

Ralph Horton Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 06/01/1964
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Ralph Horton was a classmate of John F. Kennedy's [JFK] at Choate Academy and Princeton University, a member of JFK's campaign staff, and a special assistant in the Equal Opportunity Program in the Department of the Army from 1962 to 1969. This interview focuses on JFK's time at Choate Academy and his 1960 presidential campaign, among other topics.

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INTERVIEW OF RALPH HORTON
FOR THE JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

INTERVIEWER: JOSEPH DOLAN

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 1, 1964

Joseph Dolan: It's June 1, 1964, we're at Rip Horton's office in the Pentagon. This is Joe Dolan from the Department of Justice. Rip was an old friend of President John Kennedy and we are going to chat a little bit this morning as part of the oral history project of the Kennedy Library.

Rip, I just look over your head here and I see a picture on the wall that says Rip Horton, Lem Billings, Butch Schreiber and Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy looks as if his coat doesn't fit him. It looks as if--is that somebody else's coat he has on there?

Ralph Horton: No, in school he always looked as though he wore hand-me-down clothing. He was a very simple sort of a person, not the least bit ostentatious, what with his wealth, and just a regular boy the same as the rest of us were. We first met back in 1932, which is just about 32 years ago at Choate school, and the late President and I became very good friends at that time, which friendship lasted until the day he died in 1963.

J.D.: Did he go all the way through Choate?

R.H.: Yes, he did. We started there as freshmen and graduated in 1935.

J.D.: Where had you come from?

R.H.: I had come from New York City and he had come from Bronxville.

J.D.: Which is also in New York City.

R.H.: Which is also part of New York--it's in Westchester.

J.D.: So you're not a native of Nebraska.

R.H.: No, Joe, I just happened to run the campaign out there for the late President. I had nothing whatsoever to do with Nebraska.

J.D.: Oh, that was your connection with Nebraska.

R.H.: That was my only connection with Nebraska.

J.D.: Many people think it's Rip Horton from Nebraska.

R.H.: No, no, I was a city boy they sent out to a farm state to attempt to run the election in 1960 for the late President, and that has been my only trip to the State and God willing, I won't be going back in the future.

J.D.: When was this photograph taken?

R.H.: That was probably taken about 1933 or 34. You'll notice the President has a golf club in his hand. He always enjoyed playing golf and we used to go to Florida over Christmas vacations.

J.D.: Would you go to Ft. Lauderdale?

R.H.: No, we went down to Palm Beach to visit his father and the President would be there, and Lem Billings, myself, Joe Kennedy, Jr., and Ambassador Joseph Kennedy. We'd play golf almost every day. Generally we three boys, Joe, Jr., Jack and myself, would compete against the Ambassador, who played a very fine game of golf, I might add. Jack was the weak member of our team but he was always in there pitching and trying.

J.D.: Who was best?

R.H.: Mr. Kennedy was and I was probably second best. I was the captain of the Choate team, the golf team. It was a six man team and Young Jack Kennedy rated about number fourteen out of the total golf squad.

J.D.: Was he a great student in those days?

R.H.: No, he was a very mediocre student. He did have one particular flair that stands out in my mind and that was a flair for writing. We used to have to submit essays two or three times a year and we had an English teacher by the name of Dr. Tinker. I can remember after we had submitted our essays, Dr. Tinker said to Jack Kennedy, Jack you have a very definite flair for writing. It's a career that you should think of pursuing when you graduate from school and college. And it came as sort of a shock to me because I never considered Jack Kennedy a very outstanding student in any particular area.

J.D.: Where did you think he would go after school?

R.H.: I thought--I really didn't give it too much thought as to what he might do. I thought he might possibly go into business with his father or that he might possibly go into some form of public service, because even in those early days he was very interested in political events and particularly international events. I can remember one particular time we used to listen to an old radio program called Information Please, and they'd ask very difficult questions, everything from sports to opera. One particular time we were listening to the program and I'd know roughly 10 percent of the answers and Jack Kennedy would know a good 50 or 60 percent and he never seemed to read anymore than I did or he wasn't a better student and, I, at that time, didn't think he was any brighter than I was. And I asked him how he happened to do so well on these particular tests of this particular questioning and I remember very well that he said the most difficult thing in the world is to concentrate and to re-read what you've already done. He said I'll pick up an article, I'll read it, and then I'll force myself to lay down for about a half an hour and go through the total article in my mind, bringing to memory as much as I possibly can and then analyzing the article, and then attacking it and tearing it down. And I think from that early training he gained a great deal toward securing his memory for everything he read that was so outstanding in his early development.

J.D.: Did he indicate to you that that was a course of action that occurred to him spontaneously, or had been inspired by his Dad or some teacher? Do you know how he came by this process?

R.H.: I don't know how he came by it, but I would say that his father probably was instrumental, as he was in so many things inspiring Jack to do certain things. His father was a very remarkable teacher. I can remember sitting around the dinner table down in Palm Beach over Easter vacations and the whole talk would center around politics and international events. Mr. Kennedy was then Ambassador to the Court of St. James in England. And any of the children could ask him questions and in the greatest detail, no matter how simple or how stupid the questions might seem, the Ambassador would go to great lengths to describe it, to explain it, to explain the strengths or weaknesses of a particular policy that he was discussing. However, if an outsider, such as myself, would have ask the Ambassador a question, he'd be practically ignored.

J.D.: He, would he just answer it?

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R.H.: He would just answer it rather curtly as though he didn't want to be bothered with your questions. He was only concerned about educating his own children. On the golf course it was entirely different, because I played a good game of golf and he'd always hold me up as an example to both young Joe and to Jack as something he would like for them to turn into, which would drive them both a little crazy, quite frankly. But on the golf course, I played a good game of golf and I was rather competitive, so Mr. Kennedy would use me as an example of what he wanted his sons to be as golfers and he'd even stretch it a little more, I think, to irritate them as a person.

J.D.: Did this create any strain on your friendship with John Kennedy?

R.H.: Not particularly. He had too good a sense of humor. I've never seen him disturbed, or hurt, or his feelings wounded by any particular event or occurrence. He just had too good a sense of humor. He figured that his father was pulling my leg, which he probably was.

J.D.: Where was Joe going to school?

R.H.: Joe at that particular time was just finishing up Choate. As I recall, he was two years ahead of us and over the three or four years I went to Palm Beach, Joe graduated from Choate and he went to Harvard and, I believe that Ambassador Kennedy was very interested in having Jack also go to Harvard, but Jack had two very good friends, Lemoyne Billings and myself, and strictly on the basis of friendship he chose to go to Princeton.

J.D.: Did Jack Kennedy see much of Joe, that you know of, at Choate?

R.H.: They used to see each other, but being two classes apart and also both being very competitive, great competition existed between these two boys as to who would be more outstanding; they weren't quite as close as they might be. Joe had his own friends and Jack had his own friends. Joe's friends were a little more mature than Jack and Jack's friends.

J.D.: What was your -- was he quite bookish, or not bookish at all?

R.H.: Jack read a great deal but not to the point that he was burdensome about it. I think he could read quite fast, and, yes, he read a great deal but not ostentatiously. He seemed to absorb on the basis of this retentive memory training that he worked on -- he seemed to absorb what he read much better than the rest of us. He also, which I think is rather indicative of his future, always read the New York Times. He read that every single day from cover to cover, and I think that gave him a great insight into the political scene and international activities which he was so interested in. When we graduated from Choate we exchanged pictures as so many seniors do and the inscription on his picture to me was also, I think, indicative of his interest in political affairs. I remember it very well -- I still have the picture. He signed it "To Boss Tweed from Honest Abe, may we room together at Sing Sing." He had a sense of humor about things.

J.D.: What was the -- How did you become Boss Tweed?

R.H.: I was also interested in politics, and we used to have a group that went together -- there were 13 of us -- and we called this group the Muckers Club. We were slightly anti-school administration. We were constantly in trouble, not for any serious things, but just for being sloppy, rough-housing, going out after lights at night to go to a local diner to get something to eat, and just non-conformists at school, and this all came to a head one day when the headmaster in chapel got up -- we had chapel every evening -- and talked about the bad apples in every basket, and suddenly Mr. St. John, the headmaster at Choate, let loose at the Muckers Club, all 13 of us.

J.D.: He named them?

