

Ernest G. Warren Oral History Interview –JFK #1, 2/29/1968
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Biographical Note

Warren, Ernest G.; New England regional correspondent, Associated Press, Washington, D.C.. Warren briefly discusses John F. Kennedy's [JFK] time as a congressman, senator, and presidential candidate. He also describes JFK's interactions and relationships with people inside and outside of politics, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

with

ERNEST G. WARREN

February 29, 1968
Whitestone, VA

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Why don't you start off, Mr. Warren, by talking about how you first came in contact with John Kennedy or his career.

WARREN: Well, I don't have the imaginative total recall that some of my colleagues and friends have, but I met Jack Kennedy when he first came to Washington as a freshman congressman in '46. I'd know his father [Joseph P. Kennedy], having covered him when he came in as Chairman of the Securities Commission [Securities and Exchange Commission]. I didn't pay too much attention to Jack as just another freshman congressman. As a matter of fact, when he came in, he didn't have an office assigned to him, and I had to borrow then Democratic floor leader McCormack's [John W. McCormack] office to interview him. I always interviewed the freshman congressmen. He was very boyish, as we knew him early, appeared rather helpless, so much so that I offered to help him find a place to live, in my innocence. He could have bought my house, without further thought.

[-1-]

And he went along in his first term in Congress, nothing distinguished about him, mistaken as usual for the page boys -- traditionally played touch ball with some of them on

the lawn in front of the Capitol. I didn't pay much attention to him, any more than you would to the normal freshman. He didn't have much to say, didn't have much to do in the way of legislation naturally, until John McCormack was circulating a petition to get a presidential pardon for Jim Curley [James M. Curley]. He, from Boston and all the rest of it, refused to sign. Naturally I paid a lot of attention to him from then on because it took quite a lot of guts to buck the machine at the time. Jack had only Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] as his secretary, principal secretary, and one girl.

HACKMAN: Mary Davis? Do you remember if that was her name?

WARREN: I think that was her name. She didn't go to the Senate with him when he went to the Senate with him when he went to the Senate, a nice little girl. Ted Reardon, of course, as you know, did and became his, at least nominally, his administrative assistant.

I don't think you'll find many bills introduced by Jack in his House career, nor, I don't imagine -- I haven't done a check on it as the *Congressional Quarterly* would, but I think his attendance probably was just a little poor, too. But he was paying strict attention to his district. He was being a good congressman in that he was answering the usual mail and doing the usual favors that a congressman does for his district, and he was getting back to the district quite a little.

[-2-]

It was fairly evident when it came up time for him to run against Cabot Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge] in '52. I think his House career was fairly undistinguished. I don't think he made many speeches, unless you count the one minute's, revise and extend, in the early morning hours. But when he started running against Cabot Lodge in '52 for the Senate -- Cabot Lodge, a delightful fellow, was being a national and international diplomat at the time a statesman rather, and wasn't paying too much attention to the home territory. Jack was paying a great deal of attention to the home territory, and the results, as we all know, paid off rather well. Cabot came in as a sprint runner at the end and made a lot of statements about legislation he had or was going to or thinking about introducing. But Jack had been introducing it and talking about it, and he was well elected.

In the Senate, too, Jack didn't... You'll pardon me calling him "Jack," because that's how I knew him. He became "Mr. President" later. In the Senate he was a freshman Senator, he didn't do a great deal of talking. He still had the air of diffidence, if that's the word you can apply to him. He was an appealing guy on the ground, I think, that he didn't take a bumptious attitude. He was always accessible, he never had a press agent until, well, not until he got Pierre Salinger. He was accessible, you could go to him and ask him about things, and he would talk to you.

[-3-]

The trait that he displayed when he declined to sign the pardon petition for Jim Curley, he showed in his interviews with constituents. There're always delegations of this union or that organization coming down to get a member of Congress to commit himself on some legislation or trend. I was the Associated Press New England regional correspondent, and he was one of my babies or constituents, so I attended all these meetings, or as many as possible. I was particularly impressed mostly with the union groups that would come down, and others. They would meet with him in his office, or, if it was too big a group, he would borrow a subcommittee room and listen to their gripes and suggestions. Then they'd get to the crucial question, "Well, will you vote for this?" or "Will you introduce this?" He didn't stampede and give the usual thing: "I'll give this my deepest consideration and thought, and if I find merit in it, I will certainly give it my support." He would listen to what they had said and generally -- inevitably -- came back and tell them where they were wrong. Sometimes it made the groups a little made at first, there was a little murmuring about it, but I think in the end it paid off. He was quite honest in what he said. He knew that reporters were present -- generally Don Larrabee [Donald R. Larrabee] and I were in there [Don with the Griffith News Service] -- and he never tried to persuade us that, "Now this was off the record, what I was telling them today." He let it stand. And I think, on the whole, that he got the backing of labor because they felt that he was honest in his thinking about them and that he wasn't merely giving them lip service. That, I think, is mainly his character.

