

W. Arthur (Wendell Arthur) Garrity Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 10/17/1977
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Garrity, (1920 - 1999), United States Attorney, (1961 - 1966); judge, (1966 - 1985); senior judge, (1985 -1990), discusses the presidential primary in Wisconsin, working on the 1952 senate campaign, and Robert F. Kennedy's work in the Justice Department, among other issues.

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W. Arthur (Wendell Arthur) Garrity – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

W. Arthur Garrity, Jr.

October 17, 1977
Boston, Massachusetts

By Bill Hartigan

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HARTIGAN: I'm in the office of Judge Arthur Garrity, and the purpose of my visit to Judge Garrity is to interview the judge on behalf of the Oral History Department of the John F. Kennedy Library. Judge, I suppose we'll start off with the obvious question. When and where did you first meet the last president?

GARRITY: Well, I have a little difficulty being certain, but I think that the first time I met him was at the Harvard Club in Boston. He was a congressman at the time and had either announced his candidacy for the United States Senate or there was talk to that effect. And he gave a speech on foreign policy to a crowded main dining room at the Harvard Club on Commonwealth Avenue, and I had planned to go. And the chairman of the meeting told me to be prepared to put a question to the congressman on some aspect of his discussion when the meeting was thrown open to questions. That was the first time I realized that when you do finish a talk in a situation like that it's nice to have questions already planted in the audience. He didn't know what the question was to be, but I boned up on the subject a little bit myself and was able to ask an intelligent question. And I met him after that talk.

HARTIGAN: Do you remember the question?

GARRITY: Oh, no. I have no idea of what that was.

HARTIGAN: You were satisfied with the answer, I'm assuming.

GARRITY: Well, yes. I was really more anxious to put in an intelligent question than I was to get an intelligent answer.

HARTIGAN: And then the next time you met him was?

GARRITY: I can't really recall. It might have been within a matter of months thereafter. But it was in connection with this senatorial campaign, I think. That was the first senatorial campaign.

HARTIGAN: What, 1952?

GARRITY: Yes. And I was then on a so-called "speakers bureau," or it was a group of persons supporting his candidacy who were available to talk. And I remember meeting him only casually. It was Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] who, you know, was the campaign manager, and I remember quite vividly the first meeting I had with Bobby Kennedy which was in connection with that campaign. Because he looked to me as if he was too young to have completed college, perhaps even high school. He was very, very young looking in those days. And he addressed a group of us in an office on the second floor at Batterymarch Street here in Boston. And there might have been a ten or a dozen men in the group, and I think that Bobby almost never looked up from the tops of his shoes. He had looked at the floor almost all of the time he was talking to the group of us. And I think John Kennedy, well, either passed the door and waved hello on that occasion or on some similar occasion. But I never had any real personal dealings with John Kennedy such as I did with Robert.

HARTIGAN: But then you proceeded to become active in that campaign, didn't you?

GARRITY: Not substantially. I was the person on whose doorstep campaign literature was dropped in Wellesley. I was the so called "Wellesley Kennedy secretary" and had a small organization of people interested in his candidacy who distributed material out in Wellesley. I remember helping to arrange some minor aspects of the first tea that was held in connection with that campaign which was held up in Worcester. And I remember meeting Polly Fitzgerald at Thompson's Spa on Washington Street before her first visit up to Worcester, suggesting people whom she might see, things like that. And I think that was probably the year when Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] was nominated for the presidential nomination. I'm not positive of that, but I think that's the case. And Maurice Donahue [Maurice A. Donahue] had been selected by Governor Dever [Paul A. Dever] and Stevenson and Congressman Kennedy and others to head up what was called a "Dollars for Democrats Drive," and they had an office over on

Tremont Street. And I was asked by Ken O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], I think, to help there, and I did some work in that office but, you know, just as sort of an assistant to Maurice Donahue.

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HARTIGAN: But you were secretary of Wellesley, you said?

GARRITY: Yes.

HARTIGAN: And that was basically Republican territory, wasn't it?

GARRITY: It still is.

HARTIGAN: It still is?

GARRITY: Yes.

HARTIGAN: You had your work cut out for you.

GARRITY: Well, yes, but the senator ran, of course, far better in Wellesley than the usual Democratic candidate does. You may have to help me in remembering who his opponent was. Was that the time that Vincent Celeste [Vincent J. Celeste]...

HARTIGAN: Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge].

GARRITY: ...Celeste was the second time?

HARTIGAN: Yes.

GARRITY: '52, was....

HARTIGAN: Lodge. '58 was....

GARRITY: Celeste.

HARTIGAN: Celeste.

GARRITY: Right, right. But he still did better against Lodge than most. Most Democrats would run, but of course Lodge defeated him two or three to one.

HARTIGAN: In Wellesley?

GARRITY: Yes.

HARTIGAN: Did you have any contact with him after he was elected?

GARRITY: Probably, but so fleeting.

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HARTIGAN: Or with any of his staff like Bobby and, or Kenny?

GARRITY: Not really. It was really so casual that it didn't amount to more than a handshake at some party, dinner or public meeting. There was never any private communication that I had with John Kennedy in those days and very little thereafter.

HARTIGAN: Dick Maguire [Richard Maguire] was in the Hill law firm at the time, was that correct?

GARRITY: Yes, but... That is correct.

HARTIGAN: He was quite active.

GARRITY: Well, yes. He was the one who was called in by either O'Donnell or one of the Kennedys – it would be John Kennedy – to head up the effort to remove William H. Burke, Jr., of Hatfield as the chairman of the state Democratic committee and to replace him with a Kennedy supporter who I think was Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch].

HARTIGAN: Pat Lynch, yeah.

GARRITY: And I recall Maguire actually sending out the telegrams to the members of the state committee that would either set up meetings between them and John Kennedy, or between them and Kennedy's representative. I'm a little hazy on the details.

HARTIGAN: That's exactly right. I remember that.

GARRITY: Quite clearly. So that it was really through the friendship that developed between O'Donnell and Maguire that I got more involved in the Kennedy campaigns subsequent to '52. And '58 was the first time I really, you know, did anything of any significance and, even then, it wasn't that great.

HARTIGAN: Well, tell us about the 1958 campaign, as you recall it.