R.H.: He named the members, he named the club. We were the bad apples and were corrupting the morals and integrity of the other students in the school.

J.D.: Must have made you feel very important.

R.H.: Made us feel very important -- and at that stage of the game Mr. St. John dismissed each one of us from school.

J.D.: He expelled you?

R.H.: Expelled us from school. However our families were notified, and I remember Mr. Joseph Kennedy had to come up to the school at that time. He was very involved also in the administration under Franklin Roosevelt.

J.D.: What year would that be?

R.H.: This was around 1934 when we were juniors at Choate and Mr. Kennedy was highly irrate at young Jack for allowing himself to get into this particular predicament, and after our parents spoke to the headmaster we promised to disband this Muckers Club, promised to more rigidly conform to the school administration and their regulations, we were taken back in school without ever actually having to leave school. We were punished by being kept over Easter vacation for three or four days and not allowed to go home with the rest of the students.

J.D.: And by having your parents apprised of your activities?

R.H.: And also having our parents apprised of our activities.

J.D.: Who had organized the Muckers?

R.H.: I was more or less the head of it. Every member was equal, but I had the title of secretary and that made me the prime mover in the Muckers Club. Jack Kennedy also at that time showed a desire to excel in spite of this other side of him. In our senior year we had elections for the handsomest, the best dancer, and the wittiest, and so on and so forth, and Jack wanted to be voted the most likely to succeed. So we campaigned and traded votes back and forth.

J.D.: You mean I'll vote for you for most likely to succeed if you vote for me for best athlete.

R.H.: Best dancer, best athlete, best dancer --

J.D.: What was the most expensive office in this vote buying campaign?

R.H.: Well, I accepted most generously for some particular reason, and as a result Jack, of a graduating class of roughly, I think, 80 or 90 students, secured approximately 50% of the votes for most likely to succeed. There was nobody near him so that was a sign pointing to his future politically.

J.D.: Were you voted most generous?

R.H.: I was voted most generous.

J.D.: How did the rest of your slate do? You couldn't possibly have let everyone in the class in on your slate or it wouldn't have worked, would it?

R.H.: No, we didn't. We didn't have everyone in on it but the word got around that Jack Kennedy was most likely to succeed and it wasn't a hardship on any person at that particular time to vote for him for that office because none of us were too concerned about the future.

J.D.: Tell me a little more about the Muckers, that sounds interesting. How long did you last?

R.H.: The Muckers Club only lasted for about 3 months. It was organized, as I say, by non-conformists; there were 13 members.

J.D.: One of you decide that 13 is a magic number or something?

R.H.: Not particularly. It just happened to be 13 of us that went around together, like the people in the picture up on the wall. There was Billings; there was Butch Schreiber who was a very outstanding athlete; there was President Kennedy, myself, and the others were all reasonably good athletes but just more or less regular type of guys. We had a little gold shovel made and on it we had the person's initials and also CMC which stood for Choate Muckers Club; and we very proudly displayed those shovels. Unfortunately over the years I've lost mine. I don't know if there are any still in existence. But after the headmaster's blast about rotten apples in the basket we disbanded the Mucker's Club.

J.D.: Did that make you the envy of all the other students?

R.H.: Everybody but the Student Council. They weren't too in favor of our particular organization.

J.D.: You were a rival government?

R.H.: Rival government of the Student Council, but they were firmly entrenched in power and had the support of the administration; so there was no way of usurping them from power, much as we would have liked to.

J.D.: You were fighting City Hall.

R.H.: Always fighting City Hall, the entrenched political machine.

J.D.: Did you have any projects, other than just fun like going out for hamburgers or something like that?

R.H.: No, none whatsoever.

J.D.: You didn't move the bell tower, or the bell and the bell tower, or anything like that, or put a cow on the roof?

R.H.: No, there were no traditions like that at Choate at all. No, we didn't get into anything of that nature. One particular thing that caused us a good deal of concern and a good deal of grief later on was... There was an Assistant Headmaster at Choate who had a very pretty wife, and she used to be extremely kind towards the students; and there was one particular student by the name of Maury Shea who was in the Muckers Club, the same as we were, and she was particularly nice to him. And young Jack Kennedy composed a song one time. It went like this: "Maury Shea, what's your appeal, Queenie, we want a new deal." Queenie was the name of the Assistant Headmaster's wife. She apparently heard about this song and she made Jack Kennedy and myself stand up there and recite it or sing it to us, sing it to her rather. I think if that had reached the Headmaster both of us would have been thrown out of school once and for all; but, fortunately, she didn't say anything about it.

J.D.: What was your involvement? How did she come to pick you?

R.H.: She knew that Jack and I were singing the song around the school so she picked me along with Jack.

J.D.: Did Maury Shea ^{or} O'Shay tell her?

R.H.: Maury Shea, I think he's the one who told her about it.

J.D.: Shea. Oh, he did hear about it.

R.H.: Yes, he had heard about it and he didn't like it particularly; so he must have told her in a moment of great confidence because before we knew it, we were accosted by her.

J.D.: What was the President's participation in school extra curricular activities--debates, athletics or anything like that? Was he a team man?

R.H.: Yes, he was. He was part of the organized activities. He was on a football team, not the first team but one of the intra-mural teams during that season. In the winter, I think he played around at basketball; and in the spring, he was on the golf squad. He wasn't outstanding in any of those sports. As far as any other activity is concerned, he was financial editor of the Choate Brief. That's a yearbook that was put out by the senior class. It had pictures of the graduating class as well as the undergraduate classes, and it carried the poll that I mentioned before, the election as well as all sporting events. He was business manager of that. I can remember very well that I always thought he was extremely sloppy in his habits; and a good deal of advertising was sold for the particular Brief as well as articles; and the whole book had to be put together, and it also had to be financially sound. I can remember when he balanced his book at the end of the year, I was amazed he was only one penny off because in my opinion, he was terribly careless in his habits.

J.D.: Maybe it was an accident.

R.H.: I don't think it was an accident. He had a very sharp mind, which I didn't appreciate at that particular time.

J.D.: Were there any other students, contemporaries of yours and John Kennedy's at Choate, who were personages later in the Kennedy Administration, or in other parts of his career prior to his coming to the White House?

R.H.: I'd say the person who was closest and participated in the Kennedy movement from early 1946 right to the time of his death was Lemoyne Billings. He was in the first Congressional race that President Kennedy was involved in at Boston in 1946 and in every subsequent one.

J.D.: Was Lem another New Yorker?

R.H.: No, Lem came from Pittsburg, and he and the President roomed together the last two years at Choate; and then, the three of us roomed together when we went to Princeton.

J.D.: What did you do that summer between Choate and Princeton? Go off separate ways?

R.H.: We all went our separate ways. I know that President Kennedy at some stage in there took a trip to Europe with Lem Billings, but in my opinion it happened during his college years at Harvard, to the best of my recollection.

J.D.: Well, tell us about Princeton -- this would be the Fall of '35.

R.H.: Well -- Fall of '35 we went to Princeton, and we roomed in an old hall called South Reunion Hall. It's the oldest building outside of Nassau Hall at Princeton, and it was also the cheapest building, the room rent, and the reason for that was that Lem Billings wasn't well to do at all -- as a matter of fact he went to Princeton on a scholarship, and the rent that he could afford was very nominal. So we selected this particular hall, and we roomed on the top floor of South Reunion Hall. I can remember one day very well -- Ambassador Kennedy pulled up there in a large Cadillac, chauffeur driven, and we were up four flights. After he climbed two flights, he had on a very heavy coat of his for a football game that he had come to Princeton for -- climbed up the first two flights and he was so fatigued that he stood out on the fire escape and took his coat off and threw it down to Dave the chauffeur. He was overheated and over exerted on that trip up to our room. Jack was only at Princeton for about four months and then he was taken sick and he left Princeton.

J.D.: That would be just a little more than a term.

R.H.: Just the first term, that's all. He left around Christmas. And as well as I have known the man, even in those days, I never heard him discuss the state of his health. But his stay at Princeton was very short.

J.D.: He was there such a short time he didn't have any major -- everyone took the same courses as a freshman, didn't they?

R.H.: That's right.

J.D.: Were you in class together?