[-4-]

One of the worst times I had was when he developed the back trouble to the point of having to have the operations. They took him to Boston -- New York then Boston, I think it was. And there was no announcement made as to what was the trouble. For a little while that's all right, no one raises any questions. But he was a Kennedy and he was in the eye, glamorous, and I kept getting queries from my papers in Boston and from the Boston bureau, "What's the matter with Jack Kennedy?" We'd get, "Well, he's having a little trouble with his back." Ted Reardon was his principal spokesman and virtually the only one in his office then. He hadn't gotten Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] yet or some of the other help that came along as business increased and his importance increased, or his aims were raised. And then the rumors began starting around town, "Well, there's something malignant. He has an incurable back ailment," and so forth. I'd go to Ted Reardon, and he'd say, "Oh no, no, no. There's nothing like that." It's just this, that, and the other. And you have probably heard, the rumors became quite strong, so I went to Ted and said, "If there isn't anything wrong with him, why don't you say so? Say exactly what's wrong with him and still these reports." And he said, "No, Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] doesn't want that to be done. We can't do it now." We had quite an argument about it, as to the public relations value of it, so much so that Ted wrote to Joe Kennedy -- at least he said he did -- and, very shortly after, we got the explicit pronouncement as to what the trouble was and what was being done about it and how he was progressing. And I think it stilled a lot of things. But that's not peculiar to the Kennedy family. All politicians try to hide what's wrong with them, when if they said what was wrong in the first place, there wouldn't have been all the talk about it, and it wouldn't have become worse by word of mouth and repeating.

[-5-]

As far as the campaigns were concerned, I was covering the New England delegations so that I didn't travel with the President at all. I'd had a heart attack meanwhile and was not up to going out on campaign trips, which I'm not too sorry about.

But the whole tempo of the office stepped up after Jack almost got the vice presidency. Well, it had been stepping up because, obviously, that was not just a happen - so at the convention. But from then on things really began to pick up, and he opened up the sort of semi-sub rosa office over in the old Esso Building, now torn down. And Pierre Salinger joined the staff as his public relations man. Up until that time he had handled his own publicity, with the help of Ted Sorensen, which needed no help.

HACKMAN: Let me ask you one thing. I heard that a fellow worked for him in '58 on press relations named Thompson, either Frank or Robert Thompson -- I can't recall which. Do you remember dealing with that fellow?

WARREN: Name doesn't even register with me. I don't recall him.

HACKMAN: He must not have been that important.

WARREN: Well, many senators have a man on their staff, not listed as a press relations man -- they generally list them as a congressional liaison or research assistant or something of that sort -- who informally is told, "Well, you handle all the press relations as well." But I don't recall him. The only formal pressman that I recall was when Pierre came with him. But Ted Sorensen and Ted Reardon, mostly Sorensen, handled his press relations up until that time and did a very good job of it, I may say, a zealous job. If you didn't get out what they thought was good publicity, or you didn't treat it just the way they wanted it, why, they wanted to know why. They were very zealous in backing him, and they were all very loyal and would fight for a word.

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HACKMAN: Did you ever hear from the SENator himself on any of the things you were writing?

WARREN: Never did. The Senator was available and talked, but he himself never questioned what you wrote about or suggested what you should write. It was his minions who did. And as I said, they were very much on the ball in putting forward Jack. They were a loyal bunch.

HACKMAN: A lot of people have said that Sorensen was particularly difficult to deal with at times. Did you find that being so?

WARREN: No, I never found him at all difficult to deal with. Sorensen was -- he was so intense. I think that was the feeling you got about him, that he was intense. He was thinking ahead to what he wanted you to do and what he wanted to do, and it took a little patience, but I never found him difficult in the least. I found him anything but. He was a cooperative fellow -- on his subject.

