

Francis X. Morrissey Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 6/09/1964
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Biographical Note

Francis X. Morrissey (1910-2008) was a Massachusetts political figure and Kennedy family friend who worked as a member of John F. Kennedy's [JFK] staff from 1946 to 1953 and as a judge on the Boston Municipal Court from 1958 to 1980. This interview focuses on JFK's 1946 congressional campaign, his time as a senator, and the workings of the Massachusetts Democratic Party, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Francis X. Morrissey

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Oral History Interview

with

FRANCIS X. MORRISSEY

June 9, 1964

Boston, Massachusetts

By David Farrell

For the John F. Kennedy Library

FARRELL: When was the first time you met the late President John F. Kennedy?

MORRISSEY: Well, I met the late President John F. Kennedy at the General Patton [George S. Patton, Jr.] dinner, and also met him later while I was the director of the community fund drive in Boston, in which the then president asked if he could participate in the United Fund drive in this area. I put the late president on our speaker's bureau and he decided in our various talks at that particular time what he would do. He seemed to have a tremendous interest in politics or in teaching.

FARRELL: For purposes of chronology, was this before World War II or what year was it?

MORRISSEY: This was just after World War II, just as he got out of the service. He was still in his lieutenant's uniform when he came in to me at the United Fund headquarters.

FARRELL: He expressed interest in politics ?

MORRISSEY: He expressed an interest in politics. As you remember, his older brother, Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.] had been definitely interested in running for political life, and the ambassador [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] at that time, came into Massachusetts with the late Governor Tobin [Maurice J. Tobin] to develop a department of commerce within this state. He campaigned very, very strongly for a year to get the department of commerce here, and he was laying a foundation for Joe. But with the death of Joe, Jack stepped into Joe's shoes, to take Joe's place.

Now as you remember, Tobin was governor and they had a lieutenant governor by the name of Bradford, [Robert F. Bradford], who later became governor, and Maurice Tobin strongly urged the ambassador and Jack to run for lieutenant governor. Knowing the state rather well, I strongly urged Jack and the ambassador that he should run for Congress. As you recall, Dave,

Chief Justice Higgins [John Patrick Higgins] had been named to the chief justiceship by Governor Hurley [Charles F. Hurley], causing a vacancy in the seat in the old Eleventh Congressional District, in which they had his chief secretary, John Cotter, who was acting congressman at the time. Now, I think the choice was an excellent one. Later on he had to make another choice whether to run for governor or United States Senator, but that was determined then by Governor Dever [Paul A. Dever].

But I think it's interesting for you to know, Dave, that in the old congressional district they used to take in Chelsea, only one ward in Cambridge and in Somerville and part of old Ward Eight, but they did basically have Charlestown, East Boston, the North and West End, and I think it's interesting to know that the political roots of the Kennedys were very strong in this area. There seems to be some misunderstanding of their ties. Everyone knows about the late John F. Fitzgerald who was mayor, but he was also congressman from this particular district. But few people realize that the ambassador's dad [Patrick J. Kennedy] was a senator from East Boston. There were four men that practically controlled the Boston politics at that time: the ambassador's father; George Corbett [Joseph J. Corbett?] from Charlestown; Diamond Joe Timilty, who was Commissioner Timilty's [Joseph Timilty] father; and an Eddie Donovan [Edward Donovan]. So that they were well schooled and grounded in politics, and they had their roots in this particular area for many, many years and many, many generations.

Now the particular seat that Jack ran for had boasted of having some real colorful and outstanding political personalities. They had the grandson of a president of Harvard [Harvard University]: Eliot [Thomas H. Eliot] was a congressman from there; Governor Curley [James Michael Curley] represented that district; they had that very colorful figure, Keliher [John Austin Keliher], who was the sheriff here; they had Billy Murray [William Francis Murray], who was postmaster, a very brilliant and able lawyer; they had Douglass [John Joseph Douglass]; they had Peter Tague [Peter Francis Tague]. It's also interesting to note the liberality of this particular district because they also elected to Congress from that area Leopold Morse, who was a great Jewish philanthropist; and this area and this district boasted of many nationalities. Every racial group that you could think of was in this district: the Irish, the Italians, the Jews, Poles, Lithuanians, Armenians, Ukrainians, Chinese, Lebanese. Every one that you could think of was in this particular district. And it was considered a very rough, tough district from the point of view that you had the waterfront there; you had the longshoremen from Charlestown; you had the navy yard; you had factories; you had heavy industries. And, of course, in a university city itself, you had great intellects: the men from MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] and Harvard and other colleges. So it was really a tremendous cross-section of people;