R.H.: Yes, we were in English class together, and as I say, his stay was so short at Princeton that there was nothing really to distinguish it at all. He never had a chance to actually get into any particular crowd or group. The three of us as freshmen

stuck pretty much together. Once in a while on football weekends we might have girls down for football games, but his stay was extremely short.

J.D.: Were there other Choate grads in your class?

R.H.: Yes, there must have been about, oh 15 or 20 of us, but we weren't close to any of these -- none of the Mucker Club crowd had come to Princeton.

J.D.: You were the only three Muckers?

R.H.: We were the only three Muckers who went to Princeton.

J.D.: It had dissolved, but the memory lingered on.

R.H.: It's lingered on to this day.

J.D.: Did he go out for any sports?

R.H.: We all had to take some sort of sport in the Fall, and I really can't remember what President Kennedy did do at Princeton. I think that we all had to take a body-building course, which probably sufficed as athletics for him. I know I boxed in the Fall, and I went into the school tournament and Jack Kennedy was my second, and I had had a bout in the afternoon which I was fortunate enough to win, and then I was in the finals on this particular day, which was in the evening in the school gymnasium. I remember very well that Jack Kennedy and I went up to a nearby soda fountain before this bout and all that he would let me eat was a dish of corn flakes because he didn't want me to go in there on any sort of a full stomach. Incidentally, I lost in the finals.

J.D.: Do you think that decided him to make a career other than in the fight game?

R.H.: That was as far as -- very definitely, yes -- I'd say that cured him of any ambition in that field.

J.D.: You continued on at Princeton --

R.H.: I continued on at Princeton, graduated --

J.D.: The President dropped out?

R.H.: I graduated in the class of 1939.

J.D.: Did Lem continue also?

R.H.: Lem continued on, we roomed together for two years and then he got a scholarship, a managership at the Ivy Club in Princeton, so he lived right there because he was always on a very close budget.

J.D.: Now, where did you next cross paths with John Kennedy? What did he do when he left there?

R.H.: John Kennedy, I believe, went to the Mayo Clinic. Shortly after that he went over to Europe -- his father was Ambassador to the Court of St. James, and he worked with his father over there until he entered Harvard the next Fall. And my paths with Jack Kennedy crossed several times during our college years. We still went down to Florida over Christmas vacation and visited him there.

J.D.: Did Lem go there, too?

R.H.: Lem would go down, I'd go down, and from Harvard Jack had Torbey McDonald who was later captain of football at Harvard and is now in the House of Representatives. We used to play a considerable amount of touch football -- mornings we would do a lot of swimming and in the afternoon we'd have our golf games. Mr. Kennedy was always there over the Christmas holidays and we'd play golf.

J.D.: Did you sail down there?

R.H.: No, we didn't sail at all.

J.D.: There's not much opportunity for small boat sailing, is there?

R.H.: No, I remember we went out deep sea fishing one day, but that's the only recollection I have of sailing at all.

J.D.: Didn't he go to Stanford for a month or two?

R.H.: I think he did, yes, but I think that was after he graduated from Harvard.

J.D.: Oh -- graduate work!

R.H.: Because I can remember so clearly one time being in a movie and watching the news and it was just at the time the draft was put into effect, drafting men into the Army, and one of the lowest numbers was young Jack Kennedy, and this picture was flashed on the screen, and I remember getting quite a kick out of it, thinking in terms of him being drafted into the service.

J.D.: And you think he was out on the West Coast?

R.H.: He was out on the West Coast at the time because I remember the flash came from California and what was particularly odd about it was the fact that his father was so opposed to our getting involved in any foreign commitments at that time.

J.D.: Would this be about 1940, September 1940 --

R.H.: This was around September --

J.D.: September, 1940 was the original draft-drawing.

R.H.: Yes.

J.D.: Number 158 --

R.H.: Yes, this was around 1940, just when he was probably going out to Stanford University.

J.D.: That would be the Fall following the completion of his undergraduate studies. Did he lose a year by the Harvard-Princeton --

R.H.: Yes, Yes.

J.D.: So he did --

R.H.: Yes, he lost a year, graduated in '40 -- and it was at that time that he wrote his first book, While England Slept, and he sent me a copy of it at that particular time, which I still have, with a suitable inscription. It was humorous, I don't recall it too well, but I had gone to work at that point for Continental Can in a regular training course, and I was time-keeping in a factory, learning the various operations, and the inscription went something to the effect, "To Rip Horton who has timekeeper's personality and I'm sure will go far in this world," signed Jack Kennedy.

J.D.: Did his personality seem to be about the same when you would see him down in West Palm -- you would see him only sporadically at measured intervals, and I would think you would have more of a chance to look at him from outside and to think about -- is this the same fellow that went to Choate with me than if you had been with him every day. Is that so?

R.H.: That's very true, but I didn't notice any particular change in his personality. He was still very light, very witty,

a particularly loyal good friend who cherished old friendships very, very much. As a matter of fact, he put himself out a great deal more to get in touch with me and to see me and retain our old friendship than I had done with him. But his personality hadn't changed particularly from the Choate days. If I were asked at that time what he was going to do, having completed college, I wouldn't have had the least idea. No, he was still living everyday and just enjoying life and people. He was very attractive to girls. He had any number of gals who were devoted to him, and that seemed to be his chief interest.

J.D.: Carefree?

R.H.: Very carefree, yes, very carefree; but Jack was not a spendthrift even though he had a great deal of money. I don't know whether it was the fact that he felt that he had money and he didn't want people to take advantage of him; or whether it was the fact that he was tight, which he really wasn't. But he didn't throw money around. He might pay his share of a check if he remembered to bring money with him; but the general situation was that he didn't have a dollar in his pocket.

J.D.: This was remarked on after he came to the Senate.

R.H.: The Senate, yes.

J.D.: He never had change in his pockets or never remembered just what he was supposed to be doing in the next two minutes.

R.H.: That's right, yes.

J.D.: Which is fairly common, I think, in people that are preoccupied with other things.

R.H.:with other things. But the interesting thing was as I look back again I wouldn't, couldn't imagine what his preoccupation was at that particular time. I couldn't imagine what he was driving for, which he wasn't particularly doing, or what he was living for.

J.D.: Do you think he might, from your recollection of him then, he might well have ended up in the investment-banking business in New York? That's what Lem did, isn't it?

R.H.: No, Lem is in the advertising business in New York.

J.D.: Oh, advertising.

R.H.: No, I'd say that Jack Kennedy's bent at that point was towards writing, which was indicative of his senior thesis from Harvard. He had a flair for writing and I think;

J.D.: So the book didn't surprise you?

R.H.: Not too much but the depth of the book and the very fact that it was so well written did surprise me. I can remember Arthur Krock, what at that time was the pre-eminent columnist in this country, I believe, for the New York Times, and he still is very outstanding, wrote a column on that book; and he still refers to that book, extolling the virtues of that book as it being so full of good common sense for the American people in the 1940's.

J.D.: Going back to Choate for a minute and just a general question. There are several stories that Joe, Jr. and Jack were great scrapers with each other, and that family rivalry was such that it was give nothing in a game or anything else; and I think I've heard a story of either Ted or Bob saying that they can remember the wall shaking in one of the juvenile fights of Joe and Jack. Is that in line with your observations?

R.H.: Yes, that would be. Of course, they had matured a little from their earlier ages of 8 or 10 or 12 when they would try to knock each others brains out, but there was a very intense competition between the two boys, whether it was in swimming or on the golf course or in touch football when we all used to play together.

J.D.: Did they always want to be on opposite sides or...

R.H.: Always on opposite sides.

J.D.: They didn't want to play with one another.

R.H.: They didn't want to play with one another. Jack would always have Torbey McDonald on his team, who was captain of football at Harvard; and Joe was a great friend of Ted Reardon's who was also, I believe, captain of football at Harvard in Joe's year there. And Lem and I would be more or less the line that would stand there

and try to get in each other's way. But the competition definitely was between Jack and Joe, and they might defer to the superior abilities of a Ted Reardon or a Torbey McDonald; but they were the driving force on the team just to beat each other. But at that stage of the game, they weren't getting into brawls, the competition was taken out of the playing field.

J.D.: Yes, how about Bob? Was Bob ever, or Ted, they're too young.

R.H.: No, they were too young at that time. I think Ted and Bob might have been down to Florida once or twice during our stay there. I can remember Ted, I think, but I don't remember Bob in those days.

