

John J. McNally Jr. Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 2/19/2003
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

John J. McNally Jr. was part of the White House Special Projects staff from 1961 to 1963. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign and the inner workings of the White House staff during the Kennedy administration, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

with

John McNally

February 19, 2003
Worcester, Massachusetts

by Vicki Daitch

For the Oral History Program
of the John F. Kennedy Library

McNALLY: So what are we going to do, just have like a conversation-type thing? Or, how are you going to do this?

DAITCH: Yes, we're just going to have a conversation.

McNALLY: Okay. I've got all sorts of newspaper articles that somebody wrote about me years ago that I brought in.

DAITCH: Oh, terrific!

McNALLY: That you can look through if you want.

DAITCH: That would be great. Maybe we can get a copy of that.

McNALLY: They have that.

DAITCH: Okay. Oh, terrific. Okay, good. I want to set up the tapes just by saying

that I'm Vicki Daitch, and I'm talking with John McNally, and we're in Worcester, Mass. Today is the 19th of February, 2003. And we're speaking as a record for the John F. Kennedy Library. So let's just go ahead and sort of start from the beginning. I know that the library knows when you met Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] and so forth. You had said before that it was 1950. You were working with the Democrats?

McNALLY: Right. Mmm hmmm.

DAITCH: So you must have been a puppy at that time.

McNALLY: Yeah, I was a young puppy at the time. At the time I was very active in the Young Democratic Club of Massachusetts. In the Worcester County area we had a very large Young Democratic Club at that time, and I was president of that group. I had taken some courses at Becker College from a fellow by the name of Paul Glennon. Paul was very, very close to the Kennedy Family. He asked me . . . he was kind of the coordinator for then Congressman Kennedy's campaign for the United States Senate. So he asked me if we could get the Young Democrats involved, which we did.

One of the jobs that we did on a county-wide basis. . . . And Worcester County's a relatively large county, going from the New Hampshire border down to the Connecticut border, and running east and west almost to Framingham and out to Palmer out in the west. Well, we took it upon ourselves, on assignment from Paul Glennon at the time. . . . They had put out a Kennedy newspaper per se on the campaign, of the record, and we got that distributed throughout Worcester County. We set up a distribution network which did that. Of course the senator . . . the congressman . . . was then victorious, and did beat Henry Cabot Lodge for the Senate, and became our senator.

DAITCH: Now, did you get to meet Kennedy at that time?

McNALLY: Oh, yes. I met him several times at that point. One of the interesting things, too, was that Ken O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], who went on to become the chief-of-staff for President Kennedy, was very active with the congressman's campaign at that time. Kenny and I were both from Worcester.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

McNALLY: And had known each other as young children in high school.

DAITCH: Really!

McNALLY: Yes. So that we had developed a relationship at that time. And, as I say, that was very helpful to us. I then went on to be. . . .

DAITCH: How old . . . you guys were very young at that time. I'm thinking twenties?

McNALLY: Oh, yes, we were in our early twenties. But keep in mind the senator wasn't much older than that at that time.

DAITCH: I know. What was it like to. . . I mean here's this guy who is himself in his twenties. He's not that much older than you. What was he like at that time, to look at him and say, this is Congressman Kennedy and this is Senator Kennedy?

McNALLY: He was a very outgoing individual, even as a young congressman. No question he was brilliant. He just had people smarts. He had the ability to relate to the people in those days that worked in the steel mills in Worcester, the textile plants out in the county towns or the shoe industry. He could relate to them.

DAITCH: How did he do that? Because I mean here's a guy who was born definitely with a silver spoon in his mouth. What was that?

McNALLY: He had people smarts. He just. . . He didn't ever let where he had come from or the lifestyle that he was accustomed to interfere with his relationship with the ordinary man. He had a deep concern for the welfare of all of these people. He'd visit a steel plant, and he had a man operating a machine. He had a deep interest in talking to that man about what that machine did and what the problems that he might have with that machine. When he left and went on to the next machine, this guy was overwhelmed that he talked to him. And this was part of people to people.

DAITCH: Was he genuinely . . . my understanding is that he was such an incredibly curious, inquisitive person.

McNALLY: Very inquisitive. That's what I say. That was the thing that would stand out. He would talk to these people, and he would ask the questions that the ordinary person might not even think about.

DAITCH: Yes, and it was genuine interest.

McNALLY: Genuine, yes. He wanted to know about what they were doing and what their lifestyle was.

DAITCH: Somebody told me once that he asked people . . . and I can't remember where I read this or someone told me . . . but that he was very interested in

how much people made, how much money people made.

McNALLY: That is correct.

DAITCH: Because it never was a thing for him.

McNALLY: No.

DAITCH: He was curious.

McNALLY: He was concerned as to how much money they made, how much did this cost and that cost? Because you're right. He never really was concerned about it, and, you know, very seldom carried money with him.

DAITCH: I've heard that.

McNALLY: Yes. So he was very much concerned about that.

DAITCH: So these were questions that he had to ask because he didn't know what the rest of us knew.

McNALLY: He had to ask people and know that. But he wanted to get out amongst the people always. Even in all of his campaigns and later as he became president, I mean he just wandered off in a crowd. It was unbelievable, you know.

DAITCH: Yes. Must have been a nightmare for Secret Service.

McNALLY: It was a nightmare for Secret Service. You're right.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. We'll talk about that later. But you mentioned in Hartinger, I'm not sure how to pronounce that, in the other interview, that. . . .

McNALLY: Bill Hartigan's [].

DAITCH: Hartigan, right. That part of his appeal was to women and young people, too. I had specifically wanted to ask you about labor as well, which you've already addressed. But tell me about how he . . . I mean obviously he was young himself, so that was a good thing with young people.

McNALLY: That was it. Because of his age and because of his energy, he related to young people. I think, you know, one of the things . . . and this may be jumping ahead to a degree . . . but I think the great legacy that John

Kennedy left to this country was the deep interest that he created in people of all parts of society, the rich, the poor, Democrats, Republicans, liberals, conservatives was a deep, abiding interest in government. And I think today, if we look at the leadership of government, those people, on both sides of the aisle, are there because of the interest that he created in government. I mean former President Clinton [William J. Clinton] was an outstanding example. As an American Legion Scholar he came to the White House and met with a group of young, outstanding students. So I think that's a good example of what you've got.

DAITCH: Yes. And the kind of interest that he created.

McNALLY: And the interest that he created, yes.

DAITCH: I mean aside from the fact that he was young and charismatic, you know, attractive young guy, wealthy, all of those sort of romantic things, were there particular. . . .

McNALLY: I think, you know, in the fifties, in the late forties and so forth, I think the fact that he was a bona fide war hero. . . .

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

McNALLY: . . . reflected on the people. Because you had all of these people who were young veterans. And here was a guy that not only was a veteran, but was a disabled person who had performed heroically. So I think that was a thing also that attracted a lot of the younger people.

DAITCH: Yes. A lot of the things that we're talking about sound more like a little bit of a cult of personality. He's a hero, he's a veteran, he's wealthy, young, attractive, all those things, charismatic. But were there particular messages that he was delivering that seemed to appeal to people?

McNALLY: Well, his message always was from his days as a congressman: America can do better. We can be as great as we want. In one of his speeches he talked: Man can do the things that man wants. The only limit is what man's desire is. And I think that's true.

DAITCH: Yes. So that was always at. . . .

McNALLY: That was his message.

DAITCH: . . . the root of it. I wondered about any specific things that. . . . Oh, I don't know, if there were any particular. . . . I mean that's kind of a general

message. It's just sort of a rousing thing. But that's very effective in motivating.

McNALLY: It is effective in motivating people. And I think also that. . . Well, you know, in the fifties the country kind of was almost in a lull. I mean General Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] was the president. I think that he was a very revered man. People loved him. But he was kind of the grandfatherly image. Been a grandfather today many times. I can see what that image is: Let's just hold the status quo along. But even as a senator, John Kennedy had his eyes on the moon, okay? And the moon's the limit. We can go beyond.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. So the things that he wanted to do. . . . When he said we could do better, we can do better, we should do better, we will do better, what kinds of things?

McNALLY: Well, I think he wanted . . . I think he thought we could have a better educational system. There's no question he thought that we could advance technology to a far greater degree. He thought that we could provide better welfare and better medical systems and so forth for the people of this country, and we could improve the lot of everybody in America. And I think that's what he strived for.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Those seem to be the things that he was most interested in.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: And that appealed to people? Did you have. . . . When you were campaigning, tell me a little bit about the down and dirty when you talked to people. What did you do as far as . . . you were distributing these newsletters.

McNALLY: Well, you mean in the 1952 campaign? Yes, I was primarily getting these networks established. We would get all these things distributed. We would get the campaign buttons distributed. We would get the bumper stickers out on cars. And so we utilized the various Young Democratic Clubs that we had in that period of time to get these things distributed. We would get them delivered door to door in some communities. So basically my job was to try to motivate people to want to participate and to get involved in doing this.

DAITCH: Right. Now this is all volunteers.

McNALLY: Oh, yes, absolutely.

DAITCH: And you're in school at this time or maybe. . . .

McNALLY: No, no. I had just gotten out of school, and I was trying to establish an accounting and real estate business.

DAITCH: Okay. And working as a volunteer.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: Okay, so this was the '52 campaign.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: He wins. You move on. For the next several years you don't really have any contact with him?

McNALLY: Well, I had some contact. I went out to the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1956.

DAITCH: Oh, you did?

McNALLY: When Estes Kefauver won the vice-presidential nomination, only because the tote board wasn't working and we had no real count, number, as to what the real numbers were. And then, of course, in 1958 he ran against for reelection to the United States Senate. But by then it was a conclusion amongst most people that he would start to move ahead for the presidency. But by the same token, he ran for reelection as hard in 1958 as he did in 1952. And he ran against Vincent Celeste [Vincent J. Celeste], who was a young fellow, lawyer, from the Boston area. But he was all over the state in running.

DAITCH: Going back to the '56 convention for a minute, do you think that . . . I was curious about what seemed to motivate. . . . I mean again, you might have been privy to this. But for a lot of people the vice presidency is sort of a dead end. Did he really want to do that? Or was he just getting his name out there to prepare?

McNALLY: Oh, I think he would've liked to have been the vice presidential nominee. There's no question about it. But I think it also was a means of getting his name out and getting nationally known. And I think that, yes, he genuinely would've wanted to be vice president. But then he saw what had happened when it was over, I think he thought, well, wait a minute. Let's go for all the marbles and not go for a few of the marbles.

