

David L. Lawrence Oral History Interview – 1/26/1966
Administrative Information

Creator: David L. Lawrence

Interviewer: Charles T. Morrissey and Joseph E. O'Connor

Also Present: Walter Giese

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Biographical Note

Lawrence was governor of Pennsylvania (1958-1962) and chairman of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in Housing (1962-1966). In this interview, he discusses the 1956 and 1960 Democratic National Convention, the 1960 presidential campaign in Pennsylvania, and civil rights, among other issues.

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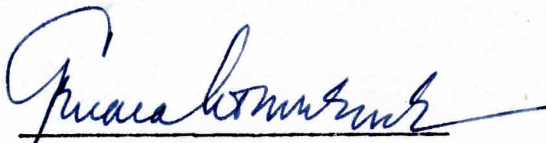
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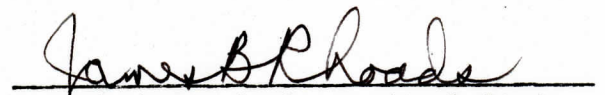
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Oral History Interview

with

David L. Lawrence

January 26, 1966
Executive Office Building
Washington D.C.

By Charles T. Morrissey and Joseph E. O'Connor
Also present: Walter Giese

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Let's start by my asking you when you first met John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy].

LAWRENCE: My recollection is I first met him not too long after he was elected to Congress. What year was that that he was elected?

MORRISSEY: Elected in '46, and came down here to serve January, 1947.

LAWRENCE: Yes. I think one of the first instances surrounded in my getting him to come to Pittsburgh to speak for the Young Democrats [College Young Democrats]. He was quite young at the time, of course, when he came to Congress and he was very much sought after by the Young Democratic organizations. That was one of the things that attracted me to him was his willingness back in that period to help out wherever he could. He was very generous to us in Pennsylvania. Was I chairman in '45?

GIESEY: No.

LAWRENCE: I gave up in '45.

GIESEY: Yes, you had been mayor, if I remember, Governor.

LAWRENCE: Yes, I was elected mayor in '45 and took office in '46. But I was always very closely associated with

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the state organization in the state and still am. We became very close in that respect.

MORRISSEY: Had you known his family previously?

LAWRENCE: I had met his father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] when he was down here in the Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] period. I was around in that period, too. He was around in various capacities. Of course I knew of him, and of course I knew of his grandfather, Fitzgerald [John Francis Fitzgerald], a way back. I was always interested as a youngster in baseball. My first recollection of Mayor Fitzgerald was when the Pirates [Pittsburgh Pirates] played Boston in the World Series. I think that was, oh, way, way back.

MORRISSEY: Was that the famous "miracle Braves" [Boston Braves] of 1914? No, that would be the Red Sox [Boston Red Sox]. Well, no, I can't remember what year that was either.

LAWRENCE: Well, anyway, he came to Pittsburgh with the ball team and he was a singer in those days. As I recall, Boston won it. They had a song that was popular at the time called "Tessie." They claimed that—the writers would say—that was one of the "hoodoes" to the Pirates, the singing of this "Tessie." He was a great fella to sing, a very colorful mayor.

But that was my knowledge of the older members of the family. Just meeting his father very casually. I'd just known that there was such a person here. I had no occasion of having any business or anything of that sort with him.

Then, of course, as the thing wended its way on, I had one or two funny incidents that I think might be worth repeating. I was always in a sort of complication where Kennedy was involved. I always admired him, but in 1956 in the spring—I was then mayor of Pittsburgh—the Knights of Columbus came to me along in April or May of that year and they were wanting to get in an early bid for Senator Kennedy to speak at their Columbus Day banquet on October 12. They asked me, would I try to get him? So, I picked up the phone and called him. He agreed right over the phone.

Well, that was the second campaign of Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson]. I was one of those who took part in the original draft in Chicago in '52. In the meantime, I had become very friendly and close with Stevenson. We were out in the primary fight. Jim Finnegan [James A. Finnegan] was helping to handle it from

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Pennsylvania and I was around in an advisory capacity. We were running out of money. He had several primary contests with Kefauver [Estes Kefauver]. Howard McGrath [J. Howard McGrath] was campaign manager and former senator of Rhode Island; he was campaign manager for Kefauver. I met him here one day and complained to him that they were broke—they were worse off than we were—they were out of money and we were very near out of money and it was a very foolish operation. We were going to beat Kefauver anyway.