and it was this formative period that developed the president into a tremendous student of politics, and the development that he received here was really tremendous.

FARRELL: With this background, then, and the former senator and the late president's decision to run for Congress, what type of a campaign did he wage in this cosmopolitan district? Just what did he do to win this congressional seat? This was during the summer of 1946.

MORRISSEY: This was just prior to '46. What happened then, as you know, Dave, the president then lived at the Hotel Bellevue with his grandfather, John F. Fitzgerald, and he later moved up the street to 122 Bowdoin Street, which became his permanent residence and his legal residence until the time he died. That's where he voted from, that was the place that he worked from. He was born, as you know, in Brookline, but he moved back into the West End to Bowdoin Street.

Now the campaign he had to wage there was this. It's hard to visualize one of the most popular presidents and perhaps one of the most outstanding personalities and one of the most colorful figures in American politics or in the world politics. At that time, he asked me where Scollay Square was from the Hotel Bellevue. He knew very few people. He was a very shy, unassuming young man, who had to work hard to become interested in politics. He was a scholar; he had a fine analytical mind; he had no burning desire to go in to be a politician or into the field of politics. He could have been a great lawyer or a great teacher. We brought him over to Maverick Square, East Boston, and I told his father that I would give him the acid test. There they had a group of rough young men that were hanging around Maverick Square, and I asked Jack to go over and introduce himself to that group and say that he was running for Congress. He walked over and said, "I'm Jack Kennedy and I'm running for Congress." And the first eight or nine said, with rather colorful language, "Well, who are you?" and, "What are you?" but they described it in language that perhaps we couldn't get over a tape recorder now, but he survived that.

Now when he had a fight in that particular field, he had John F. Cotter who was the acting congressman, who had done a great many favors for John Higgins who--the vacancy had occurred there. Then they had other candidates like Mike De Luca. They had Catherine Falvey who was then a captain in the WAC [Women Army Corps] who later became a colonel. Then he had Joe Lee [Joseph E. Lee] who was on the school committee, whose father was the father of the modern playgrounds that we have here, and who lived in the West End for many years. They had Mike Neville [Michael J. Neville], who had been very active in politics, who was a popular figure in Cambridge, who was mayor of Cambridge and

speaker of the house. And now we've included the whole city of Cambridge into this congressional district, so it made it very difficult. And with him he had fellows like Danny O'Brien [Daniel F. O'Brien]; he had Francis X. Rooney, who was a very popular educator from Somerville; and then you had City Councilor Joe Russo [Joseph Russo]; you had another Joe Russo [Joseph Russo] in the fight, and a fellow by the name of Robert D. Fruscio that came from the North End. Now what we did with Jack, at that time, was that we actually started by going out and meeting and seeing the people in every single ward and precinct.
 . .

FARRELL: Was that the birth of the tea parties?

MORRISSEY: No, the birth of the tea parties came later, but not at this particular time. Now the unusual thing here was, the primary that year was on June 18, 1946, the first time they had the primary there. John Cotter was very active. To give you a "for instance" of the type of work that was done, in the Knights of Columbus the Bunker Hill Council in Charlestown, I had been very active in the Knights at the time, so we had Jack admitted to all the degrees of the Knights and the night before the seventeenth is a big day in Charlestown and the feature speaker at Bunker Hill was Jack Kennedy and. . .

FARRELL: Tell us about his speech, why don't you.