J.D.: Did they let, did Joe and Jack let the girls in the family play as they did in later years, or was the competition too intense?

R.H.: No, these meetings down in Florida were strictly composed of comprised of Joe and Jack and their friends. None of the girls were there at the time; they were all too young. I didn't meet the girls actually until, oh, around my senior year at Princeton and that's when I first met Kathleen and then Rosemary, who was not well; but the other girls were all younger at the time.

J.D.: So after you went off to Princeton, Jack Kennedy went off to Harvard, you'd just see him several times a year.

R.H.: Very intermittantly, and then we both went into the service. He went into the PT boats, of course, and I went into the Army; and I didn't see him until 1946, after the war. And that's when...

J.D.: Did you correspond at all during the war?

R.H.: No, we didn't. And that's when I got my first inkling of where his ambitions lay. We were staying at a place up on the Cape, my wife and I, called Coonamasset; and I telephoned, this was in the fall around Thanksgiving of 1946, the Kennedy house and Jack was down there. He drove up to Coonamasset to see us and brought us back to the house for dinner. The Ambassador was there at the time, Mrs. Kennedy, also Teddy, Bobby and the girls were there. And Jack had a tape recorder, and he was practicing speaking into this tape

recorder; and he made me speak into it and then played back the tape, and your own voice always sounds awful to you. And I asked Jack why he was working so hard with this tape recorder and he told me that he planned to run for Congress. That was, I say, the first indication as to where his inclinations were then leading him.

J.D.: Wouldn't that be 45? He ran in '46.

R.H.: That was probably in '45, yes, yes, because he ran in the fall of '46. Yes, that was 1945.

J.D.: Were you involved in that campaign?

R.H.: I wasn't involved at all in the campaign, no.

J.D.: Did the...from time to time you read stories about the dinner table games, and you had mentioned earlier that when you were at school with John Kennedy that you were both devotees of Information Please. Did those family table games go back as far as the Choate days, the quizzing by the elder members of the family, quiz games of the children?

R.H.: Yes, Mr. Kennedy, I can remember more clearly, this particular two or three days I spent there at the Cape with the Kennedys, was at the house and he was going through a quiz game, largely with Jack, I think, stimulating his mind for his first step into politics. But I don't remember any general games at that particular time with any of the other members of the family. But the talk with them at the Kennedy table, and this goes way back to 1933 or '34, was never trivial. It always had to do with events and outstanding personalities.

J.D.: And everyone was supposed to have an opinion and defend it.

R.H.: Everybody would have an opinion and defend it, and the younger members of the family like Bob and Ted would ask these questions that might have seemed sort of childish at the time. But, as I said, Mr. Kennedy, at great lengths, would explain the meaning of what they were asking and the reason therefor.

J.D.: Would the younger children participate in questioning one of the elders. Would somebody be at bat, and every-

one fire questions at him or

R.H.: I don't remember that. No, no, no, I just remember the general tenor or all the conversations and how stimulating it was for an outsider to be there and listen to Mr. Kennedy.

J.D.: Then did you follow the new Congressman's career, when he was in the House, when he was elected?

R.H.: I was, at that time, working in New York, and I naturally was very happy about his election and I would see him very intermittently. I didn't get to Washington particularly at that time. When he would come up to New York, it was generally to take some girl out. Once in a while we'd double date, and he was going with many different girls at that particular time. Then I got in the trucking business, and we had hoped to get some government business. So I came to Washington, and I wanted to make a connection with the Transportation Corps in the Department of Defense. I went to then Representative Jack Kennedy, and he and Ted Reardon and I came over to the Department of Defense where he introduced me to the Chief of Transportation; and I can remember a conversation at that time. I thought that he was working very hard; he was driving himself very hard, and this was only around 1948 or so. I said to Lem Billings who happened to be in Washington at the time, just what is Jack after; what is he looking for. Lem said that he wants to be President of the United States, and I was the most shocked person in the world. I looked upon him as a Representative, but becoming President of the United States was a dream that was just beyond my comprehension. I can remember when he made up his mind to run for the Senate against Cabot Lodge and I quoted an article from Arthur Krock. There had been recently a column by him about Lodge, pointing out that he was a very outstanding American, what with his war record and his family background, and his participation in public affairs. I pointed out to Representative Kennedy what a difficult thing it would be to defeat him. Representative Kennedy pointed out certain minor sarcasms, certain ironies of this particular article by Arthur Krock as to how Cabot Lodge was always on the popular side of every issue which didn't necessarily make him an awfully good statesman; but it might make him a satisfactory politician. And he shortly thereafter, of course went into that particular campaign and capitalized on these particular weaknesses and won the Senate race.

J.D.: That'd be 1952.

R.H.: That was 1952.

J.D.: You weren't involved in the campaign; you were down in New York?

R.H.: I was in New York at the time, and shortly thereafter I went to Texas; and as a result I didn't see the then Senator Kennedy for several years. I received a letter from him apprising me that he was going to marry Jacqueline Kennedy and asking me to be an usher in his wedding which I'd planned to do; but just, oh, possibly a week before the wedding I had an appendicitis operation and was unable to make it. And then I didn't see Senator Kennedy until I came back from Texas which was around 1955 or '56 and I got in touch with him. He was coming to New York and I can remember very well that I met him at a place called Chipps, which is a tailor in New York. As we left Chipps, we were walking along the street and I noticed all these people, just ordinary people, walking down the street, turning around and looking at him and pointing him out. And I said to him, "Do you realize that all of these people recognize you; how prominent you are?" And he said, "Yes, I'm well aware of it." It was nothing conceited about it, but he was just aware that he was at that point more than a Senator from Massachusetts, but that he was becoming a national figure. I can remember we went to a restaurant on Lexington Avenue for something to eat, this was around noon; and he advised me at that time, I just don't remember the year; I might be off a year or two; but he advised me at that time that he had just heard that he had won the Pulitzer Prize for Profiles in Courage. I could tell and I never heard Jack Kennedy boast about any accomplishments or anything he had ever done, but I could see that he was extremely proud and extremely touched by this particular Pulitzer Prize award.

J.D.: I think that was 1956.

R.H.: That would be about 1956, yes.

J.D.: I was working for him then.

R.H.: Oh, were you, Joe?

J.D.: Yes, I can remember the period before the award was made and I don't remember the time of the award though, but as you say, there was great interest. All right, go ahead.

R.H.: And, shortly thereafter, oh around 1959, I didn't see Jack Kennedy probably for a couple of years. I had had some severe financial reverses and I had gone into a sort of a period of withdrawal. I went to a football game with Lem Billings down at Princeton, the first time I had been back in quite a while and Lem and I sat together in the stands. We just happened to run into each other, as a matter-of-fact, and got to talking about Jack; and Lem said that you definitely should look Jack Kennedy up. He still feels the same about you, as a very old friend and a good friend; and he is going to be the next President of the United States. Well, I was slightly embarrassed to get in touch with Jack. It made it look as though I was tying my rather unsuccessful wagon onto his particular successful wagon.

J.D.: He didn't look that much like he was going to win at that point, Rip.

R.H.: At that point he didn't. Lem thought he was, and I was willing to take the gamble. And so, I think Lem had Jack get in touch with me and invite me up to the Cape for a week-end. I went over there and none of the older members of the family were there. Jack was a little late in arriving. We were all around the dinner table and for an outsider to participate with the Kennedys at anything like that is difficult because the talk is so fast; and the chain of events and the patter and the wit and humor so keen; that for an outsider to be there you feel like some clod who has just come off the farm; and I remember a feeling of great discomfort for that first night. Jack arrived as we were all at dinner. There must have been 12 of us at the table, Jackie, Bobby, I don't think Teddy was there; but all the sisters were there, Sarge Shriver, Peter Lawford, Lem and myself. And Jack came in and the first thing he did was come over to me and say "hello", and "how good to see you again" just as though I had seen him the day before. His feelings for old friends never changed-- a great sense of loyalty. And I spent the week-end there. We played golf together. We didn't discuss politics too much. We noticed how he could read the papers so quickly sitting out on the veranda on Sunday morning. And I went

back home to Syracuse and, oh, this was around 1959, I then for the first time got into Democratic politics. Prior to that I had been a registered Republican, which is true of many of his friends, and got into local politics and ran two or three campaigns up there just to get known among the politicians and then started the first Kennedy for President Club in up-state New York. I worked closely with people like Pete Crotty up in Buffalo and the O'Connells down in Albany, getting the stuff cleared with Steve Smith, which was my first entry, entrance into the Kennedy campaign.