DAITCH: Yes. That just seems so odd to me because here he is . . . again, he's a

young man. Of course he's been in Congress for fair number of years by this point. But he's still a young man, and he's already thinking. . . .

McNALLY: Yes. In 1956 he'd been in the Congress for six years, and he'd been in the Senate only four years.

DAITCH: Right, right. So he's been there for a decade, and he's already looking at the White House.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: And then another few years, and he's looking to be the top dog in the White House.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: It just seems . . . and the way you said it a moment ago, that it was sort of a foregone conclusion among some of you, how is that possible?

McNALLY: Well, because you began to look, and you said, wait a minute. If we're this far with the limited resources that we had really put in it, let's put all the resources, and let's go for it. You could win.

DAITCH: And you really. . . . It seems amazing, looking back, because there don't seem to have been that many resources. But the thought was that if you could put together this kind of a Democratic . . . machine's not the right word, but an election. What is the word for that?

McNALLY: Well, you could put together an organization is really what you were putting together.

DAITCH: An organization, yes. So if you can do that in one state, you can then do it throughout the country?

McNALLY: Throughout the country. You've got to keep in mind, though, that in those days it was a different situation than you have today. You had to go into these states and actually campaign.

DAITCH: Yes. So how did that. . . . Okay, so you're working all through this period. You're still in Worcester?

McNALLY: Oh, yes. Well, actually at that point I'd gotten married and had moved out to Webster, Mass., which is just a suburb of Worcester.

DAITCH: Not far.

McNALLY: No.

DAITCH: So when did you actually become sort of a full-time Kennedy person?

McNALLY: Well, after the . . . about 1959 we started into the New Hampshire primary. I was still a volunteer then, but I worked. . . . Larry O'Brien [Lawrence O'Brien] was kind of coordinating the New Hampshire primary. So I worked in the New Hampshire primary, and many of the cold days we had. I then went out to West Virginia, where you're from.

DAITCH: Yes.

McNALLY: And worked in that primary. Then after that, of course, we started preparing for the convention, at which time I became a full-time Kennedy staffer at that time. Actually I went to work at that point for Pierre Salinger. At the convention we put out the Kennedy newspaper, which was a task in itself in that. . . . I think it was one of the things that really impressed an awful lot of the delegates to that convention, because we distributed a newspaper to the hotel room of every single delegate. When they awoke in the morning, they had a Kennedy newspaper at their door.

DAITCH: You know, the logistics! It doesn't sound like much today, but the logistics of that must have been horrendous.

McNALLY: We put out 20,000 copies a day, and we put out five issues of that. Those are on file in the library, those newspapers. We had a staff of about 40 volunteers. We had college students, we had retired reporters who actually did the writing. Fred Forbes [], who came from New Hampshire and whom I had worked with in New Hampshire, he, in effect, became the editor with a fellow named Don Wilson []. Don Wilson was a reporter for *Life Magazine*. We developed a group of these volunteers. College students who came from all over America, who wanted to help us, up every night. I mean the paper'd come off of the press about two in the morning, and by six in the morning it was distributed to every single delegate.

DAITCH: Did you get much sleep?

McNALLY: No, we didn't get much sleep. But we got a lot of satisfaction.

DAITCH: Yeah, yeah.

McNALLY: And what you really had was that you had Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson], and Stu Symington [Stuart Symington], and Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], who were all, you know, candidates at that point. I think the fact that we were organized, and we had the people. And I think it made a tremendous difference to these delegates, particularly those delegates that came that weren't committed.

DAITCH: Yes. Because there was a certain point where you knew what most of the delegates were going to do.

McNALLY: Right. And then you have the situations you know you had with the political leaders of those days who were extremely important. The Richard Daleys [Richard J. Daley], and Dave Lawrences [David Lawrence] of the world. And Orville Freeman, who was the governor of Minnesota at the time. You know all of these people. It was necessary. . . .

DAITCH: To court them a little?

McNALLY: To court them and to get them in. But also to see that you were ready.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. I want to go back to the New Hampshire primary just for a minute before I forget. And then I want to talk a little bit more about the organization of the campaign. You had said in the Hartigan interview something about a debate in New Hampshire with someone whose name escapes me. It was another candidate who was sort of minor.

McNALLY: Fisher [Paul Fisher]!

DAITCH: Fisher, yes.

McNALLY: That's right. He was the man who invented the ballpoint pen.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: God bless him. You mentioned something that I thought was interesting, that debate was sort of a precursor maybe to the debates with Nixon [Richard M. Nixon], and that there were a lot of media people there. And I'm wondering what sort of impression . . . because I'm sure Kennedy evolved over time as both a speaker and as a person who could debate, a debater. So what was the impression that he made at that point?

McNALLY: Well, it was just night and day. It was like an amateur and a professional.

DAITCH: Well, was Fisher more of an amateur and Kennedy more of a professional, though?

McNALLY: Yes. By far. Paul Fisher was not a . . . he had been a successful businessman, but not, in my opinion, a very potential president of the United States probably. But they did have a debate, and the president just overwhelmed him. And again, it's because he came prepared. Everything he ever did, he was prepared for. That was his whole way of doing things. Don't leave anything to chance.

DAITCH: Right. Yes, I want to talk about that some more, too, because that's a fabulous point about him. Where were the other candidates? I'm reading this, thinking about this Fisher guy, and thinking, where are the other candidates at this point?

McNALLY: They elected to bypass the primaries.

DAITCH: All of them?

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: Really! Or at least the New Hampshire primary.

McNALLY: Yes. But the only one that really was good in the primaries, of course, was Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], and he defeated him in both Wisconsin and West Virginia. And in West Virginia Senator Humphrey then withdrew as a presidential candidate.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. So tell me about West Virginia as long as we're there. That seems to have been such a pivotal thing. You know, somebody suggested to me that setting up West Virginia as the place where we were going to lay to rest the question of religion was sort of setting up a straw man because it turned out not to really be that much of an issue in West Virginia.

McNALLY: Yes, I don't think that it was that much of an issue in West Virginia, but people thought it was. But again, I think that the great thing there was the president's ability to relate to the working . . . particularly to the coal miners of West Virginia. I mean he was at the gates to these mines at six o'clock in the morning on cold and blustery and rainy or snowy winter days greeting these people, and his ability to relate to them, and he was everywhere. I think that was it. They saw him as their type of person.

DAITCH: Yes. So he literally went up the hollers and visited with people.

McNALLY: Yes, he did. Oh, the whole state.

DAITCH: I remember my great-aunt, my grandmother's sister, was somewhat active at that time. And again, you know, a lot of people, not just West Virginia, but I think it has to do with poverty sometimes in general or with rural areas in general, they're not that involved in politics very often. But when my aunt died, I was helping to clean out her home, and she still had a pin: "Senator Kennedy . . ." or whatever, "John Kennedy for President." And then there was a piece of masking tape over the "for" that said "the President." And I thought, here's something that she's been holding onto for these many years. It was such a big event in so many people's lives.

McNALLY: Even today. I have now moved to South Carolina. I go around to some of the smaller communities of South Carolina, and I enjoy talking to school groups. I go into some of these small, little communities, and people have Kennedy pictures up. Go to Europe, go to Ireland, and they still, all through Europe. Several years ago I had the opportunity to go to Poland. Marshal law was still in effect. But went to visit . . . my wife was of Polish extraction, and we went to visit a relative of hers, and in her what they would call a closet but they only had . . . we have closet doors, they had curtains over them. And on the wall she had a picture of President Kennedy, on that wall.

DAITCH: Is that right! Wow!

McNALLY: And these were their treasures. And I think you can still see that today. People still have these.

DAITCH: Yes. It's just such an interesting phenomenon that he. . . .

McNALLY: I read recently . . . and as an historian, you would probably know better . . . but the Kennedy half dollars have never fully been accounted with. People still have those. They're not in circulation. And I think that's part of the phenomenon that you're talking about.

DAITCH: Right. That people just, for whatever reasons, were so. . . . There was something about him in particular. The whole Kennedy Family, I think, but him in particular.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: That moved people, that they felt they could identify with.

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: Which is extraordinary considering how few people could really identify with his upbringing and his family's wealth and all that.

McNALLY: Yes. But he was the person that they felt was going to get them out if they were in a rut or that type of thing. And particularly, as you said, in these smaller communities. He went to them. He might have been the first presidential candidate they ever saw. As such, they regarded him as the president. He was their savior. And I think that really had an awful lot to do with it.

DAITCH: Sure. Yes. And not even a naive thing, but just an appreciation of his willingness to, okay, this guy's willing to come and talk to us.

McNALLY: Talk to me, that's right.

DAITCH: At least he's willing to come and talk to us. We'll vote for him.

McNALLY: And when they did, they never diverted. They were there all the way, and they worked hard.

DAITCH: Yes. Speaking of working hard, what type of. . . Obviously the organization in West Virginia, and in other places as well, had something to do with that.

McNALLY: We had a very strong organization in West Virginia. I was just one of the peons, really, in that organization, doing the things that had to be done, primarily doing advance-type things.

DAITCH: Yes. So you'd go to local communities?

McNALLY: We'd get things lined up, and, you know, that type of thing.

DAITCH: Right. So basically you just go to a community, and you say, "We have a candidate coming. Can we set up a speaking engagement?"

McNALLY: Right. Set up the meetings and work with the, you know, advance teams, work with the Jerry Brunos of the world and the John Trainors of the world.

DAITCH: You got things organized.

McNALLY: Got things organized, you're right.

DAITCH: Okay. So at that point you're still a volunteer.

McNALLY: That's right.

DAITCH: You're traveling to the coal fields.

McNALLY: That's right.

DAITCH: What was that . . . I've heard that Kennedy was pretty appalled by some of the things that he saw there and in other places in terms of the poverty.

McNALLY: Yes. I think that was an awakening to him of the amount of poverty that existed in this country. And particularly having come from his level of life to see this, he just. . . . And I think that this was one of the things that really settled in his mind. He always knew that we had had some, but he never saw, for instance, in Massachusetts the levels of poverty that he saw in other parts of the country.

DAITCH: Well, and it's a different type of. . . . I think rural poverty looks different from urban poverty.

McNALLY: Absolutely.

DAITCH: It's all the same, but it has a different look.

McNALLY: It's a total different look, yes.

DAITCH: I, of course, coming from West Virginia, have just been fascinated with his . . . because I've heard so many times that it really did settle in his mind, and he gave a lot of thought to it and was concerned about it.

McNALLY: He was very much concerned about it. There's no question. I think some of the things that he attempted to do as president all reflected on those things that he saw during those campaigns and the lessons he learned.