MORRISSEY: Well, it was rather interesting. At that time we had no one around to write any speeches or do any of that work. I happened to get a quick paraphrase of Daniel Webster's oration given in 1850 at Bunker Hill, and after Jack got through he said, "Did it take you much to write that particular talk?" I said, "No, but Daniel Webster spent a lot of time down at Marshfield [Massachusetts]." I think it was from January to June. But it was a quick paraphrase, and then he knew that the language was not my language even though I had paraphrased it, but he knew it was the language of Webster. He was a very keen student of history.

But now what we had in going in--he had his old friend like John Droney [John J. Droney], who is now district attorney and who at that time had just got out of the navy. He had to fight, like Danny O'Brien, and all the entrenched politicians in the city of Cambridge, and they are almost as bad as we have over here in Charlestown, North End, West End and South End. They're pretty good politicians, and it was spearheaded, for instance, by Dan O'Brien who later became a very good friend of ours. When we went over and asked Danny for his support, Danny said to Jack, "You can be Mike Neville's office boy if you want to, but you certainly have no right to run for Congress."

In every area--it was then that we conceived of the idea--I made sure that we had a committee of every racial group. We worked hard on that. We worked hard in making sure that we saw every pastor of every church. We went to every labor union. We went to every post office, every police station, every fire station. We made a thorough canvass of the particular district. It was really a very difficult fight, it was a very hard fight, but I think that was the particular making or giving Jack a terrific insight into politics at the particular time.

If it's interesting to note the vote, then, was that Jack got 22,183 votes; John F. Cotter got 6,677 votes; Mike De Luca got 536 votes; Robert D. Fruscio got 298 votes; Catherine Falvey got 2,446 votes; Joe Lee got 1,848 votes; Mike Neville, to show the strength he had from Cambridge, got 11,341 votes; and Francis X. Rooney got 521 votes; City Councilor Joe Russo from the North End got 5,661 votes; and Joe Russo got 799 votes. Now that year we also had--just for the record, anyhow--you'd be interested to know, in '46--the election was held on November 5, 1946. We had a fellow by the name of Lester W. Bowen, who was very active in Republican politics in Somerville. His total vote was 26,007, most of the vote, of course, coming from Cambridge and Somerville where they had a large Republican population, and of course Jack received 69,093 votes. Also running, as you'll see, in all these contests, was a fellow by the name of Phil Geer, who represents the Prohibition party, and he received 1,036 votes. That's just so you have the record right there.

FARRELL: So in both of these fights, the primary in June of '46 and the runoff against the Republicans in the final election in November, the late president won both very handily?

MORRISSEY: Oh, very handily. And he showed great strength and he showed great aptitude and great knowledge. He always had a burning desire to understand the political situation, so that he never took anything for granted, and he always asked for a particular vote. He never hesitated to do that.

It is interesting to note, he was a tireless worker. In the whole period of time that we ran, I would say we never had any time off at all, as a matter of fact, except Christmas. We were always working. I don't think I had a vacation in the entire eighteen years that I was with the senator. Actually he would take time off to go to the Near East and the Far East to study and to do many things of that kind, but he always came back.

In the meantime--one of the most amazing things about Jack, Dave, and I think you remember it--he was always in and out of the New England Baptist Hospital. He had an old back injury. He suffered badly from malaria. Night after night I would put him

to bed, give him aspirins, give him hot water, stay with him all night. He wouldn't want a doctor. We always carried a hard mattress with us with a board. Many times he would sleep on the floor. We always had blankets and pillows where we'd sleep in the back of the car. But notwithstanding all of that pain and that suffering, I never heard him once complain about pain. Of course he would get irritable; of course he would get tired; but he would never make any complaint about pain.

Now as you remember, Jack was not an orator or a speaker, and it was during these formative periods that we seized upon the idea of question and answer. He'd get up, he'd speak for four or five minutes; then we'd always turn the meeting open to questions and answers. He had such a keen analytical mind that no matter what question or problem they would ask him, he could speak with some freedom. So later, as you know, when he became president, this apprenticeship or this background that he had during this tough, hard period was done as a result of a great deal of effort and work on his part where he developed a terrific technique.