GARRITY: Well, in '58....

HARTIGAN: '52 was the year that Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] ran against Adlai Stevenson and Dever ran against Herter [Christian A. Herter].

GARRITY: Yeah, that was the year when Dever gave the speech at the Democratic national convention and had the perspiration rolling off his face and damaged himself enormously, according to all the writers. And that was the year when Taft

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[Robert A. Taft] and Eisenhower had their bitter struggle before the Republican national convention. It had such ramifications in Massachusetts for years and years thereafter. That's when Basil Brewer left the Eisenhower fold because he was bitter about the – he's the publisher of the New Bedford Standard Times – and he was bitter about the treatment he said, in his opinion, that Taft had received at the convention. And that was supposedly the time when Eisenhower forces obtained important support in the Massachusetts Republican delegation by a visit from Tom Dewey [Thomas E. Dewey], who was working for Eisenhower, to Robert Choate [Robert B. Choate], the president of the Boston Herald Traveler Corporation. And as a result of discussions, according to the story at the time, or I should say the understanding at the time because it was never printed, but according to the understanding at the time, the upshot of the Dewey-Choate conversations and discussions was a strong endorsement of the Eisenhower candidacy by the Herald Traveler and the alienation of Basil Brewer and Taft supporters in Massachusetts. And that, as you know, Bill, over the years worked to the advantage of Kennedy candidacies because, for example, in the Lodge-Kennedy fight, or election contest, the margin of the Kennedy victory was in an area probably influence by the New Bedford Standard Times.

HARTIGAN: Of course, also, if my memory serves me right, wasn't then Senator Lodge one of the originators of the Eisenhower movement.

GARRITY: Oh, very much so.

HARTIGAN: And devoted a great deal of time to that.

GARRITY: Oh indeed. He said that he devoted so much time to the...

HARTIGAN: He blamed his loss on that.

GARRITY: ...Eisenhower campaign that he neglected Massachusetts.

HARTIGAN: And he blamed that for his loss to Kennedy.

GARRITY: Yes.

HARTIGAN: Not so much Kennedy's appeal.

GARRITY: Well, that's his story. [Laughter] That's a matter of opinion. Getting back to '58, I can't recall whether Ken O'Donnell asked me directly, but probably he did. But I started traveling around the state with O'Donnell and O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and sometimes with Dave Powers [David F. Powers] and had a desk indeed at the headquarters – this is in the summer and early fall of '58 – which was located at 50 Tremont St. in Boston and did the computing of mileage and time necessary to schedule then Senator Kennedy's campaign in Massachusetts. Ken O'Donnell or O'Brien, I can't remember exactly, gave me the dates during a 30-day period, if that's what it was, when Senator Kennedy would be in

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Massachusetts and available for campaign activity. And I actually laid out the itinerary and submitted it to O'Donnell who, I think, adopted it for the most part, although I'm sure there were changes made after I did it. I did the initial scheduling of the Kennedy re-election campaign in '58 from the 50 Tremont Street headquarters. And as I say, traveled around some, a little bit. Well I went around, you know, maybe two or three nights a week with O'Donnell and O'Brien. And I have a vivid recollection of a car that belonged to the senator. It was a black Buick, I think, but it was a black automobile. We had a breakdown coming back from Taunton one night when the fan belt broke, and we were stranded on Route 24, the three of us, O'Donnell, O'Brien and me. So, those are a few recollections of that campaign. Now, I met John Kennedy at the 50 Tremont Street headquarters perhaps once or twice, maybe, during that time and might have seen him on the campaign trail, but probably never even to speak to, once or twice.

HARTIGAN: Did you have the experience of meeting Ambassador Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] during these campaigns?

GARRITY: I did and only once. And it was during this campaign and it was at 50 Tremont Street. I had a desk there, in a little cubbyhole where I used to measure the distances and write out the routes. And Ambassador Kennedy I can recall coming into that office on days other than the one that I recall especially. And he seemed to, you know, be anxious to be doing something, but there wasn't really a great deal that he could do. He was there, perhaps, chatting with some friend. I remember John Dow [John Goodchild Dow] being there talking with him. I remember Commissioner Timilty [Joseph P. Timilty] being there talking with him. Ambassador Kennedy would like to pay attention to things that were actually being done by the younger people that were working there, but there wasn't really that much that he could do. So it was one of those afternoons when things were dull, when I recall him coming in and sitting next to the desk and talking to me about his son, the senator. It's the only time that I ever chatted at any length with Mr. Kennedy, and I didn't do much of the talking actually but mostly just listening. But this was in the fall now, probably September of 1958, and Mr. Kennedy, Sr.

was already talking about a presidential campaign, because I remember him saying to me, “Well, you know,” or words to that effect, “you know what we’re actually running for here. It’s important that we do well in this campaign. This isn’t just a senatorial campaign. This is the prelude,” although that I don’t think was his word, that was the sense of it, “this is the prelude to a presidential campaign.” And I was really a little surprised that Mr. Kennedy would speak that way to me. I didn’t know him except, perhaps, having met him briefly. But then he started telling me about some of the receptions that Senator Kennedy had in Southern states, and I remember him describing in some detail the reception that President, then Senator Kennedy, had at some place like the University of Georgia or the University of Florida, something like that. He said, “You just cannot believe the warmth with which Senator Kennedy was received in these various Southern states.” And as he was talking, Ambassador Kennedy’s eyes really lit up, I can’t quite say that they glistened, but he became animated in a fashion I never saw before. You could tell, I think, from that, at least I formed the conclusion during that conversation that at least Ambassador Kennedy that early was so anxious to mount a presidential campaign that he could hardly wait. He was, he spoke with an absolute zeal and an affection, of course, of the son and

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about his prospects. He seemed, that is the father himself, seemed sort of awestruck at the magnetism that his son could, you know, demonstrate or could exude in a large crowd. He was himself so impressed with his son’s political abilities. That was the impression I received from him. And he must have talked to me for ten minutes and maybe even fifteen. And I figured that if he found ten or fifteen minutes to talk to a young man whom he hardly knew about this topic that was so close to his heart, he positively must have been talking hours on end to real friends of his and persons who were far more important than I was in the political spectrum.