DAITCH: Yes. Right.

McNALLY: As you indicated early, he had a very inquisitive mind, and he was also a quick study.

DAITCH: I've heard that. And this thing about the legend of him being able to read a gazillion words a minute and absorb it.

McNALLY: And he never forgot. He had a memory that was unbelievable.

DAITCH: Right. So here's a man who is, you know, he's not just a people person. He's also a scholar and an athlete. He can relate to so many people on so many different levels. Do you think that was part of his charisma, that he was in so many. . . .

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: He was himself accomplished in so many different areas.

McNALLY: He was, let's probably say, an all-American boy, an all-American man. People could look up to him from all walks of life and see "That's what I want to be." And I think that became a great part of the legacy _____. He could relate to all of these groups, and they saw something in him that they wanted.

DAITCH: Absolutely. Well, let's get back to the . . . we were talking about the organization. I've heard both things: I've heard that the Kennedy campaign was very well organized, and I've heard, on the other hand, that it was . . . and that it was very efficient. I've also heard that it was disorganized. And I wondered which of those, from the inside out. . . .

McNALLY: I find it hard to say it was disorganized, if you want. It had a lot of different facets to it. You know, one of the . . . let's look at the senatorial campaigns. There were a lot of different areas that people worked in. One of the great things was the coffee hours that were established and set up, where not only the senator would go to them, but Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] would go, Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] would go, Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] would go. So you had different organizations, but ultimately they all meshed into one.

There might be in Oxford, Massachusetts, on a given day, there might be two different events going on, and somebody would say, "Well, how could you do that?" But one of them was aimed at a women's group, another might have been involved in an industrial plant tour. Two different groups, two different groups of people that you were trying to reach. So that maybe to somebody looking on from the outside it was disorganized.

But to the . . . and in those days they didn't call them . . . we called them Kennedy campaign secretaries. So that secretary for that particular town, who was reporting to a regional coordinator, it wasn't disorganized. I mean everything had its reason for being. The biggest job that any regional coordinator dealt with is trying to tie in these schedules together so that they would work, and so that you could keep on some kind of a reasonable, which never can happen in any campaign.

DAITCH: No. He was famously late, wasn't he?

McNALLY: Well, tell me any political candidate that really isn't late for the most part.

DAITCH: At least if he takes time to stop and talk to people.

McNALLY: That's exactly right, and that's what he did. I mean he was going to talk to people, and he did talk to people. I can remember one of the . . . this is kind of jumping ahead. But we were in the presidential campaign. We arrived in Waterbury, Connecticut, about three a.m. in the morning, and Victor Borge was still out there. They were playing. And there were thousands of people waiting at the three a.m. in the morning.

DAITCH: Wow! That's amazing.

McNALLY: So you know. . . .

DAITCH: You did your best.

McNALLY: This is again the charisma. They were waiting for somebody that they wanted to see.

DAITCH: It's quite an amazing phenomenon. What was it like for you to. . . . I mean, well, I was going to ask you this, and we sort of slipped past it. But it must have been difficult for you. You've got your career going. You've got a young family, probably. I don't know if you had kids at the time, but you're married.

McNALLY: I did.

DAITCH: That must have been a difficult decision for you to go full time into this campaign.

McNALLY: Well, yes. But I was again taken in by his charisma. And I thought that here was a man who could be president of the United States and could do more, I thought, to get the country moving. Because as I indicated to you earlier, I think we were just kind of in a lull period. Things were good in the country with President Eisenhower as president. But I thought we could do better.

DAITCH: Right. This actually speaks to something that one of the . . . you know, I've talked to some reporters and media people, and one of them said that he thought very early on that Kennedy could win and probably would win, in part because he had this absolutely, incredibly devoted cadre of people around him who believed in him and who worked very hard for him.

McNALLY: I think this is true. Absolutely true, you know. And I think that a good portion of that. . . . You know you'd get back, and you were talking about being married and having a family and so forth. I think the great thing here was that the so-called Irish Mafia, their wives were as devoted to this as we were. I know my wife, God bless her, firmly believed that, you know, you should be doing this, and we should be doing this. While we were out, she was out running coffee parties and so forth.

DAITCH: Is that right?

McNALLY: I think that all of the wives, you know. . . . I know that Ken O'Donnell's wife was very involved as was Larry O'Brien's and Dick Donahue's []. These people were very much involved.

DAITCH: Well, that says a lot.

McNALLY: Yes. And that you have to have.

DAITCH: Right, right. Well, this kind of devotion that we're talking about, this is not just a job.

McNALLY: No, no. This was the devotion. For the most part people went to work at minimal salaries to do . . . you know, put their own careers on hold to see this thing happen.

DAITCH: Right. Because most of you were, well, I guess almost all of you were young professional.

McNALLY: That's right.

DAITCH: You had things to do of your own.

McNALLY: Right. Sure.

DAITCH: And this an amazing thing. So did you anticipate, were you thinking, okay, we'll do this campaign and. . . . What were you thinking, then what? We'll do the campaign, and that'll be over. Did you think you would go to the White House?

McNALLY: No, I never dreamt that in my wildest. Actually when the election was over in 1960, I came back home to my home in Webster, Mass., ready to restart my business and get it back on track, when Ken O'Donnell called me and

said, "Hey, you get back here. We've got a country to run now." So that was, yeah. . . .

DAITCH: Wow! That must have been a little bit of a shock.

McNALLY: It was. It sure was. You're right. I said to my wife at the time, you know, "They want me." She said, "I think you should go."

DAITCH: Really! Did she go with you?

McNALLY: Well, ultimately. Once we got down, after the inauguration, we upped and bought a home down there. Oh, yes. The family moved to Washington, yes.

DAITCH: Moving your family to Washington so you can work in the White House. It's an amazing thing. But we're not in the White House yet.

McNALLY: No, no, no. We haven't gotten there yet.

DAITCH: But we're getting there. Tell me about the convention, aside from . . . the newsletters are a fabulous thing.

McNALLY: Well, I tell you what: That was my whole job, basically, was to get that . . . I kind of served as the general manager of the paper. And to get it distributed and make sure that every single delegate got that and to get it printed, the actual editorializing and developing of it Fred Forbes kind of held and Don Wilson and put that together. But the mechanics of getting this printed, getting it bundled, and finding out where every delegate lived and all that, came onto me, which we did. And then to get it set up.

As I say, we had a tremendous cadre of volunteer college students who would come in. And we would say, okay, you're going to be responsible. Here's a list. This is where Joe Smith is, this is where Bill Jones is. You've got to make sure that before six a.m. that newspaper's at his door.

DAITCH: Wow! That's amazing!

McNALLY: Then, of course, that involved dealing with hotel management to allow us to get these things in. Which we did.

DAITCH: Yes, the logistics.

McNALLY: Then we also had somebody at the Coliseum distributing these . . . standing out, you know, handing. So that people got them either at their hotel or they got them there.

DAITCH: Wow! So you didn't have any chance to come up for air, really, and take a look around.

McNALLY: We didn't come up for air at all and look at anything at all.

DAITCH: Whose idea was this newspaper? I mean what a brilliant stroke.

McNALLY: Well, I think the idea for the newspaper was Pierre Salinger's. There's no question about it. We went from that. Yes, it came from Pierre, who was the press secretary.

DAITCH: Now, what was he like, actually, to work for?

McNALLY: Oh, Pierre was a great guy.

DAITCH: Really?

McNALLY: Oh, yes. Pierre was a lot of fun. He had a lot of ideas. And Pierre always had that eternal cigar in his mouth that was going a mile a minute. When he'd get nervous, his cigar would go up and down like that. But, no, he told us what he wanted done, and Pierre let us do it, and we'll do it. And we did it.

DAITCH: I mean these kinds of things, it seems to me the Kennedy campaign was sort of notable for those things, which were just unusual.

McNALLY: Well, I think you had a situation where you had, as I indicated earlier, you had a group of people who were dedicated. You gave them a job to do, and then you forgot about it because you knew and you had faith that those people were going to do what you wanted them to do. As I indicated, on that newspaper, Pierre gave us a job to put out a newspaper, and he wanted every delegate to have that. Well, we had to do it. And we just had to figure out how to do it. And we did it.

DAITCH: Kennedy seemed to have this talent for drawing people around him that would do that. Not just that people were attracted to him, but that he picked them out.

McNALLY: Right. Yes.

DAITCH: How did that work? I mean did you ever, aside from yourself, did you watch that in action in other places?

McNALLY: Well, I had seen that there, and I had seen that. . . . As president of the

Young Democrats, I saw that, where you could pick out people that you knew would work. You had also other people that you could pick out in a moment and say they're in there for the glamour of it, and they weren't going to do any work. And they quickly went by the wayside. You didn't see them.

DAITCH: And Kennedy could pick that out, too.

McNALLY: Oh, yes, he could pick that out in a second. And, you know, by the same token, I think that Kenny O'Donnell and Larry and Pierre could pick that out. They were good at picking people. You know, Pierre had an excellent staff. His deputy, Andy Hatcher [Andrew Hatcher], was a former San Francisco newsman, and he was extremely good at what he did. Then, as I say, we attracted people that could do these things.

DAITCH: And wanted to.

McNALLY: And wanted to do it, yes. Not that could, but wanted to do it. That's more important.

DAITCH: Yes, yes, exactly. I think about the story that Jerry Bruno told about his coming on board the Kennedy staff. And it seems almost . . . what's the word I'm looking for? Not flippant, but just such a quick thing where, you know, Kennedy had met him in Wisconsin, was pleased with what he saw in terms of his work. He happened to bump into him somewhere else, and he just invited him: Why don't you come and work for me?

McNALLY: Yes, yes. And the book that he wrote, *The Advance Man*, Jerry Bruno's book, was a great . . . honest, it's almost a textbook on what an advance man has to do and should do.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. It's really amazing work. I mean I had no idea what they did do. But you probably participated in those types of things.

McNALLY: Yes, I did. I absolutely, yes. And, as I say, during the campaign, of course, we were in constant contact on the campaign planes with those advance people because they were extremely important.

DAITCH: Oh, yes. No doubt. You know, I would never have even thought of that until I talked to him, how much organization these things actually take, to set up all these appearances and that sort of thing. It must have been exhausting.

McNALLY: They didn't sleep. And particularly in the days immediately prior to the candidate arriving in that community that they were involved in. Or, in Jerry Bruno's case, many times it was several. . . . [Change to Side B of Tape]

DAITCH: So how about the candidates themselves and the staff members? You guys probably didn't get a lot of rest either.

