

**Joseph A. DeGuglielmo Oral History Interview – 5/4/1964**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Joseph A. DeGuglielmo

**Interviewer:** Art Gardner

**Date of Interview:** May 3, 1964

**Length:** 25 pp.

**Biographical Note**

DeGuglielmo was a friend and associate of John F. Kennedy, and the Mayor of Cambridge (1952-53) and alternate delegate to Democratic National Convention from Massachusetts in 1956 and 1960. This interview focuses on DeGuglielmo's relationship with John F. Kennedy; the 1948, 1956, and 1960 campaigns and elections; John F. Kennedy's presidency, and the personal effects of the assassination on DeGuglielmo, among other issues.

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**Suggested Citation**

Joseph A. DeGuglielmo, recorded interview by Art Gardner, May 3, 1964, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1, 3, 5	First Meeting with John F. Kennedy
2	Politics in Cambridge/Boston
3, 5	First Congressional Race in 1948
7	JFK as Campaigner/Appeal to Women
9	Election Night in 1948
9	Campaign for and Election to the Senate
12	1956 Democratic Convention/Possible V.P. Bid
14	Issue of JFK's Roman Catholicism
15	Senator Kennedy Leans toward Global Issues
16	Possibility of Presidential Bid in 1960
17	Loss of Early Campaign Supporters
18	Visits to Senator Kennedy in Washington, D.C.
19	DeGuglielmo Campaigning for Presidential Bid
20	Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
21	Visit to President Kennedy in the White House
21	Lack of Italo-American in the Cabinet
22	Histories Possible Assessment of President Kennedy
24	Effect of Assassination on DeGuglielmo

Oral History Interview

with

JOSEPH DE GUGLIELMO

May 4, 1964

Boston, Massachusetts

By Art Gardner

For the John F. Kennedy Library

GARDNER: The interview today is with Mr. Joseph De Guglielmo, former mayor of Cambridge, and a man who knew the late President, John F. Kennedy, intimately. My first question to the former mayor of Cambridge would be: Mr. De Guglielmo, when did you first meet President Kennedy?

DE GUGLIELMO: My best recollection is that the first time I met Jack Kennedy was approximately March of 1946 before the primary campaign in June of '46.

GARDNER: What was the occasion of the meeting at that time?

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, the surroundings of the meeting were very peculiar. They're quite vivid in my mind because I happened to be at a formal banquet at the then Copley Plaza, now the Sheraton Plaza in Boston, and while I was there, having a night off with my wife, a cousin of mine, Walter Cenerazzo, came into the hotel and asked me if I could leave for a few moments. And I asked him the reason and he said, "I'd like to have you meet a young fellow that's running for Congress." I asked him who it was and he said, "Well, it's Jack Kennedy." I'd never heard of the fellow before. "I don't mind meeting him but can't you find a more convenient time to meet the young man

than tonight. After all, I did promise Angie [Angela DeGuglielmo]," who happens to be my wife, "that we'd have a night off and I think it would be kind of an imposition to leave her here with all these strangers and go and meet Kennedy, especially when you say you want me to meet him at your house in Waltham." But if you know Walter, Walter is a very insistent fellow and a very persistent fellow and at that time he had undying admiration for Kennedy and everything attributable to Kennedy, so he persuaded me to go and he persuaded my wife that it would be all right, that we'd be back in twenty minutes. I got back about two and a half hours later. But in any event, we got into Walter's car at the Sheraton Plaza and from there we went to Walter's home in Waltham. There we met the late President and we met another attorney friend of mine by the name of Anthony Di Cecca from Somerville, who happened to be there that evening and I then met the President for the first time.

Quite candidly, when I left the Sheraton Plaza I had left with a fairly firm conviction that this was merely a visit to do Walter a favor, that I was going to make no commitment whatsoever, that I'd be a very foolish boy to make any commitment, especially in view of the opposition which the President was going to have, and with that resolution in mind I went there. But after talking with the embryonic Congressman for a very few moments, I was very much impressed both by his mannerisms his intellectual depth, his facility in assimilating knowledge quickly, and I thought that he'd be the kind of a Congressman that I would like to have represent me, and with that I violated another rule which we have in our house, that is, neither I nor my wife make any political commitments except with the assent of the other one, and I told Jack Kennedy that he could depend on us for some assistance.

GARDNER: At that time, what was the political, well, what was the Cambridge area like in those days politically? Tell us about the other opponents.

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, the Cambridge area, as far as Cambridge was concerned, the political God, if I may use that term without any sacrilegious connotation, was Mike Neville [Michael J. Neville]. He was the kingpin. He had been former minority leader of the House of Representatives in the State House in Boston, had been a Councilor. In fact he was Councilor with me, had been mayor of Cambridge. He was politically experienced.

[-2-]

He knew all the means of political campaigning both fair and foul, not that I'm intimating in any way that in this particular campaign he used any foul method, but he knew how to campaign. He was an experienced man and as far as Cambridge was concerned he was the man. In fact, several months later when I spoke with the President's father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] on this matter and we were evaluating the campaign, the President's father told me that he would be satisfied if we could keep within 9 to 1 of Neville in Cambridge, that we'd have the fight won. And I told him in my judgment we'd do much better than that. In fact, if I remember correctly the figures showed it was something like 11 to 9, the Cambridge results. But that was the man that you had to fear in Cambridge.

Of course, as far as the other divisions of the congressional area were concerned, each had it's "favorite son." For instance, Italian segment of the community, which is represented chiefly by East Boston and the North End, had Joe Russo [Joseph Russo] who was then Councilor in Boston, as I remember, as the "favorite son." Charlestown had Cotter [John F. Cotter], if I remember correctly. And there was a lady by the name of Falvey [Catherine E. Falvey]. Then there was another Italian boy by the name of Bevilacqua [Frank Bevilacqua]. If I remember right, there was something like 9 or 10 that ran in that particular fight. They had somebody from Brighton running. The name escapes me right now, that was the "favorite son" in Brighton. So that was more or less the political background in that first congressional fight.