HACKMAN: A lot of people have talked about tension existing in the Senate office between Sorensen and some of the other staff people, Could you see this?

WARREN: No, it certainly wasn't evident -- and I was in and out of the office all the time -- in relation to the other senators. They had to be covered, their activities. I had the freedom to be covered, their activities. I had the freedom of the office in that I never knocked on the door or anything else. I walked in, sat down, and waited until whoever I wanted to talk to was free to talk to me. And they were back and forth, carrying on their normal business, and I never got any sense of tenseness in the office, not between personalities.

[-7-]

HACKMAN: Do you think the other press people who were covering an area similar to yours found him as accessible as you did?

WARREN: This is Sorensen or Kennedy?

HACKMAN: Kennedy, or maybe the office as a whole, if you want to talk about it.

WARREN: Why, I should certainly think that if there had been an inaccessibility that, in the usual gossip in the press galleries, you would have gotten the gripe, "Why can't I get to see the so-and-so?" -- whichever one they wanted to see. But at this stage, I don't recall anyone having to complain that they were getting the brush-off, or being put aside, or stopped. We were perfectly free to go in and ask. He might be busy or in conference, which is not unusual, but you never were frustrated in trying to get news out of the office.

HACKMAN: Let me go back and ask you about a couple of things you mentioned before. First, on the Curley pardon, did you ever discuss this with him or with Reardon?

WARREN: No, I covered Jim Curley's trial, right on through the appeal, one of the most astounding things I've ever covered. Never discussed it with him later why he didn't. I can't recall having discussed it with him. My impression is he said he thought he [Curley] had been given a trial and been found guilty of

the charges, and he should serve. But that's just pure recollecting. I recall no specific conversation about it.

HACKMAN: What can you recall about his relationship with John McCormack in that period when he was in the House?

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WARREN: Well, certainly openly, there was no.... They didn't bicker with each other. They were.... Jack Kennedy was a cool person. He held himself to himself too much, he didn't give too much. John McCormack, naturally, was not going to do battle with one of his own Party openly. Now, what their private conversations were, I don't know, but there was certainly no obvious antagonism between the two. Jack was not that kind of combative person, I don't think, and John's too smart a politician.

HACKMAN: Did you see anything more developing on this during the Senate years?

WARREN: No. There was always the talk of the feud between the Kennedys and the McCormacks, and certainly they weren't buddy-buddy. But when Eddie McCormack [Edward J. McCormack, Jr.] was making his bid, or bids, the last one particularly, you know they all got together in John McCormack's office, the McCormacks and the -- even Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] came over. There was Ted [Edward M. Kennedy], Bobby, and Eddie McCormack and John McCormack, and arms around shoulders with their pictures taken, but it was all in an effort to down the feud idea. And, undoubtedly, there had to be some antagonism. Of course, Eddie McCormack and Ted had run against each other, and Ted had won. But they were all good politicians; they buried the hatchet when it was necessary. But I think that the feud business was more encouraged by the papers and the reporters than it was certainly agitated between them.

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HACKMAN: You had mentioned that he was, when he first came down, that he seemed to be very lost, and you had attempted to give him a little help around town. Did he adapt quickly to the House, did he ever take much of an interest in the way the House worked, and learn the rules and his way around?

WARREN: Oh, he learned the rules, of course, but he was not an eager participant. Maybe that's the wrong way of putting it. He didn't throw himself into the business of the House, as some of our freshman do. He didn't rush out with a statement on every issue that came up, seek out somebody to tell them what he thought about something of the sort. I think the air of, well, shyness, if you can apply that to a man who got as far as he did in politics.... YOU can't be both shy and aggressive at the

same time. I mean, it doesn't seem so, but he gave the air of difference. I think it was one of the things that appealed to a great many people and caused a great many people to jump up and down and scream and yell when he'd go make a speech. He had that magnetic appeal. I know Tip O'Neill [Thomas P. O'Neill] said he was the hottest thing in the world. When he wanted to have a fundraising dinner at his church or in his political district, all he had to do was advertise that Jack Kennedy was going to be the speaker, and he said he could load the hall two or three times. He said, "I don't know what does it, but it does."

HACKMAN: Did you see his speaking ability improving much in the House, or did this come much later?

[-10-]

WARREN: No, he didn't speak in the House. I doubt if you'll find half a dozen times he took the floor. I think you'll probably find a lot of speeches in the *Record* [*Congressional Record*], as I say, these one minutes when you get unanimous consent to extend your remarks and revise. But I don't now recall his ever having made a speech in the House. And he made very few in the Senate.