McNALLY: Not really.

DAITCH: During the campaign.

McNALLY: Oh, no, on the campaign. Of course I was on the campaign itself, traveling with the president. We rode the press plane because we were riding herd and trying to keep track of who was joining us where, who was coming, and what kind of hotel accommodations did we need at the next stop for X number of people, where was their baggage? And, you know, it's . . . we were really shepherding literally hundreds of people whose names and numbers changed almost on a daily basis.

DAITCH: Oh, my gosh! Now, did every campaign do the same thing?

McNALLY: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: So it wasn't just yours. That was just the way that campaigns were.

McNALLY: That's the way, yes. And even today it is. Because what would happen is you would always have the national press and the national media, the networks and the major newspapers, you'd always have somebody, and generally the same person from those campaigns, with you for an extended period. But you always would have, would pick up local press who wanted to follow you through West Virginia here or Ohio or wherever you happened to be. They would go through two or three legs of the trip.

So they would arrange through the national campaign in Washington to pick you up in Chicago and leave you in Green Bay, Wisconsin, for instance. So in there you might have had two or three days where you had hotel accommodations for them. You had different requirements that they might have needed. Then we were juggling the press constantly between the press plane. And we always had a pool, so-called, that rode on the *Caroline*. So we were juggling those back and forth. So that there was a lot of coordination that went on between basically Andy Hatcher, as Pierre's deputy, and myself as to who would be where. Then through me to the advance men.

In those days we did a lot of that by Western Union. We had a Western Union representative, Herb Darcy [Herbert Darcy], who traveled with us constantly. You know, we didn't have computers in those days. You didn't have cell phones in those days. You

did all these things, and they worked. Oh, sure, you'd get a snag here or there. But for the most part they didn't.

DAITCH: It's a very expensive proposition. Who paid for all these motel bills and the travel?

McNALLY: The reporters and all, they paid for their hotel bills. We billed them for their portion of the aircraft the day. . . . In other words, we would bill them. . . . If they were flying from Boston to New York, we would bill them for that segment. The billing was done through the Democratic National Committee to them. Same way their hotel bills were billed to them and so forth.

So now the only ones, you know, the staff people, and we had a considerable amount of staff also traveling with us, that was paid by the National Committee. But we used to file with a fellow named George O'Gorman, who worked at the Democratic National Committee, and he was my contact. I'd be in contact with him almost every day, either by telegraph or by telephone, as to who was where. And he at points would call me, or I'd get a telegram when we landed in Altoona, Pennsylvania, that Vicki Daitch is joining with us today.

DAITCH: Right, right.

McNALLY: And so, you know. . . . There was constant trying to keep track of these things.

DAITCH: And it was Don O'Gorman?

McNALLY: George O'Gorman.

DAITCH: George O'Gorman.

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: Wow. And he was sort of an accounting-type person?

McNALLY: No, he was more of a coordinator that the press would contact through him and would say: We're going to join . . . we want to join the flight there. He would know pretty well. Then he'd contact . . . how many seats do we have, and how many don't you have? And so forth.

DAITCH: A lot of Western Union, a lot of telephone calls, too, back and forth.

McNALLY: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: I'll bet.

McNALLY: That was all. And, in fact, those records are at the library, those manifests and all are in the library.

DAITCH: Oh, my gosh! How hard that all must have been to keep track of.

McNALLY: Well, yes, because everything was pencil and paper.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. So what were the press people like? Who were some of the people that you might remember, and how did they. . . .

McNALLY: God, we had them all. We had them all the way from Merriman Smith and Bill Lawrence [William Lawrence] and, you know, God, all of them that were around.

DAITCH: Were they fun to travel with?

McNALLY: Yes, they were. They were a good group of people to travel about. I'm trying to think of some of the people that we had that really were good. But they were good people for the most part. And they were very cooperative. I think that was good.

DAITCH: They would've covered Nixon, too, right?

McNALLY: Some of them, yes. They would switch off.

DAITCH: Did you ever get a feel for any comparisons that they might be making? Did they talk to you guys about it?

McNALLY: Not much about that, no. No, they kept it pretty much to themselves. Bob Novak [Robert Novak], for instance, used to travel a lot with him. You know he's very conservative. In those days it was Evans [] and Novak. And then Hugh Sidey traveled a great deal with us. Peter Morris, who's now a novelist, but was a writer in those days and traveled a great deal of the time. And then we had congressmen, you know, also.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

McNALLY: Would come with us from time to time, congressmen from particular areas that would fly with us.

DAITCH: Just coming to be supportive?

McNALLY: To be supportive and to make sure that we knew what the political atmosphere in that particular area was. And they primarily worked with Ken O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien.

DAITCH: So tell me a little bit about Ken O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien. I want to talk a little bit about some of the staff people, what they were. . . .

McNALLY: Well, Ken O'Donnell was chief-of-staff, if you wanted a title. Appointments secretary is what he was called, but he was the chief-of-staff, and he was chief-of-staff. Regardless of what you might hear today, he was the chief-of-staff. Larry O'Brien was director of congressional relations, and they worked very close as a team. Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] was the counselor to the president, advisor, and also wrote all of the speeches that he gave, and worked with them frequently.

Bill Hartigan, who worked . . . Bill Hartigan was a former airline employee of American Airlines, and he was the one that really during the campaign coordinated all of these aircraft and the landing areas and all of the things that were necessary. And then, of course, Dave Powers [David F. Powers] traveled, and he was really kind of the personal assistant to the president.

DAITCH: Yes. They were good friends, right?

McNALLY: They were extremely good friends. And Dave had a tremendous ability to know when to get tough, to hound the president, ease the president, and he did a great job at doing that. Pierre Salinger, of course, he was the press secretary, and he was a good press secretary.

DAITCH: So when did all these people . . . I mean what was it. . . . You described Dave Powers's relationship with the president a little bit. What about Kenny O'Donnell? They had been friends for years.

McNALLY: Kenny O'Donnell was probably one of the most astute political analysts, for want of a better word, I think that this country ever had.

DAITCH: Really!

McNALLY: Ken O'Donnell devoted his life to John F. Kennedy. Unfortunately, I don't think Ken O'Donnell ever got over the assassination. But, you know, as we sit here in Worcester, Mass., today, we sit here in an office that belongs to a fellow who was devoted to Ken O'Donnell and feels the same way. I don't think there was any question at any time, but if something arose, the word was, "See Kenny" in the administration, and that was a fact of life. I ended up in the White House working as

Kenny's deputy for want of another word, reporting directly to Ken O'Donnell.

DAITCH: Now, what would you . . . what kinds of things would you do for him? I mean he was sort of the gatekeeper. That's the way I've heard him described, among other things.

McNALLY: I think that gatekeeper is probably, maybe in a sense, demeaning for what Ken O'Donnell really did. Because I think that Ken O'Donnell kept the flow of government through to the president, to the cabinet, and so forth. Yes, he did decide who would see the president and when he would see the president. But more important, I think, he also was the person whom the president leaned on to discuss the pros and cons of every issue. Because he was a sage. He really understood what the president believed in, and thus he knew what was important to the president and what he should see, and they could sit and talk these things out. And I think that was extremely important.

DAITCH: And that's what . . . I'm curious whether that's what you saw, because I get. . . . And, of course, from different perspectives, different people saw different things.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: And I watched the movie *Thirteen Days* again not too long ago, and I wondered how accurate of a portrayal that was. Because he was a very central figure in the movie.

McNALLY: I think that was extremely accurate.

DAITCH: Do you?

McNALLY: You mean Kevin Costner's portrayal of Ken O'Donnell? I think it was an extremely accurate portrayal. I think Ken O'Donnell played a leading role in every major decision for the short few years that President Kennedy had as president.

DAITCH: Now what about Robert Kennedy? We haven't talked about him at all yet. He was around.

McNALLY: Well, Robert Kennedy was the attorney-general. Robert Kennedy to start out was probably Ken O'Donnell's best friend, and they were extremely close. Robert Kennedy was a brilliant man. He had a very analytical mind. And, as you well know, he and the president talked numerous times during the day. And in most of those conversations, whether it be in person or over the telephone, Ken

O'Donnell was an integral part of those. So they formed a triumvirate, if there was.

DAITCH: You said that Bobby Kennedy was very analytical. I've heard people say that he seemed, that analytical piece of him seemed, a little cold and a little hard-driven. Did you perceive him that way, too?

McNALLY: Yes. Because he looked at the bottom line. Where are we going to go if we follow this track? Where's this going to lead us to? We want to accomplish something, but if we go that way, are we going to get it done? I think, yes, he had the mind that could look down that road and see where we wanted to go. Yeah, if it meant stepping on Senator Jones's toes because this was not going to do what we wanted, we had to do that. He made that decision.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. And John Kennedy was pretty. . . .

McNALLY: He took their advice.

DAITCH: Yes. You know, these are all these things that are interesting because you hear these . . . on the one hand you hear about someone like Robert Kennedy, who is very forceful, has very strong opinions.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: Was willing to do whatever it took to get to the bottom line.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: But, on the other hand, I've also heard that John Kennedy, he appeared to be not as hard-driven, maybe more relaxed. But he definitely sort of had a mind of his own.

McNALLY: Absolutely.

DAITCH: So you have to balance that.

McNALLY: That's right. You had a balance. He was the president, and he was looking to do the things that he thought were the best for the country. That's why he relied on Bobby Kennedy, and he relied on Ken O'Donnell, to make sure that the information he was getting wasn't colored. In other words, he wanted the straight scoop. And then he would make up his own mind.

DAITCH: Right, right. But these were two guys who know how he thought.

McNALLY: Absolutely. They knew how he thought and what he wanted.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. So what was your . . . I mean you're an assistant to Ken O'Donnell. You're in the White House.

McNALLY: I kind of just handled all of the administrative and public affairs types of things of the White House. For instance, there are hundreds, thousands of people who want to see the president. You obviously can't do that. But you had the members of the Congress who wanted a group to be seen by the. . . . Well, that couldn't happen, so I would greet those people in the East Garden of the White House and talk to them on behalf of the president. And accept whatever presentations that they might want to give, and then we would distribute it.

The president had set up a policy early on that he would no accept any gifts that had a value of over \$15.00. And so we would distribute those to charities or the Smithsonian or wherever. But literally there wasn't a day went by that I didn't talk to two or three or more groups.