FARRELL: Were there any noticeable changes in him in his campaign for reelection for a second term in two years as far as his oratory, as far as his tactics and campaign strategy were concerned?

MORRISSEY: Well, it's interesting to note, in that second campaign they had a primary that was held on September 14, 1948. There were many people that wanted to go into that campaign. They had City Councilor Kinsella [Michael Leo Knisella]; they had former City Councilor Coffey [James S. Coffey]; they had Senator Langone [Joseph A. Langone]; they had the Russos; they had Ralph Ginara; John I. Fitzgerald, and many others. But the congressman had done such a splendid job as a congressman--he handled himself so well that he had no opposition in the primary. What's more important than that, they had a very fine Republican by the name of Daniel Hoar, who felt so strongly about the president--or Jack at that time--that he felt that he deserved to run without any opposition. So both in the primary and the election in '48 he had no opposition whatsoever.

In the meantime he had been traveling; he had been speaking; we had been going through the state. The first thing that Jack wanted to be was secretary of state. He wanted to go to the Senate, but we were then--had to be determined what Governor Dever would do. We came in again. . . . Now that brings you up to 1950, to go over it, you know, very quickly. People in the Republican party, like the late Henry Cabot Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.] saw the senator coming along, and knew that he would perhaps be in opposition to him. So in the primary of 1950 there were many many people put in there who didn't amount to much, but just for the record that primary was held on September 19, 1950.

They had Frank Bevilacqua from the North End; they had a Phil J. Diehl; and they had a Charles Di Sessa; a Paul S. Martellucci; and an Andrew Zona. Just quickly and to pass over that, the senator got 38,322 votes in that fight; Frank Bevilacqua got 3,587; Phil Diehl got 437; Charles Di Sessa got 821; Paul S. Martellucci got 936; and Andrew Zona got 365. Now the election was held on November 4, 1950, as you remember, and that was the first time that Vincent Celeste [Vincent J. Celeste] came on. He had a big sound wagon with Lodge stickers and Lodge support, saying that Lodge was with him in the particular fight, and had his picture taken, as a matter of fact, with the distinguished senator and ambassador over there in East Boston. But notwithstanding that support, the senator won rather handily, 87,699, and Vincent Celeste got 18,302, and for the record they had a Lawrence Gilfedder who was for the Socialist Labor party; and a Mark R. Shaw, who was for the Prohibition party; and also a Martha E. Greer who got a sprinkling of votes.

Now the thing to remember, Dave, as you recall very clearly and very vividly, we were moving the congressman throughout the state very carefully. Then we started to conceive of the idea of making sure that we would get into the major racial groups within the commonwealth.

Now Cabot Lodge, in my judgment, was one of the finest men that the Republican party had. He had great charm; he was a great speaker--he could speak French fluently, and spoke Italian very well--so we had a very formidable opponent in Lodge. And as you also remember, he was the one that sponsored Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] who later ran, you know, for president, to run at this particular year.

But we didn't stop, day and night, for four and a half to five years with the exception of Christmas, in each one of the cities--there are fifty-nine cities. We were in the fifty-nine cities at least ten times; we hit every town in the commonwealth at least once or twice, so that we had canvassed this state wholly.

Now this is one time where fate played a part. We couldn't determine, or make an election, to run for the Senate. That was the office that Jack wanted to run for, and his dad felt that if he ever could defeat Lodge he would be the next president, which proved to be right. But Dever was then governor and he was going to run for re-election, and it was not until Dever decided or made up his mind that he would run for reelection for governor. As soon as he announced that, we went down to the Ritz [The Ritz-Carlton] and he had Judge Fox [J. John Fox], who is now the probate judge, Governor Dever, Jack and myself. Dever said he was going to run for reelection for governor. We immediately announced we were running for senator, and that showed that fate then stepped in and played an important part.