J.D.: Was Steve down at the Esso Building here in Washington at that time?

R.H.: Yes, I came down to see Steve in the Esso Building.

J.D.: The Kennedy for President Committee?

R.H.: Kennedy for President. I got a group of about 12 people from Central New York to come down when we started this to have their pictures taken with the Senator and to give us a good send off. The particular fear of Steve Smith was that we might do something to upset the established political order there, as they were still very much on the fence. They were going more for a neutral candidate, not committing themselves to the Kennedy movement at all.

J.D.: Well, Crotty and O'Connell were for Kennedy at that time.

R.H.: Crotty and O'Connell were very outspoken but the New York crowd was not...

J.D.: How 'bout in Rochester? Posner?

R.H.: Bill Posner. That was the next time I saw Senator Kennedy. He came over there to speak in Rochester, and I was standing down in the hotel lobby with a couple of my candidates from Syracuse; I wanted them to have their pictures taken with Senator Kennedy. He was extremely popular in Central New York and all these photographers and prominent politicians, etc. were standing around and I was standing off by myself, by the elevator. I don't want to horn in on this particular greeting plan but the minute he walked into the hotel lobby, he spotted me as well as this large crowd waiting to see him and came right over to see me and tell me how happy he was to see me and how happy he was that I was there.

J.D.: Who was the state chairman then? Pendergast?

R.H.: Pendergast was in the state. Bill Posner was the one that was initiating this particular movement in Central New York. He was a strong Kennedy supporter at the time but rather reluctant to make his views too well known. Shortly after that, Senator Kennedy came to Syracuse University to receive a degree and to make the commencement address. We were....

J.D.: This would be the spring of '59?

R.H.: This was the spring of '59 and I went out to the airport to meet him. They also had a welcoming committee from the University that was lead by Harlan Cleveland, who was head of the Maxwell School at Syracuse and is presently an Assistant Secretary of State; and we both met him there and Harlan Cleveland brought us back to the hotel where there was a suite reserved for the Senator. At this point, his old financial habits came very much into evidence--he needed Vitalis. I had to go out and buy Vitalis for him and he needed...anything he needed I was shelling out for; so it was rather an expensive week-end. I was more or less his bat boy that particular time. But I can remember something that I thought was rather amusing. He spoke to Harlan Cleveland. They were having a dinner of about 75 prominent businessmen for him that night and he spoke to Harlan and said Ted Sorensen didn't accompany me on this trip as Rip Horton is here and is able to take care of any little jobs that have to be done, would it be all right for him to attend the dinner with me tonight? And Harlan kind of mumbled as though he had a hot potato in his mouth, obviously wasn't too keen on having me horn into this dinner, which I wasn't trying to do; but Senator Kennedy was just being nice about the thing and very reluctantly said he guessed it would be all right. And as he left the room, Senator Kennedy made some remark to the effect--where the devil does he get off being so high and mighty about this head of this Maxwell School, why he's lucky to earn \$7500 a year.

J.D.: Was Cleveland active in Democratic politics in Syracuse at that time?

R.H.: When we started this Kennedy for President Club up there, we had a very hard time getting support. We wanted to get somebody who was prominent in the community as well as being a Democrat, of course. I telephoned Harlan

Cleveland, told him we were going to start it, told him we wanted to get prominent citizens in it; and I'd be interested in arranging, this thing was going to be pre-arranged, in having him made Chairman of this Kennedy for President Club. And Harlan Cleveland, over the telephone, told me that after all, many of these candidates such as Adlai Stevenson were his good friends, and he didn't see, he couldn't see his way clear to head up this particular movement for Senator Kennedy. No, Harlan Cleveland was most inactive as far as our movement was concerned.

J.D.: He probably was he active in other Democratic politics there?

R.H.: Not particularly. He was more interested in the international scene and keeping irons in the fire which....

J.D.: The town and the University were separate; you know in some towns where there's a University, University people are all involved and...

R.H.: Embroiled.

J.D.: Embroiled and involved in politics, and in others, there is a certain aloofness or separateness.

R.H.: No, Harlan Cleveland... There were some University professors up there who were interested. Bradcroff, Bradford Airplane County Chairman and Board Chairman; but Harlan Cleveland considered himself above that. He participated in no way whatsoever and wouldn't lend his good name to the Kennedy for President movement.

J.D.: Well, your delegates in New York were picked in a convention, weren't they? They weren't picked in a primary?

R.H.: That's correct, yes.

J.D.: What was the next step in your efforts to get some delegates?

R.H.: We had our delegates from Central New York lined up pretty well. The County Chairman of Syracuse was in favor of it and Harlan Cleveland was named as a delegate. He had to make a sizable contribution to the local county organization and he was committed to go for President Kennedy on the first ballot; but after that, he was free to make his

own choice.

J.D.: When you say Central New York, could that be as far west as Auburn?

R.H.: Very definitely.

J.D.: Would it go--it didn't go over to Buffalo?

R.H.: Yes, it went to Buffalo.

J.D.: Oh, it went to Buffalo.

R.H.: Yes, that was Crotty's territory.

J.D.: Did you go up then to the north and to Watertown, and...

R.H.: Yes, we did. This organization, working closely with Pete Crotty, this Kennedy for President movement, encompassed everything from Albany right.....

J.D.: North-as far west...

R.H.: As far west as Buffalo. Our main support was Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo. Those were the four key cities in that particular area.

J.D.: Did the leaders there indicate that they thought they would be strengthening the local ticket with John Kennedy?

R.H.: Very much, yes, very much so, yes. You see up in that area even though religion shouldn't enter into politics, there's a high incidence of Catholics that runs over 50% in Syracuse. There's a large Irish group, a large Italian group, a large Polish group and those people were very strong for Senator Kennedy. So the politicians were responding to the electorate and thought that he would do the best job in helping the local candidates win elections.

J.D.: Quite a few of the identifiable ethnic group population up there is not normally Democratic, too, isn't it?

R.H.: The rural areas are heavily Republican; the farm group, and they would be always Republican; and anti any

Democrat whether it was Kennedy or anybody else. But in the cities where you had the ethnic groups, they were Democratic.

J.D.: Did you see the President again before the election after that '59 trip?

R.H.: After the convention...

J.D.: No, I mean between then and the national convention.

R.H.: No, I didn't see him until after the graduation at Syracuse University, after the commencement address. I spoke to him on the phone two or three times. Shortly after the convention in July of 1960, this would be, I received a telephone call from him after he had gotten the nomination, asking me to come with the Kennedy group and participate in the election. He suggested that I go see the company I worked for and get a leave of absence from them, with pay if possible, he specified, and if not, that somehow the Kennedy crowd, the Democratic party would be able to carry me through. So I came to New York and spoke to the company I worked for who gave me a leave of absence to participate, without pay, I might say, and I came to Washington and saw Bobby Kennedy and Lem Billings. I was then assigned to the State of Nebraska; I went out there and worked for the three months. The President himself did not come out to that area to campaign. He made one trip out there to Offut Air Force Base in Omaha at which time I didn't see him. It was meant to be non-partisan. It was part of his briefing on international affairs and our capability; so political people weren't meant to attend it.

J.D.: That was his only visit to Nebraska during the campaign?

R.H.: During the campaign; he had been there during the primary...

J.D.: Yes.

R.H.: ...so he had built up a rather strong organization.

J.D.: You weren't at the convention, Rip?

R.H.: No, I didn't go out to the convention.

J.D.: I thought I remembered seeing your name down as the coordinator in Nebraska. I guess it is from a later list.

R.H.: From a later list you must have seen that, Joe.

J.D.: Who had Nebraska at the convention?

R.H.: Well, there was Bernie Boyle who was the State Chairman.

J.D.: But you know within the Kennedy group... At Los Angeles, there was one name assigned to each state. Like Joe Tydings was Florida and Maryland; that sort of thing.

R.H.: I don't know. Kennedy had won the primary, so he had a certain number of their votes.

J.D.: Well, now, did-what did you do out in Nebraska?

