

George H. Taylor Oral History Interview—JFK #1, 5/7/1964
Administrative Information

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George H. Taylor (1907-1986) was a chauffeur and valet for John F. Kennedy from 1936 until 1946. This interview focuses on Taylor's relationship with John F. Kennedy (JFK), the beginning of JFK's interest in politics, and Taylor's responsibilities as JFK's valet and chauffeur, among other issues.

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George H. Taylor—JFK #1
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Oral History Interview

with

GEORGE TAYLOR

May 7, 1964
Boston, Massachusetts

By Sal Micciche

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MICCICHE: The following is an interview with George Taylor of Boston. The interviewer is Sal Micciche of the *Boston Globe*. The place is Boston. The date is May 7, 1964. George, you first met President Kennedy in his early days at Harvard. Will you tell us about it?

TAYLOR: Yes. I first met him in 1936. He, along with his brother Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.]. And we were friends during his college days.

MICCICHE: What were you doing at the time?

TAYLOR: I was with the valetaria service there in Cambridge.

MICCICHE: And you served the President while he was a student?

TAYLOR: I served the President and a good many of his friends who were at college, at that time, and they all became very good friends of mine during that period.

MICCICHE: Did he show any interest in politics at that time?

TAYLOR: Yes, he did. HE spoke politics always, and he introduced me to his grandfather, “Honey Fitz.” [John F. Fitzgerald]

MICCICHE: The former Mayor of Boston?

TAYLOR: The former Mayor of Boston, that was his grandfather. And I remember as he entered the service, he and his brother Joe said, “George, take good care of Gramps, and Gramps will take good care of you.”

MICCICHE: Who were his friends at Harvard, George?

TAYLOR: Some of his very close friends were Langdon Marvin and Torbert Macdonald, who was captain of the football team that year.

MICCICHE: Torbert Macdonald, the congressman today?

TAYLOR: Torbert Macdonald is a congressman. That’s right.

MICCICHE: They were roommates at Harvard?

TAYLOR: Let me see. I think they were roommates. Yes, they were roommates. I had to sort of recollect, but they were roommates, yes.

MICCICHE: How did you serve the late President at Harvard?

TAYLOR: I took care of his clothes, his shoes, and drove him because of the fact he couldn’t drive very well after his back injury. I drove him wherever he wanted to go. I can’t forget that he always – as a matter of fact, at that time I had a new Chrysler that year, and he wanted to go down to Poughkeepsie, New York, and he wanted to borrow my car. He said, “George, let’s exchange cars.” And his Ford was about falling to pieces, and I said, “Well, Jack, I can’t lend you my car because mine is only a week old.” Anyway, I loaned him the car, and he and Torby Macdonald was going down to Poughkeepsie, down to see some girl friends at Vassar University. I think Vassar is in New York.

[-2-]

MICCICHE: You were with him when he made his first political speech. A speech with politics as the topic. Could you tell us about that?

TAYLOR: Yes, I was with him that year and his topic of the evening was, “Beware of the threat of the Soviet Union,” and that’s about the first speech that he gave, and it was at Huntington Avenue YMCA in Boston.

MICCICHE: And how old was he about then?

TAYLOR: He was then about twenty, I’d say.

MICCICHE: About twenty. His second or third year at Harvard? His second year at Harvard?

TAYLOR: I think it was about that, yes.

MICCICHE: And even then he was warning us of the danger?

TAYLOR: Yes. Yes, he was.

MICCICHE: Do you recall any passages of the speech?

TAYLOR: Yes, I remember that he said that when the top man in the country at that time said he wanted a train full of nuts or bolts that they would produce the bolts or the nuts, but they would not be perfect, any of them.

MICCICHE: I see. What type of a fellow was he at Harvard? What did he like best of do and...

TAYLOR: Jack was a very well liked – well, as a matter of fact, he was about the most popular. Between he and his brother Joe, everything had to do with Joe or Jack. I mean they were very popular. You'd go in his room, and there would always be a lot of students there getting information, and they would speak about the current events of the time, at that time. He liked sports even though he could not participate because of his injury.

[-3-]

MICCICHE: Yes, that's true. George, you were saying that you took care of his clothes and his shoes while he was at Harvard. Did he have a hat while he was at Harvard?

TAYLOR: No. As a matter of fact, when I met Jack, he never wore hats. He hated a hat. And I said to him, "Jack, when you get into politics, you're going to have to wear a hat." And he said, "George, never!" [Laughter]

MICCICHE: What type of clothes did he like to wear?

TAYLOR: He never liked to wear a suit. He liked to wear a pair of gray slacks and a sport coat. And sometimes a tie, but not too often, at college. He was just a carefree individual.

MICCICHE: Casual dresser?

TAYLOR: Yes. He never liked extremes, in other words.

MICCICHE: George, a little later I'm going to ask you about the President's physical condition after the war. But while he was at Harvard, he didn't take part in sports very much because of some physical disability? Could you tell us about that?

TAYLOR: Well, as a matter of fact, I knew that he had something the matter with his back, and he never would complain too much about what it was. But his friends were all athletes, such as Torbert Macdonald and Tommy Bilodeau [Thomas Bilodeau]. He was very friendly. He lived with Joe, I think.