GARDNER: I wonder if we could return to the moment, Mr. Guglielmo, to this first meeting of you and the late President, this day in 1946. What were some of the, oh, exchange of pleasantries between this man and yourself?

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, the chief things, the chief thing, of course, you meet the fellow. You meet a fellow for the first time. This probing takes place. Of course, I assume he didn't know me except that Walter told me he was a good kid. And the thing you mustn't forget is that there was a difference in ages between the President and myself. There was some, if I've got the thing figured out right, there was something like twelve or fourteen years. And at that particular time in life Jack Kennedy was just a young kid, so to speak, as far as I was

[-3-]

concerned. And I was also fat headed enough to consider myself sort of an old-timer. After all, I was an elected public office holder and he was looking for office. And he had had no experience or anything of that sort. The only thing I wanted to make sure of, as far as I was concerned, was that I was meeting somebody that seemed to have some depth of intellect and some ability. And I suppose what he was looking for was to make sure that he wasn't running into a fellow that was going to try to milk him for every cent he had, because the thing you mustn't forget is that his reputation at that time wasn't... The only thing that he had to recommend him was that he had ambition and he was a millionaire's son. And, of course, you had later the situation of this PT boat experiences. So that we were more or less fencing back and fort to evaluate each other and as far as I was concerned, I was satisfied with the evaluation and I assume that because of the development of the relationship between the President and myself that he grew to have a little respect for me also.

GARDNER: Would this be a fair question: was there some form of mild resentment? This man, Mr. Kennedy, he was not too familiar a figure, as you said. He had a lot of, as you said, drive, and he was a son of a millionaire. Also, he was not too well known as a political candidate. How did you feel about this?

DE GUGLIELMO: He was unknown. I knew when I got into this situation that I was into a very bitter fight, as far as Cambridge political life is concerned. I knew I was really taking my political life into my hands to support a nonentity at that time against the political boss, so to speak. The thing you mustn't lose sight of is that at that particular time, fellows like Danny O'Brien [Daniel O'Brien], the undertaker here in Cambridge, Paul Dever [Paul A. Dever], Pat Lynch, John M. Lynch, who was then mayor of Somerville—they were all in Neville's corner. And if you ask them, they'll make no bones about it. They were in Neville's corner and they were with Neville because Neville was going to be the winner and here I am, a first term office holder, daring to interpose my judgment of the neophyte against the experienced man. And, of course, there was a lot of bitterness among the Dever supporters and myself and my supporters. They felt that we were trying to take away something from them, which was justly theirs. They had in January of that year, they had

[-4-]

that congressional seat signed, sealed, and delivered to Mike Neville. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. But as the thing developed, it turned out that both Mr. Neville and the others who were in the fight were doomed for a little disappointment.

GARDNER: You said you felt as though you were, and you were, putting your political future on the line by this meeting that night we speak of. After the meeting with the President, what was your reaction when you left the meeting? Did you feel as though...

DE GUGLIELMO: The chief thing that bothered me that particular night was going to be the reaction of my chief political ally, to the decision I had made without prior consultation, and that's my wife. After all, the way we work, I make a lot of decisions. I ask her about it, but then I expect her to implement most of my decisions in action, because I'm not a wealthy man and I have to depend on my income from my law business and I work during the day and she implements most of my decisions by advice and directions I give her during the day's activities. So here I was faced with the proposition of going back to my wife at a formal banquet where you can't talk freely because people are going to be around, and explaining to her that I had violated the first cardinal principle that we have in our political household and that is: make no formal decisions without consultation. And I can assure you I was a little nervous about that. But by 2 o'clock in the morning that was all straightened out after explaining the entire situation and going over everything, she realized that we were in the fight of our lives and she was prepared to take it. Then, of course, when she got around to meeting Jack and Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] and Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] and the rest of them, and Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy], she was satisfied we'd made the right decision.

GARDNER: Then came the days of campaigning for Mr. Kennedy. Can you relate some of the campaigning that you did on the President's behalf here in



Cambridge; some of the probably not too nice things were said about you here in Cambridge. How did you handle this?

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, I'd had a dose of that already, of campaigning.

[ -5- ]

And I'd had a dose of being called names during campaigning in Cambridge. The biggest thing they used on Jack Kennedy, at that time was he was a kid, no experience, and he was buying the election. And...

GARDNER: How did you defend these statements against him?

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, there was nothing you could do. Of course, the way they would attack you would be, they'd wait until there were seven or eight people around, then they'd say, "Well, how're the boodle boys doing?" And you'd laugh at them to show that they weren't under your skin, weren't getting under your skin, and they'd say, "Have you got some of that Kennedy money for me?" I remember one incident that occurred down at the Third District Court, I'd prefer not to name the names, but it got me in trouble with the Dever faction because I was—I had lost my temper a little bit. I was approached by the usual statement, "How are the boodle boys doing?" And I said, "We're doing alright." "Well, have you got any of that Kennedy money for me?" I said, "Just a second." I fished into my pocket and I had some pennies. I picked up two pennies and I gave it to the fellow. And I said, "Here, this will buy the whole Dever organization. That's all you're worth." I never heard the end of that one. That's the type of reaction you would be getting; that all of us that were supporting Kennedy, were supporting Kennedy because we were bought. They never gave us credit for seeing in Kennedy a good office holder and it was a beamed at the lower intelligence of the people in the wards of Cambridge who would go for the favorite son. Here's one of your own, a poor boy. He hasn't got anything. He shined shoes, he was a paper boy when he was a kid. Help him become a congressman against this millionaire's son that went to Groton and Harvard. That was the type of campaigning they were using. They couldn't do anything else because Jack had no record to assail; he had no criminal activity; no social activity that they could attack. He had done nothing except what was good. They couldn't very well attack his war record. You mustn't forget that at that particular time, if you were a war hero, you were a demigod. They couldn't attack him on that basis and the only basis they had to attack him on was the fact that he was buying the election against a poor boy and everybody that was with him were bought.