In addition to that, also in my office, we had the tours of the White House that were established, you know, and they're done through the congressional offices. We had two different tours: one being the congressional tour, which is the VIP tour, so-called, which was a guided lecture tour, and which was limited in number and had to be arranged through congressional offices; and then we had the public tour where you opened up the door to literally thousands of people. The first year he was in office we set an all-time record of over a million people going through the White House.

Those were the types of things. Plus the normal administrative functions for the White House: staffing, budgets, automobiles, parking, you name it. Newspapers, magazine subscriptions, all of these things.

DAITCH: So those things came through your door?

McNALLY: They came through my door.

DAITCH: Oh, wow! So you, oh, I don't know. . . . You had to, if you lost a cook or something. . . .

McNALLY: No. That wasn't it. That was all handled by the usher's office and that type of thing.

DAITCH: Okay.

McNALLY: But we did have an executive secretary who was a career person in the White House. We had the administrative officer, Carson Hull, who was a career employee, had been from one administration to another. They stayed there, but they came through me. And if Larry O'Brien, for instance, needed some

temporary people, we would get those from other agencies, and so forth, to bring in. And so there was paperwork and all involved in that type of thing. The travel, any of the presidential travel that we did, it was involving visas and passports and that type of thing. There was the billing of the press, and all of that type of thing. We did have a transportation office, but there again, they were career people that reported through the administration.

DAITCH: Wow! The travel thing, it just doesn't occur to me that for presidential travel you need visas and passports.

McNALLY: Yes, you do.

DAITCH: I guess you do.

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: So those were the kinds of things that you did. What about during . . . I mean I can't help but think that those three years were some of the most eventful years and some of the most perilous years of the century.

McNALLY: Well, it was, you know. We went through the Cuban Missile Crisis which was a real time of tenseness, not only within the White House, but throughout the world.

DAITCH: Everywhere.

McNALLY: It was a time when you had a president who went toe to toe with a wily dictator.

DAITCH: Yes. So what was your experience? I mean you're in the White House. There are people back and forth, I'm sure lots of grim faces, and it must have been incredibly frightening.

McNALLY: I'm not sure that it was frightening, but it was tense because you knew . . . you had faith in the president that he was going to do the right thing. But he wasn't going to back down. I think the great thing at that time. . . . And I look now. This is February 19, 2003, and we're facing a situation in Iraq and North Korea, and I look at the polls each day, and I say, The president doesn't have a majority of the American people with him at this time. And I go back to the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the American people stood shoulder to shoulder with the president. America was united, and it was strong at that time, and everybody was with him.

I think the difference . . . and I recently had it asked me, what was the difference between the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Iraq situation? The president went on national

television, and he showed the missiles. He showed what was happening in Cuba. He showed the ships coming in. There wasn't "we think. . . ." as we're now seeing. He showed the people proof, and they stood with him. That's the difference. This president has got to show the people something there.

DAITCH: It's an interesting thing, the dilemma between, you know, showing too much and not enough. Going back to the first sort of crisis, you know, the Bay of Pigs thing, the difference between that and the Cuban Missile Crisis is like a 180-degree turnaround.

McNALLY: That's right, a complete turnaround.

DAITCH: You were there already during the Bay of Pigs?

McNALLY: Right. I would suspect that, in retrospect, that the difference between those two was the president had relied on the information given to him in the Bay of Pigs, vis-a-vis the Cuban Missile Crisis when he determined, show me, prove it to me. He wasn't going to take anything any further for granted. And I think that's the whole key.

DAITCH: It appears to me, too, in looking back at some of the documentation of what happened, that when he first came into office, there was this series of events that was already well on its way. And, of course, he could have said "no," and he knew that he could have said "no." But he didn't because things were under way, and it seemed to be the thing to do at the time, for various reasons. But the second time around was. . . .

McNALLY: Well, I think in the first time around that he relied totally on the military input that he was getting from the military leaders. The second time around it was proven.

DAITCH: It's almost more of the transition from a civilian accepting military as being the right thing to a more civilian approach.

McNALLY: Absolutely.

DAITCH: But I can't imagine. . . . I don't know if you saw the president during that time. He was maybe in and out and what have you.

McNALLY: Yes. I did. Sure.

DAITCH: What kind of demeanor?

McNALLY: Demeanor was the same. He was focused, but his demeanor was the same. He would walk through. If he talked to anybody . . . business went on as usual. He would talk to people. You never knew what was going on when he was out there talking to groups of people.

DAITCH: Amazing.

McNALLY: It's amazing.

DAITCH: Yes.

McNALLY: And you know what was amazing also at the time, and we talked about it early on, was the throngs of people that wanted to come to Washington at that time, and did come to Washington at the time. And wanted to go to visit the White House because wherever he went, he would say, "Come to visit me because this is your house." They just came from everywhere.

DAITCH: That's interesting.

McNALLY: And as I indicated, they came by the millions.

DAITCH: Did people think that they might get to see the president?

McNALLY: Yes, they did.

DAITCH: Did they? Did people very often. . . . I mean was he very. . . . I mean obviously he has to control his time? But was he reasonably accessible as the president?

McNALLY: Yes, he wanted to see the people. I can give you an example. It was one Saturday, cherry blossom time in Washington. I went over to. . . . My office was. . . . I went to Kenny O'Donnell for a moment, and the president spotted us, and he grabbed me, and he said, "John, who are all of those people down around the Ellipse?" I said, "Those are people who are waiting to get in the White House." And I said, "But unfortunately, it's about quarter of twelve, and they're not going to get in. We close at twelve o'clock." And he said to me, "I want every person that's in that line at any time to come into the White House."

DAITCH: Wow!

McNALLY: And so what we would do was at twelve o'clock, we would send two police officers to the back of the line to say to anybody else coming, "You're going to have to come back." But anybody who was in that line,

they went through the White House. Unless on the occasion that there was a state visit or something that they couldn't do. But he wanted them, anybody that came, he wanted to make sure they went through the White House.

DAITCH: No kidding!

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: Isn't that amazing!

McNALLY: And there were times that he would walk from his office back to the mansion, and there would be people be there, and he would wave and shake hands with them. That was real, but he did it.

DAITCH: So what about Mrs. Kennedy? I mean she was very interested in the White House itself and its history.

McNALLY: She renovated the White House, and she was very much interested in people being able to see the White House. She put out the White House book and so forth, on the renovations that she did. But she wanted it to be very first class all the way through. I didn't have an awful lot of things to do with it. That was handled through the social office. But we would deal with her secretary, Mary Gallagher [Mary B. Gallagher], and with the social secretary, Tish Baldrige [Letitia "Tish" Baldrige], on these things. And it was rare that we ever closed the White House.

DAITCH: Really! Wow! You can't imagine that today, can you?

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: Did you see Mrs. Kennedy very often? Was she a presence very much in the White House?

McNALLY: Yes, I would see her frequently, and she was very . . . she was a very outgoing, friendly person. We would see her out with the children on the South Lawn and so forth from time to time.

DAITCH: So she was around?

McNALLY: Yes. She was around, yes, very much.

DAITCH: Do you remember anything in particular when you worked with her on any projects?

McNALLY: No. I worked basically through her secretary, you know. For instance, on some of her trips and all, I worked very much with Mary Gallagher as to setting up . . . particularly on the trip she made to Italy and then the trip she made to India and so forth, and doing some of the logistics of that trip. We worked on those very carefully. And as a matter of fact, Mary Gallagher in her book that she wrote, she referred to those events.

DAITCH: Yes. What about some of the other people who were around? Not the staff people, but the Cabinet people and advisors that came and went.

McNALLY: Well, I didn't have an awful lot directly to do with them. Ted Sorensen primarily worked with those types of people. Larry O'Brien, of course, worked with the congressional people. His staff, Mike Maniotose [Michael Maniotose] and Claude Desatelles[sp?], and Henry Hall Wilson, Chuck Daly [Charles U. Daly], and even Dick Dunno[sp?] [] at the time, when they wanted something for a congressional member of Congress or something that involved the White House in any way, a group that wanted to come in and so forth, we would work closely with them.

We would keep a list of what we had done for each congressional office, and that would be given to Larry O'Brien's office so they could monitor. They knew that we created five groups from Senator Humphrey's office request, we had a 1,212 people that went through the White House in August from your office. So we maintained a log of all of those visits.

DAITCH: Right. That makes sense. Were there other visits from, oh, I don't know who? These may be your constituents or something that they're just trying to do something nice for. Would there be other kinds of visits to the White House on behalf of a congressperson? I can't imagine what. Some dignitary or something.

McNALLY: Well, not really. Most of those would come. . . . But a congressman himself many times would come down, and he would have a group from . . . his Chamber of Commerce executives. And they would want to see the president. Well, that just couldn't happen. So we would have them out either in the Rose Garden or somewhere, and we would have a picture taken with the congressman with the group and myself. And then send copies of all these photographs to all of these people or to their local newspapers or that type of thing. So, yes, those were all part of congressional relations.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. So this would be a picture of these people with the White House in the background kind of thing.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. That makes sense. So did you ever get involved in any policy or

policy discussions or policy-making kinds of things?

McNALLY: Not really. I did most of the administrative and public affairs functions.

DAITCH: Mmmm hmmm. Did you talk to. . . . You were probably pretty good friends with Ken O'Donnell?

McNALLY: Yes. Oh, I talked to Kenny . . . I saw Kenny many hours a day.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Did you ever. . . .

McNALLY: And we would talk about. . . . Yes, we would talk things of a political nature or, you know, what this one or that one was talking about.

DAITCH: I'm thinking that you're good friends with him. You're no political slouch because you've been involved, active in politics from the time you were a youngster.

McNALLY: Sure. That's right.

DAITCH: And you guys must have probably had lots of. . . .

McNALLY: We would discuss things. You know, discussions we had in early '63 of who the Republican candidate might be, you know, and went through those types of things.

DAITCH: Were you thinking Goldwater [Barry Goldwater]?

McNALLY: Yes, well, we talked. But we were also thinking Bill Scranton [William Scranton] at the time was a potential candidate. And Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller], you know, we were looking at. There were a lot of different discussions.

DAITCH: What of the things that's just a fascinating aspect, I think, of this whole period . . . I mean the foreign policy was probably the biggest thing and the most intriguing thing. But, you know, there were huge things that were taking place in domestic policies, too, in domestic issues.

McNALLY: Yes. You had the issue of the steel issue, which was a major crisis at that time. The president made a discussion, and that stuck.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. What were your thoughts about that? Were you involved in that at all?

McNALLY: No, I wasn't involved in the policies of that. But I think the decision was right, and it proved to be right. They backed down. But we had. . . . A lot of the industry people, we tried to do things much the same as we did for the congressional people. Some of these industrial groups we tried to do things for.