MICCICHE: They were football players?

TAYLOR: Joe, yes. And I think he's a lawyer now in Boston.

MICCICHE: Did he have any illness at the time that you know of?

[-4-]

TAYLOR: Well, no, he was – I didn't know about it. If he had an illness he was not the complaining type, but he had a little asthma. As a matter of fact, I had asthma, too, and the Cape bothered me very much. So he would always say, "Georgie, when you find anything new for your asthma, get the same thing for me." And I'd always get two.

MICCICHE: Did you ever send him some remedies?

TAYLOR: Yes. Whatever I knew that would be good for me, I'd get the same for him. Another thing about Jack. He always would say, "George, you know I don't like to be driving in the car while you're smoking these big cigars, so when you get a cigar for yourself, always get a couple for me, too." [LAUGHTER]

MICCICHE: What do you remember about his older brother, Joseph?

TAYLOR: Oh, he was the most wonderful person I've ever met in Cambridge. I always said, "Joe, I'd like to take a trip down to New York." And he said, "Well, George, You've got a chance to make that trip. I've loaned my car to a friend of mine so I want you to go down and bring the car back." So I went by air to New York and drove the car back, which was a brand new Chrysler.

MICCICHE: Joe and the President were at Harvard together at the same time?

TAYLOR: Yes, about the same time. As a matter of fact, I think because Jack took a little time out to go to school in England, they both entered Harvard about the same time. But I didn't meet Joe until after I'd met Jack, and Jack and I were already good friends, and when I met Joe, we three used to get along so good together.

MICCICHE: I imagine a comparison between the two brothers was inevitable. How do they compare as students?

[-5-]

TAYLOR: Well, as a matter of fact, Joe – they were both very intelligent. They were at the top of their class. They were tops. Joe was summa cum laude and Jack was cum laude.

MICCICHE: Who was the better dresser between the two?

TAYLOR: Joe. Joe was very handsome. He could have made Hollywood anytime.

MICCICHE: Do you think Joe could have become President?

TAYLOR: Oh, I do think so. I do think so.

MICCICHE: Do you think they both had the...

TAYLOR: Joe was tutored to be a politician, and Jack was going to be an author or writer. And I mean when he died, of course, we both had a good cry together because of the situation. Joe was killed over the English Channel during the war.

MICCICHE: I see. That was at the time that the President was in the Navy himself, wasn't it?

TAYLOR: Yes. Well, no. No, Jack had been injured, and he came back just about three days before Joe was killed, and he told me.

MICCICHE: You were together with the President then?

TAYLOR: Yes, I was together with him. Yes.

MICCICHE: What did he have to say at the time?

TAYLOR: Well, he just said, "George, I got to tell you something." He knew it before the papers knew it. He said, "Joe has been killed over the English Channel." He said, "He was supposed to come home. He was supposed to come home," he said, "on leave, but he refused his leave and he took this very dangerous..."

[-6-]

MICCICHE: Mission?

TAYLOR: Yes. "... and he's been killed." We both just – it was a very heart-rendering

thing. We both sat down, and we both said we just couldn't imagine that Joe had died. And so it was when Jack was killed in Dallas. I was on a ship called *The Maryland Trader*. I was chief cook on that ship, and I couldn't believe it either. And so both things happened about the same time. Very tragic.

MICCICHE: Did the President ever mention what he wanted to be while he was at Harvard in the field of writing?

TAYLOR: Yes, he thought that – I mean he liked to write, but then when he got interested in politics, well, I didn't know how far he was going to go. But I thought that he felt that he was going to go to the top.

MICCICHE: You mentioned that you were with him in his first speech dealing with politics. How did he go over at the YMCA meeting?

TAYLOR: He went over tremendously. He just was terrific in his first speech. He said, "Taylor, how did I do?" And I said, "Jack, terrific!" That's the words we used, too.

MICCICHE: And you were with him on his graduation day at Harvard?

TAYLOR: Yes, I was.

MICCICHE: How did he celebrate that day?

TAYLOR: Well, Jack was never a man to drink too much. I mean he just took it like any other day. It was just a big...

MICCICHE: Did he do anything special that day?

[-7-]

TAYLOR: No. Then he said, "George, now that I'm all through with college, I want you to take me out to spend a couple of weeks, nothing else, but introduce me to all the politicians in this area." So I had spent from 1926 till then in Cambridge, and I took him out and introduced him to such political bigwigs as Daniel O'Brien. Also friends of ours was Tony Galluccio [Anthony Galluccio], John Droney....

MICCICHE: What did he talk with them about when you introduced him? Did he display his interest then in getting into politics?

TAYLOR: Well, yes. As a matter of fact, all during that particular period he was very interested in politics and I never saw anyone so enveloped into a situation like he was. He just loved – he talked politics all the time.

MICCICHE: Did he get any particular advice from these people?