Another thing that I think showed later in the political life that taught Jack, I think, one of his most valuable lessons, when we were campaigning for the Senate--this was now the time. . . . Or for governor, whichever was to be available for us, depending as I told you on what Governor Dever did. This was the time, Dave, that this strong apprenticeship had been served by the congressman in three terms. This is the time that we brought about the teas. Ambassador Kennedy asked us to form ladies groups and committees. I got Polly Fitzgerald from Needham--that was the wife of Eddie Fitzgerald--and we set up a program of teas, and we later brought in, you know, Mrs. Kennedy [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] and all the girls, who campaigned very strongly. But the teas, we started it this way: we'd have a meeting; we first organized it so we'd have a meeting of the committee. We'd have pourers, receptionists, and hostesses. So just having the pourers, receptionists, and hostesses alone, we would have a very substantial crowd. If they were to bring one or two more, you'd have an overflowing crowd.

I remember when they had Cabell Phillips [Cabell B. H. Phillips] from the New York Times that came up to do a story in the Sunday Times, we brought him over to Cambridge. Lodge had a time in one of the nearby hotels. We were at the Commander. We had worked very hard on that, and we had about a little over six thousand people jamming into that particular hotel. And I remember playing it rather low and saying to Cabell, "We're disappointed a bit in the crowd." Of course we weren't--it was a tremendous crowd. They only had one hundred and fifty over at Lodge's time. And he said at the time, "Why, you couldn't get this many at a double-header at Braves Field."

But all through the state each of the girls was tremendous. Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] was unusually good; Pat [Patricia Kennedy Lawford] was extremely good; and of course everyone knows about their mother. She is one of the most lovable, finest, and not only beautiful, but. . . . A lot of people don't realize about the mother. She has one of the finest minds, I would say, of any woman in America. She has a great mind as well as great beauty, and she was a tremendous asset.

As you recall then, too, Dave, the president was always in intense pain. He went on with crutches; he'd have to drag himself; it was very painful for him to step up a curb even, or to go up one stair, but he would never quit. He had a great fight; he had great determination; he had great dedication; he was a tremendous competitor. And I could see without any question that he was destined even from the beginning to be great or to be president, because nothing would ever stop him.

It's a curious thing to know, Dave, that on three great issues--if I can throw it in parenthetically to you--that showed

the sterling character and quality of the late president. Three issues that came up to him. One that brought up. . . . This is relevant to the Lodge campaign, because the late publisher of the Boston Post tried to bring it in to get Curley to go on TV with an editorial endorsing Lodge in the campaign the night before. As you know, traditionally the Post had great influence amongst the Democrats in Boston, and if they could have coupled both of these together it may have made the difference in the fight, when you get to the final figures.

But Curley was incarcerated, and there was a petition for his pardon. Now the ground for his pardon was that he was a very sick man and he wouldn't live. The then congressman went to Clark [Tom C. Clark] who was then the attorney general of the United States, and asked to see his report. Now he came from an area where Curley was very popular, where the most popular thing to do would be to petition and to grant the pardon for Curley. That he didn't do.

Now he asked me my judgment on that particular case, and I pointed out that he represented Curley's old district and he could go along on the basis of sympathy and kindness, because many high people in the hierarchy and all that supported his petition, including the then majority leader, now speaker McCormack [John W. McCormack]. But he said to me, and I'll never forget it, he said, "Frank, if I don't honestly believe he's sick and I don't honestly believe that he should be pardoned on the basis of what he said, do you think I should do it?" I said, "No." He said, "It isn't worth being in Congress if I can't do what I feel." I said, "Well, Jack, I think that that's the greatest quality to have, when you feel you can do what you absolutely believe in, and those who are with you know that you're doing what you believe in, you can't go wrong." Now he made that particular decision, which should have worked against him in his congressional district and in the fight that later came on, but it did not.

And of course he had also that fight he took on with the American Legion, which I admired him so much for. The American Legion lobby on housing was going pretty strong. He said to me, "I'm going to take on the American Legion. What do you think?" I said, "Well, it's just like Joe Louis (who was then the world's champ) walking down the street and I got up and kicked him on the chin, I'd be gone." Then he said, "Well, I'm going to take them on." I had to admire him, because he took on the American Legion and he did a terrific job with their lobby.