HARTIGAN: It’s interesting. I never realized that, that early stage that he was that....You always assumed that the father....That’s interesting.

GARRITY: Well, I saw him and absolutely....I never, I didn’t know, of course, whether the son shared the father’s plans or his zeal or enthusiasm, and I don’t know that to this day. But you could really detect a man who was, you know, perhaps more ambitious than his son was or perhaps wanting this chance to run for national office even more than John did, although that I don’t know.

HARTIGAN: Well, I think that he never showed any indication that he was running for anything other than senator. I think....

GARRITY: Oh, he wouldn’t do that because it would be politically unwise.

HARTIGAN: Yes. That’s what I mean.

GARRITY: But why, also why Ambassador Kennedy spoke in this fashion to me, if it could in retrospect be thought that it had been somewhat indiscreet, I have no idea. It was, as I think, simply a matter of his wanting to talk to someone and having some time to kill and he found a sympathetic listener. Because I was entranced with the prospect of Kennedy running for national office as he was, you know, from a much greater distance. I thought it would be marvelous because we were already, the whole family from my parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, wife and her family, of course, we were captivated by the Kennedy prospects long before 1958, you see. We were, no one could have surpassed my family and myself in our enthusiasm for whatever Kennedy might run for. We were converts at an early stage as far as, you know, our feelings were concerned.

HARTIGAN: Did the Ambassador recollect any, did he mention any other state other than the University of Georgia?

GARRITY: He mentioned more than one Southern state, but I can't remember. He was, it was principally a question of the South, and it was maybe his surprise, what with all the talk about religious bigotry in that area of the country, that he found that his son's appeal overcame, at least in his understanding, the bigotry that was written about so much in those days. And, of course, he obviously felt that if his son, the senator, could draw large,

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enthusiastic crowds in the South, well then he could do it in any section of the country.

HARTIGAN: Which was, I suppose, a reasonable assumption...

GARRITY: I think so.

HARTIGAN: ...in those days.

GARRITY: Yes, because religious bigotry figured a lot more largely in the newspaper write-ups then than now, as you know.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall any other interesting occasions during the 1958 campaign?

GARRITY: Well, actually, I left, no, the answer is no because I left about, well, I can't remember exactly, but a few weeks before the election. I had business, a will contest case, that involved taking testimony in London, England. It involved the validity of a testament made in London, and by a man who died in London who was an American citizen, which had been offered for probate in Dedham here, in Norfolk County. So I had to leave on business and was in London and then after that went on to travel for ten days or two weeks in Europe. So I wasn't here for the last three

weeks or so of the campaign. I think I got back just maybe a week before the voting, and I really didn't get back into it.

HARTIGAN: Well, then the next....Were you involved at all other than what you briefly mentioned before with the activities between the Kennedy and the McCormack [Edward J. McCormack] forces looking for control over the Democratic state committee?

GARRITY: No. That happened one weekend, as you recall.

HARTIGAN: Well, the voting did.

GARRITY: Yes.

HARTIGAN: Dick [Richard K. Donahue] was a....Kenny, of course, was involved in getting people like myself and Dick Donahue to run for the office. You couldn't get on unless you had somebody on the committee. And I know Kenny spent a great deal of time, and Dick Maguire, I know, was in constant contact with me, as was Kenny during that period of time, encouraging some of the secretaries to run for Democratic State Committee.

GARRITY: I had nothing to do with that, at all, I mean, in any respect. Even what Maguire did, I didn't know about because, you know, we were....He was into his own thing.

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HARTIGAN: He was doing a lot of work with Kenny and advising Kenny in some of our signatures that were challenged.

GARRITY: I didn't get into that, Bill.

HARTIGAN: Well then, moving on to the next major event in there was the 1956 presidential campaign in Chicago.

GARRITY: Well, yes, but we talked about '58. This was the, talking about the second senatorial campaign in '58. Of course, presidential, that was in Chicago and I had nothing whatsoever to do with that.

HARTIGAN: You weren't a delegate to that...

GARRITY: Correct.

HARTIGAN: ...where his name was submitted for the....

GARRITY: No, I just never.... You see, I was not of that stature in the party. No I just, you know, remember reading about things and talking with people, but I never did anything.

HARTIGAN: Well then, I know you were involved in the primaries because I ran into you.

GARRITY: You mean in '60 or in '56?

HARTIGAN: In the presidential primaries.

GARRITY: In '56?

HARTIGAN: No, in...

GARRITY: '60.

HARTIGAN: ...the presidential primaries in '60.

GARRITY: Yes, in '60. Well, not....

HARTIGAN: Weren't you in Wisconsin?

GARRITY: Yes. That was the one. I never went to West Virginia.

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HARTIGAN: Okay, in Wisconsin then.

GARRITY: That happened in this fashion, and I don't know if I'm taking too much time.

HARTIGAN: No, no. No, no, go right ahead.

GARRITY: That again was an O'Donnell request to me to help out. I had met the senator in Washington a few times but never to talk with. The thing that amazed me was that he recognized me whenever he saw me. I'll never get over that as long as I live. I remember one time, and I hadn't met him, but, as I say casually, never to talk more than a minute or two and almost never alone, it was always in a group of half a dozen people. I remember clearly being in the Senate Office Building on legal business, I think, I don't remember exactly – this would be previous to '60 – and him rounding the corner of the corridor. I wasn't even, I don't remember whether I was coming to or from his office or not. But he was with some other congressman, and the minute he came around the corner, he recognized me. He called me by name and introduced me to this colleague of his. And I'll never get over that because I just never knew him that well, ever,

even after, you know, I became the United States Attorney. But, that too, you know, is the type of thing you remember always. So coming to the '60 campaign, Kenny sought me out at a party, some sort of a testimonial dinner, we were over at the Copley Plaza Hotel. And he said they needed someone to go out to Wisconsin and would I be able to do that. And he had to know pretty soon, and so I talked to my wife and said I would go out there. And I did. I went out George Washington's birthday weekend around the 22nd or 23rd of February and then stayed out there until the primary ended in April, the first week in April 1960. So it was six or seven weeks that I was there, and the only major contribution, you might say, that I ever made to any Kennedy cause. Everything I did other than that was pretty much routine or incidental. But out there, I was the man in charge of the state headquarters and was responsible for distributing all the material that would come out there and doing a lot of other types of chores that you do around a political headquarters. The most interesting thing to me about Wisconsin was that they had one man in charge of each of the congressional districts out there. Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] was there, I know. One or two others....