TAYLOR: Yes. I'd say that John Droney gave him a lot of information that he wanted, and he was very pleased when he talked to these people. Another fellow I want to speak to you about, tell you about, was a fellow named Patsy Mulkern [Patrick J. Mulkern]. Jack was very interested in him and Dave Powers [David F. Powers]. Dave Powers – Jack liked athletics, and he'd always say to Dave, "What's the Red Sox doing? Where are they going to end up?" Ted Williams was playing at the time.

MICCICHE: Dave Powers was with him right through Congress?

TAYLOR: Yes, Dave Powers was with him.

MICCICHE: How did Dave Powers and the President get acquainted in those days?

TAYLOR: I don't know how they got acquainted, but they got to be very close. I mean they were very good – we'd go to Charlestown. We went to Charlestown quite often.

[-8-]

MICCICHE: That was Dave Powers' hometown, wasn't it?

TAYLOR: That was his hometown. Yes.

MICCICHE: What did you do when you went there?

TAYLOR: Get information. He'd always look up Dave Powers to get information as to the possibilities of what was the future in store for him? Did he have any chance to get these different politicians over, such as Cappuccio, Piemonte [Gabriel Piemonte]. What were his chances? And another fellow from Cambridge whose name was – what was his name? Eddie Martinello. Martinello.

MICCICHE: Was this before or after the war?

TAYLOR: After the war.

MICCICHE: But before the war, right after his graduation from Harvard, what was his interest in politics then?

TAYLOR: Well, I think, at that time, his brother was alive, and I think that the family had counted on Joe, Jr., as the one for politics, and I think that Jack was going to be the author because he was a terrific brain. As a matter of fact, the students all referred to him as the egghead.

MICCICHE: The egghead?

TAYLOR: The egghead, yes.

MICCICHE: After graduation you were with him for a while before he entered the service?

TAYLOR: Yes, I was with him.

MICCICHE: Where was he staying then?

TAYLOR: Well, he spent time at Hyannis Port and he spent time at the Bellevue with his grandmother and grandfather.

[-9-]

MICCICHE: What were his interests at that time before the war?

TAYLOR: Well, he was always more or less interested in politics, but he wasn't quite so much as – well, he was always interested in politics, but his main interest was to write.

MICCICHE: Had he done any writing at that time? This was before the war, right after graduation?

TAYLOR: I know that when I worked with him, he was writing a book, at that time. I discovered afterwards it was *Profiles of...*

MICCICHE: *Profiles in Courage?*

TAYLOR: ... *in Courage.*

MICCICHE: He began writing that at that time?

TAYLOR: At that time. As a matter of fact, I believe that's what he was doing then.

MICCICHE: What was his favorite pastime?

TAYLOR: His favorite pastime? Well, I'll tell you. One thing about Jack, he was never much of a playboy. He never drank very much.

MICCICHE: Did he like to go to the movies?

TAYLOR: He liked the movies. He liked especially these off Broadway shows like the – well, I mean plays, stage plays. And he liked music very much. He liked especially operas, which I didn't understand too much. But he'd say, "Come on, Taylor." And we'd go to an opera, and I didn't appreciate it too much.

MICCICHE: When he went into the service, what did you do, George?

[-10-]

TAYLOR: Well, I was still in the valetaria service, and I folded up pretty soon after because all the students that I'd worked for were taken into the armed forces.

MICCICHE: Did you hear from him while he was in the service, George?

TAYLOR: Oh yes, he wrote to me quite often. I mean he would write to me, and, of course, it would take a little time before I got the mail from him, but he wrote. We kept in contact. I saw him – I think he was here just about one week after his brother died. His brother was killed in the war.

MICCICHE: Did he ever ask you for your advice on his touch of asthma in the South Pacific?

TAYLOR: Well, no, his asthma wasn't too bad, really. But after he came back from the war. But I was always in contact with his grandmother and grandfather. Well, his grandfather, really.

MICCICHE: Do you recall any of his letters from the South Pacific while he was in the service?

TAYLOR: No, I don't recall too much about the letters that he wrote. He didn't write too much because he was never much of a man to write. Even the family used to say to him, "Jack, you didn't write us." And so he'd always write his card and say, "Kathleen, Patricia," – he'd write all the names – and he'd say, "You can't say that I didn't write you. Everything is fine." And that was Jack.

MICCICHE: When did you meet with him after the war?

TAYLOR: Well, I met with him a very short time. As a matter of fact, he was in the Chelsea Naval Hospital undergoing this operation I speak of. That was after the service in the Navy.

[-11-]

MICCICHE: I see. And this was the result of injuries while he was on the PT boat?

TAYLOR: Yes, the PT boat. He told me all about it. And another friend of his was a fellow who is now the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Paul Fay. We called him "Red" Fay. And he was an advisor at that time. He came from California. As a matter of fact, he came all the way over here from the West Coast to help him in his campaign for congressman.

MICCICHE: Did he ever tell you about his injuries while he was in the South Pacific?

TAYLOR: Well, he just said, “George, my back is bothering.” His back did bother him a lot. I mean he couldn’t carry a suitcase unless he had something to balance it off in the other hand.

MICCICHE: And he had to wear braces?

TAYLOR: Braces, yes.