GARDNER: Well, I was going to ask you one thing: Did Jack especially appeal to the returning veterans?

[ -6- ]

DE GUGLIELMO: I think if Jack had at that time, if Jack had any single appeal to a group of people, it was to the women. It was an uncanny appeal and it was on the basis of that appeal that I suggested to Eunice that we have the

first tea party we had. Somehow or the other the minute he came into a room where there was one or more women, the females that were in the room forgot everything else. It didn't make any difference what emergency there was. They gravitated towards him. And that would happen many times. Many homes we went into of people that I knew intimately. We'd go in and meet people. The minute the women would see him they'd drop everything and I know I've gone into those same homes in the past and since and, heck, I can go in and they'll keep on doing what they were doing. It doesn't make a particle of difference. But when he came in, at that time, there was some sort of – I don't know what you'd call it – some sort of electricity or something, some indefinable electricity in the air that would make the women stop and come to him. And they didn't want him to go. As I say again, I've gone into those same homes and if I say going, "All right. Good bye Joe." With him, "Why don't you stay. Why don't you have coffee? Let's talk some more." And things along that line. It was an indefinable quality and characteristic that he had and, as I say, if I had to pick any one group that he had the greatest attraction for, it was the women.

GARDNER: Did you find him – you as a politician, as a man who held public office – did you find him an effective campaigner in these early days when he was running for Congress?

DE GUGLIELMO: There's no question about it. He had, his biggest fault when he started was his lack of oratorical polish. He would fumble for words. He was not the polished speaker that he developed, as he finally ended up. He would be hesitant, diffident on the stand, on the platform. He wouldn't be as positive as he later became. That was the big handicap he had but as far as women were concerned, they didn't see that. They just saw something that was attractive and something they individually wanted. It was a quality that each woman that I spoke to during the years before he became the national figure he became – each

[ -7 - ]

woman thought that this fellow was her personal property. It's something I've never run into before in my life. And the closest I see to that is it seems a little bit to be coming towards Ted [Edward M. Kennedy]. Ted seems to have the same quality, although not with the same degree of intensity. You know, memory makes a thing look greater than it was or more glamorous than it was and the passage of time may give me the impression today that the intensity for the attraction of women for Ted is not quite as strong as it is of Jack, but that's the way I'd evaluate it now. I may be wrong on that, but it's got almost that same quality that Ted generates, if you notice when Ted goes around.

GARDNER: But in your opinion, as you say, there can be only one Jack?

DE GUGLIELMO: That's right. To me, even though a lot of people say that Ted is a better pol than Jack. Maybe he is, that Ted is going to go great guns and maybe he is. But Ted – and I will agree that Ted is further advanced politically today than Jack was at the same time when he started, after three years of public life. I'll agree to that. But there still isn't, to me, Ted doesn't quite measure up to that

magnetism, to that depth of intellect, to that ability to transmit a common bond of feeling between himself and the person with whom he talks. Although Ted is a terrific campaigner.

GARDNER: I wonder now if we could go up to the time of election night and the morning after, your first meeting then. How long were you with Jack Kennedy in his first race for political office?

DE GUGLIELMO: I was with him almost daily from the day that I told him that I'd be with him up through election night.

GARDNER: Take us now to election night and the victory and then the first reaction.

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, of course, we stayed in Cambridge to get the Cambridge result. We did not go into the Boston headquarters. My job in that campaign was to minimize the Neville votes as much as we could. As I told you, the father said if we could keep it to within nine or ten to one, he'd be very happy. We'd have the fight won.

[-8-]

So that being so, I stayed here. In fact, I think that it was because of the tea party that we concocted here in Cambridge that we broke the back of the Neville campaign and that was purely an accidental brainstorm. On election night we had the usual thing that I have every election night. We had coffee and doughnuts. We'd get some local fellow who was running an establishment to donate the coffee and donate the doughnuts. We'd get the returns and after the returns came in, it was apparent that Jack was going to win, his father came over. His sister was always there; LeMoyne Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings] was always there. And Bobby came up from East Cambridge with the young men and the girls that were supporting us in the East Cambridge area and then the father came over; and Timilty [Joseph P. Timilty] came over and Jack came over too and there was a lot of backslapping and a lot of congratulations back and forth, and thank you, and that type of thing, the typical victory election night.

GARDNER: Well, the time came after the victory when he must have taken a few minutes and put it aside to talk to you personally. Can you recall some of his remarks of gratitude to you, as one of his hard campaign workers in Cambridge?

De GUGLIELMO: Well that is something that... He thanked me. There's no question about it. He was very grateful for what I did. But my personality is such that when a person starts thanking me, I say, "Forget it, let's go on to new business." I don't want to discuss anything like that. I'd agreed to do something and I do it. As long as you say thanks, that's all I want. I don't want any long maudlin session. What we did, we did see where we had been in trouble. We analyzed the reports. We

knew what we had to do to strengthen our position. And we went over it and we engaged in about a year and a half, two years, of mending our fences, so as to speak. And from then on he had no further trouble in a congressional fight.