HARTIGAN: Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith, II] was there.

GARRITY: Yes, but that was the point I was going to make, Bill, was that I had no idea who these people were. And I was really pretty autocratic in my demands upon them, you know, from the Wisconsin headquarters, which was in Milwaukee. And I would, well, if not chew them out, you know, get after them as to what they were doing or why they weren't doing this and that. And later, it wasn't until thereafter that I learned that these people were such intimate friends of the president's. Because I remember, for example, Chuck Spalding [Charles Spalding] was out there.

HARTIGAN: I was with Chuck up at Eau Claire.

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GARRITY: Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings] was out there.

HARTIGAN: Yeah.

GARRITY: Bill Walton [William Walton] was there. Of course, Billings and Spalding, they turned out to be intimate personal friends of the president's when he became president. Walton wound up in charge of the inaugural parade and festivities. And I had no idea who they were. I thought that they maybe were local yokels. If I'd ever known who they were, I would have been far less effective.

HARTIGAN: Well, that was the beauty of it.

GARRITY: Well, of course. But, and that was a great experience, cold as a son of a gun. And I saw the president, later the president, you know, a few times out there. I recall one time in particular when Kenny had to

have some medicine for the president. He was ill, and he was due to go on TV later that day, maybe at noon, and this is in the morning. They had to get a particular medicine that required a doctor's prescription, and he had no doctor's prescription. So my job was to get a druggist that would give me a prescription, give me the medicine, but without a prescription. And I remember being able to do that, handing them a bottle of medicine and a teaspoon to O'Donnell as the president, or as then the senator, was walking right along the corridor to go into the television studio. And I chatted with Kennedy briefly thereafter, after he had given the....Of course, he came across just looking as fit as can be. And I don't mean to be, you know, too mysterious about it. He had a severe diarrhea, was what he was suffering from. It wasn't something pernicious. But he had to have some medicine that would stop it, and he couldn't get without the prescription. And, but there again, it was Robert whom I saw for the most part in different places. And we....I don't have to tell you, we just worked as you do in a campaign headquarters all day.

HARTIGAN: What do you recall of Bobby's activities out there?

GARRITY: Well, he was a "shaker," you know, and I think he came out, and a "mover," more than one who was able to, you know, become interested in all of the details. He made sort of spot appearances; he wasn't there all the time. In fact, very few were out there really all of the time. But, I remember meeting Bobby when he came out to the airport in Milwaukee. And he had written a pretty hard-hitting memo to these men that they had in the different congressional districts, announcing my prospective arrival. And it really built me up; I saw the memo later. It said, you know, how this fellow was coming out from Massachusetts who is experienced in Massachusetts, you know, campaign tactics etc, etc. And they should look to me for, you know, this or that. And so, Bobby came out, and he didn't bother anybody though. He was never.... Bobby was less interested in the "nuts and bolts" of the campaigning and the organizing and the mailing out of cards and envelopes and making phone calls to get workers than he was in the national campaign. You see, he was interested in the national campaign. He never focused, I don't want to say he never focused, but he never spent the time on the Wisconsin

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campaign itself, it seemed to me. We'd go out, and I had dinner with him a number of times. But he'd always be talking to a reporter from Newsweek or Time or one of the big national magazines or the New Yorker or the Los Angeles Times. He was always talking about the national campaign, it seemed to me, much more than the Wisconsin campaign because he was thinking, you know, nationally. And I remember Bobby giving a few, you might call them, inspirational talks to the chairmen of the different ward committees that we had lined up. And there again, I would rather be a little more accurate. All I did was, you see, help the locals. I was not in any sense running the thing. They had Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey] who, of course, now...

HARTIGAN: Governor.

GARRITY: ...who was the governor.

HARTIGAN: Former Governor.

GARRITY: Former Governor.

HARTIGAN: Former state chairman.

GARRITY: Yeah, and then John Reynolds [John W. Reynolds], who's now on the bench out in Milwaukee and Jim Brennan [James H. Brennan], who's city solicitor for the city of Milwaukee for the past several years. They had local, prominent men.

HARTIGAN: They had Ivan Nestingen [Ivan A. Nestingen].

GARRITY: Ivan, of course, was over in Madison, so I didn't see too much of Ivan.

HARTIGAN: What about Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno]? Did you run into this....

GARRITY: Sure, I met....Oh, well Jerry....[Laughter]

HARTIGAN: Or did he run into you?

GARRITY: I met Jerry when he was beginning. Before I had met Jerry, he was, and I don't mean this quite literally, but figuratively, he was pushing a broom in a Studebaker factory. Now, he may have been doing that literally. He was a maintenance employee in the Studebaker Company.

HARTIGAN: He was also a shop steward for the unionists, too.

GARRITY: Ah, and that's far more important. He was prominent in that respect. But he was an employee of the union and of the company. So I did meet Jerry at the very,

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very beginning and I met his wife, of course, and saw him last at O'Donnell's funeral just a month ago.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall a gentleman out there by the name of Stalbaum [Lynn E. Stalbaum] who eventually became a one-term Congressman?

GARRITY: No.

HARTIGAN: He was head of a movement, one of those anti-movements of some type.

GARRITY: No, a number of the Kennedy people really came, I guess, from Wisconsin, and I'm thinking, of course, of Jerry Bruno and Ivan Nestingen. Ivan, coincidentally, and I rode out in the car to the John Kennedy funeral and then after, the Robert Kennedy funeral. Everyone rushed up from the train up to the buses that were going to take us out to the cemetery. I sat down. I looked to my left, and Ivan was sitting next to me. Sort of a freakish coincidence, the two brothers, I happen to see the same fellow whom I'd met for the first time out there in Wisconsin.

HARTIGAN: The local office holders out there, Arthur, did you have a chance, do you recall or recollect any of their attitudes or activities with reference to this outsider coming into Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] territory?