MICCICHE: Around his back Did you visit him while he was at the ...

TAYLOR: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I was there. I went to see him every day. He had different little chores he wanted done, and he depended on me to do those chores. And then it was on one of these chores – I had met the father previously, but I didn’t talk to him such a length until the day I met him at the hospital, the father.

MICCICHE: And when he was released from the hospital, then you went with him full time?

TAYLOR: Full time. Right. As his chauffeur and valet. I was with him all the day. When you saw Jack, or if you wanted to see Jack, if I liked you, you could see Jack, if I didn’t like you, you couldn't see him. [LAUGHTER]

[-12-]

MICCICHE: And he set up his apartment at the Bellevue?

TAYLOR: The Bellevue, yes, sir.

MICCICHE: And you were his cook also?

TAYLOR: Yes. Well, when we’d go to Hyannis Port, well, I was his cook and I did everything he wanted.

MICCICHE: What was his favorite meal?

TAYLOR: Well, Jack, he loved roast beef, rare, with asparagus and mashed potatoes. That was one of his favorite meals. And in the morning he like his bacon. He like his eggs and bacon, but the eggs was softboiled. He used to break up his bacon into the eggs, and it didn’t look so good, but he loved it.

MICCICHE: You were with him during his first political campaign.

TAYLOR: I was with him until he became Congressman. And then he wrote me a letter from West Palm Beach, Florida, and he said, “George, because of your

asthma, I don't think it wise for you to go with me to Washington because it won't agree with you." And since then I have proven that it didn't agree with me.

MICCICHE: But you remained in communication with him during all this time?

TAYLOR: Yes. Right.

MICCICHE: Did you see him often when he came up to Boston?

TAYLOR: Well, no. As a matter of fact, to be perfectly honest, I was in the Merchant Marines, and I was going around the world. I didn't see him very much after – the last time I heard about Jack I was on a ship called *The Maryland Trader*, and I heard he had been shot. I was stunned and shocked, and it was a terrible thing for a man in his early life. I mean I was terribly surprised.

[-13-]

MICCICHE: Getting back to the 1946 campaign, George. What do you recall of his style of campaign? Type of speeches?

TAYLOR: Well, I think up until this time that Jack, he said, "We need younger people." Patsy Mulkern was a great help. Things that Jack didn't know – this was a brand new field for Jack. He didn't know too much, and he got help from his grandfather, and he got help from his father. I was no help at all because I didn't know anything about politics, and as a matter of fact, I didn't like it too much really. But Patsy Mulkern, I'd say, in those early years was the whole works there.

MICCICHE: You traveled with him through the congressional district?

TAYLOR: Yes.

MICCICHE: What do you recall now of his speeches at that time?

TAYLOR: Well, the speeches that he made – there was a lot of speeches, and he'd say, "Taylor, how did I do?" He was a very good speaker. Of course, he was worrying all the time, and so was I. I didn't know too much about politics, didn't care much about it, but I know that, let's see, all the people that he talked with at that time were – there would be commentators. There was a man named Holland [Edward Holland] from the *Record*, and there was a man from the *Globe*. What was his name? I don't know. He's on that – every Sunday Holland and they gave an outline of the news, and he was on that panel, too. I can't remember his name now, it's so long ago.

MICCICHE: You chauffeured him around here at that time?

TAYLOR: Yes, as a matter of fact, during that period I drove him. Wherever he went, I drove him.

MICCICHE: Did he like to drive himself on occasion?

[-14-]

TAYLOR: Yes, he liked to drive. He'd say to me sometimes, "George, you're driving too slow. Push over and let me take the wheel." And when he took the wheel, he was a fast driver.

MICCICHE: He never said you were a fast driver, then?

TAYLOR: No, I was never a fast driver. But he liked to take the wheel himself sometimes.

MICCICHE: Do you recall any humorous incidents?

TAYLOR: Yes. I'll never forget one day while we were at the Bellevue, Jack hollered out the window. "George," he said, "take it off! Don't come back till Tuesday!" That was a Friday. And so my girlfriend was working up at Wolfeboro, New Hampshire. So he didn't say to leave the car, so I took the car. And he said, "George, why didn't you leave the car?" I said, "You take a taxi, Jack. I'll take the car." So that's the way it was with us. We were good friends.

MICCICHE: George, let's go back a moment to his early days of writing. I believe right after graduation, he did quite a bit of it at that time.

TAYLOR: Yes.

MICCICHE: Did you...

TAYLOR: Well, he wrote a lot of books. I mean he wrote quite a little, and I said that he wrote *Profiles in Courage*, but I think that the book that he wrote about at that time was *While England Slept*.

MICCICHE: And later he wrote *Profiles in Courage*.

TAYLOR: And later he wrote *Profiles in Courage*.

MICCICHE: I see.

[-15-]

TAYLOR: And then he also wrote this other book. I didn't know that he was as good as he was until he wrote *As We Knew Joe*.

MICCICHE: That was the story about his brother?

TAYLOR: That was about his brother. And there were five hundred copies, and I have one of those copies. I think a lot of them got lost, but I still have the copy. I'd like to have you read it sometime.

