areas where they needed some discussion and some things that they felt would be helpful. I was very, very well

received. I was received by the heads of all of the governments and many of the lower echelon, which I thought was very, very nice. After all, I didn't have that heavy a credential. But, I think because of the fact that my mother and father were from the Arab world and there's an Arab expression which the son of an Arab means that you belong and I think that was a helpful thing.

STEWART: Did you talk to [GAMAL ABDEL] Nasser?

REGGIE: No, I did not see him. I did not see him.

STEWART: No. They had made quite an effort, I think it was in the spring of 1961, they engaged in a correspondance with a number of heads of state ⁱⁿ from the Middle East. They made a fairly serious effort to try to resolve some of the real old problems, but never had much success.


REGGIE: Well, that's what we were talking about at

every stop. We were talking about the refugees^g thing.

STEWART: That's right. They made a . . .

REGGIE: That was the overriding thing. And it looked like there was going to be some hope, but they-- neither side wanted it^g solved. ~~Once it's~~ solved. . . . So you can't. . . . It's a political weapon, I think. All the problems are always blamed on the refugee problem, so any side. . . . That's good for either side, while the refugees continue in population. But that was the biggest thing that we. . . . Oh, I remember, we talked to the President of Lebanon about the World's Fair. We wanted-- and we got a commitment by the way and they did have an exhibit at the World's Fair.

STEWART: ~~Really?~~

REGGIE: Yes, they had a building, a very nice building. But the refugee problem was the big thing ~~and~~ then, of course, 

We were just getting into conversations about diverting the Jordan waters, you remember, at that point. And, of course, the ^{well} real fight and ^{well} real war business was the attitude. I never went into Israel because it would destroy, I think my protocol in the Arab countries if I would have. . . .

And the last time I saw him was in February of the year he was killed. I went up to Washington to introduce a local attorney to the United States Supreme Court. And I went by and they were getting ready to have a parade for--I can't think of who, who the many ^l was--but I remember that the Lincoln was out there. And I remember noticing that the Lincoln was dark blue and it wasn't black, and I had always thought that it was a black Lincoln. But it was a blue. And saw

him just briefly. That was the last time I had ever seen him. I went to the funeral, Camille and ^{Vick} Dick and I.

STEWART: ~~Eight years.~~ ^{Yes,} Camille mentioned that. . . .

REGGIE: We went to the funeral. . . .

STEWART: Very good. Let's see if there's anything else I want to ask you. ^{Back to} ~~The fact~~ the Middle East-- ~~the Middle East had~~ most of the new ambassadors had been appointed. [?]

REGGIE: The new ambassador had not yet gotten to Saudi Arabia, a Charge d'affairs was there. ^[William B.] The new ambassador was in Jordan, a ^{MACOMBER} Bill McCumbe, who was a Republican and who Kennedy appointed there and who was doing an excellent job. And, ^{with} of course, he's still in the State Department. The old ambassador was about to be moved ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ Lebanon. And Mr.--a fellow by the. . . . A college man in Cairo--

Oh, Gee whiz, I know his name, I can't think of his name--he had not yet presented his credentials, he had been appointed but had not yet presented his credentials. There was no embassy in Syria, it had been reduced because of the UAR [United Arab Republic].

STEWART: Did you get involved at all in any of the civil rights problems or activities during those ~~years~~ years as they related to the Kennedy Administration?

REGGIE: Only to this extent. Can we go off the record for a minute?