Then, after about four years, he called me one day and he indicated that he thought he'd like to run for the Senate in Massachusetts. But by that time he asked me what ideas I had along that line. But by that time, you mustn't forget, you mustn't lose sight of the fact that, by that time, he was now being accepted as the white hope of the – maybe this is improper to term it this way – but the white hope of the

[-9-]

non-organization Democrats, the people that were Democrats because they were Democrats. They didn't want anything from government, but they wanted honest public servants. He was their white hope and he was attracting more and more people. He was attracting the higher class people. And, of course, there were a lot of politicians who saw in him a future great in Massachusetts and they were coming. So he was getting advice and assistance from many, many angles that were not open to him and many, many areas that were not open to him before. But in our particular conversation he wanted to know what I thought about the chances and I told him the easiest way to find out it to make a survey. "Well, how would you go about making a survey?" I said, "Well, if you've got no objections." So he asked me how I thought we ought to conduct the survey and I told him there was only one way that I knew of and that is to go out among the grass roots and find out what people thought because he was undecided whether to run for Senator or run for governor. Well, this was about a year before '52; it was the summer of '51. Galluccio [Anthony Galluccio] and I decided with his approval that we were going to make a circuit. And we went into every large city and town, starting with Boston and we worked out towards Springfield and up towards Pittsfield and North Adams and then came back down through Athol and that situation. If I remember right, we took about two weeks off. We had made appointments in advance of people we were going to see. Besides that, at my suggestion Tony and I adopted a procedure that we would divide when we'd get into a town and we'd go get a shave whether we needed it or not, we'd go get a haircut, go in a restaurant, talk to waitresses and the rest. And what we were trying to do was evaluate the various strengths of Kennedy, Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge] and Dever. And when we came back after two weeks, then we took a trip down around New Bedford-Fall River area and then we took other trips around Lawrence and Lowell. And after we got through, Tony and I evolved the theory that Dever could not be re-elected and Jack Kennedy would be a lead pipe cinch to knock him off as governor, that probably he could defeat Lodge, but it would be a much closer fight than the other fight. And we went—we were invited to go down to Hyannis Port one night and we had an afternoon session with the father and with Bobby and Jack and we went over that whole situation. The father was of the impression that Jack would murder Lodge; no question, "Would murder him" were the words he used. He didn't quite

[-10-]

agree with me on Dever. He thought Dever could win. And he asked me on what I based it. I said, "Well, the only thing I can base it on is this: you ask people in eastern Massachusetts, around Greater Boston: how's Dever? Well, he's weak here but western Massachusetts is going to carry him and he can't be beat. You go into western Massachusetts and you ask people, and by people I mean ordinary people in the street and I also mean the professional polls. The professional poll will tell you that Dever is in real bad shape here, but Boston will carry him. Well, if each section," as I told Joe Kennedy, "If each section is expecting the other section to carry him and admits that his section is weak, then the man is weak and can't win." So I think I persuaded the father, when we got through, with that theory but they eventually decided that the decisions of America and the decisions of the world were going to be made in Washington and they preferred to take a crack in Washington rather than the State House in Boston. And the decision was then made to run for Senate and then came the question of organizing the campaign and again, I interjected the theory that it would be bad to give any impression to people, political hardwheelers especially, that you got a permanent organization already set up. Because once you appoint somebody as chairman of an area, nobody else wants to work under that chairman and I suggested that possibly we call them secretaries and we were going to eventually elect a treasurer- a chairman. And as I said, we were eventually going to elect a chairman, but that day has never come when he's elected. And on that theory we created that system of Kennedy secretaries all over Massachusetts. The secretaries were happy because they had a title, everybody else was ready to work because if they worked hard they had a chance of becoming chairman, but we never had an election for chairman. But on that theory of secretaries, Kennedy secretaries, we were able to wield and put together a very effective senatorial campaign for Kennedy against Lodge.

And, of course, with the means at their disposal they were able to bring in national figures. For instance, for the Italians, we brought in the then mayor of New York, Impellitteri [Vincent R. Impellitteri], who had a night here in Boston. And we made arrangements for an award from the Italian government to the Senator which carried television coverage. We had a tea of the Italian women at the Hotel Somerset. There must have been 2,500 Italian women there. And at that time we got a big embossed parchment that the Italian women of Massachusetts honor Congressman Kennedy with this token of their esteem in view of his sympathy, etc., etc., to

[-11-]

the Italian people. My wife made the presentation that night to him at the Somerset. And all the usual fanfare that goes with political campaigns took place and he finally won out by some 70 odd thousand votes. He got a tremendous assist from Lodge in my book. Lodge violated one of the cardinal rules of political campaigning and that is when you have your own fight you don't butt into somebody else's fight. He butted into the Presidential fight and we got a big assist from the Taft [Robert A. Taft] people in Massachusetts who felt bitter about it. I wonder what would have happened if Lodge had stayed out of that Presidential election at that particular time. But Jack finally won and I think it was about 8 o'clock the morning after election that we finally found out that Kennedy had been elected by some 75,000 votes.

GARDNER: We come up now to where the late President is now United States Senator from Massachusetts. Now suppose we go on to the first Democratic Convention, in '56, when I believe Senator Kennedy was being mentioned as vice presidential timber. Could we now go to the year 1956 when Senator Kennedy's name was entered into the Convention, I believe, as a vice president for the Democratic Party. What was his reaction to this great honor? History tells us...

DE GUGLIELMO: Before '56, before the Convention I had gone down to Washington a couple of times because, you know, the newspapers were carrying the story that Senator Kennedy was being mentioned as vice presidential nominee, etc., and because of the fact that I have many friends outside of Massachusetts who are in strategic places and I know them through my college fraternity. I've worked on my college fraternity for some thirty odd years as a national officer. Many of our members are political leaders in their community and they're judges, and eminent doctors, and architects, etc., all over the United States. So, when I found out that that was happening on one of my trips down to Washington on business, I dropped in as usual to see Jack and asked him, I said, "Listen, if you're going to run, it strikes me that we ought to go out and start making some sentiment in your favor. I know you're going all over the country making speeches. I don't know whether you're doing it with anything in mind but if you've got something in mind, I think we ought to help