MICCICHE: You recall some of his own personal profiles in courage at the time after the war when he was near death on a few occasions because of his injuries sustained in the war. Could you tell us about those, George?

TAYLOR: Well, I know that he was -- most people would be very worried about the outcome of an operation. He was a little worried, but he didn't show it. He took it like a man. He just said it had to be done. A lot of us thought that he wouldn't come through, but he did come through.

MICCICHE: Which occasion was this?

TAYLOR: This was the operation on his back.

MICCICHE: Immediately after his release from the Navy?

TAYLOR: I don't remember exactly the year and so forth, but I know that before he underwent the operation, he was quite concerned whether he would make it or not. His father and his mother and all his family were very worried.

MICCICHE: This was a dangerous operation?

TAYLOR: This was a dangerous operation. It either would be that he'd be corrected or else it would be the end. He took it, and such courage I never saw.

MICCICHE: This was the operation on his back at the New England...

[-16-]

TAYLOR: New England Baptist Hospital.

MICCICHE: And you visited him there?

TAYLOR: Yes, I went to see him every day. As a matter of fact, he said, "George..." He had a Buick convertible. He said, "George, you use the car." And I kept the car all the time he was undergoing his operation.

MICCICHE: How long a period of recuperation did he have?

TAYLOR: Oh, it was quite some time. I can't remember exactly, really, but I remember the family and they were all very concerned. His grandfather and I were very

good friends. As a matter of fact, he says to his grandfather before he went into service, “Gramps, take good care of George, and George, take good care of my grandfather.” And that’s the way it was. I took his grandmother and his grandfather out riding all around Dorchester where he came from, down to the Cape, and different places.

MICCICHE: After the operation he had to wear special braces around his back?

TAYLOR: Yes, he had two of these sort of corselettes, you might call them, and my job was to keep them repaired because he’d always lose, quite often he would lose different parts of them that were very important.

MICCICHE: They required special care?

TAYLOR: Special attention. Right.

MICCICHE: George, could you tell us about the President’s early days on the Cape when he was a bachelor?

TAYLOR: Yes. When his family would be at Palm Beach, he loved the Cape so much that Jack and Torbert Macdonald and Bill Sutton [William Sutton] and I would go down and spend the weekend on the beach, and he’d take us out on his boat. I didn’t know that Torby knew so much about boats, but he would take care of putting the boat away properly.

[-17-]

MICCICHE: Do you recall any incidents that happened at that time?

TAYLOR: Well, I can’t recall too many incidents because this was a long time ago. But one of the times I was down on the Cape, we had a guest there. Her husband was the publisher of *Time* magazine. Her name was Luce? What’s her name?

MICCICHE: Clare Boothe Luce?

TAYLOR: Clare Boothe Luce. And at all times there was important people like that down there. And I’d say I’d like to be introduced to this person or that person, and I was introduced to her. He’d always say, “I want you to meet my dear friend, George Henry Taylor.”

MICCICHE: George, during your association with the late President you undoubtedly became very close to the entire family?

TAYLOR: Yes, I was very close to all the family during this period. I remember that -- I think it was when Jack was having his last major operation because of his injury to his back, that he said, “George, don’t take any vacation. My father is going to make a survey of the key industry in Massachusetts. Tobin [Maurice J. Tobin]...”

MICCICHE: Governor Tobin?

TAYLOR: Governor Tobin had asked his father to make this survey why that -- to keep the industries from leaving because of taxes and so forth. And so he said, "Would you want to drive my father for the next couple of months?" And I said, "Well, I'd be glad to." And so I drove his father and I got to be very friendly with his father. I didn't know his father was such a popular man as he was. Course, who wouldn't be a popular man with I think it's five hundred million or something like that.

[-18-]

MICCICHE: Would you say that Jack is a chip off his father's block?

TAYLOR: Well, I'd say that the father is a very nice man, but I don't think I got to know him quite as well. Of course, he was older than I, and I think that Joe and Jack -- I was closer to them than I was to the father.

MICCICHE: Did you ever think at that time that Jack would ever become President of the United States?

TAYLOR: Well, I'll tell you. Even as early as his graduation from Harvard, Jack spoke, "I might even be President." I says to Jack one day, "Jack, you'll never make it."

MICCICHE: What was the occasion that he happened to mention that?

TAYLOR: Well, we were talking downstairs outside of a club, the most exclusive club in the world, I'd say probably.

MICCICHE: What was that?

TAYLOR: It was 1324 Mass. Avenue called the Porcellian Club. [Mr. Taylor spelled out "Porcellian."] He said, "George, someday I might make that Porcellian Club." And I said, "Jack, I don't think you'll make it. There's only bluebloods there." And I was just kidding, you know, having fun.

MICCICHE: And that's when he said it?

TAYLOR: Yes. And so Jack did make the Spee Club. He was in the Spee Club. And so was Joe. No, Joe didn't make the Spee. Jack made the Spee Club; Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] and Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] was in the Spee Club. And at Harvard the club life is very important.

[-19-]

MICCICHE: And how did he happen to mention that he might become President of the United States some day?