DAITCH: I'm sure.

McNALLY: So that opened the door for those people.

DAITCH: Right. Did he have favorites or people that aggravated him, like the steel people?

McNALLY: I think so. But he had some congressional people that he thought very highly of.

DAITCH: Who were they? Which ones?

McNALLY: Well, let's look at the other side of the aisle. I think he thought very highly of Senator Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall] at the time.

DAITCH: I'm sorry?

McNALLY: Senator Saltonstall from Massachusetts. George Aiken from Vermont. There was a young congressman at the time out of western Massachusetts, Sovio Conti, that he was extremely. . . . These were all Republicans. Joe Martin [Joseph W. Martin], who had been the speaker of the House. So these people, he was extremely friendly with. I mentioned George Aiken. So he was. . . .

DAITCH: He strikes me as somewhat of a balanced person in some ways that. . . . I mean he was very careful about certain things. For example, civil rights. And of course that was a problem among the Democrats within his own party. But he was a very careful politician.

McNALLY: Oh, yes. He was very. . . . He had a line of where he wanted to go to and how he wanted to get there. But he didn't want to break the speed limit to get there and mess up someplace along the way. He was very deliberate and very thoughtful in what he was doing and how he was going to get there.

DAITCH: Yes. With the civil rights issues, did you ever have much to do? I mean some of the things like the March on Washington maybe that would have come under. . . .

McNALLY: Yes, that was it, and we weren't very concerned, you know, about. . . . The March on Washington was there, but that was being handled by the Metropolitan Police Department. The White House Police Department had things lined up. But that was very peaceful. It was rare that you had. . . . You always had protest groups, and they would sit across the street from the White House. But they weren't . . . it didn't interfere with the actual operations of the White House in any way.

DAITCH: Right. Nothing disruptive particularly.

McNALLY: No.

DAITCH: Did you have any . . . I've heard people say both ways, that Kennedy moved too quickly or Kennedy didn't move quickly enough with civil rights.

McNALLY: Well, I suppose that depends on who you were talking to and what persuasion they came from and so forth. I think he moved deliberately in what he was doing. I think he knew what he wanted, and he didn't want any setbacks in getting to where he wanted. So I think he moved cautiously.

DAITCH: Do you have any specific . . . oh, I don't know, moments that you remember? I mean he was such a punster, I guess. He was a funny guy. And I wonder if you have any moments that you remember, incidents, or just hanging out in the White House and he said something funny.

McNALLY: There's a lot of incidents that would be there. As I said, he had a memory that he never forgot. And I can remember one time we had a group of foreign ministers that were visiting the White House, and he spoke to them out in the Rose Garden. They had come with their wives and so forth, and this was actually a return visit of some of the Cabinet people from our country who had gone to visit these. And I had asked the question about, did the wives of the American Cabinet go? And I was told, "Yes." Well, that proved to be wrong. They hadn't gone. But I told the president who was out there. I used to have these little cards that we'd give him. So I told Kenny and the president.

So he went out there, and he's talking to them. And he remarks, "I'm delighted to have you here, particularly with your wives, as our wives went with you." And one of the Cabinet wives said, "We didn't go!" So he just brushed it off, and he kept going. Couple of months later we were out in Palm Springs, California, and he was on a resting. . . . We were watching Bill Scranton on television. It was Kenny and Dave Powers and myself. I forget who else was there.

But we were just watching this television thing, and it was an interview with Bill Scranton. And I just said something to the effect that, "He's somebody you've got to watch, Mr. President, because he can't run for governor anymore." He said, "You sure of

that?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Yeah, you're the guy who was also sure that the wives went to . . ." And this was six months later. ". . . went to Europe." So, you know, he never forgot. He had a memory like a hawk.

DAITCH: That's funny. I don't know why, but I always ask this question. It's just funny to me. But did he ever chew you out for anything?

McNALLY: Not really.

DAITCH: So he wasn't likely to get inflammatory that way?

McNALLY: No, no. I never had. . . . No.

DAITCH: Because I'm sure people made mistakes. And if you're the president of the United States. . . .

McNALLY: That's exactly right. But, no, he never did. If he didn't like it, he might have told Ken O'Donnell to tell me something, but not necessarily. No.

DAITCH: Do you know if he ever did?

McNALLY: I don't . . . I can't really picture that, you know, happening. You know there's a famous story around that the true version of it was the *New York Herald Tribune*. . . . Do you remember? Are you familiar with that, where he was very angry with the *Herald Tribune*. He called me one day: How many subscriptions do we have? And I told him exactly how many we had. He said, "Stop it! I don't want them anymore. I don't want them in here." So I called Pierre, and I said, "Pierre, the president wants to cancel these." "Oh? Better do it." And so I checked with Kenny, and we did, we cancelled them. Of course as time has gone on, Pierre's kind of forgotten that portion, that he was in on that decision. But that's right. So did he get angry with things? Yes. I think he was angry with the *Herald Tribune* at that time. Yeah, we did cancel.

DAITCH: What was that about? I've forgotten. I do remember that story, though.

McNALLY: It was a series of editorials that they were writing, and he just hasn't happy with it. And we substituted the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*.

DAITCH: There you go.

McNALLY: For the *New York Herald Tribune*.

DAITCH: Now did that go on through the whole . . . did you ever get the *Herald*

Tribune back?

McNALLY: No, we got it back after a while. Yes. So, yes, he gets angry.

DAITCH: Well, I mean, he's entitled. Everyone gets angry. But I was just curious. I can't imagine what it would be like to be dressed down by the president of the United States.

McNALLY: No, I don't know of anybody really that did that, you know.

DAITCH: I've heard over and over again what a collegial, pleasant atmosphere it was.

McNALLY: Yes, it was. I mean it was we were all. . . . Of course we had all been together during the campaign. And keep in mind, when you look at the size of White House staffs in the last few administrations versus what we had, it was night and day different. I mean you've been doing the history of these things, and how many staff people are there, did we have, vis-a-vis what they have today?

DAITCH: Right. Absolutely. You can name them all.

McNALLY: You can name them, absolutely. You knew who they were, and everybody knew each other.

DAITCH: Now, you traveled some with the president.

McNALLY: Yes, I did.

DAITCH: When you were traveling, you wouldn't maybe necessarily have been doing the same things as you did when you were at the White House. What did you do when you traveled?

McNALLY: Yes, I did.

DAITCH: Exactly? Really?

McNALLY: Primarily almost that type of thing, yes.

DAITCH: Just travel arrangements?

McNALLY: Travel arrangements and that type of thing, yes. As we progressed, though, gradually more and more we relied on the career travel office really to handle that type of thing. And it was much more organized than the

campaigns were.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. So then what would your job . . . once you got some of that burden taken off of you, you probably. . . .

McNALLY: It's a burden of all of these groups and all of these people coming to the White House. The administration function was getting heavier every day.

DAITCH: Yes, it could have been fairly brutal. So what were you . . . I mean just on behalf of the president you'd shake hands and say a few words?

McNALLY: Say a few words and try and do a little bit of research on who they were and what they were about and talk to them. Then we would follow that up, as I indicated, with . . . it was our PR effort to get, we would get pictures out to all of these people.

DAITCH: I'm sure.

McNALLY: You know, everything was based . . . you were building up for the next election.

DAITCH: Exactly.

McNALLY: Which unfortunately never came.

DAITCH: Yes. So tell me about . . . I read that you were not there in Dallas when he was assassinated.

McNALLY: No, I was not. I was at the White House.

DAITCH: And you were about to have a gallbladder operation or something.

McNALLY: Yes. You've really done your research. That's correct. I had had a gallbladder attack, and I was about to have my . . . and which I ended up doing about a week after the president's surgery. But I was in the White House when the word came that the president had been shot. Jerry Vane [], who was the chief of the White House detail. . . .

DAITCH: The Secret Service?

McNALLY: Secret Service. He wasn't in Dallas. He was here. . . . [End of Tape #1]

DAITCH: So you were in the White House.

McNALLY: Right. And when Jerry Vane came down to notify me that the president had been shot. . . . Of course the Secret Service office was on the second floor of the East Wing. My office was on the first floor of the East Wing, but I had a much larger office. So they moved all of their . . . they transferred all of the phone calls down into my office.

In the meantime my first reaction was that. . . . I had just come back from the staff mess, and I knew that Clark Clifford [Clark M. Clifford], who was chairman of the Foreign _____ Board, was in the staff dining room. So I scooted over immediately to notify him as to what was happening. They immediately went back to their offices because they had no knowledge.

DAITCH: So nobody knew that he was dead yet?

McNALLY: No, we did not know.

DAITCH: They just knew that shots had been fired.

McNALLY: We knew that he had been shot. We had indications also that Johnson had been shot.

DAITCH: Oh, gosh!

McNALLY: When, in fact, it was John Connally who had been shot. But the indications were that the vice president had been shot. Knew that he was on the way to a hospital. We didn't even know what hospital it was. Then, of course, we got word that he had been . . . the president had died. And we still didn't know about Johnson.

But our biggest concern then became about John McCormack who always declined security and who was the speaker. And we tried to locate him, which was a real . . . when I say "we," the Secret Service were trying to locate him to get some protection because we didn't know what was happening.

We didn't know if this was a conspiracy. We knew nothing. And keep in mind that nobody, up to that time, had any type of experience in this. I mean Secret Service job is to try to protect him, but they hadn't had any experience in this. So that really you were flying by the seat of your pants, if you want for a better description, as to what you do. We were able to locate the speaker. He had gone to the Hotel Washington, as he did every day, where he lived because his wife was of no help, and he would go to have lunch with her every day. So the Secret Service was able to contact them.

DAITCH: And they were working out of your office?

McNALLY: Out of my office, only because it was a larger office. And then we got a

phone call in from Senator Humphrey who had gotten word, and he came immediately. He was as white as this cup we're looking at here when he walked in. And, you know, everybody was in a state of shock. We were in constant contact then with the Secret Service in Dallas as to what was happening. But it was a long day, I'll assure you.

DAITCH: Oh, yes. I bet. I think one of the things that seems to be hardest about the whole. . . . I have trouble talking about the assassination, and I wasn't even there. But I mean it was a very close-knit group of people in the White House.

McNALLY: Right. Yes.

DAITCH: And it's not just . . . this isn't just a colleague that was assassinated. This was their leader, everybody's leader.