We got together. Then I talked to Kefauver on the thing, too, and we got together on Kefauver withdrawing from the primary from then on with the understanding that I would get Kefauver, and our forces would get Kefauver, all the votes we could for vice president. That was in the summer before the convention.

When I arrived in Chicago for the convention, John F. Kennedy was a candidate for vice president and David Lawrence pledged his word to be with Kefauver. So you can see the position I was with the Pennsylvania delegation. It was pretty much the Pennsylvania delegation that deprived him of the nomination—that's right up to it.

A lot of my people couldn't understand why the devil I was for Kefauver and against a fellow like Kennedy. It was very, very embarrassing but I had to keep my word. It was a question of keeping my word.

Well, the sequel of this came on October 12 when the Knights of Columbus banquet came on. The Knights of Columbus came to me a few days before and said, "Now, you've gotten Senator Kennedy to come and we'd like you to come to the banquet and introduce him." So I got to the banquet and introduced him and did so with very high compliments, what a very wonderful young man he was, what a great thing it was that some of the rest of us were passing from the scene in a few years and men like that were coming on, and it was certainly a great asset to the country that we did have highly qualified young men like himself, devoting himself to the government and all that sort of thing. I pulled a terrific boner. I was telling about his grandfather and what a great man he was, too, as mayor of Boston and so forth and so on. I wound up with a peroration and said, "I now give you the junior senator from Massachusetts, Mr. John F. Fitzgerald." [Laughter] Of course that caused a great laugh.

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But he got up, and then while I... I picked it up right away—he had stood up—and I put my arm around his shoulder and said something to the effect that I knew he'd be as great a man as his grandfather, and so forth and so on. But then he got up and he said the cutest thing. He got a big ovation, of course. Most of these men were mostly Irish and, well, they were practically all Catholic. He got up and he thanked me very much for what I said and he turned over to me and he said, "Gee, Mayor, I wished you'd have said that out in Chicago." [Laughter]

Of course all these "micks" were mad at me for not being for him, you know, and they gave me the raspberries. They applauded and applauded. I thought they'd never quit. [Laughter] That's one of the interesting things.

Then, of course, I would meet up with him every once in a while. The next sort of episode came when the campaign had come on. In the meantime, I had been elected governor of Pennsylvania. I was in another situation because I was still friendly with Stevenson and I was firmly of the conviction that a Catholic couldn't be elected president. I had run in Pennsylvania and I was the first Catholic to be elected there. I just skimmed through with a 76,000 majority. I was fearful that we would lose Pennsylvania and that any chance I would have as governor of getting a majority in both houses of the General Assembly would go skimming if Kennedy was the head of the ticket.

My calculations were right to a degree. We did lose the rural Democratic districts overwhelmingly and we lost eight of our members. We had control of the House in the first part of my administration but the Republicans had the Senate. We did lose eight of these members in counties like Berks, York, Pennsylvania Dutch counties.

But where I miscalculated on them, to my great surprise and great pleasure, we picked up ten Republican districts in some of the areas. Like we elected a member from Montgomery County, that was the Norristown district that Kennedy swept and swept a member in with him. So I was wrong on that, but nevertheless I was for Stevenson, trying to get delegates for him and we had a good many in Pennsylvania.

I discovered as it wended its way on, that Stevenson wasn't catching on at all. When the primaries came on in Wisconsin and in West Virginia and Kennedy won both of those—I knew

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not too much about Wisconsin, but I did know West Virginia very intimately—knowing the religious complexion there, which was worse from a Catholic standpoint than in Pennsylvania, that shook my thinking a bit about whether or not he might win. I was on my way back from Israel the day after the West Virginia primary and The Associated Press contacted me at the airport for a statement on the West Virginia primary. When they told me he had carried it by 100,000, well, I just couldn't believe it; but he did. Then, at our primaries in Pennsylvania, how many votes had he won, do you remember?

GIESEY: He got over 100,000, but I forget what....