TAYLOR: Well, he'd always say, "George, I'm working hard." And I'd say, "You're just kidding." I'd say, "Jack, you'll never make it." That was one of the things. And I was very surprised and very happy when he did make it, and I think that he did a very good job.

MICCICHE: George, you told us about the President's liking for opera. Was there any other type of music that he cared for?

TAYLOR: Yes. He just loved Irish music. I can't remember all the different Irish tunes, but anything -- he just sort of loved. Let's see, what was the -- yes, the "Irish lullaby" and other Irish music. And I loved it too. "While Irish Eyes are Smiling," and songs of that type, he would flame up, and he loved them very much.

MICCICHE: George, your association with the President in his early days ended with his election to Congress in 1946?

TAYLOR: Yes. The reason why it ended up so abruptly was because of the fact that I had asthma, as I stated before, and he wrote me a letter: "Dear George, because of your asthmatic condition, I think it unwise for you to go with me now to Washington." And I found out that asthmatics, people with asthma, the ocean was good for them, and I got onto a tanker and went to see and that ended our friendship. I mean, not our friendship, but it ended our being together, and I didn't see him anymore until...

MICCICHE: You've been in the Merchant Marines ever since?

TAYLOR: Ever since. Yes. About seventeen years, I think. I'd say about seventeen years.

MICCICHE: George, what would you say was the quality that you found in the President that...

[-20-]

TAYLOR: The quality I found in Jack and his brother -- whatever principles they thought, they fought for, and I was also very sorry that we weren't together in his last years, but in spirit we were very, very close. He was a man of God.

MICCICHE: This has been an interview with George Taylor of Boston. The interviewer was Sal Micciche of the *Boston Globe*. The place is Boston. The date is May 7, 1964.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-21-]

The Sea Breeze



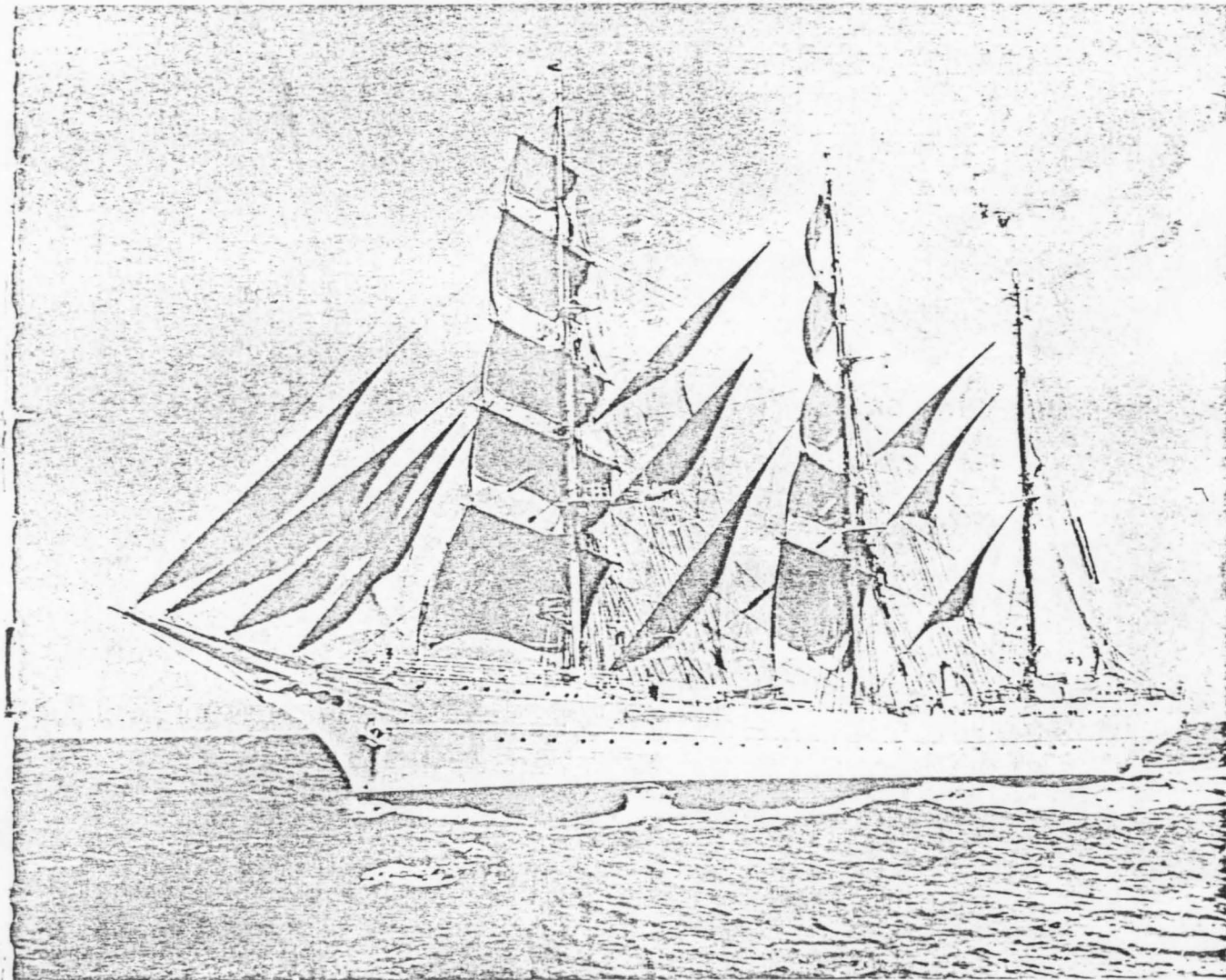
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No. 3



American entry in "Operation Sail" and flagship to the fleet. The U. S. Coast Guard Academy's Training Bark *Eagle*. See Chaplain's Log, Pg. 3, and Operation Sail.