[-12-]

generate sentiment." And he told me, "Joe, in national politics unfortunately the presidential nominee decided who his vice president is going to be. That's the custom. And if I've got to make my peace with anybody, I've got to make it with the nominee of the Convention. And there's nothing you can do except, of course, when you see people tell them what kind of Joe I am." And I said, "Oh, I've been doing that for years, so there's no problem along that line." In fact, we went to the Convention and throughout the Convention I'd run into Jack and I ran into Bob and Eunice and, "Anything new?" "No, Joe, nothing." Sarge Shriver [Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.] too, whom I know fairly well. "Nothing new, Joe." He said, "Still status quo. It looks like Stevenson's [Adlai E. Stevenson] going to make it. He's going to decide who he wants." And so far as I know, we got no more advance warning than anybody else did that Stevenson was going to throw that Convention open to the general public. And I think that the absolute proof of that was that through that Convention, if you remember, there was a film on Kennedy that was thrown on the screen as part of our entertainment. And Kennedy also made one of the speeches at the Convention, a thing that would never have been allowed by anybody had there been forewarning that Stevenson was going to throw out the nomination to the Convention floor because that gave Kennedy, theoretically, an unfair advantage over the other candidates. And none of the other candidates or their adherents had any objection at all or voiced any disapproval of this technique of Kennedy getting on the platform or this movie. So I think it's safe to conclude that nobody had any advance warning before Stevenson actually told everybody it's going to be an open convention. So, when we were told that it was an open convention, of course, then we operated the same way. I guess the other campaigns were as bad off as we were. We were totally unprepared for it and we

were like a group of executives and very little leadership until Bobby and Sarge took over and started giving directions, "Do this, do that, do the other thing." I remember one of my jobs was at 3 o'clock in the morning trying to locate Senator Gore [Albert A. Gore, Sr.] and I finally located him in his bedroom. I don't think he approved very much because he was really sleepy when I knocked at the door and I told him that Senator Kennedy had asked me to get hold of him and he was very anxious to talk to him as quickly as possible. And he said, "Okay, I'll do it. Thanks." And away I go. But we all pitched in the best way we knew how and

[-13-]

nailed the delegates that we knew and could influence in that short period of time that was given to us. Considering everything, we did a fairly good job in that limited time. Of course, we lost the nomination as you know. And I think it was a good thing politically that he lost it because if had been elected or nominated and then Stevenson took the licking he did, a lot of the blame for Stevenson's loss would have been attributed to Kennedy's religion. So that we were able to meet the religion issue full square four years later.

GARDNER:               What discussions were made at that very time on the religious issue?  
                                  When he sought the nomination in '56, you mentioned there was some  
                                  discussion. Was there any great fear or apprehension on the part of the  
people working that this would be an issue?

DE GUGLIELMO:       Well, we knew it was an issue. It's inevitable. I ran into the same  
                                  problem when I ran for the first time in Cambridge. No Italo-American  
                                  had ever been elected. I knew I was faced with the issue that this is the  
first Italo-American coming in. Do we want that kind of an animal in our municipal  
government? Well, you have the same situation. This is the first Roman Catholic that aspires  
for the high office of Vice President and later for the President of the United States. Will the  
Papacy have control? You got to be realistic about these things and measure your assets as  
well as your liabilities. And we knew that this was an issue that could be both an asset and a  
liability. It was an asset in that it would band together the Roman Catholics and yet at the  
same time it was a liability in that there were a lot of people that had fears and that were well  
grounded as far as they were concerned, although we thought they were unjustified, of a  
Roman Catholic becoming President of the United States. So we knew we had that issue to  
face back in '56. But at that particular time we weren't thinking in terms of issues. We were  
thinking, "Here, the thing has dropped in our lap at the last minute and we've got a problem  
to face. Can we get a majority of these delegates here to buy a man by name of Kennedy of  
Massachusetts?" And we came close. And as I say, we were lucky, I think, when you look at  
it from the long-range proposition, we were lucky that we lost because the issue would not  
have been joined in the Presidential campaign of Stevenson and Kennedy as it was

[-14-]

joined in the Presidential campaign of Kennedy and Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. In the Presidential campaign of Kennedy and Johnson the big issue besides youth was religion. There's no question about it. And it was an issue that had to be faced. It was faced in all the primaries and you came up against it right head to head in the election and then the American people decided at that time, the majority decided, that religion would not bar a person from being President of the United States.

GARDNER: Do you feel that he kept his home state chief in his interest as a senator or did he lean towards global problems? Was the White House in mind after the Convention in 1956?

DE GUGLIELMO: That's a hard one to answer. It's a very difficult one to answer. Jack Kennedy, from what I know and what I could observe, in my judgment, was always more internationalist than he was a states righter, if I can use the term very loosely. To him the glories and the future of America lay not in the practical physical control of a state, although you need a state to be elected in order to get there. To him, the big problems were the problems of people, of men, of nations, of the world. You get that, in my judgment, in his first book, *Why England Slept*. He seemed to have an interest in the world, not the state. Jack Kennedy, even when he was first Congressman, I suggested to him that he should get control of the Democratic State Committee and make something of it so that he'd have an organization. And he indicated no desire for that. Conversely, Ted, you notice, said, "You've got to have a solid organization." But Jack, no. Jack sort of always was up on an intellectual pedestal and while he wanted to be helpful to the ordinary person that had troubles and he was always sympathetic to them and he did his best, but he always did it through somebody else. "Kenny, do this. Tony, do this. Frank do the other thing." You follow what I'm getting at? Rather than doing it himself. But if you came to him and said that the thing wasn't done, well, he'd raise Cain if thought it could be done. He was an action man in that respect, but he wasn't action in doing it himself. He was rather, as I could see it, up on this higher intellectual plane that was involved with great problems of a mankind. That seemed to be the Jack Kennedy that I knew.

[-15-]

GARDNER: What was the first discussion that you had with the then Senator Jack Kennedy or his aides that he could or would be good Presidential timber for the 1960 campaign? When did this first come up? The first time you heard it?