McNALLY: This was the leader of the Free World. And, you know, the outpouring. . . . You know what's interesting? Forty years ago this November, the president was assassinated. And yet today people of my age, much older than you, know exactly what they were doing at the moment of the assassination. And I don't think there's any other history event that people have that memory. And that's amazing. And I tell you what, it shows the great love and respect the American people had for John Kennedy.

DAITCH: Right. Well, not just the American people.

McNALLY: All over the world. But I'm saying in this country people, you know, they know exactly, you're right. Yes.

DAITCH: It's an amazing phenomenon. And, you know, again, young, vigorous, charismatic man is cut down in a second. It was shock for everyone. For you, working in the White House! And you just have to carry on. You have to figure out what to do.

McNALLY: And you have no experience. Manchester's [William Manchester] book criticized me in part for some of the things that I did.

DAITCH: Oh, let's talk about that. I don't think I read that.

McNALLY: Well, you know, he was critical of, you know, we were _____ because we moved the office into where it was. We did that because Secret Service didn't have room. They asked. We lined up the people to go to the airport to greet the president's body when it came. The people at the Cabinet and so forth were

there. These were just things that you did because we were such a close-knit group.

But you had no experience. You had no background. You had to do what you had to do without being able to go to a book and saying, well, what do you do on. . . . There were no books. There was nothing. So I think what everybody who was involved, Secret Service, the White House staff that was there, most of them were, everybody did what they thought was in the best interests of the United States of America.

DAITCH: So what was the problem with bringing people to the airport to . . . I mean it would seem. . . .

McNALLY: That was _____ critical. You know I. . . .

DAITCH: That would seem a gesture of respect both to the assassinated president and the new president.

McNALLY: That's right. There was no problem. I mean these were little things that came up. But I don't see it. . . . And then, of course, we were over the next few days busy trying to make arrangements: a funeral list, and who was going here, and who was staying there, and it was extremely hard. And we were dealing with not only the work in the White House, but you had the family that you had to deal with, which was very easy. I mean they were just tremendously. Sargent Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver] really was the coordinator from the family standpoint, and he was just tremendous.

But then you were dealing with State Department people, foreign dignitaries. You were dealing with congressional people. You were dealing with governors. So it was hard trying to accommodate all of the people who wanted to fit into a very limited St. Matthew's Cathedral. And then, of course, you had the funeral procession from St. Matthew's to Arlington Cemetery, again which was long, millions of people along the route. So there were different, little problems that cropped up. But I think all in all everything worked out well.

DAITCH: Oh, yes. It's an amazing. . . . There are a couple of books that I think Sid Davis directed me to them. But wonderful accounts of the assassination and the aftermath written by AP people. Just beautiful. I mean the whole thing was very, you know, it was very dignified.

McNALLY: Yes. And, you know, you had the in-between, you had the body at the White House, body at the Capitol, and you had all of these people. Then, of course, in between you had the assassination then of Ruby [Jack Ruby]. The world was chaotic, for want of a better word.

DAITCH: How was President Johnson? I guess he came right in. It was the right thing to do; he's the president.

McNALLY: Yes. He was it. He became president, and he was different, totally different. I mean it was a totally different atmosphere. I mean he could be cold as a fish one minute and warm as, you know, he was . . . it was different. It was totally different. And yet Lady Bird [Claudia Alta Taylor Johnson] was just as warm as they could get. But, you know, shortly after he became president, he had a meeting in the East Room with all of the Kennedy Cabinet and Kennedy staff and so forth. He indicated he wanted everybody to stay and to be part of, you know. . . . But you knew that this wasn't going to last, that he had to have his own people. It was a totally different operation.

DAITCH: How long did you stay?

McNALLY: I stayed with him for about a year and a half.

DAITCH: Oh, you did! That's a long time.

McNALLY: Yes. Ken O'Donnell had left. I guess the last two that really were there were Larry O'Brien and myself. Larry left to become postmaster general. And then I left to go, I just. . . . But I stayed about a year and a half.

DAITCH: Obviously it was different because part of what's difficult about the assassination is not just that your boss was killed, but he was a friend.

McNALLY: A friend. There's the key. And, you see, we were just . . . we were people to Lyndon Johnson. To John Kennedy we were family, we were friends, we were, you know. . . .

DAITCH: And I mean in a way that shouldn't reflect too badly on President Johnson because you all were Kennedy's friends from years before.

McNALLY: That's right. It shouldn't reflect on him, no. No.

DAITCH: And he probably needed to have his own people.

McNALLY: He needed to have his own people. And they came from a different walk of life, a different philosophy of life.

DAITCH: It's a different geographical area if nothing else.

McNALLY: A whole different. . . . That's right. Everything was different. Yes, it was a different time.

DAITCH: Was there any time to . . . I mean I know the first few days were probably just days of shock. But was there any time to mourn in between any of the activities?

McNALLY: Not really, I tell you. Because you just, we were going . . . I'd get home at one or two in the morning, and sleep for an hour, and take a shower, and put a new suit on, and go back to work, and get things done. Then, of course, after the funeral, Thanksgiving Day, Kenny called me and said that Mrs. Kennedy was going out to the cemetery, and he wanted me to go along. And there was Pierre, and . . . there's one of the famous pictures of her with her sister at the grave. And it's Kenny and Larry O'Brien, Pierre Salinger, and myself. Then I think that's when it really sank in. Then you said, oh, boy!

Then shortly thereafter, in three days, I went into the hospital. In those days. . . . Today you're going to have your gallbladder out, and you go home the same day. You were in the hospital for two weeks in those days. They cut a road map on you. But, you know, one of the great things, I can remember when I came back from the recovery room, there was a personal note and a big bouquet of flowers from Mrs. Kennedy. Then I think it was the very next . . . no, that day she called my wife. But the very next day she called me then. I mean, you know, here's a woman who's just become a widow.

DAITCH: Her universe just shattered.

McNALLY: Yes. And she was taking time to. . . . And that's the kind of person she was.

DAITCH: Yes. That's amazing. I've often heard . . . I mean so many people so admired her behavior through the whole thing. She was an incredibly strong woman.

McNALLY: Incredibly strong woman. I mean she just epitomized dignity of America.

DAITCH: Absolutely. I've looked at all these photographs and read some of the text on people's responses; people just seemed to draw strength from her strength. She held together.

McNALLY: She did. There's no question about it. Yes.

DAITCH: At the same time, I can't imagine. . . .

McNALLY: And then a little note that I have that my family will cherish forever. It was just a very simple, "Thank you for all you did for the president and for me. Jackie Kennedy." And that makes it all worthwhile.

DAITCH: Oh, absolutely.

McNALLY: You know, she didn't have to do that, but she did.

DAITCH: She was so tremendous at those kinds of things.

McNALLY: Yes. But at any rate, so that's our history.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, that's not all. Let's regroup for a minute. That's kind of a chronology, and we talked a little bit about these odds and ends things. I want to see if there's anything that I haven't touched on. Actually, one of the things that I would like . . . you've already told this story to Bill Hartigan, but I want you to tell it again just because it's funny, about the brown shoes.

McNALLY: Oh, you mean about Dave Powers. Well, yes, that was down at the Houston . . . when the president spoke to the Ministers' Association in Houston. What had happened was that Dave always brought . . . since he was the president's personal assistant, he brought in the clothes. And what would happen is when we would arrive, he and I would jump into a police car and get into the hotel so everything would be ready. The president would get off the plane, greet all the people as he always did.

The last that Dave saw him on the *Caroline* was that the president had a brown suit, pressed very nice. So fine. So Dave takes in a fresh shirt and so forth, and doesn't bring black shoes. Now we get to . . . we're into the hotel, and Dave spots the president coming, and he doesn't have the brown suit. Dave had brought another suit, but he didn't bring black shoes. Now we hear the phone; it's the president. "Dave! Dave!" Dave says, "John!" He'd come down to my room. "Let's get out of here before. . . ." So the president has to go before the ministers in black, but he's got a pair of brown shoes on. Now, you know, he's a meticulous dresser to begin with. So the speech is over. We watched it. Well, you couldn't tell what color shoes he had on. They were behind the podium. Dave says, "Let's get back to the plane." Now we grab everything we've got. We clear up. We're starting down the elevator, we hit the bottom, and open the door, and who's there? The president, police.

DAITCH: And Dave's trying to avoid the president.

McNALLY: He's trying to avoid him. And he says, "Dave!" He says, "Mr. President, you were great! You tied up the brown shoe vote tonight." And the president looked, and he just broke into . . . he couldn't get mad. I mean that. . . . You tied up the brown shoe vote tonight.

DAITCH: That's great.

McNALLY: Oh, yeah. There was another story that I tell like that that I remember about Dave. We were in Scranton, Pennsylvania, the Hotel Casey, and it had been a long day, and the president was taking a bath. The Hotel Casey was famous for oyster stew, and he wanted some. So they brought it. Dave brought it into the president sitting in the bathtub so he could have it. And as he did, Dave tripped, and he spilt it.

DAITCH: In the bathtub?

McNALLY: In the bathtub. The president was. . . . And Dave said, "Well, look, Senator, look at all the broth you got." Oh, Dave had a tremendous way with being able to relax the president.

DAITCH: Oh, yes. It sounds like he had a quick wit.

McNALLY: Oh, he was . . . oh, yes, great wit.

DAITCH: Oh, my God. But the president enjoyed. . . . I mean he. . . .

McNALLY: He enjoyed Dave.

DAITCH: And he enjoyed humor, too.

McNALLY: Yes, oh, yes. He enjoyed humor. Yes.

DAITCH: I see those press conferences at the library, you know, you can watch them; we have videos of all of them. And he's so . . . just such a masterful, not just a conversationalist, but he's quick-witted. He could just either stave something off or he could enjoy a little humor with the press.

McNALLY: Oh, yes. And he'd go back and forth with them. Sure. Oh, yes.

DAITCH: Yes, he was quick with them. The press liked him?

McNALLY: Yes, they did. I think the press genuinely liked him. You know, and there were certain people that you could tell that they liked him. I think Hugh Sidey, whom I think was one of the great writers of the time, Hugh Sidey, I think, in all of his writings that came through that he liked him. I think that Bill Lawrence, who was at the *New York Times* at the time, and then went with ABC, Old Gravel Voice they used to call him, and I think he genuinely liked him. I think Merriman Smith, who was the UPI, and, you know, Helen Thomas, who was just a young reporter at the time that she first came; I think she genuinely liked him.

DAITCH: Was there anybody that you can remember . . . a person who didn't like him would have probably stood out more than somebody. . . .

McNALLY: Well, you know, I'm not sure that Novak, who's always been a very conservative guy.