HACKMAN: Can you remember ever hearing him discuss the House as an institution, what he thought of it, and maybe in terms of what his future plans were?

WARREN: No, I don't recall his ever having any philosophical discussions about the House and what his thoughts were on it.

HACKMAN: You had talked earlier about Ambassador Joseph Kennedy's role as far as the illness went. Did you see his influence on the office in other ways, in particular decisions; was he much in evidence?

WARREN: No, he wasn't. That was the only time that I had ever anyone say in the office, "Well, Joe doesn't want this done." And that was Ted Reardon talking between the two of us when Jack was in the hospital, and things in his senatorial office were more or less at a standstill without him there. But certainly, Jack disavowed any influence of his father; and, as far as it was evident, there was none. He didn't show up at the office. Oh, occasionally, he'd probably drop in if he was in Washington. But as for running the office or having any influence on it, it was not evident.

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HACKMAN: You talked a little bit about his relationship with some of the labor groups that were coming down. Can you remember anything particular

about his relationships with any of the other people who were coming down from Massachusetts, particular problems that he had with some of the groups or anything?

WARREN: Not particularly, no. Just in general, he always listened well, which is an art in itself. Some of them are so tied up with themselves that they don't listen to what is being said. And Jack always listened thoughtfully and gave a thoughtful answer in response to what was said.

Quite aside from anything, I think one of the funniest instances I ever saw was after he'd come back after having his back worked on -- and I guess it was Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] who put the rocker in his office. It was just a cane bottom, straight back rocker. Don Larrabee and I were in there one day, kidding him about the thing; it'd just come in. And he said, "I'll show you, it's a very comfortable chair." He sat down in it with gusto and turned completely over backwards. We were a little bit alarmed as to what the result might be, but he thought it was hilariously funny. He got up and straightened the rocker up again and then sat down properly, and it didn't turn over. It was an anxious moment or two, just as it was when Ted [Kennedy] came back [from his plane crash and back injury] and well-wishers would slap him on the back and say, "You're looking fine, Ted" and some short woman would reach up to kiss him on the cheek and pull him over and tilt him. It was just a little alarming, just as it was when Jack fell over in the rocker. But as for his relations with the groups that came down, it was one of intelligent listening.

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HACKMAN: A lot of people have talked about, particularly in relation to the Senate, in his relation to the Senate leadership, how he felt about the "Club" -- what people call the "Club," the inner circle. How do you think he saw these people in that period -- Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] and Russell [Richard B. Russell] and some of these people?

WARREN: How do I think he saw them? As a bunch of stuffed shirts. I don't think he really belonged to the "Club" in the sense of pulling wires and wheels and turning wheels. He worked more on the periphery of that, somewhat aloof. And, when you get right down to it, he was always somewhat aloof. Despite the fact that everyone thought they knew him well and were buddy-buddy with him, I don't think he was with any of them. He was a self-contained person.

HACKMAN: Can you recall, from your coverage of the New England delegation, any particular feelings he had about some of his fellow members of Congress -- which he was close to or which he had problems with possibly?

WARREN: He always got along well with them. He always showed up at the delegation meetings. He and Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall]

instigated the idea of the New England Conference, the senatorial conference. I think it was his idea, as a matter of fact. And the two of them organized the twelve senators from that area to meet once a month -- and they still do, spasmodically now since Saltonstall is gone -- and discussed problems of mutual area interest, regional interest. They didn't always agree on them, but they did exchange ideas on them, and out of it, I think, came some very good ideas for forwarding New England. Saltonstall and Kennedy both cited the fact that there was the Southern "bloc," and the farm bloc, and the Midwestern group, and they were always getting things for the region, and it would be a good idea if New Englanders got together and

[-13-]

discussed their problems, and couldn't they do something about them. And, in cooperation with the New England Conference of Governors, there was an exchange of views as to needs and what could be done about them legislatively. I think a great deal of good did come out of them, and it was their organization. As a matter of fact, Ted Sorensen was secretary to that group for their monthly meetings. They met in succession among the senators' offices; one would be host one month, and right on around the group, so that no one had any possessiveness about the thing.