DE GUGLIELMO: The first time I heard it? That Kennedy would be President in '60? About 1948.

GARDNER: What was the occasion?

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, let's put it this way. We were talking and somebody said, "He's going to be Senator in '52; and he's going to be President in '60." And



I said, "Well, I'd like to see him be President, but I think you're daydreaming." "You mark my words. He'll be Senator in '52 and he'll be President in '60."

GARDNER: What did you think he lacked for this at this time?

DE GUGLIELMO: Youth. That's all. I couldn't see the American people buying a youth. And don't forget that here's a man under fifty, right? And he's going to lead the greatest nation in the world at a time of international crisis when man hates man and the wrong decision is going to mean the destruction possibly of mankind. And you're going to give him the power by pressing a button to destroy mankind or destroy this nation and I couldn't see the American people having faith in the man I knew. I couldn't see them knowing him well enough. Not that I doubted his

[-16-]

capabilities. I never doubted his capabilities for a minute. But I couldn't see them having the faith in that kind of man at that particular time.

GARDNER: When did you first see, shall we say, see the light? Prior to the 1960 Convention?

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, when they told me that was their idea, as far as I was concerned, I was, "Sure. I don't think you can do it, but we're in this ballgame together. Sure, I'll try it with you. I got nothing to lose. I got no other candidate. He's a good fellow." And then from that time on every time I went to a fraternity convention, sitting down bulling about various areas, and with the polls in the areas I said, "My Senator's, he's going to be your President." "You're crazy." "Alright, I'm telling you now." And we kept making inroads here, there, and everywhere else. And we made a lot of hay.

GARDNER: Now, tell me this. Did he lose, at this stage of the game of the late President's life, did he lose any of his early supporters? I know he didn't lose you. But did he lose a lot or a few of his early supporters when he was, shall we say, reaching for the moon now, reaching for the highest office in the country?

DE GUGLIELMO: He lost supporters, yes.

GARDNER: Why, in your opinion, did he lose these supporters?

DE GUGLIELMO: No person in public life keeps his early supporters all the time. You're bound to lose. You can't do everything that everybody wants. Now of course, we had demands made upon us. We'd go to people and we'd ask them to support so-and-so. In this case, support Kennedy and we'd try to do something for you. You know, you've got a friend. So, we'd get requests; we'd transmit them, alright. If

you're realistic about this game, you cannot complete 25 per cent of the favors that are asked of you. You can't do it. If you can do 25 per cent you are doing marvelously well. Well, now, occasionally something comes in that, let's say, I want to have done and somebody else wants to have done that's

[-17-]

equally close to Mr. Kennedy. Well, he can't do it for both. He's got to pick one over the other. Okay, when those times come, if a person isn't realistic and doesn't accept the decision, he gets angry and takes off. Now, some people are more thin-skinned than others. And these rebuffs they take personally, so they take a walk. That's bound to happen. The most popular day of your life is the day of your first election for the first office to which you aspire. From that day on, you make enemies because you can't take over the people you've licked. And from that day on, you've got to start saying no. When you start saying no, you start destroying your organization. The question is can you replace by others? And Jack had a happy faculty of replacing.

GARDNER: You visited, probably more than once, Jack Kennedy in Washington, I'm sure. Tell us of some of the more memorable visits you had with the President.

DE GUGLIELMO: Are you talking now as President or as Senator?

GARDNER: I'm talking as Senator and then as President. Let's take one of each. Let's take first as a Senator...

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, as Senator, the only times that I would go in to see him, is if I was in Washington, I'd go in and say hello and goodbye unless I had some specific problem I wanted to talk to him about. And at that time, we'd sit down and we'd discuss the problem after passing the time of day. But other than saying hello and goodbye, I wouldn't bother him. The fellow was busy. If you ever had a picture of his Washington office after '52, let's say after '56 especially, it became apparent that here was a fellow that could be President of the United States and every tourist that went into Washington would go into his office to say hello to him and you'd know that unless you really had to talk to him about something, he'd appreciate it more if his personal friends would leave him alone rather than bother him with chit-chat. And all the small things that had to be done, we took care of through the office. But the times that I did go in was when we finally decided or we knew that he was going to make an overt move for the Presidency. And then we went in

[-18-]

there and I discussed with him leads that I had in various states with various men, some of whom were governors of states, some of whom were Congressman, some of whom were judges in states, and asked him what he wanted me to do and his usual rule was, "Use your

own judgment. You've done pretty good so far. Keep on the way you've been going and let me know." So I would go in and talk with the fellow and I would send back a report in writing as to exactly what was said and I would send it to the address he told me to send it to and he'd get it. Nobody else would get it, and eventually I'd get either instructions or something along that line of what to do. That's the way he and I operated. Very seldom was there any need of bothering him in the sense that I mean. We knew the goal and he had faith in what I was doing and the only time I would consult with him was when I felt the thing was critical enough to get instructions or to tell him something he ought to know. For instance, there was a Congressman of a very important state who wielded a lot of power. He was a personal friend of mine but he was always cold to Kennedy. And I happened to know his brother who was a judge. And one night we were sitting at a fraternity convention. He said, "Joe, I don't understand about this Kennedy friend of yours. There's my brother that's ready to work and we've got a tremendous organization in our state. We control this, that and the other thing, and you know, that in all the time they've been in Washington, Jack has never called my brother once." I said, "You're crazy. Of course he's called him. Your brother hasn't been there. I know as a fact he's called him." But first chance I had, which was a week later, I went down to Washington and I told Jack what the story was. While I was there he picked up the phone and called him up right in his Congressional office, "I've been trying to get a hold of you ." It was those types of things that you couldn't reduce to writing, you had to explain, you had to explain away to then Senator that we did from time to time. Another situation where I sat in with a governor of a state who later delivered the state for him. And I happened to know his poker-playing friends and worked on them. And after I sold them I said, "Well, now what do you say? Why don't you sell your friend so he doesn't realize it's coming from us? You owe me favors? This is what I want you to do." So after about six months they called me one time and said, "You're coming into our town in about three months,