Of course, the third one that showed his great qualities was the St. Lawrence Seaway, and particularly where it hit all the people on the waterfront. My father was on the waterfront for forty-five years, and it is interesting to note that Fox or the Post had said that they were going to lose all their jobs, and I

had to go over, and if it weren't for some very rugged fellows that were good friends of my dad, I may not have got out of the situation as I did. But it's a wonderful thing to know. Curley wanted to challenge Jack to a debate on the St. Lawrence Seaway. He didn't make it, but on the big meeting that came over there we had Hugh Thompson, the head of the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] that came out of Buffalo, New York, who knew it, and when Curley got up he couldn't even give where the St. Lawrence Seaway was coming, the depth, or what it would do. There were a lot of wonderful people from the Maritime Union [National Maritime Union of America] there. We carried it, so that broke John Fox's thing. But it showed this, that he had the courage to make a move, and it required courage, and he did that.

FARRELL: Do you think the St. Lawrence Seaway vote was a vote that was not popular, but was more in the national interest?

MORRISSEY: That's right. It was not a popular vote, Dave, you're correct there.

FARRELL: Well, as the campaign approached election day in November of 1952, and with Cabot Lodge spearheading the Eisenhower drive for the presidency, what were the late president's feelings about his chances of upsetting Lodge in a state which was still as Republican as it was Democratic--or at least with this popular Eisenhower at the helm, certainly Lodge himself was a probable favorite--how did the late president feel?

MORRISSEY: It was a hard and intense fight. He wasn't sure that he would win--at times he felt a bit discouraged. The situation, as you know Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] was running then against Eisenhower, and Lodge had taken Eisenhower. The he had that great controversy with Senator McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] from Wisconsin. The Stevenson group wanted the congressman to debate McCarthy in Massachusetts, and they felt that they had greater strength than the congressman had, and they would not take him in many times on the platform where they were featuring Stevenson. ✓

We had a pretty good pulse of the whole situation in Massachusetts. We knew that Stevenson was gone, and we knew that Stevenson didn't have a prayer, so therefore we allowed the Stevenson group to go along with their own particular way of presenting Stevenson. Eisenhower carried the state, and it was not up until the last. . . . As you remember, Dave, the final results didn't come until about five or six o'clock the following morning. It was nip and tuck all the way, because Eisenhower carried the state, you know, substantially, as you remember. And we didn't know. . . . We didn't sleep for three days or nights and we went right over, but the president, or the congressman ✓

then, wasn't sure that he was going to win, but that he did win, as you know. The vote being, Lodge got 1,141,247; the congressman got 1,211,984; and they had, for the record, if you want it: Thelma Ingersoll, Socialist Labor, got 4,683; and Mark Shaw, who was on the Prohibition party, got 2,508. So you can see that Congressman Kennedy did an extraordinary job in defeating Henry Cabot Lodge, the most popular Republican that the state had ever had. When you couple that with the tremendous popularity that Eisenhower had, because Eisenhower won the state very handily with Nixon [Richard M. Nixon], 1,282,325, with Adlai Stevenson, if you can remember--he's almost a forgotten man--Sparkman [John J. Sparkman] got just 1,083,525.

So that was the most extraordinary fight that he had, and Mr. Kennedy then said--that's the ambassador, who was a very able, fine man, who had a fine mind--"Jack will be president of the United States now, no doubt about it." This was the toughest fight he ever had or ever would have, and that was the Lodge fight, and he made it and he did go on, as you know, to be president.

FARRELL: Well, this election, then, to the United States Senate, the decision was made at least. . . .

MORRISSEY: That's right. He was going for president from then on. Because of that, he then got one more wonderful experience that gave him a terrific understanding and knowledge of the fundamentals of politics, so he'd never make the mistake. It was a cardinal rule--we were with Ambassador Kennedy, and with Jack, and the late Mayor Tague [Peter Tague] had given certain fundamentals in running for the United States Senate; one, never get mixed up in a primary; two, have nothing to do with a state committee at all that you're a member of. [inaudible] into the state committee fights at all. Now you remember Jack, in preparing himself then for president--because the thought was there, and we went out to the convention in Chicago where he almost made it--but he was working constantly and continuously for it. But we were rough. . . . That brought up. . . .