GEORGE TAYLOR

George Taylor is a colored gentleman from Harvard Square who worked for Joe as a valet for the six years that Joe was in Cambridge. Though he took a slightly jaundiced viewpoint of George's habit of smoking large black cigars, which George claimed were good for his asthma, Joe thought the world of him. As for George — they may say no man is a hero to his valet — but read on.

JOSEPH KENNEDY, JR., an intelligent scholar, an altogether democratic gentleman, first became a customer and friend of mine during his sophomore year at Harvard College. Joe, Jr., had a radiant personality, and befriended every one with whom he came in contact — Jew, Negro and Chinaman — irrespective of race, color or creed. As a tradesman, I had a chance to see what a really fair person Joe was. At every opportunity he introduced or recommended me to his fellow students as a valet, and referred to me laughingly (though I cannot see why) as “the gentleman’s gentleman of Cambridge”. Later, that became my official title throughout Harvard Square.

Joe was generous and more than understanding towards the workman. I can vouch for that! While I was working for him, he made possible one of my supreme ambitions at that time — a trip to New York via air, a rare treat for a poor man such as I, even though it was a hurried business trip to bring back his car which he had loaned a buddy of his to take to New York. Many times I chauffeured for my friend and employer and enjoyed doing it, for I was never inferior in any respect in his estimation, despite my color. I came to look upon Joe as an adviser, and often found him very sympathetic when I had troubles.

When football season rolls around each year, I shall never fail to remember the cocktail parties which Joe gave in an “open house” fashion. Of course, I donned my white coat and became bartender on those evenings, but I was made welcome by every one.

As a valet cannot help knowing a fellow quite personally, and although I had a certain group of favorites each year, I grew particularly fond of the handsome and unassuming Joe because of his genuine disdain of everything ostentatious.

When Joe spoke at Ford Hall, he wrote his speeches and had me

JOE

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TH DEAN LANDIS

read them and pass my honest opinion; I, who had never gone further than high school. But I was flattered, and every man likes flattery.

Joe's magnetic personality won him many friends among his own sex, but the fairer sex enjoyed his company far more, naturally.

After his departure from Harvard Square, we kept in close contact. Even after he entered the Navy, he used to write me now and then just for auld lang syne. In my memory, Mr. Joe Kennedy will always hold the honor spot, for I never expect to meet any one quite comparable to Joe, Jr.



JOE IN FLYING UNIFORM

A Seaman Remembers John F. Kennedy

as told to Larry Habermehl

George H. Taylor, merchant seaman, was living at Seaman's House in May and June, 1964 until he shipped out June 15th. He worked for the Kennedy family off and on for about nine or ten years. In 1945 John F. Kennedy edited a book in memory of his brother, entitled "As We Remember Joe," which was privately published by the University Press, Cambridge, Mass. George Taylor wrote one of the chapters in this book. In the June 11, 1946 issue of Look Magazine there appeared an article entitled "A Kennedy Runs for Congress." George Taylor is mentioned in this article and there is a picture of the late President and his "amateur brain trust," with Taylor included in the group. In May of this year, Taylor was invited to make a recording for the Kennedy Memorial Library. He was asked to give some of his impressions and recollections of the President; and this record is to be a part of the permanent memorial of the Library.

I first met John Kennedy in about 1941, when he came to Harvard University. I was his chauffeur and valet, and when he came to the Cape, I was his cook. I did everything: at cocktail parties I served the drinks to his friends. My calling card at that time referred to me as "The Gentlemen's Gentleman." I had worked at Harvard Square in Cambridge for 22 years. When Joe (Kennedy) signed up for the armed forces, as usual I was with young Joe. He said, "Kid, I wish you were going with me on this trip." But I was too old at that time; with my asthma and flat feet I was rejected. Jack and Joe and I were pretty much always together. I remember the time that Joe was going down to Poughkeepsie, New York, on a date, and wanted to borrow my car. Torbert MacDonald, the captain of the Harvard football team (and now a congressman), said that Joe was interested in borrowing my car for his trip to see a girl-friend. He wanted to borrow my car, a new Chrysler, in exchange for his ten-year-old car. I first said, "No, I can't do it." But then Torbert came to me and said that Joe was seriously interested in borrowing it. I finally consented to loaning my car to Joe Jr. When Joe later went to war he said, "George, you take good care of Gramps (John F. Fitzgerald)," and he

Future scholars using the Kennedy Memorial Library will have available to them George Taylor's taped interview, as well as some 450 others with men and women who knew Kennedy. Frederick G. Dutton, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, who is in charge of the project, said: "We're urging everybody to speak out frankly. We don't want just platitudes." A civil-rights leader, for instance, might be quite critical of Kennedy for what he considered inadequate action on the problems of discrimination. A man is never a hero to his own valet, it is said. George Taylor was John Kennedy's valet. He was also his chauffeur and his cook at various times. If he seems a bit irreverent in this reminiscence, that is a cook and a chauffeur and a valet's prerogative. And irreverence is a far piece from disrespect.