GARRITY: No, I just don't remember that much, because that would be an area where O'Donnell or Bobby Kennedy or someone would deal with them directly. Funny, I don't recall too well. I remember that Reuss, Henry Reuss [Henry S. Reuss] the Congressman, was running and I think, perhaps, for the first time that year. I don't think he was running for re-election, but I'm not certain. And the candidate for the mayor was a man named Meyer. But I was just not active at that level. I was more along the lines of persuading housewives to ask their husbands to ask their friends to distribute campaign buttons, that sort of thing. I remember standing on the corner, the main corner of Milwaukee handing out buttons myself if the candidate, you see, as you well know, is going to appear to stop at a street corner to speak for a few minutes in the course of an automobile ride. He never did it, to the best of my knowledge, cold, by that I mean without a crowd being prepared. You had a half dozen people announcing that the candidate would be stopping here and handing out buttons. So when the car stopped, you had fifty or a hundred people there, you know, receptive to listening to whatever he wished to say.

HARTIGAN: John Traynor was up there.

GARRITY: John was indeed up in, well...

HARTIGAN: He was every place.

GARRITY: ...in every place. After Wisconsin, and I really, you know, speak very sort of –

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maybe modestly isn't the right word – I never would want to overstate what I did anywhere. But in Wisconsin, I was at the Wisconsin Hotel around the corner from the headquarters, and you know, was there every single day, seven days a week from, what,

nine in the morning until eleven at night. That was interesting work, but thereafter I did nothing either, except that I did go to the convention, and I did an odd job for a couple of weeks in Washington. After Wisconsin, Bobby called me on the phone, and he had actually thanked me when we were in Milwaukee. And said he thought we'd done a good job. And, in fact, every member of the Kennedy family always was, you know, courtesy itself as far as personal relationships. I never knew more considerate people. What poppycock to read, you know, that they were very cold and, you know, casual in their dealings with people. I never saw the slightest indication of that. But Bobby was, you know, very expressive and appreciative. I had to get back to business. I had a law practice, you see, and I volunteered my time and didn't know then what I know now. And that is that, perhaps politicians generally, but the Kennedys in particular, always differentiated between people who worked for them for nothing and people who worked for them, you see, on a payroll. I never got a dime. I got my bill paid at the Wisconsin Hotel which meant my room and board, period. And once they sent, and they gave me a ticket, I think, to fly out there. I came home and went back on my own. And I was, of course, a partner in a law firm and I felt I had to hold up my end of the business so I had to get back to work and said goodbye to the people in Milwaukee and came home. Well, it was about two or three days later when Bobby called me and said that that was just terrific in Wisconsin. They hadn't done quite as well as maybe they hoped, but they did better than a lot of people had predicted. And now the big fight was going to be in...

HARTIGAN: West Virginia.

GARRITY: ...West Virginia. And could he count on me and would I go. And I said, I don't think I even said I'm sorry, no, I just said no. I had thought it out completely, you see. And there was dead air on the other end of the phone for about 45 seconds. Bobby didn't say a word, and I figured he thought I would say something that he could respond to, not that I was in any sense indispensable, but he wanted me to come, I'm sure. And I wasn't going to say anything, so then neither of us said anything. And so he said, well you know, he was sorry that it wouldn't work out or something, and that was the end of the conversation. But I didn't go to West Virginia, and the only other thing I did was in July, just before the convention. Bobby had an office in a building down on Pennsylvania Avenue – the building's no longer there – and he went out to Los Angeles ten days before the national convention to twist a few arms and line up a few delegates, I assume, although he never said that to me, I'm just interpolating. But there was a project that he was interested in, and I think he asked me directly rather than through O'Donnell, although I'm not positive of that either. But I went down in any event to the Kennedy headquarters and took over the office that Bobby had occupied. I differentiate, I didn't take over the office in the sense that he had had it, but I moved into that place and put together materials for a voter registration drive that would be undertaken by the successful Democratic nominee, whether it would be Kennedy or one of the other persons who were opposing him, whether Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] or Stevenson or whoever. And

this was something that the Kennedys wanted to give to the nominee, whether it was John Kennedy or someone else. And so I spent about ten days or two weeks on this project over at the national Democratic committee, but mostly in Bobby's office building and at the census bureau getting forms mimeographed in a loose-leaf book for everyone of the, I guess there were 48 states at the time, and looking up the election and registration laws for every state in the union. We put together really quite a compilation that would look like a Manhattan telephone book with all the loose forms for every one of the states in the union as to which registration could still be conducted. Interestingly, there were a couple of states in which voting in the presidential election, the rolls for voting in the presidential election had already closed the previous July. There were some places you couldn't register to vote for the president after the spring of the year in which the presidential election was going to be held, if you can imagine. But we looked up the election laws, got a lot of assistance from the census bureau and the national committee and got girls in to type up all this stuff. And we then shipped all that stuff out to Los Angeles.

HARTIGAN: I believe there were 50 states at that time.

GARRITY: There could well have been.

HARTIGAN: The only reason I remember it is we had to go to Alaska to campaign.
[Laughter]

GARRITY: Yeah, you're right.

HARTIGAN: Who, was anybody else with you during this drafting of a program?

GARRITY: Well yes, but they were not people that you would be apt to recall. They were younger people. I don't where they came from, frankly, and I don't remember their names. But there was one thing that impressed me about that, I'll tell you, and that is the difficulty in obtaining secretarial help to do typing. I couldn't, I never got over it. The people who did the actual work, typing these forms, were all of them practically related to people who, you know, were already connected with Senator Kennedy, maybe some aunt of someone who was an employee in his office or something. You couldn't get Kennedy volunteers, at least to the best of my understanding, even at that time in Washington.

[TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

GARRITY: I had assumed that someone as close to the presidential nomination as Senator Kennedy would have scores of volunteers beating down the doors to work, you know, on some matter, to work on the preliminaries to the convention. I was flabbergasted to find that it was only on specific personal requests to someone who was known in some past connection that you could get help to put together a project like this. I just felt that Washington isn't like Boston.

HARTIGAN: Of course, Washington....There were a lot of candidates in Washington.

GARRITY: Yes.

HARTIGAN: And also, we sort of parochialized ourselves with the fact that we recognized the importance of being popular at home. It's a big country.