R.H.: I went out there. Bobby sent me out with a suitcase and told me to go out there and start a Kennedy for President Club or a Citizens for Kennedy Club. I went out there around the first of August, I'd say. No funds, nothing. So initially I had two problems; one of funds, and one to get a state chairman for the Kennedy movement. Bobby referred me to Bernie Boyle who was the National Committeeman from Nebraska and, of course, Boyle who was a tough, oldtime, ruthless, hard nosed politician, wanted no part of this movement. He gave me a couple of dog catchers to head up the Citizens for Kennedy, and I turned them down and Boyle said, "Well, I can assure of one thing-that if I have my way, your campaign is going to fall flat on its face. You're not going to get money; you're not going to get any support." However, I went to Hans Jensen who had headed up the Citizens for Kennedy in Nebraska and Hans...

J.D.: Before the convention?

R.H.: Before the convention. And Hans... took over as

State Chairman.

J.D.: Where was he from? .

R.H.: He was from a little town outside of Lincoln, Nebraska, right out in the rural area. He was a Lutheran and farmer, which is a large voting block in that particular area.

J.D.: Two large voting blocks. Were you able to organize clubs and participate?

R.H.: We organized clubs, yes. There were just 12 cities with a population of 20,000 or over there. The two largest cities, of course, were Lincoln and Omaha. I got quite a bit of support in Omaha, got a lesser degree of support in Lincoln, but we raised funds. As a matter of fact, the initial fund had to be raised at my expense. I invested \$1,000 in these straw hats and went down and sold them at the State Fair for \$1 a piece, which was twice the cost; and that's the way we got it off the ground and then we naturally, as was true of many areas, had to buy every bit of advertising and buttons and bracelets and PT pins.

J.D.: Was Helen Abdouch out there during that?

R.H.: Helen Abdouch went with Bernie Boyle when there was a definite break between Bernie and myself, even though I tried to hold the Democratic party, what there was of it, with the Citizens for Kennedy movement. Helen Abdouch chose to go with Bernie Boyle.

J.D.: She had lived in Nebraska, hadn't she?

R.H.: She lived in Omaha, yes. And the two groups were constantly fighting. Bernie telephoned Bobby one time, it was on Labor Day week-end, and suggested that they throw me out of the State, because all I was doing was messing things up. And I spoke to Bobby, oh, several times during the campaign, and he always seemed in my opinion to be taking Bernie's side in the argument. At one point, Bernie went so far as to hold a press conference and say that the Citizens for Kennedy movement was wrecking the state, but...

J.D.: There was a lady associated with the Citizens. I

can recall...

R.H.: Mrs. Jane Stoner.

J.D.: Mrs. Stoner. They were asked to submit weekly reports to the National Citizens for Kennedy-Johnson in the Esso Building in Washington, and the last item on the mimeograph sheet was "any special problems?" And Mrs. Stoner, who wrote dutifully every week, would list under any special problems--still Bernie Boyle.

R.H.: That's good. Yes, Bernie wouldn't let us--didn't want us to raise funds. He said we were tapping his funds but we had the right to raise funds, too. He was more interested in the state ticket. We were strictly interested in the candidate for President.

J.D.: Was the Governor up?

R.H.: Frank Morrison was running, and our relations with Frank were good.

J.D.: Was there a Senator up?

R.H.: No, no Senators were running that year. Just the Congressmen.

J.D.: Congressmen?

R.H.: Congressmen, the four Congressmen were running.

J.D.: The rest of the state ticket?

R.H.: Yes, yea.

J.D.: Was it felt that the President's religion would be a handicap in Nebraska?

R.H.: His religion was definitely a handicap out there.

J.D.: Among the non-bloc vote?

R.H.: Among the farm bloc particularly.

J.D.: The non-bloc. White Anglo-Saxon Protestant vote?

R.H.: The non-bloc. They used to have meetings in churches. They'd advertise these meetings, various denominations, telling people to come to a mass meeting on why they shouldn't vote for a Catholic for President. The religious issue was very, very prominent there. A great deal of literature was being mailed into the state from out-of-state somewhere, talking about how the Pope was going to come to the White House; and how the Knights of Columbus were a secret armed army to take over the government. So religion was a very prominent factor, but without the religious issue, Senator Kennedy couldn't possibly have won that particular state. It's just too far gone Republican. No Democratic candidate...

J.D.: Who did campaign the state for the President? Any other member of the family, or did the vice presidential candidate campaign in the state?

R.H.: Yes, Lyndon Johnson spent two days there. He was very well received. He was in both Omaha and Lincoln. Bob Kennedy came out. He was there in Omaha, Lincoln and two or three of the smaller towns. He got a very good reception, but we lacked crowds. Bobby gave me an extremely hard time as a result of it. I stood at the foot of his bed as he lay and relaxed one evening before dinner and he said, "Rip, can you possibly explain what goes on here to me?" I had no explanation and I felt like I did when I was a Mucker and they were throwing me out of Choate. He chastised me pretty roundly for his swing through Nebraska. Those were the... and Joan Kennedy came out and campaigned.

J.D.: Did you have a social type campaign, teas, and that sort of thing with Joan?

R.H.: Yes.

J.D.: Geared to the ladies?

R.H.: Yes, we did. We had teas in the principal cities and some of the smaller cities. I'd go around and talk and try to explain why they should vote for Senator Kennedy; but his appeal, of course, was more to the large Eastern industrial centers and this would not go in Nebraska. They're too conservative, very conservative people. And I think Nebraska, I'm unhappy to say, had the largest Republican

majority of all fifty states in the last election, which the President didn't let me forget when I saw him after the election.

J.D.: What did he say?

R.H.: I went over there for dinner to the White House, and he said he just couldn't understand how a Frank Morrison, a Democrat, could win the governorship...

J.D.: Was Morrison Catholic?

R.H.: No, Morrison's not a Catholic. And how he would only get something like 38% of the vote and Morrison got 51% of the vote. And I had an extremely hard time explaining to the President because actually he was needling me. He knew much more than I did about it.

J.D.: Do you think he really hadn't expected to win and he was pulling your leg; or do you think he was also trying to learn from it maybe?

R.H.: He might have been trying to learn from it, and I pointed out that Frank Morrison campaigned on an entirely different type of a platform than he was campaigning on.

J.D.: Strictly on state issues?

R.H.: Strictly on state issues, not national issues.

J.D.: Who was the Republican candidate for governor?

R.H.: I really can't remember his name at the present time.

J.D.: Was he the incumbent or was he vulnerable on his record or anything like that? Did Morrison campaign against the other man's record, something like that?

R.H.: The other man had not--he had no record. He was an extremely heavy drinker and he made accusations against Frank Morrison as to his ties with labor which in Nebraska is not a popular thing. His ties to the Teamsters, specifically, which Frank was able to disprove so he made this man out a liar, and Frank was just a good campaigner.

J.D.: Did he campaign separate from the national ticket there?

R.H.: Yes, he did. He wouldn't get too involved with us. He'd capitalize, for instance, when Estes Kefauver came there to campaign--then Frank and I would be on the same platform. But generally speaking, Frank would not tie himself with the Administration, with the Kennedy program at all.

J.D.: You should have told the President that he didn't carry Nebraska because he didn't campaign there.

R.H.: I think I did tell him that. He said, "Well, after all, I was out there I made..." He had the number of appearances that he made there, very specifically as to number.

J.D.: Before?

R.H.: Prior...

J.D.: The Convention.

R.H.: Prior to the convention, yes. That's when he campaigned for the delegates.

J.D.: That's 'cause there was a primary for delegates. Yes, that was different.

R.H.: At the time, something interesting came up. Bernie Boyle had run a picnic for the President and to meet all the leading Democratic politicians in the state.

J.D.: Before the convention?

R.H.: This was before the convention and having given this big picnic at his estate, he billed the President for the picnic. I think the figure was \$1600; and I remember President Kennedy never recovered from having to pay that particular bill that Bernie Boyle sent him.

J.D.: Whose ox was gored? It was an ox roast, wasn't it?

R.H.: Yes, it was an ox roast. Do you remember it, Joe? Were you there? I don't remember.

J.D.: No, I wasn't there. My impression is that he either

went to Colorado from the ox roast or went to the ox roast from Colorado. One or the other.

R.H.: Yes, whatever it was.

J.D.: No, I'll tell you-our national committee man went to it.