They tried to organize the same thing for the New England congressional delegation, House and Senate, but the House was too loosely knit, and it would make too many of them to go that way. They had a group in the House, but it was only on call when some New England small business association, or something like that, wanted to talk to the whole delegation, and then they'd generally meet in what used to be known as "Speaker Martin's Room" [Joseph W. Martin] on the House side, a small dining room. And Jack Kennedy and Saltonstall and all of them would always come over to those meetings and listen and talk. Trespassing on the House side, they generally let John McCormack or Joe Martin, who was then Speaker and leader, preside.

He got along excellently with Lev Saltonstall. Generally the bills that were introduced affecting Massachusetts and New England carried their joint signatures as sponsors, almost inevitably. So much so that when it came time to introduce the bill that created the Cape Cod National Seashore, they were both for it, they were both going to sponsor it, and the question arose as to whose name should go first on the bill. And they flipped a quarter to see whose name should go first, and it came out Kennedy-Saltonstall is my recollection now. But that was the relationship they had.

[-14-]

He had no feuds with anybody in the delegation that I know of, no jealousies in the delegation from Massachusetts or New England. He cooperated with them, and was the leader, was a leader anyhow to the extent that he and Saltonstall organized the group and kept them going. Jack set Ted Sorensen aside to write up an agenda and to get calls out to the senators to remind them to be at the meetings, and made a cohesive group of it.

HACKMAN: People have commented that when Saltonstall's time came up to run for the Senate, Kennedy would usually prefer Saltonstall to the Democrat. Can you remember that ever creating any problems?

WARREN: He would. He ran into that very specifically when Foster Furcolo, who had been in the House and then went up and got himself elected State Treasurer to get some statewide attention.... I wasn't at the meeting in Boston where they were all to appear on the same program, but I certainly heard plenty about it when Jack didn't get up and endorse Furcolo, much to Foster's chagrin I'm sure. But, he certainly never tried to oust Saltonstall. I think he was very happy, from a personal standpoint as well as in the interest of the state, to keep Saltonstall in office. They got along very well; they both were gentlemen and both quite sincere in their aims.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything specific about the St. Lawrence Seaway vote, what this did to his relationship to Massachusetts and to the other New England senators?

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WARREN: Well, there was a great deal of controversy as to what it would do to the port of Boston. I'm sure that Jack was the one who was favoring the Seaway and argued that anything that increases business increases railroads as well. There was the opposition, of course; the railroads were afraid what it would do to their transportation west. But it never became very acrimonious one way or the other. It didn't create as much heat as the Passamaquoddy Dam did. These things get away from you in your mind, but my recollection is that he was quite as firm in his stand as some of the others were that it would be a bad thing for the port, they would be bypassed and all the rest of it. But I don't particularly recall a great heat about it.

HACKMAN: You've talked a little bit about Kennedy's view as a senator of the Senate leadership. What do you think they, in turn, thought of him in this period?

WARREN: I don't know. That would be very difficult for me to say. I know when Cabot Lodge and some of the other boys were trying to oust Taft [Robert A. Taft] as the Republican leader there was a great deal of heat there -- he and Baldwin [Raymond E. Baldwin] of Connecticut who were in that group of young Turks, as they called them. But since Jack was not a member of the "Club," I don't think there was any great feeling, pro or con on him, until he became a little more prominent as a possible president and then as a presidential candidate, and you wouldn't get any open expressions there unless you were very partisan.

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HACKMAN: Could you see any great changes taking place in him during the Senate years? Particularly in terms of his marriage, do you think this changed him any?

WARREN: No, no I don't think that it did. Of course, a man who is contemplating running for the highest office becomes a great deal busier and is more in the eye, and more people are interested in talking to him and discussing issues. But he still remained accessible; you could stop him in the hall. He always, apparently, had time, though you knew he didn't. But I don't think it changed his character particularly or his attitude toward people.

HACKMAN: I don't know how closely you observed his social life, but what could you see about the types of people that he liked to be with, or those particularly close to him?

WARREN: Well, you're way out of my bailiwick now. My wife and I are not particularly social minded. Obviously, our age differential would have meant quite a lot because I didn't go around with the same age group that he did. And, as I say, we were not in that group, and I had no opportunity to observe his social life.

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HACKMAN: One of the other things that was controversial at the time, and also important later, was when the McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] censure came up and he was in the hospital at that time. Do you remember discussing his view, either with him or with Reardon or some of these other people on this?

WARREN: No, no, I never did, either with him or with his aides. I know it was a matter of great speculation, but it was not within my regional purview and I never discussed it with him.