GARRITY: Yes, but then the wrap-up of that thing was I shipped them out, and I came back to Massachusetts expecting that, you know, I'd watch the TV broadcast from the convention. And to my total surprise, they, someone sent to me, I think it was Bobby, but again it could have been Ken – it would be the one or the other – a ticket. It went out on Ambassador Kennedy's credit card with the airlines. I had no expectation of going down to Los Angeles. They just sent me out there, really more for my pleasure than for any necessity. I continued to do a few little things out there, but they put me up in the San Carlos Hotel, right next to the Ambassador Hotel in the center of Los Angeles. It was the only time I was ever in Los Angeles. I addressed a couple of meetings of Democratic state chairmen with respect to this registration material the morning after the nomination of John Kennedy as the candidate. But there was no real need for me to go there. They sent me out there and, you know, I stayed out and, of course, was fascinated by the convention.

HARTIGAN: Judge...

GARRITY: Another instance of their absolute thoughtfulness and kindness.

HARTIGAN: ...after the convention did you participate in any of the campaigns, any of the primaries, I mean any of the elections.

GARRITY: No. Well, the answer to that is no. The only thing I ever did after the convention is that the senator wanted to review the campaign....This voter registration material was from other people and he had Congressman Frank Thompson [Frank Thompson, Jr.] up there in New Jersey. He had Walter Reuther's [Walter P. Reuther] brother, whose name eludes me, who was out there in Los Angeles. And he had one or two other people down at Hyannis Port, and he asked me to come down. And so it would have been then in July or August one day, I don't remember the day. I think I may have picked up Thompson at the airport. There were only maybe seven or eight men, and we sat on the lawn at Hyannis Port, and I went over these materials and explained what we had done and what it was hoped might be done. But that was maybe for an hour. The senator came by for probably twenty minutes of the hour, if that, maybe five or ten minutes. Bobby and Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] were there throughout, and we

had a lunch on the porch, and then I came home. That was the end of it.

HARTIGAN: I know you're strapped for time, but moving along, if there's something in between my question and what you've already said, feel free to mention it. You were after John Kennedy president, you were appointed United States

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attorney.

GARRITY: Right and that's the commission on the wall. It's, of course, signed by John as president and Robert as attorney general.

HARTIGAN: How was that....were you approached by the president or Bobby?

GARRITY: Oh, no, neither. And I may have told you this in the past, but maybe not. I never even asked for the appointment and didn't give it much thought. I was very, very busy in my practice at the time. And I probably was interested in the possibility, but not really very. But there were other Massachusetts lawyers who were interested, and I recall hearing indirectly from two such persons, one was Endicott Peabody and the other was Joe Ward [Joseph Ward], that they had spoken with Robert Kennedy about the possibility of their becoming United States attorney. He says no, we figure that we'd like Arthur Garrity to be the United States attorney. I heard indirectly, and you know, I don't think anyone ever told me I was going to be the United States attorney, so far as I can recall. I'm certain neither, I'm positive I never discussed it with John Kennedy. I don't think I ever discussed it with Robert either. It was just sort of something after hearing those reports that I assumed. And I guess, Ken must have told me some day, well your name is going to go in or something like that.

HARTIGAN: Well, that's what I heard. I heard it as almost a foregone conclusion, it was just in conversation. Judge, Robert Kennedy had a desire for reorganizing the Justice Department which comes out in some of his writings. Did he have a chance to set that in motion to your knowledge? As a United States attorney, you would have been involved in this if it took place. Were you aware of it?

GARRITY: Well, the big distinction to be drawn is between the local offices which are the United States attorneys' offices and the headquarters, you see. We're like the hinterlands in the field offices. Now, he did a fair amount of reform that I wouldn't call reorganization because I frankly don't know quite that much about the organization of the headquarters. But he did things such as locate persons who would investigate and prosecute organized crime in the various field offices so that we had a program directed against organized crime and involved the FBI in the struggle against organized crime. I think for the first time really in the FBI's history the FBI had never done too much in that direction, feeling that, I guess, other agencies had greater opportunities

along those lines. But Bob Kennedy made substantial changes in the efforts to suppress organized crime. He did many, many other substantive things, but in terms of the organization of the offices or of the Department of Justice, I honestly don't...I know there was no radical change in the organization of the United States attorney's office in Boston. And what the changes were in Washington, I really wouldn't be apt to know.

HARTIGAN: In other words, you would distinguish between reforms that he made and

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reorganizations....

GARRITY: Oh, yes. He had instituted, you see, many substantive programs. I don't know that the numbers of divisions or positions or that sort of thing changed. He never....

HARTIGAN: Were you involved in any of this from a planning point of the reforms that you talked about? Did he call upon you for any?

GARRITY: Not in the planning way. I went to Washington for a number of meetings, and he addressed groups of United States attorneys every time we gathered. They divided the country up into various types of offices, and the Boston office was one of the so-called metropolitan offices. The United States attorneys from the larger offices would meet, maybe eighteen or twenty of them in a group. So that I met regularly with my counterparts from, you know, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, the bigger cities. So in that sense I was involved in whatever was discussed and decided upon that applied to the big offices, and his real contribution, his major contribution, I think, as the attorney general of the United States was not so much the organizational aspect of it as this burning integrity he brought to it. You see, Robert Kennedy had such an uncompromising approach to things that it was a little awe-inspiring, and it was least inspirational. He had everyone jumping through hoops.

HARTIGAN: And you were appointed federal judge by President Johnson?

GARRITY: Yes.

HARTIGAN: Was Robert Kennedy the attorney general at that time?

GARRITY: No, as you....See this was after President Johnson's election.

HARTIGAN: His real election.

GARRITY: His real election.

HARTIGAN: Yeah, that's right.

GARRITY: Robert was senator from New York at the time. He was United States senator from New York, and Nick Katzenbach [Nicholas DeB. Katzenbach] was the attorney general. This was in between Robert Kennedy's resignation as attorney general and Ramsey Clark's appointment. Ramsey Clark was deputy attorney general under Katzenbach. Katzenbach was the attorney general for, I don't remember exactly, but only about a year, I think, maybe a little more. Then, he went over as under secretary of state, Katzenbach did. But this then was simply an appointment on the recommendation of Senator Ted Kennedy, you see, when I was named to the bench.