R.H.: Yea.

J.D.: Because Bernie Boyle was the National Committeeman from Nebraska, and I can remember his talking about what a great occasion it was. I'd guess it was around September.

R.H.: That's right.

J.D.: '59, something around in there, around fair time.

R.H.: Yes, yes.

J.D.: County fair time. Well, were you able to satisfy the President that you hadn't really been campaigning for Nixon-Lodge?

R.H.: I don't think he was ever convinced, but fortunately Lem's record, Lem Billings's record....

J.D.: Was it worst?

R.H.: Was much worst than mine.

J.D.: No, you had, your state went worst.

R.H.: My state went worst, but he pointed out with a good deal of humor, I thought, that with apparent disbelief, that every district that poor Lem Billings ever had from 1946 to 1960 when he ran the campaign in Wisconsin, Lem had managed to lose everyone one and after all, all I had done was lose one. So Billings was the horrible example of the way not to run campaigns.

J.D.: Don't you think quite possibly that they had, after a certain point maybe, he had insisted that Lem be given always the most difficult district; so that he would continue to have something to kid him about?

R.H.: Well, I...

J.D.: Where was Lem, Rip? In one of the Dakota's, wasn't it?

R.H.: No, Lem was in Wisconsin.

J.D.: Wisconsin? No, that was during the primary.

R.H.: No, that was in...

J.D.: In the general, too?

R.H.: During the general, yea. Lem and I used to talk on the phone, oh, once or twice a week. Bobby had given Lem instructions to help me anyway that he could and because Lem had been more experienced in this particular area but not more successful. So Lem and I used to speak and he was having his problems in Wisconsin; and I remember when he lost Wisconsin how badly he felt about it in that the President had campaigned out there during the primary for such a long time.

J.D.: And he might really, Lem might really have thought that they were going to win there.

R.H.: He might have, yes. Well, he hoped they would win. But, of course, when you're that close to a campaign, you always think you have a chance.

J.D.: You have to or you're no good.

R.H.: I had hopes for Nebraska until I got the first returns from Kansas and then I realized that we were going to take an awful shellacking because those two states were so similar.

J.D.: How did you come to get into the Kennedy Administration after he was elected President?

R.H.: Well, after he was elected President, first of all, I received a phone call from him; I'd say either one or two days after the election, thanking me so much for participating. I had gone home; I hadn't gone to the Cape as so many people had and just figured that I had made a contribution. I was hoping that he would ask me to come to Washington, but there was never any word or mention of such an arrangement. In other words, I was doing it voluntarily. I went back to work and then it was around, oh, the latter part of December, just in between Christmas and New Years.

when he was down in Palm Beach at the time, I received another call from him. He asked me if I would like to come to Washington, and I told him I'd just love to; and he told me to make arrangements to quit my job; and I'd hear from him in the near future. So I quit my job and sat there waiting for the phone to ring, not being at all sophisticated about politics and not realizing he was slightly more interested in the cabinet and jobs of that nature than he was in his old pal Rip. And I sat around for about a month until they were ready to foreclose on the mortgage on my house; and I then got a call from SPaul Corbin who had heard about my predicament and whom I knew. He had been in Syracuse running the Kennedy campaign, telling me to come right down to Washington that I was going into the Defense Department. It's not that the President deliberately forgot me; but he just had so many things on his mind and after all I think it was really up to me to take the initiative and come down and see what he wanted. And I was first assigned to the Department of the Army down here, and, oh, I hadn't been here for more than two or three weeks then I got my first telephone call from the White House. Lem Billings was in town, to come down, over there for dinner. I can remember how nervous I was walking into the White House and realizing that I was going to meet the President and the big problem in my mind was what do I call him. Do I call him "Mr. President" or do I call him "Jack". I was sort of waiting in a little television room that they have on the second floor, and he came in and just said "hi Rip" just as normally as he would have down at Choate or Princeton or anywhere; and instinctively I said "hi Jack". I continued to call him Jack possibly oh several times after that; but soon shifted as he grew into the job more and became more the President. I...

J.D.: He assumed a new personality to you...

R.H.: Yes.

J.D.: ... and you looked at him...

R.H.: Very definitely.

J.D.: ...as the President in addition to being your old friend.

R.H.: Yes, an old friend, very definitely. At first, it

was a toss-up between an old friend and President; but as time went by, he just grew in stature somehow. He seemed to grow bigger, and as he grew bigger I dropped the "hi Jack" business; and it was always Mr. President.

J.D.: You and he and Lem had some reminiscing about old times?

R.H.: Yes.

J.D.: At that dinner, particularly, I was thing about it as well as generally.

R.H.: At that particular evening? Yes, he had a great flair for bringing people into conversations. He'd talk to me about what I was doing over in the Pentagon. And I can remember him asking what I was making and at that point, they were creating a job for me over here; and I think the salary was going to be about \$14,000 a year; and as I say, he was a very loyal friend. He said well, I want you to make more money than that and he telephoned Ralph Dungan that very first evening and said I want Rip to make at least \$16,000 a year. And the next day, everybody from the Secretary of the Army to Ralph Dungan was trying to reach me to apologize for paying me \$14,000 a year; and it was all a big mistake, but the President definitely felt that I was worth \$16,000 a year to the Administration. But to me that is just an example of his thoughtfulness to old friends and friends who had been loyal to him through the years; but his loyalty was a very outstanding thing. But we talked about many subjects there at the various times I went to the White House for dinner. I can remember before the - after the Cuban crisis, I was there alone, which was probably the most enjoyable evening I had with him. Charlie Bartlett was due to come but couldn't make it. And we went down to see a movie in the projection room down in the basement; and the President just kiddingly said to me. "Rip, if you were me, what would you do about Cuba?" And I presume it was very much on his mind at that stage, this was three or four months after the Bay of Pigs; and I just offhand said, because I didn't have the least idea what to do about Cuba, to turn it over to the Catholic Church and let them handle it. They're all Catholics down there anyhow and don't worry about the place. He just laughed; he didn't pay too much attention to me.

J.D.: Did he seem burdened shortly after the--the first time

you went over there to dinner, it was just, oh, its probably not more than a month after he came into office?

R.H.: It was probably sometime in early March that I went.

J.D.: Was he quieter or was he more garrulous or was there no change?

R.H.: Just chatty, joking, a little compared with later times, a little more inclined to talk more about problems. As time went on, he became more quiet in the presence of people who weren't actually concerned in those particular problems. But he was very easy. I can remember after dinner, there was also Steve and Jean Smith there; I was amazed he said he felt like a walk, and we suddenly walked out the front door of the White House, down to the gates on Pennsylvania Avenue and all the Secret Service men were running around, lights were flashing, providing protection for him; and he just walked right out of the gates and we walked all around the White House, the total distance of the White House. And People stood there in amazement to suddenly see the President taking a walk at that time of the evening-it was about eight o'clock. He didn't have too high a regard for his safety outside.

J.D.: Then later on as the months went by, you say gradually he seemed to talk less about Presidential business when he was with friends.

R.H.: Yes, that's right.

J.D.: ...old friends and more about what? What would he talk about instead?

R.H.: He'd listen a little more. Generally, he had people there who were light and would joke. People like Lem Billings when I was there or Jim Reed of Treasury or Red Fay; and he'd be inclined to listen. He'd lead the conversation, but he'd listen. I remember one incident that I hadn't thought of for quite a while. The President-at that time, unfortunately, my marriage wasn't doing too well; and there was talk of a divorce, and he was aware of it; and he spoke to me about it. And he said, well, Rip, isn't there anyway you could patch it up? Couldn't you and Jane possibly go off together for a week somewhere or take a trip, or do some-

thing to try to bring it together again, and I probably answered to the effect I didn't think there was much point to it; it just wasn't working, that's all. And he made a remark that how happy he was with Jackie and how they were getting along better than they ever had; and he also mentioned one or two other friends of his who were having marital difficulties at that particular time and how hopeless their situation seemed to be. But his marriage, at that point, seemed to be a very happy one. Also, I could see his complete love and devotion for little Caroline. John-John was just a baby at the time, too young, but whenever I was there, Caroline would always come in to say good night to him, and they would talk for quite a while; and he would play with her and tease her a little. She was very much in his thoughts. But the White House for somebody with his desire to do things, to move, almost seemed like a prison. I asked him one time; I suggested that Jim Reed had a lovely house in Maryland and I said couldn't you possibly get out of here some evening; and we could all go over to Jim's house and have a party there, just to break away from this prison. And he said he didn't know of any secret exits from the place. There was no way he could get out of it without the Secret Service following him wherever he went. When he would no sooner pull up to somebody's house, the Secret Service would be there; the lights would start flashing, and then his presence would be well known.