STEWART: Yes. [Tape turned off]

REGGIE: I spoke with, in ^{connection with the} respect to civil rights thing when the Louisiana legislature in all these extraordinary extra sessions for that war with the federal court, Skelly Right was ^H using it in and they were meeting and doing everything they could the other way

around the state was in a tremendous upheaval. And I spoke with Bobby, who was then the Attorney General. And I asked him if there was any kind of a middle ground that we could reach to work something out with Davis. And he said, well, there was a possibility and talked from the possibility if I could talk to him and the possibility of he would kind of ease off in New Orleans because that was the integration spot at that point. He would kind of ease off on New Orleans if he would not interfere with voting rights and registration for four years, feeling that if you got the right to register when ^{your} you're normal rights would accrue. I thought that was very correct. So I called Chris ^{Fraiser} Fraiser, the Governor's Executive Secretary, and said, "Chris,"-- this was in April, if I remember correctly, because it was right around the Gridiron Dinner during that terrible period--and I said,

"Chris, do you think that something can be worked out?" He said, "I'll talk with the Governor and I'll call you tomorrow." He called me in about five minutes. I was in a hotel in Baton Rouge. He said, "When can you see him?" I said, "Well, I can come down Thursday." So I remember I flew down on Thursday and I saw the Governor and said, "What do you think about working this possibility out?" And he, of course, he spoke in kind of riddles anyway, he said, "Well, you know, kind of like a country boy who sitting at the table doesn't know which fork to pick up—and he said, "So I guess the best thing I better do is just drink water and wait and to see what all the other guests ^{do} eat." So I said, "We can't get anything ⁷ done." I said, "Don't you think it would be worth it to ease up this New Orleans deal now and just go for voters' rights. ¹ *The people aren't going to* object that much." Well

I was
he ~~is~~ not willing, so I reported ~~that~~ and
so that dropped and that's the only part
I'm a little sensitive is
the reason why ~~Millicent is there~~ because
I wouldn't want it to appear that. . . .

STEWART: Did this ever come about then?

REGGIE: Nothing ~~more~~ came about. My attempt was
absolutely fruitless. They were very
interested I think merely to hear. I don't
think they met with me, I don't Davis met
with me at all with the idea of trying to
work something out. I spoke to the Davis ~~ES-~~
~~xxxx~~ to Mrs. Davis, he didn't go he
because he had stomach trouble at the
Convention, and it was another one of those
things. They would talk to be adut
everyday, about trying to work a meeting
between Bobby and her for the delegation.
And they would conveniently never be available.
So it's the same ^a kind of thing. They wanted

to be called, I think merely to say that
they were called, they didn't want to do
any business. But it was worth a try
because ~~z~~ our state was in a terrible upheaval.,
our legislature was going absolutely crazy
and just over integration of a school
and just a few kids, it didn't mean anything
at all, but they were just making it look
like it was absolutely something and ~~that~~
the national television was down here, the
legislature would meet and ^{Stalling it out} S R
at midnight would ~~be~~ give--enjoin the
state ^{from} for doing what they were going to do
at nine in the morning and it was a terrible
deal, it was a disgraceful ~~xxxxxx~~ era. So
it looked to me like what the solution could
be if you could just remove the pressure for
a while ~~xxxx~~ it looked like a pretty good
deal but my efforts in that connection were
absolutely and totally fruitless, ^{He} they merely
listened and told ^{me} he was like the country

boy, as I told you, at the table. And he was just going to sip water.

STEWART: Did they make any other efforts to get to the Governor, that you know of?

REGGIE: Well, not to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge. Certainly not through me.

STEWART: Okay. ~~Is there any...~~ Do you recall any other visits to the White House or anything that you haven't mentioned?

REGGIE: No, except I can just tell you this, I saw him several times after he was President, ~~it's~~ ^{for} not a great length of time, I want to make this clear, but I want to make one thing clear that he never changed as a human being. He never got to be a big operator, the office didn't change our friendship ^{ship} or his warmth. And I never felt that, you know, if I saw him for a few minutes I never felt like well he'd just rather not see

me, these old political cronies. You know, that kind. . . . He never gave me that feeling, never gave me that feeling. I never say him that he didn't ask about my wife about my children, about my family. He always exhibited genuine interest and always had a ^{Terrific} very good sense of humor about him and we've been, you know, used to many politicians after they get elected kind of cool off a little, you know, but not this man, he did not.

STEWART: Is that poll you were mentioning, does this have relevance or is this strictly . . .