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HARTIGAN: One final question, I know my time was run out.

GARRITY: It's not that urgent, Bill. This is a chance I won't have again. Feel free to ask a few more if you would like.

HARTIGAN: Are there any, before my final question, are there any other observations with reference to your activities as United States attorney? Incidentally, we are also interested in Robert Kennedy's activities and thought possibly you might, having been in....

GARRITY: Bobby, of course, was everywhere and, you know, tireless. I met him a number of times when he was attorney general, when I was United States attorney here. He was personally interested in that big Plymouth mail robbery, for example, which was the biggest robbery, you know, of cash, I guess, in the history of the country. And I remember him coming up and being interested, not just in hearing from me, but typically he wanted to talk to the inspectors who were working on the case, which he did. We went down to the postal inspector's office, and Bobby looked at the principle exhibits that the postal inspectors had gotten together which would be the foundation of the subsequent prosecution in that case. Whenever Bobby was in Boston, for whatever reason – whether he did it in every city, I don't know – he would let me know and I would see him. I sometimes would come in from the airport with him, just ride in from the airport to the hotel in Boston. I remember at least one occasion when he came into the city he wanted me to come up and review business matters while he was changing his clothes and showering and so forth before going down to address a meeting that was being held in the Parker House. Well I did feel that I got to know Robert directly. I never felt that way about John because my contact with the president was such things as in a group of United States attorneys at the White House. I remember his addressing the group one morning, one sunny morning. We were there with our wives, well, he spotted me, and it was very pleasant. We chatted for about twenty seconds, thirty seconds maybe. That was the type of contact I had with John Kennedy. With Robert, I watched him cut his toenails, that sort of thing. I felt that I knew him.

HARTIGAN: But he was on the move for some great reforms, maybe ultimately reorganization, but initially in the Justice Department.

GARRITY: I wish I had known a little earlier, Bill, that we would be talking about these things and I could be more precise. But, you know, there have been books written on it which I have, some of them, incidentally. And I can't be as precise as to the nature of particular things that he did. I have only....

HARTIGAN: But any of the offices of the United States attorney, there wasn't this, "all the United States attorneys will participate in these reforms and help him organize them," type of thing.

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GARRITY: Well, there were changes, but I never associated them, frankly, as directly with the attorney general as I did with the assistants. And with the head of the executive office, you see, the attorney general has so many national responsibilities. Of course, Robert Kennedy was advising his brother on matters having nothing to do with the Justice Department. He was dealing with Congress. I don't associate changes necessarily with Robert, but I associate them with the assistants he had who were head of the tax division, criminal division, the United States attorneys offices, etc. I had a fair amount of dealings with them, but I never thought of, and I'm sure they were under the supervision of the attorney general, but I never thought of their being his complete agents. They were operating pretty much independently in some areas, I'm sure. I thought they were a fantastically capable, intelligent crowd and such pleasures to work with and so supportive, you see. I didn't think of Robert Kennedy as keeping in touch with everything that they were doing. I may be mistaken, maybe he kept a closer rein on the assistants attorney general than I realize. But I wouldn't be in on that, you see, I was just here in the field.

HARTIGAN: Judge, do you recall where you were when the president was assassinated?

GARRITY: Oh, of course.

HARTIGAN: Would you mind?

GARRITY: Well, yes. I don't suppose there's anyone who will ever forget where he was when Pearl Harbor was announced and when President Kennedy was assassinated. I'll be like Judge Glennon [Paul W. Glennon] in this regard because frankly I, who you said became a little emotional when you asked him that question, and I didn't anticipate this particular question. But I was having lunch up in Purcell's Restaurant which is up here on School Street. I was leaving the restaurant, I had had luncheon with a friend there in one of the booths in the central part of the restaurant, and as you leave the exit that goes out onto School Street – there's one that

goes onto City Hall Ave. and one on School Street – the one that goes on School Street passes the bar. And there was a television set at the end of the bar. And as we were walking out onto School Street, the flash came over the TV that the President had been shot, and we stopped there. And I can't remember just offhand who it was I was having lunch with, although for years and years I could recall that, and I'm sure I could if I had more time. But then, though your first reaction is disbelief, but then we stayed there long enough, maybe five or ten minutes. And it was evident that he was seriously wounded and maybe had been killed. Well, we broke-up, whoever it was, and I remember I went down to the chapel, either Arch Street or Franklin Street, I'm not sure. But before coming back to the office I just didn't know what I could do. I just went to church and started praying for his recovery. But then when I got back to the office or very shortly thereafter, I heard that he had been killed. But, of course people will always remember such traumatic moments in their lives as the assassination of the president. We felt about that like everyone else. I went to the funeral, incidentally, in fact I went down that very next day. Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy]...When we went down there the next morning we didn't know what to do frankly. And I didn't feel, honestly, quite as if I could be of

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any assistance to any member of his family as they all had friends far, far closer than I. But I did think I could help and be of some solace or support to fellows like O'Donnell and O'Brien and others whom I had become quite friendly with, you see. So Bob Morey [Robert F. Morey] who was intimately friendly with the President over the years and who was the United States marshal here [in Boston], came over and we talked – I don't remember who – but we said, "Why don't we go down?" And we did; we took the plane the next day. And I remember Mrs. Kennedy was still wearing those stained clothes when we saw her. But you know, this I'll never forget. This was the very day after he was shot. And when we got into the White House which is maybe toward the end of the morning, they were already moving the furniture out of the Oval Room. This is the very next day.

HARTIGAN: Under the direction of Bobby and Kenny?

GARRITY: Could be. I don't remember such things as that. I couldn't get over the fact that they didn't even wait twenty-four hours before starting to make the change in the furnishing of the executive offices.

HARTIGAN: Well, of course, he was president before he left Dallas.

GARRITY: Oh, no question about it. And that very day in that afternoon, the new president, Johnson, gave his first address over television from what they call the Fish something.

HARTIGAN: Fish Room.

GARRITY: Fish Room in the White House. And Morey and I stood on the threshold, actually, of the room watching the new president, Johnson, give his talk on TV. Of course, the whole thing was so disorganized that nobody questioned Mr. Morey's right or mine even to be there which we really had no real reason for our being there. But that's all so long ago.