FARRELL: Judge, what was the next crucial battle the senator had?

MORRISSEY: Well, I think most historians and most people who write about his life overlook one very crucial battle that put everything on the line. We were up in early May in Pittsfield, 1956--not early May rather--it was really part of. . . . Yeah, early May. That was it. And I'll never forget, in what we thought was an off-the-record interview with Pete Miller [Lawrence K. Miller] and a very distinguished journalist by the name of George Michaelson that was there; and the meeting should have been off-the-record, or we understood it

would be off-the-record, but then the senator criticized very severely the then chairman of the Democratic State Committee, William Burke [William H. Burke] of Hatfield. As you know, the decision that came down from the [Massachusetts] Supreme Court when they had a terrible controversy with Carr [John B. Carr] and Gilgun [Edward P. Gilgun], and then Judge Blassberg [Samuel Blassberg] had retired, or resigned, in January of '56; Bill Burke had gone in with Ida Lyons [Ida R. Lyons], who was elected. I remember the committee then elected chairman and secretary. Carr and Gilgun brought it to the Supreme Court; the Supreme Court found in favor of Burke and Ida Lyons; and as a result of that the whole committee became chaos, and he didn't reflect the type of person in the state committee position that reflected the thinking of the Senate, and he made no bones about expressing that to both Pete Miller, the publisher of the Berkshire Eagle [Pittsfield Berkshire Eagle], and to Michaelson. And as you recall, we stepped outside, and we were in the general [inaudible] When we came back, the blazing headlines came about the criticism of Kennedy of the chairman, and, of the eighty people on that committee, it's a safe bet to say that we didn't even have five or six that were with us.

Now the present speaker of the house is a very strong friend of Bill Burke's. He was also a good friend of Truman's [Harry S. Truman] and Roosevelt's [Franklin D. Roosevelt]. He had done many favors. And the eighty people that he had that were on that committee, they were intimate friends of his. And as you remember, John Fox was going very strong with this political writer by the name of James Colbert, that brought every type and kind of pressure on that state committee to maintain and retain Bill Burke. We went in all over the State [inaudible]; climbed three flights of stairs to get to the wonderful ladies and gentlemen on that particular committee, to appeal to them to go, you know, for him. It was one of the hardest and toughest fights that Jack ever had.

Then, what happened, at the Bradford Hotel we had a caucus, before which we had forty-three or forty-four, we felt sure votes, which was sure. We thought it was sure anyhow. That was May 19, '56, at the Bradford. A very vigorous person, Ed McCormack [Edward J. McCormack], the congressman's brother, who used to go under the name of Knocko McCormack, he came in with a group of people. They expected some fireworks, but they just overpowered. . . . They had two special police officers at the door, knocked them on the floor, went right in, and took over the chair. And at that time Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] had come along to know Jack. He had come up to Boston to see what politics was like, and with that he fled from the Bradford with Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien], who had just come in, because of the excitement and the tactics they pulled in trying to take over the committee. I stayed with Knocko at the time, and they moved to have the Australian ballot. And with that,

Bill Burke was defeated; Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch] was named temporary chairman and Dick Donahue [Richard K. Donahue] was named temporary secretary, and later was made permanent chairman and permanent secretary. But I will say this for Knocko McCormack, as soon as the votes came in, he moved to make it unanimous for Pat Lynch. He went out and he congratulated Pat Lynch, and he congratulated the then senator; so while Knocko fought hard, he certainly was great in defeat, because he enthusiastically supported Pat Lynch, and Pat Lynch became a very good friend of both Knocko's and he was a good friend of the now speaker.

But in that fight valuable lessons were taught to the senator, that you can't make any mistake by inadvertence, or by an injudicious remark, or get involved in a fight that you can't win. We didn't have the votes then. It was the hardest fight that he ever had, harder than any congressional fight. It meant, as you know, going on throughout the nation, if he had lost that fight on the Democratic State Committee. Not that it had any great power, as you so well know, to control the votes within this state, but if he had lost it, it would have been a situation that could have been tough because they controlled the delegates then to the convention that was so important in a presidential election.