REGGIE: No, now I was just going to point out this that the Kennedy name still runs so strong here, that once he came through here and took it over. Bobby is the--by polls taken--
I got the preliminary figures yesterday
figures yesterday

and it shows that Bobby's got more strength in this parish than any other politician, including George Wallace.

STEWART: Really?

REGGIE: Yes.

STEWART: That's amazing.

REGGIE: It is. It is. I mean, he just beat^s them all. I mean by tremendous margins. I mean it, ^{he} takes [Richard M.] Nixon, like three^{to} one; [George] Romney, five to one; and a head to head with Humphrey, it's five to one. They prefer Bobby over Humphrey, and this is the-- something else. In other trial heats Wallace is the leader against everybody, but he can't go against Bobby and it's a. . . . And in the same poll the parish is just about evenly divided on escalation or pulling out of Viet Nam. So, you know, you. . . .

STEWART: Okay, let's see, that's. . . . Do you want ~~any~~ to say anything? Have a little bit of tape ^{left.}

~~It~~ No.?

REGGIE: Except that she has a letter hanging on the

wall at her house in which he thanked her
for all of her ^{effects} in connection with
his visits.

~~2~~ Yes, *Thanking me every week* and I treasure that.

STEWART: Okay, it's just about running out.

NAME INDEX

Bailey, John: 9
Boggs, Hale: 18, 71
Boland, Eddie: 5
Bowles, Chester: 86
Bussi, Vick: 16, 39, 66, 94
Chehab, Fuad: 87
Clements, Frank: 3, 4, 7, 11
Cushing, Richard Cardinal: 24
Davis, Jimmy: 31, 34, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 73, 98
Desmarais, Phil: 30, 31, 55, 83
Domengeaux, Jimmy: 36
Dungan, Ralph: 82
Edmundson, J. Howard: 22
Edwards, Edwin: 43
Eisenhower, Dwight D.: 17
Ellis Frank: 71, 72, 76, 83, 84
Faser, Chris: 73, 74, 96
Faubus, Orval: 78
Feild, Marshall: 22
Fenzer, William: 8
Gianfala, Evelyn: 62
Gravel, Camille: 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 16, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 49, 65, 66, 67, 86, 94
Harriman, Averell: 13, 19
Humphrey, Hubert: 62, 63
Johnson, Lyndon: 18, 19, 63, 69, 71, 85
Joseph, Emile: 53
Kefauver, Estes: 3, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14
Kennedy, Jacqueline: 22, 32, 33, 35, 40, 43, 44, 48, 49, 50, 54, 55, 56, 57, 60
Kennedy, John F.: 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 44, 46, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 59, 60, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 71, 72, 77, 85, 88, 89, 94, 100
Kennedy, Robert F.: 7, 83, 86, 98, 101, 102
Kern, Doctor: 73
Lawford, Patricia Kennedy: 80
Long, Earl K.: 3, 11, 12
Long, Mrs. Earl K.: 4
Long, Russell B.: 18, 69, 72
Macomber, William B.: 94
McDevitt, Jim: 66
Morrison, deLesseps: 30, 34, 65, 66, 83
Nasser, Gamal Abdul: 91
Nixon, Richard M.: 77, 102
Noe, James A: 34
O'Brien, Lawrence F.: 31, 39, 42, 80
O'Connor, Thomas G. Jr.: 6
O'Donnell, Kenneth: 79
Patterson, Governor: 71
Reggie, Frank: 32
Reggie, Emile: 37
Ribicoff, Abraham: 9
Roosevelt, Franklin: 33
Romney, George: 102

Salinger, Pierre: 31,79
Scott, Winfield: 51
Schrader, Walter: 41
Smith, Steven: 23,24,33,39,42,55,57,67
Sorensen, Theodore, : 28,29,51,69,79,80
Stevenson, Adlai: 2,8,13,17,19,26,62
Taft, William Howard: 41
Terrier, Roy: 76
Thompson, T.A.: 34,43,45,55
Truman, Harry S.: 13
Wagestack, Sherriff: 75
Wallace, George: 102
Willis, Edwin: 34,39
Wright, Skelly: 95,99