[-19-]

aren't you, for such and such fraternity affair?" And I said, "Yes." "We want you to sit down and talk with the governor." So we sat down and talked with the governor. He was cute. He didn't want to commit himself. He said, "Let's wait and see what happens." I said, "Oh, yes." He said, "However, if the Senator is ever around here I'd like to talk to him." "Sure." I went away. Instead of coming back home, I went by way of Washington and I told him, "Jack, you'd better find an excuse to get to such and such a state." And about three weeks later I read in, I think it was *Life* magazine, where they had some pictures of Kennedy being in that state and staying at that governor's house. And after everything was all over, the governor still didn't endorse Jack, but he said, "He was a very fine young man worth of great consideration." Well, that's the type of work I did. I didn't do anything much more than . There was nothing to do in Massachusetts. Hell, we had Massachusetts lock , stock and barrel at that time.

GARDNER:                    You mentioned traveling around with a fraternity. What is this fraternity you speak of?

DE GUGLIELMO: The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. It's a national intercollegiate fraternity. It's got chapters in very many colleges between here and Chicago and down south as far as, well, call it roughly Philadelphia. We have the northeast section of the United States and they're chiefly Italo-American boys and a senior member of the National Interfraternity Conference. I've had a national office there for thirty odd years. I know most of the boys. There are about 8,500 members concentrated chiefly in that section of the United States. And they're in almost every city and town in that section of the United States.

GARDNER: Probably, as you look back on it now today from the first time you met Jack Kennedy in 1946 to the day when he gave his speech, his victory speech, I believe in Hyannis Port, you must have thought a lot of things about the progress of this man, of the meteoric rise of Jack Kennedy. Was there ever a time that you sat down with the President and sort of made a little review of your first meeting in Cambridge to the day he went to the White House?

[-20-]

DE GUGLIELMO: No, I only saw the President once after he became President. I was going down to Washington and I had a date arranged to see the President and chiefly it was small pleasantries, except for one very important thing we discussed at that particular time. It was – it started out with, "Well, Joe, how are you?" Of course, when I went in I'd made up my mind: now, I've got to remember this is the President of the United States and I've got to insist on Mr. President, and keep my place. So I got into the room and he jumped up and came over to shake hands and he said, "Hello, Joe, how are you?" And I forgot completely what I had made a firm resolution to do and I said, "Hello, you foolish so-and-so, how the hell are you?" And with that, we sat down and then he asked, "Well, how're you doing?" And I said, "Fine." "Are you making any money, Joe?" So I looked at him and I said, "Well, let's put it this way, Jack, I'm paying a part of your salary." And he looked at me with a gleam in his eye and he started to laugh and he said, "You are like hell. I'm paying all of that myself." And then we went off into a resume of what's happening in Massachusetts today. Did I think Teddy could win and I said, "Teddy's got no problem in my book." And then he said to me, "How am I doing?" And that comes to the important thing that I suppose you are interested in. "How am I doing?" I said, "Well, my analysis, Jack, is that by and large you're doing pretty good. There's one area where I think you're doing lousy." He said, "Well, where is that?" I said, "Among the Italo-Americans. You know, that's the chief circle I travel in. I think you're doing lousy among the Italy-Americans." He said, "Well, what do you mean by that?" I said, "Well, on the appointments thing." With that, he pressed a button for Kenny [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and he said, "Kenny, I want you to get me that article." I said, "Wait a while. I know all about that article." And it was an article that had been written by the OSIA magazine, the Order of Sons of Italy in America magazine in which they listed the various appointments that the President had made in the short time that he was in office. I said, "I know all about that article. But you want to know what the rank and file Italy-Americans are talking about, and I'll tell you. They are saying quote, and I am telling you this, Jack because I am not the least

bit interested in anything. There's nothing you can do for me. They are saying, 'That Kennedy,

[-21-]

that President, he's put two Jews in the Cabinet. He's breaking his neck to put a Negro in the Cabinet and his department of housing or (I forget the name) and nowhere in the United States can he find one Italo-American to put in the Cabinet of the United States.' That is the one area I see you are in trouble." He said, "Joe, I didn't realize it was that way. Are you sure of that?" And I said, "I'm telling you, Jack, it's serious." He said, "Alright, we'll see what we can do about it." In about two months later – it must have been two months later because I saw him in May of '61? '62? '62? '62. May of '62 I saw him. Two months later when I was in Rome I read of his appointment of Celebrezze [Anthony J. Celebrezze] as the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. And I was quite pleased with that because I felt that I played a part in the appointment although I knew nothing about – I knew Celebrezze from before, but I mean I didn't play a part in the actual appointment of Celebrezze himself, but I thought I played a part in getting an Italo-American recognized in the Cabinet of the United States. But that was the only time I saw him. There was no occasion to bother him. There was nothing that I was looking for from him. There was nothing that I was looking for from him. I liked him. I was looking forward to the time, when he was back in private life, when we could fool around together and maybe play some golf together and fool around, but...

GARDNER: Mr. De Guglielmo, how do you think history will assess Jack Kennedy?