DAITCH: People like that.

McNALLY: Yes, people like that.

DAITCH: I just think that he was so personable and quick-witted that the press. . . . In the videos of that, the press people seemed to enjoy that.

McNALLY: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: He was just awfully smooth with that sort of thing.

McNALLY: Absolutely. He was really good.

DAITCH: But he went in prepared. So who prepared him for these kinds of things?

McNALLY: Oh, Ted Sorensen would prepare him, and he would go over the potential questions from Pierre Salinger's staff. And then Kenny O'Donnell would certainly prepare him on the political aspects of it. He was well prepared.

DAITCH: Yes. So you all kind of just pitched in?

McNALLY: Yes. But he knew, you know, he was all mind. He was a quick study, and he had reviewed all of these things.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. What about Robert Kennedy? I mean he was attorney-general. He had his own things to do.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: But was he a participant in some of these kinds of daily routine things?

McNALLY: Oh, yes. The president and he talked many times a day.

DAITCH: They were good buddies?

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: Not just brothers.

McNALLY: Yes, they were good buddies. Yes.

DAITCH: I'm trying to think about, you know, I'm trying to picture the routine. Because when I think about those years, I can't help it, I think about the Berlin Crisis. I think about the Cuban Missile Crisis. And those were all these periods of crisis. But what was the routine every day?

McNALLY: Well, I think if you look at the routine and you talk about these things, I think look at the . . . I think of the esteem that he was held in. I think of two things that stick out in my mind. A), the famous speech in Berlin when you had a million people. All he would've had to say was "over the wall," and a million people would've gone right over that wall. But look at the tremendous turnout that he had there.

DAITCH: Were you there in Berlin?

McNALLY: Yes. Then you went to Ireland, and, you know, which was to him not a state visit but almost a vacation, if you want for a better word. Yes, it was a state visit. But he just loved every second of it, loved every second of all of the people, and so forth.

DAITCH: And they loved him.

McNALLY: Oh, that's what I'm getting at. Yes. The adulation was just unbelievable.

DAITCH: Yes. What is that, the Berlin speech? I mean it must have just given you chills to have. . . .

McNALLY: Yes. "Ich bin ein Berliner." You know. It was amazing.

DAITCH: Yes, I've seen photographs of that. It's just unbelievable that people. . . .

McNALLY: Yes, totally unbelievable.

DAITCH: What does that feel like to you when you're traveling? I suppose at the time it's just what you do.

McNALLY: You're right.

DAITCH: But still you're traveling with the president.

McNALLY: And you just see these. You know, first and foremost, I don't think any of us had ever seen a crowd that large at one place at one time.

DAITCH: Yes. It's just an amazing thing.

McNALLY: Yes. Then I look at another trip that he had in which it showed that the people . . . how much they loved him. He went to Costa Rica, and there was an awful lot of pro and con from the State Department and from the CIA and the defense people about what kind of welcome you would get and so forth. I can remember landing at the airport in Costa Rica, San Jose, driving down a mountain route, and seeing hundreds of thousands of people out all with small American flags, all along the route. And you say, what is this? And it was the . . . he was the hope of millions of people around the world, for freedom and a better life.

DAITCH: I think that's true. That would be such a good note to end on because it's beautiful. But I still want to ask more questions.

McNALLY: That's all right.

DAITCH: I always do this because I want to talk as long as I can. I'm thinking about, you know, this kind of reception in Latin America and other places, but Latin America in particular. This was not just his personal charisma. These are the policies that he was pursuing.

McNALLY: Absolutely. You're right. The Alliance for Progress is just a real example of that. And these people, they knew that what John Kennedy, as president of the United States, that they had the ears of Big Brother, if you want for a better word, in their interest, to make a better life for them.

DAITCH: Yes. Now, this all sounds kind of happy happy. But were there people who also looked at him and said, You're interfering in Cuba. You're doing the Big Brother thing in Cuba. I mean there must have been that as well.

McNALLY: Oh, sure there was. You always. . . . You know, you had in that day, you had the left-leaning governments, those with communistic tendencies, throughout the world. Oh, yes, sure you did. But by and far, you had the large majority of people with you. I think that in those days we no longer were the Ugly Americans, and I think to the great majority of people. I'm not sure that's that way anymore.

DAITCH: No.

McNALLY: You know, I look at the protest of the last few weeks, and it concerns me

greatly.

DAITCH: Me, too. A very different world.

McNALLY: I just had a letter not long ago from a close friend who is a former ranking official in the government of Ireland, a close friend, in which he said, "The people of Ireland long for the leadership of John Kennedy."

DAITCH: Yes. I've asked people about this. I mean you're a person who's been around for many years, and you follow politics. Do you see anybody coming up that is even remotely that kind of a leader?

McNALLY: No, I don't. Not really at the moment. I want to make it very clear, I'm looking at it as a nonpartisan. I look to both sides of the aisle, and I don't see. . . . Let me put it this way: I don't see either party at the moment having somebody with that charisma who can unite all of America who's interested in America first and a political diversion second. I don't see that now. I think America is longing for a hero. I particularly look toward . . . I have 16 grandchildren. And I look at my grandchildren who run in age from about one year to about 24. So they're in college, and they're in high school, and some aren't even in school. They don't have anybody really to look up to. And I think that that's a tragedy. I think we need to get a hero. Not a war hero per se, but a hero that we can all unite behind and look up to.

DAITCH: Right. You know, we could say there are all these things about Kennedy, you know, about his personal failings or whatever. Do you think that those affect the way that he is generally viewed?

McNALLY: No. Personal failings? No. I have a lot of problems with those, by the way. But that's. . . .

DAITCH: No, go ahead.

McNALLY: Well, you know, the first thing is I hear about all of these women and all those things. And I can say, I never walked into the White House without signing in, having my badge. My wife, God bless her, never walked into the White House without signing in. The records are there. The Secret Service records are there. Why don't the press ever look at those?

DAITCH: Right, right. So you believe a lot of this is just rumor. You were there a lot. You traveled with him a lot.

McNALLY: Absolutely. I just think a lot of this is just so much garbage. Did he like women? Of course he did. He didn't like men. I mean so. . . . And I don't

have a problem with that. But some of these people, the names that they're saying. . . . I just say this to myself, when, how? Look at the travel manifest. They are part of the Kennedy Library records.

DAITCH: Right. Yes.

McNALLY: I hope historians look at those.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. Well, and the thing is it's actually not something that comes up all that often because it's not necessarily the main portion of history that anyone's interested in. But it is something that seems to come up as often as the real things.

McNALLY: Absolutely. It comes up too often. And I think it misses totally the greatness of this man.

DAITCH: Did you have a feel for that at the time? Just out of curiosity. I mean, sure, he's a smart man, he's a good man, you admire his politics and his. . . .

McNALLY: Did I ever think that he was great at that time?

DAITCH: Yes.

McNALLY: No. I think that's something you come to appreciate as time has passed. And I think that the. . . . Maybe this is the way to end it. The greatness of this man was the inspiration that he inspired in people of all persuasions throughout the world to better themselves.

DAITCH: Wow! That's a really good ending.

McNALLY: Amen.

DAITCH: I like that. I'm going to go ahead and stop. . . . [Pause] Last reminiscences.

McNALLY: When we went back to Palm Beach after the election, when we were down in Palm Beach, we had got into Palm Beach probably about two-thirty or so in the morning. We were staying at the Palm Beach Towers, and the president was at the family estate. We went over there in the morning, Bill Hartigan and Dave and Kenny and myself. About ten o'clock the president came out, and one of the first things he said, "Where are your wives?"

DAITCH: Really!

McNALLY: Well, they're home. "You guys aren't going to be running around Palm Beach without your wives. Get them down here."

DAITCH: Oh, how nice.

McNALLY: That was the type of thing he did.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. I want to say, too, for the record about what you just told me before, when we had turned the tapes off, about him having the wives come along on the. . . .

McNALLY: It was the last. . . . During the campaign, you know, we had been working 18, 20 hours a day type of thing. The president just decided, you know, this might be a time to let your wives really see what you've been doing. So he invited the wives, particularly of those people who were from the staff from Massachusetts, to ride . . . to fly with us the last two or three days in the New England end of the campaign to see what it was all about and what it was like. So that while he wanted to be elected president of the United States, he also was concerned about people.

DAITCH: Yes. I mean who would think of that, that kind of thing?

McNALLY: Yes. But this is what he did, and that's the type of person he was.

DAITCH: Was Mrs. Kennedy. . . . She was pregnant, right?

McNALLY: Yes.

DAITCH: So she wasn't really along.

McNALLY: She was not, no.

DAITCH: But he told you to bring your wives.

McNALLY: Bring the wives. We scheduled them on. And they all traveled and saw what it was like.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. That is so wonderful. I think that's a good example of the kind of character that we're talking about.

McNALLY: Right.

DAITCH: Do you have any other examples of things that you can . . . I love these little anecdotes that are. . . .

McNALLY: I suppose we could sit here for days and think of these things as they come along.

DAITCH: We could, we could. Yes, yes. I'm trying to think if there's anything else that I should ask you, as long as we've turned the tape back on. Any other details that I should ask you about.

McNALLY: Well, you know, as I think of these things, I can jot them down and give them to you.

DAITCH: You can and you should, yes, because they're actually wonderful little things. Did you remember seeing the kids a lot around the White House?

McNALLY: Not an awful lot, but, you know, from time to time you did. No, Mrs. Kennedy was very protective of those children.

DAITCH: Oh, sure.

McNALLY: Dave Powers probably saw them more than anybody.

DAITCH: Yes, he would have. Did he got over to the East Wing very often? Or he just happened to be. . . .

McNALLY: Who's that, the president?

DAITCH: No.

McNALLY: Dave Powers?

DAITCH: Yes.

McNALLY: Dave had an office right next to mine in the East Wing.

DAITCH: Oh, he did?

McNALLY: So when he wasn't over in the foyer of the White House, he would be over in his office.

DAITCH: So you thought he saw the kids more often than most people.

McNALLY: Oh, yes. Dave saw the. . . . Anybody of the staff who saw him was Dave.

DAITCH: Because I remember all these wonderful photographs and stuff. But at the same time, it was my understanding that, you know, the president's working. He can't just. . . . But the kids would come in from time to time just to cheer him up.

McNALLY: Yes. Sure.

DAITCH: Okay. All right. Well, we missed our wonderful ending that was lovely and full of grava, but we have a couple of good end pieces.

McNALLY: Fine.

DAITCH: That's great. [End of Tape #2]

[End of Interview]