HACKMAN: While you talked about his relationship with labor groups, I wonder if you remember anything specific about his relationship with the New England labor groups at the time the labor legislature was developing in '58 and '59, what became Landrum-Griffin?

WARREN: Not on specific legislation, no. Our problems largely, as you know, had to do with textiles: textile imports, and fish and fisheries, and shoes, the imports and exports generally. He was an advocate of freer international trade, and so he had some very specific views that you had to give a little to gain a little. But he was certainly not a protectionist in the sense that he wanted to put up quotas or higher tariffs, though he recognized that some of the tariffs were no barrier at all to

imports. It was mostly in the textile and fisheries fields, that I had contact with him because those groups were the most articulate in their protests. He never hesitated to tell them why he thought that they had to have international trade, freer trade. And he wouldn't just dogmatically say we must have quotas or we must have exorbitant tariffs. He was free in telling them why he thought so and so and not just saying, "Well, I'll study this."

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HACKMAN: In comparison with his fellow senators, how much substantive knowledge did he have of these issues? Did he understand these things? Some people have said he was very strong on economics, and others have said he understood very little about it.

WARREN: Well, if he didn't understand, he gave an awfully good imitation of understanding because I never saw him get caught short on background. He had an extraordinary fund of information, as a matter of fact. He had an extraordinary fund of information, as a matter of fact. I suppose it goes back to his being such a quick reader, because he could cite facts and figures and, having listened, as I said before, he gave specific answers to the questions that were put to him. No, I think that he had knowledge on -- certainly within my province on New England problems, he was well-grounded.¹

HACKMAN: This was all the way through? A couple people have commented that in the late fifties that he really speeded up, or maybe it was just an increase in interest, but he became able to grasp things much more quickly.

WARREN: In the late fifties? I think they were just becoming more aware of Kennedy.

[-19-]

HACKMAN: How did your own view develop toward the possibility of his getting the Democratic nomination? When did you begin to take him seriously?

WARREN: When was it he ran? In '60....

¹ Added by Mr. Warren in editing:

What I forgot to mention in this connection was a series of three speeches JFK made early in his senate career on the economic problems of New England and their possible solutions. These speeches, later collected from the *Congressional Record* and printed in booklet form, constituted a virtual bible for the remainder of his senatorial service. Compartmented by subjects, the speeches supplied ready answers to his views on most anything that might come along. A great deal of study and thought went into their preparation.

HACKMAN: '56, there was the vice presidential thing in Chicago.

WARREN: I began to take him seriously right after the vice presidential, after the '56 Convention when he came so close to becoming vice president -- which is very fortunate, I think, that he didn't -- the candidate, rather. I think the whole attitude of his office changed. Certainly Ted Sorensen's obvious endeavor picked up. He was on the phone, and you would go into Ted Sorensen's office -- as you know, most contacts with members of Congress, or anyone, are through their principal assistants. Ted was always busy on the phone, and it was generally a long distance call to somebody in this state or the other that had nothing to do with Massachusetts or New England. From that time on the tempo seemed, to me, to pick up politically in his office.

HACKMAN: Some people have said that he was very frank in discussing his own weaknesses in regard to the possibility of getting the nomination. Did you ever find that so?

WARREN: Why, I don't recall any discussions one way or the other about it. He was not boastful, certainly, but I don't recall him discussing weaknesses either.

[-20-]

HACKMAN: Did you get involved in anything as far as covering his efforts around the country in '59 and '60?

WARREN: Not all, except inasmuch as a great many of his releases, in the way of his speeches and advanced texts and that sort of thing, were put out through his Washington office. His whole campaign was handled in a separate office from his congressional office, senatorial office. He had a staff set up over there handling it; Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] and Smith [Stephen E. Smith] and all the rest of them were over at the old Esso Building. He kept that as a separate operation, with separate phone numbers. When you had a question about his candidacy, you were referred to one of those assistants. It wasn't until fairly long into the campaign that he brought Pierre Salinger into his own office, which was more convenient, of course. But, no.

HACKMAN: How did you find Salinger to deal with, or did you have much dealing with him?

WARREN: I had quite a lot of dealings with Pierre. I got along better with Hatcher [Andrew T. Hatcher] than I did with Pierre. I thought Andy Hatcher had more actual routine -- not routine, that's not the word -- but more practical knowledge of itineraries, of what was going on, than Pierre did. Pierre was...