DE GUGLIELMO: That is a question that a lot is going to depend upon the future of America under Johnson and his successors. Of course, if Johnson is a tremendous success, the loss of Kennedy historically will not be felt as much. If Johnson turns out to be a mediocre President, of course, Kennedy's greatness as I know and I feel it is, will be so much greater appreciated by the people and the historians of the future. In the short time that he had to serve as President, there are many hallmarks of greatness. The unfortunate part of trying to evaluate Kennedy is that you're not able to determine whether he could – well, what's the word – whether he could implement his theories of service to mankind with action. You take the matter we're in now, civil rights. I think if there's one thing the Kennedys are known for, it's

[-22-]

their work in civil rights. Unfortunately, before he could translate his thoughts of civil rights into an effective bill on civil rights, he was murdered. You take the work that he and his brother – and I think that a lot of the things that Bobby did was a result of conferences with his brother. They were so close together. This work in labor with the prosecution of Hoffa and others and his research into the criminal element of the United States and the expose on Cosa Nostra – these are all part of, as I see it, the Kennedy theory of honor in government which was epitomized, for instance, in his speech before the joint House of Representatives

and the Senate of Massachusetts when he gave them quite a discourse on honor in government. It was really a chastisement of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate.

Now, as I say, the unfortunate part of the Kennedy Administration is that it was not able to exist long enough to be implemented into actual effective legislation, or action, or performance, or deeds. A real student of history, I think, will translate or really develop the beginnings of the Kennedy ideas into actions in the future. And the real historian, I think, when he gets through, if the government of the United States accepts the Kennedy theories, will say that Kennedy did commence a course of action which made an indelible stamp on the future of America and by the future of America, also the future of the world. He had – I think, a lot of the things that Kennedy did in the international scene, his facing up to Khrushchev [Nikita S. Khrushchev] in Cuba, I think that put a braking effort in Communists. And whatever we see now in the way of a fall on Communistic activities was accelerated because for once the government told Khrushchev, "If you don't knuckle down, it means war." And Khrushchev knuckled down. And although that type of chain reaction doesn't manifest itself for a period of time to come, the knuckling down of Khrushchev in Cuba, to my way of thinking, did a great deal towards easing off the Cold War because other people started to get brave and other people started to talk up to the big bully. Now this is something, as I say, Kennedy did not live to finish and because he did not live to finish it, someone else may get the credit for it, whether it be Johnson or Johnson's successor in office ten or twelve years from now. But I think the true analyst or true historian will come to the conclusion that if these things are actualities in the future, the true historian will attribute them to the Kennedy influence on the world. And I think as a

[-23-]

result of that, you'll find that history will give him a high place.

GARDNER: An assassin's bullet, as you know, snuffed out the life of your friend, John Kennedy. Yet you have through these recordings, through your own wonderful review of this man, have joined him. You, like John F. Kennedy, have become immortal, through your contribution to the Library. What is your reaction to this? How do you feel about this?

DE GUGLIELMO: Well, as for my joining him in immortality, I think that's exaggerated. As far as I'm concerned, that's incredible as when I was first told that Kennedy was going to be the President of the United States before he was Senator. "'52 Senator. '60 President.'" I hope you're right. But apart from that, to me, the loss of Kennedy was more than the loss of the President of the United States. I suppose I could take the loss of any President of the United States in stride or any public officeholder in stride. They're a public servant and they've got to go sometime the way all of us have got to go. But to me Jack Kennedy was more than the President of the United States. I have said many times in gatherings and privately that in public life you meet very, very many people. You make many, many acquaintances, but you make very, very few friends. It's an unfortunate corollary of axiom in public life that while you're in a position where you can do

something for somebody, everybody loves you. When you can't do favors any more or when you can't do anything, when you become a private person, then many times you're treated as a leper. To me the relationship between Jack Kennedy and myself far transcended anything like that, because there was never any talk of what can you do for me. To me we had a goal. We were friends. We were in a ballgame together. We were trying to achieve something that we thought was good for the people, for the government. There was no monetary gain for me whether he became Congressman or not, whether he became Senator or not, whether he became President or not. And as far as my analysis of his feelings towards me, I don't think that he was ever cordial or friendly with me because he thought, "Well, I can use this fellow." To me, he always gave the impression of being genuinely happy to see me, genuinely cordial as contradistinguished from coldly polite to a

[-24-]

political ally. I felt when Kennedy, when I got the word that the President had died – first, when I got it that he had been shot, I felt as though somebody in the family had been shot. To me, it was a personal loss. It wasn't a public loss. I didn't think of it at all as a public loss. It was the first tragedy that happened in our family in many, many years. All my brothers and sisters and my mother, whom he knew well too, all felt as though a member of the family had gone. We'd have felt equally as bad if one of our brothers or sisters had gone. That's the way it affected all of us.

GARDNER: This has been an interview with Cambridge attorney, Joseph De Guglielmo. This has been Art Gardner for WBZ News in Boston on this date of May 4, 1964.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-25-]

Joseph De Guglielmo Oral History Transcript  
Name List

**B**

Billing, Kirk LeMoyné, 9

**C**

Celebrezze, Anthony J., 22  
Cenerazzo, Walter, 1-2  
Cotter, John F., 3

**D**

Dever, Paul A., 4, 6, 10-11

**F**

Falvey, Catherine E., 3

**G**

Gallucio, Anthony, 10  
Gore, Albert A., Sr., 13

**I**

Impellitteri, Vincent R., 11

**J**

Johnson, Lyndon B., 15, 23

**K**

Kennedy, Edward M., 8, 15, 21  
Kennedy, Ethel Skakel, 5  
Kennedy, John F., 1-25  
Kennedy, Joseph P., 3, 11  
Kennedy, Robert F., 5, 9, 10, 13, 23  
Khrushchev, Nikita S., 23

**L**

Lodge, Henry Cabot, 10  
Lynch, John M., 4  
Lynch, Pat, 4

**N**

Neville, Michael J., 2-5, 9

**O**

O'Brien, Daniel, 4  
O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 21

**R**

Russo, Joseph, 3

**S**

Shriver, Eunice Kennedy, 5, 7, 13  
Shriver, Robert Sargent, Jr., 13  
Stevenson, Adlai E., 13

**T**

Taft, Robert A., 12  
Timilty, Joseph P., 9