HARTIGAN: Any final observations or recapping statements that you would like to leave us with.

GARRITY: Well, I suppose so because you stopped by this morning, and I didn't realize, Bill, that we would be talking until the end of today about this or I'd have some more perceptive comments, perhaps. But I was thinking, since you were here earlier this morning what it was that President Kennedy meant to me and my family and to the country. And so many people have said this same thing in much better ways, but it was the, what I always thought was the man's integrity that singled him out, and his basic decency and intelligence and optimism. I don't think that any political candidate or office holder that I've ever known even approaches him. Of course, there's a little bit more. I never will even get to know any other, of course, and never had in the past, nearly as well as I did, perhaps not himself personally,

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but his brothers and so forth. I got to know Senator Ted Kennedy, too, much better than I ever knew John. But, you know, he was the type of person whom you just believed and whom you felt could achieve what he set out to. It was inspiring, I thought, the confidence of the country. Bobby was different. I didn't think... Well, of course, he wasn't as mature as the older brother. But, of course, he grew so enormously in the years when I knew him. And yet I don't think of him even now as an administrator, and that's when you spoke to me about making changes in the Department of Justice. I look upon Bobby, and I still do, as almost sort of an inspirational type of a figure or of a symbol of righteousness and energy and dedication than I do as far as any of his particular programs are concerned. To me, it was more of what he stood for, perhaps, than any particular programs that he undertook. And to this day, I feel that Robert Kennedy and John, to a lesser extent, are a continuing influence in my life. And you don't feel that way about many people, but I do feel that the Kennedy influence on account of those brothers is a factor in my home life. It's a factor, believe it or not, in my work. As you can see I have their pictures here next to the commission that they signed appointing me as the United States attorney. I suppose I was the only man in Massachusetts that ever got a commission with both of those signatures on it, you know. Because I was the only United States attorney that ever served in the Kennedy administration in Massachusetts. But I remember some discussion I was having with one of my law clerks, and I can't really recall the details – and it's a year or two ago – but I still feel the same way and that's why I mention this. And just in the course of exploring various possibilities in some cases – and I can't remember the case, I can't remember the law clerk and I can't remember the question – but I do remember how I felt then and what I said. I said, "If we were to take this course, I'd have to turn to Bobby Kennedy's picture to the wall," because I

feel, you see, that faithful to the principles at least that he stood for. Now that may seem a little maudlin, and I don't want to, especially being on tape, to overstate it. And it isn't as if I think of this every day or every month because it's just not true. I don't mean to say that the influence of the Kennedys is ever present in my life or that we talk about it at home constantly or even frequently, because we don't. But in the background, you know there is a certain feeling of obligation on the part of many, many people, not just myself, but others in the government service who were connected with the Kennedys. They would be very disloyal and would be ingrates were they to violate the trust that the Kennedys put in them by putting them into jobs such as they put me into.

HARTIGAN: But that is understandable having interviewed several people, and I know the point you're trying to make. Most of us, I think if you look back up to that time, probably were the youngest group to be associated as high as we were in government with a president. And we were all at impressionable ages at that time, and let's face it, we received our training under great leadership. Whereas in other administrations, people were giving up jobs in big businesses to come down with the Eisenhowers and the Roosevelts [Franklin D. Roosevelt], and yet we had never formed anything and we were still in the formative years. So it would be most natural that our ideals were for the good. I think it was that we were that young, were formed under these leaders because they were great leaders.

GARRITY: But see you can't put me in the same position as yourself, though, because you were

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far more close to national events and decisions and responsibilities than I. I was, don't forget, up here in the field. I'm here in Boston and it's quite different. My dealings with the Kennedys were quite brief compared to many, many people, but they certainly had an impact.

HARTIGAN: It seems that because it didn't make a difference where people were, that the people they placed trust in, no matter where they served in that trust, assumed that very sacredly, almost. They didn't want to let this man down. I think...I've mentioned this to Kenny O'Donnell many times when the unfortunate Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] situation was happening, and the newspapers were saying, "Well every administration did it." Well, finally I got ahold of Kenny, and I said to Kenny, "That is just not true." I said, "I don't know of anybody who was indicted or gone to jail that John F. Kennedy appointed."

GARRITY: It could be, I don't know.

HARTIGAN: I don't know of anybody.

GARRITY: Offhand.

HARTIGAN: Offhand. So I said, "It's really not true that everybody does these things." The point I'm getting at, if it's any consolation to you, that people that I have interviewed so far always express this feeling of principles that they got attached to.

GARRITY: I think of it, partly. But I just think it's just part of an obligation that has, in fact, and should survive the death of the brothers.

HARTIGAN: Very interesting.

GARRITY: I'm tickled, Bill, really that you came by. I had no knowledge that you were even around doing this.

HARTIGAN: I'll tell you. I certainly couldn't overlook the opportunity of taping. I never believed when I called Kenny, I never believed that you had not been taped. And when I called him after doing Judge Glennon and I said, "Do you realize that Judge Garrity has not been taped." And I said, "So I'm canceling my meeting with you this afternoon." I said, "I'm going to interview the judge at 4 o'clock," and he was delighted and he personally wanted to be remembered to you. And hopefully you'll get to see him before the dedication of the building, and I hope you are going to be there.

GARRITY: Well, I may, I may.

HARTIGAN: Incidentally, the second phase of our responsibilities in building up the oral history

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department, we also have the responsibility of the acquiring of materials. And we do end up by reminding people that the Library is very anxious to get as many papers and materials that people might have that they'd like to donate in their own name to the Library.

GARRITY: If I had anything that I thought was of any possible interest, I'd let you or Dan or someone know.

HARTIGAN: Yeah. And if you run across any memorabilia or materials that you're doubtful about, do as I did. I turned everything over to the Library and let their archivist go over it and see what they think of the value.

GARRITY: Well I will act on that, Bill, because I have a few things like campaign souvenirs and posters and that sort of thing, some they may not have.

HARTIGAN: As I always like to mention, if you just leave it in the carton, there's not much exposure that it's going to get down the basement in a carton. Judge, thank you very much for your time.

GARRITY: Thank you very much again, Bill.

HARTIGAN: On behalf of the Library, I appreciate....

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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