HACKMAN: What point are you talking about, '60, as '60 developed?

[-21-]

WARREN: Yes, as '60 developed. After that, they were in the White House and I had virtually no dealings with them because our AP [Associated Press] White House staff took care of that. Obviously, it was out of my territory. But, leading up to the '60 campaign and during the '60 campaign, we were dealing with Pierre and Andy Hatcher. I won't discuss Pierre unless you specifically want it. Got along with him, yes, all right.

HACKMAN: Any particular problems that you had?

WARREN: Well, I just didn't like Pierre, if you want the honest truth. He didn't, in my opinion, fit into the picture of the Kennedys and the Kennedy organization. That's a personal thing probably, but he wasn't -- if I may quote that awful word -- the image.

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

HACKMAN: A lot of people have said the same thing that you have about Salinger. Did he seem to have a problem fitting in with the rest of the staff?

[-22-]

WARREN: Well, the setup, the whole group around Kennedy, had built up from a very small group. It didn't just mushroom -- well, it did towards the end. Naturally he had to have more people, to handle more things. But Pierre was sort of a peripheral guy as far as I was concerned. He didn't grow up with the group; he didn't have the same long background of being one of the clan. I never felt he had the real feel, the drive, that some of the others had. He did a job as a publicity man -- and I use publicity man rather than public relations man. He would call news conferences -- well, the staff said press conferences, but I'm still an old media man. He would call a news conference, generally late. He was a little bit, sometimes, not quite prepared, and he'd have to go back for the information you wanted. He would generally get it for you, but if he didn't, Andy Hatcher did. I don't know. He just didn't appeal.

HACKMAN: You didn't do any traveling in '60?

WARREN: No, no traveling in any of his campaigns.

HACKMAN: Did you cover the Convention at all?

WARREN: I covered the Conventions. I covered them as a desk man. I covered all the Conventions from '36 on, until my retirement. But I always went

as a desk man. We brought a man from New England to cover the delegations, the six delegations at the Conventions. So I didn't -- in the sense of being a reporter -- I never did cover the Conventions. I was desk, regional editor.

HACKMAN: Can you think of anything particular at the '60 Convention that you want to discuss?

[-23-]

WARREN: No, I don't recall any particular incident that stands out in my mind. I know that Bob [Kennedy] was very much in evidence. And I did attend the conference in which he [John F. Kennedy] and Johnson debated, which was rather an amazing affair. I think both handled themselves quite well. I don't know that you could say either won, except Jack won the nomination.

HACKMAN: During the campaign, then, you were back in Washington on the Senate ending, or the Senate-House ending.

WARREN: Right.

HACKMAN: Do you have any particular comments on the way they handled the press in the '60 campaign? If you were at the other end of the line, I don't know that you...

WARREN: I didn't have any great personal contact with it. I observed, of course, all the hectic arrangements when he would take an out-of-town trip, and the arrangements were trying to be made through Pierre for everyone to get on the plane, on the press plane, or get on his own plane. And they were madhouse events because generally he would take off at the drop of a hat, and everyone grabbed his typewriter and his hat and maybe a clean shirt if he had time. I saw that only peripherally since I was not concerned. I didn't have to go.

[-24-]

HACKMAN: Well, maybe you would want to comment on the Administration, then, from your point of view. How well did he deal with Congress, and the people you were in contact with -- himself and O'Brien's [Lawrence F. O'Brien] operation?

WARREN: Well, there's been a lot of discussion about that, how he had a very brief honeymoon and so forth. But I haven't any specific comment on that, I don't think. Larry O'Brien was around --very efficiently around, I may say. I've known Larry from the time he was with Foster Furcolo in the House as his

secretary. Larry is very knowledgeable, and so is Ralph Dungan, and both very affable and persuasive fellows. What's become of Ralph. Is he still an ambassador?

HACKMAN: No, no, he's up at Trenton, New Jersey, as Chancellor of Education for the State of New Jersey.

WARREN: Good, good. No, Larry is very adaptable and very much on the ball. He, like a great many of that clan, was very approachable, articulate in points of view.

HACKMAN: That's really all I have, unless you think of any anecdotes or any comments in general that you want to make about the whole thing.

WARREN: I don't think of anything in particular, Larry. Anything that you want to ask me about these things.... I'm not very specific about any of them because I don't keep a diary, and I don't dwell on these things too much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-25-]