He was interested in what I was doing in the Department of Defense. I remember one evening I was there and he was then involved in the AID program, trying to build that up. And, of course, his big problem was getting capable people to come to Washington, who did have a sense of dedication and who wanted to do something for the country and the administration, not necessarily for him. And he suggested that I might be interested in taking over one of the AID jobs in South America, an administrator of the program, and he mentioned Bolivia. I pointed out that I was, at that point, working exclusively in the civil rights area, and he, after thinking it over, said, well, that's probably our most serious domestic problem that we are faced with. I rate it with any problem that we have in the world today, the top two or three problems; and we decided then and there that I would

stay in the civil rights field, even though I had no prior experience in it. He had rather a minute knowledge of the area and of the various problem areas. At one point he suddenly asked me, we had had a good deal of problems with Ingalls Ship Building Company in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and out of a clear blue sky he said to me...

J.D.: What's the name of that company?

R.H.: Ingalls.

J.D.: Yes, yes, I know.

R.H.: In Pascagoula...out of a clear blue sky he said to me, Rip, can't we do something At Ingall's Ship Yard? Can't we do something for the Negroes down there, get them better jobs? And we had just made quite a few breakthroughs down there in all the skilled trades; and I was able to point that out to him that we were making headway. It was slow; it was laborious, but we were making headway. But he had a feel for civil rights. I can remember so well one day, we were swimming in the pool at the White House, and I happened to mention to him that Nersey Joe Walcott, who had been a great Negro heavyweight boxer was looking for a job with the federal government; that he was making something like \$60-65 a week in Jersey City. I said how terribly difficult it was to place this man because unfortunately he had gambling connections; and that in the Department of Defense is an unpardonable sin. So Senator, I mean President Kennedy said to me well, don't you realize these poor people who had no where to go either in the past had to turn to gambling connections or in too many cases communism because there was no area open to them to go to. He had a great sense of empathy; a great sense of compassion, I'd call it, for the Negroes and their problem.

J.D.: When you say, you said earlier that you thought that John Kennedy would end up as a writer, that that's where he had quite a bit of interest in his earlier days. I guess you weren't surprised that he would end up with such quality in his public addresses, public statements.

R.H.: That's correct, but even the quality of it surprised me who felt that he would go into writing. The very fact that he excelled to receive a Pulitzer prize and the very nature of his addresses, the grace with which they were delivered

and the use of words.

J.D.: Rip, can you tell us a little about the New Frontier's Club? You were most instrumental in forming that.

R.H.: Well, it's not at all related to the Muckers Club.

J.D.: What is it?

R.H.: This club started, by John Stillman from New York, and Bill Milius from Missouri, and one or two other people, their thinking being that there should be a group dedicated to what the administration was trying to do. People who were completely dedicated to the ideas and the dreams of President Kennedy. And it started with just four or five people; I happened to be one of the original people who went to the initial dinners, and I took it over shortly thereafter, and we expanded this group to about sixty with two or three from each agency. And we were well aware of the fact that we weren't here to re-make the government--that's an impossible challenge, an impossible job; but we felt that if people were dedicated enough just to President Kennedy to possibly push certain programs in the agencies just a little, that we might be helpful in passing some of his program.

J.D.: Were they mostly people who had been interested in John Kennedy's candidacy prior to the convention?

R.H.: Not necessarily, no. They were Humphrey people; they were a few Johnson people, Symington people, not necessarily all Kennedy people at all. I'd say that maybe 30 or 40% were originally Kennedy people, but when they did come here to the Government as they all did, some had already been in Government and participated in the campaign. They were supposedly completely dedicated to President Kennedy's program which often times brought them into conflict with the programs of their particular departments. They were there to fight, if necessary, the bureaucracy and in the case of Defense--the military, to get Kennedy programs through.

J.D.: It was a dinner club, right?

R.H.: Yes, it met twice a month. One evening, one night we would have a closed meeting, possibly fifteen or twenty would show up and then the other night in the month, we would have an open meeting. We had many prominent government people

from then the Vice President Johnson on down and oddly enough in November of 1963 I had written a letter to the President asking him to speak in December of that year but of course his death...broke that.

J.D.: I'm sure he would have come. Sorensen spoke...Bob... Kennedy.

R.H.: Ted Sorensen spoke, Byron White spoke, Bobby Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Udall, Hubert Humphrey, Carl Albert. They were all strong Administration people that we got there and their purpose was to explain their programs to us and then we'd attempt to get those programs through....

J.D.: The members got to know someone in other Departments who was associated with the President's program.

R.H.: That's right, yes. That was very helpful. Politics being what it is in Washington; you often times had to ask people in various Departments for favors whether it's to try to steer a contract into a close Congressional District or whether it's to get somebody placed whom we owe a political debt to. So we were able to use this referral system between Departments to help take care of political, strictly political, obligations. It was a political group. President Kennedy was aware of this group as a matter-of-fact. He and I had discussed it one time. He, I think the last time I saw him was a week-end I spent at Camp David with him and when we flew back in the helicopter, was talking about the group; and as I got off the plane, he said good-bye to me; and I can remember very clearly that he said, "Well, Rip, how many throats are the New Frontier Club going to cut today?"

J.D.: About how long before his death was that?

R.H.: I'd say it was the summer of 1963.

J.D.: There was usually someone from the White House at your meetings, wasn't there?

R.H.: We had Dick Donohue who was on the White House staff there and Chuck Daly, both attended.

J.D.: When you went with the President to Camp David, did

you talk about old times?

R.H.: That particular week-end I was there, Jim Reed was there, Lem Billings, Ted Kennedy and Joan; and we made a tour of the battlefield.

J.D.: Gettysburg?

R.H.: Gettysburg, yes; and then we talked but I'd say the President spent a great share of the time talking to Ted; and I can remember Joan Kennedy saying how happy she was that Ted was there and how much she enjoyed having the President speak to Ted about various bills that were coming before the Senate, how happy it made her seem.

J.D.: Ted was then a Senator?

R.H.: Oh, yes, Ted was a Senator. That was in '63. The summer of 1963.

J.D.: Did the President indicate any nostalgia-that he would want to swap places with Teddy?

R.H.: No, he didn't. He had, at that point, in my opinion, had grown into the presidency. I can remember Jim Reed and I talking to him and asking him how he felt the election would go coming this fall of '64; and he felt quite confident. His feeling was that if times remain good he'd win without too much trouble. I don't know who he felt at the time his opponent would be. I slightly feel that he thought it might be Senator Barry Goldwater; but I'm sure of that. That was just a feeling on my part from listening to him. But he was fully the President at that stage and he was definitely Mr. President to all of us, the outsiders like Jim Reed and myself, as close we had been to him. He came with us when we went down to have a shoot against the Secret Service shooting those little birds they shoot out of blinds with shot guns; and he watched that but after that, he went back to the house, his house, and he read and he rested and then we'd see him at dinner and the talk was very general. After dinner, there was a movie, and he had sobered somewhat I'd say, but he was still the warm personality that he had always been but he just didn't display this warmth as much because he had too much on his mind, at that's all.

J.D.: Did he trap shoot at all, ever?

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R.H.: No, he didn't shoot that day with us. Ted and myself, Jim Reed and Lem went against these four Secret Service guys.

J.D.: And you won, of course.

R.H.: The Secret Service guys won, but their shooting, I'd like to add, was almost as poor as ours was. I think out of eight shots they might have hit three birds; and we hit two and the President got quite a kick out of that, that they weren't doing too well as shooters; but as they pointed out their particular forte was pistols.

J.D.: It's quite different; all together different. That's duck hunting, training, huh? Where the birds come out pretty fast.

R.H.: Yea, oh, it's impossible. I didn't hit one the whole time I was there. But that was the last time I saw the President, was that particular week-end. He was the President then.

J.D.: You'll miss him. OK Rip?

R.H.: Joe, thank you.