FARRELL: This then was a prestige victory from a national point of view, in his campaign, looking forward to. . . .

MORRISSEY: If he had lost that, it would have been rough. That was not only a prestige victory, but it taught him the fundamentals of politics, so that when he got in, he had mastered and understood the whole science and art of politics as well as any man that ever understood it in the history of government, and he proved it as events later showed when he became president.

Now we have the point that I think is also important. You had that fight, you know, for vice-president. The distinguished Garrett Byrne [Garrett H. Byrne] was out there with other wonderful men in that particular fight, and they had an open convention, and as everyone knows he lost the fight by a few votes. But if he had won that, again it would have been. . . . Fate always seemed to do the right thing for the senator. Whether you call it fate, or whether you call it luck, or what you call it, he seemed to be a man destined to be great in history as he was. Then we came down, as you know. Again, the man that ran against him for Congress--and incidentally, in that congressional fight he defeated Celeste in his own precinct in East Boston substantially. Then they came. . . . He was unopposed for the primary and, for the record, the Senate fight came on November 4, 1958, and the senator received 1,363,962

votes to Celeste's 488,318, which was a tremendous victory again because he defeated the Republican candidate by that much.

Jack, when he'd get tough with you, he always used to. . . . He had great love for Shakespeare [William Shakespeare]. He always would read Shakespeare's sonnets. One of his favorites was the Henry V, and he would always say when he'd get a little tired: "Remember Frankie, you were with me on Saint Crispian's day." And as you remember in Shakespeare's life of Henry V, it went something like this:

This day is called the feast of Crispian/ He that shall live this day, and comes safe home/ Will stand a tip-toe when this day is named/ And rouse him at the name of Crispian./ He that shall live this day, and see old age,/ Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors,/ And say 'Tomorrow is Saint Crispian.'

And so he'd go on, and then he would say, "What feats he did that day. . . ." And he went on:

This story shall the good man teach his son;/ And Crispin Crispian's shall ne'er go by,/ From this day to the ending of the world,/ But we in it shall be remembered/ We few, we happy few, we band of brothers./ For today he that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother. . . that fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

So Jack, when he would get a little tired, would say, "Frankie, remember you were with me on Saint Crispin's day."

He always had that terrific. . . . He'd throw in a little aside. He loved Lord Byron. He said the best story that he ever liked was Lord Byron's "Childe Harold." He was great, as you know, for reading biographies and histories; he was always reading. He had an excellent analytical mind. He was a hard worker. he understood human nature, and he had a terrific determination and dedication to master the art of politics. Of course, that brings us up, as you know, when he ran for the president of the United States, and everyone knows that story so well and I understand others are to tell you that.

Now I don't know whether with those few broad, quick strokes, Dave, if I've left anything out or if there is anything you feel you want to ask me about him, I will be very happy to chat.

Oh, by the way, what he did, at the very beginning, we were challenged always on our papers. We had at that time, in the Cotter fight, for instance, we had Owen Brock [Owen F. Brock] and Jerry Troy [Jerome P. Troy] that were technical. I, as you

remember, was given full power of attorney for Jack that I had from that time until the day he died, and so that we learned from the very beginning that everything had to be done procedurally correct; everything was done accurately, and done well so that nothing was ever left to chance. Everything was carefully worked out.

FARRELL: Judge, just to go back to that first congressional fight, I understand that you and your family were among the first to sign the president's papers--this was back in '46.

MORRISSEY: Oh, that's interesting. We lived on the same street with John Cotter, and I am one of twelve, so the first twelve names that appeared on any paper for the congressman were twelve Morrisseys and that sort of broke the heart of Cotter. And then, of course, when we put Jack on, as I told you before, on a night before banquet at Bunker Hill, that took the heart out of Cotter's whole campaign.

[END OF INTERVIEW]