Laurence L. Habermehl, to whom he told his story, is Day House Manager and Head Desk Clerk at Seaman's House.

also said, "Gramps, you take good care of George." This was the last time I saw him.

Jack, when he was in the Chelsea Naval Hospital, was the one who told me that Joe had been killed, and we both sat down and had a good cry.

Right after the PT boat accident, Jack had come back from the Pacific. My valet service had by that time gone out of business. Jack asked me what I was doing then, and I told him that the valet service was no longer making a profit for me; the 28 or so students I served through my valet service had been drafted, or had volunteered for military duty, and my business had folded. He said, "Why don't you work for me?" So I began working for him as a steady job. He wanted at that time to go into politics, and he wanted me to introduce him to anyone in Cambridge who was interested in politics. So I introduced him to Danny O'Brien, an undertaker in North Cambridge, and to many politicians that I thought important enough for him to meet. When Jack was running for congressman, he would ask me what I thought of his speeches. Sometimes he would make a few changes.

His uncle, Joseph Kane, and his grandfather, John F. Fitzgerald, I considered

among my friends. After spending about five or six summers on Hyannis Port and Cape Cod, I was constantly being bothered by asthma. Jack wrote me from West Palm Beach, Florida, after becoming a congressman, that he should not take me to Washington, considering my asthma and the dampness there. He wanted to send me to Tucson, Arizona, but I didn't go.

I will always hold the Kennedy boys in an honored spot in my memory. Jack Kennedy was a very conservative man; he hardly ever had any money (he called it "cabbage"), but he would always pay his bills. He called up one day and said, "George, you owe me \$30: come right down and bring the money." I said, "But Jack, you haven't paid me for 4 months, so you owe me a balance." He said, "George: never mind coming down—I'm going out." (This thing about money was always a personal joke between us.) Another day he said,

"George, when you buy your Overland cigars, always buy 5 or 6 for both of us; it doesn't look good for my chauffeur to be smoking when I'm not smoking."

Jack had a very charming disposition. He didn't like to drink, and he didn't unless it was under protest. Jack and I were always having fun. We had a lot of good times together.

At the time of Jack's death, I was on a ship going to the Gulf (the *Maryland Trader*). I was about abreast of Florida, and someone told me that the President had been shot. I was stunned. Because of the fact that Jack was so good to everybody, I couldn't imagine anyone taking his life in this manner. It was a terrible thing to have happened, and I know that all Americans join me in the great sorrow of this terrific tragedy.

George H. Taylor

The big rendezvous of wind-ships from all over the world, is still in the news. New York on July 14th is providing a spectator vessel and tickets are available from Operation Sail press headquarters, 235 East 45th St., New York 17. Boston, too, will receive some of the ships in a full week's program beginning July 21, when our own Naval Academy's *Freedom* and *Royono* appear there, along with Italy's *Corsaro II*, Norway's *Statsraad Lehmkuhl* and Spain's *Juan Sebastian Elcano*. For Boston details see the Chaplain's Log, in this issue.

New London area will see eight of the big ships in a three day celebration July 20-22 and again on August 14. New London's Coast Guard Academy's own training bark *Eagle*, as host ship, will be there of course. But so will Portugal's big *Sagres*, and the vessels of Argentina, Chile, Spain, Panama, Denmark, Germany and Norway.

Providence and the Narragansett Bay area may expect to see at least the *Sagres* (and probably others) for three days, July 23-25; New Bedford the same on July 26, and then they run up to Canada for three days the end of the month, to Quebec City.

It's the biggest rendezvous of sailing

ships since steam. But the idea is not entirely new. A British group, known as the Sail Training Association of London, has been sponsoring sail-ship gatherings of European ships every two years since 1956. Prince Philip is its patron.

Ships from North and South America will join the European group in Bermuda and the full flotilla will head for New York, with arrival scheduled for July 12 in Gravesend Bay. While the Bermuda-New York leg is not officially billed as a race, there will no doubt be brisk informal competition between the ships.

The fleet will lie at anchor off Gravesend for 2 days, and then on July 14 move to anchorages in the Hudson River south of the George Washington Bridge. Here, a U. S. Navy vessel, acting as the official reviewing ship, will proceed along the formation. Dignitaries aboard the reviewing ship will include New York's Governor Rockefeller and New York City's Mayor Wagner.

After the formalities, officers and crews have a week of activities in New York. Among them are a parade from Battery Park to Cily Hall, a grand ball and tours of the World's Fair.