LAWRENCE: Oh, several hundred thousand or 198,000 or something. People wrote his name on the ballot. We have a place on the ballot in Pennsylvania where you can put a name on and people can vote on it. A certain number of counties got a certain number of signers. There was nobody on the ballot. I mean he didn't file it there. I think it was basically out of respect for me and probably also in the hope that eventually I would be on his team.

GIESEY: He had 183,000.

LAWRENCE: 183,000 people just went in and wrote his name in without stickers or any organized effort. Well, all of those things convinced me that it was just hopeless for Stevenson and very hopeful for Kennedy. A great many of my best friends in the state—political followers—were supporting him. But out of

respect for me, friendship for me more or less, they didn't announce it; they held off. In a lot of the rural areas there were fellows that were friends of mine that were for Stevenson, and so forth.

As I got to the convention, which was the Friday before the convention opened, we went out and I had a meeting. Well, I'm a little ahead of my story. We've had a long rule in Pennsylvania on national conventions. After the primaries, and with the reorganization of the state committee, we call a meeting of the delegates at Harrisburg, the state capitol. There they decide what they're going to do.

Well, at the meeting of the delegates they decided they were going to make no decision as to candidates. We recessed the caucus to the convention city. Normally we met on the Sunday

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night before the convention, but we agreed to meet Monday morning in this instance. I got in there on Friday night and I had a meeting with the candidate Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] on Saturday afternoon. At that meeting, I told them what the eventuality was going to be. The caucus was to meet on Monday and we would have all but very few of the delegates for him. But I was not making any statements until the caucus; I wanted to keep my word with the delegation until Monday. But that was the situation.

There was an incident there. I told him right before he came to see me that I had a meeting in my suite of rooms in the Biltmore [Biltmore Hotel]. Mine was right above his, wasn't it, Walter?

GIESEY: I believe so, yes, sir.

LAWRENCE: I was on the tenth, I think, and he was on the eighth or ninth. I might have been two below. But anyhow, he and Bobby came up. The newsmen had me covered all day long and somehow or other they were watching the elevators, and they came up the steps. They didn't know they were there.

But anyhow, prior to their coming, I had a meeting of: Mayor Wagner [Robert Ferdinand Wagner, Jr.], Mike Prendergast [Michael H. Prendergast] and Carmine DeSapio [Carmine G. DeSapio] of New York; Dick Daley [Richard J. Daley], the mayor of Chicago; Jack Arvey [Jacob M. Arvey], the national committeeman; Dave Wilentz [David T. Wilentz] and John Kenny [John V. Kenny], two of the leaders from New Jersey; John Bailey [John Moran Bailey], who was the leader from Connecticut; Bill Coleman [William L. Coleman], who was the leader from Ohio; and...

GIESEY: Bill Green [William J. Green, Jr.]?

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes, pardon me. Bill Green, Congressman Green was there and he was very friendly to Kennedy; Matt McCloskey [Matthew H. McCloskey, Jr.]; the late Jim Clark [James P. Clark]. Jim Clark and Green are both dead. Jim Clark was the treasurer of City Committee of Philadelphia and a powerful leader there. He sort of ran the headquarters for Green. Green spent a great deal of time here in Congress.

I took up with them the matter of the vice presidency; what we would do, who would be able to help Kennedy the most? There was just a unanimous, instant agreement among all these powerful political figures on Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. They all

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agreed that Johnson was the only one that would bring any votes to Kennedy that he didn't already have. We had a lot of other fellows that wanted to be vice president. From their states, Kennedy would have just as many votes as they could get but we felt that Johnson, being from the South, would hold Texas in line, and probably would hold some of the other states and border states for him. So I imparted that information to him and Bobby that afternoon, that that was the way we felt about the thing in the hope that they could give it very serious consideration.

Well, in the next phase—no, maybe I'm a little bit ahead. Oh yes I might as well tell you this incident. Senator Kennedy's father wanted to see me during the previous winter. Of course he winters at Palm Beach and so does Matt McCloskey. Through Matt he tried to make the contacts to get me to come down there, but I had the legislature in session and we had a tight situation in the legislature, just had to watch it all the time. We had the House and the Republicans had the Senate, so I couldn't go down. But anyway he became set on coming up. The last thing I wanted was for Stevenson or any of them to think that I was dealing around with any of the candidates.

Joe Alsop [Joseph W. Alsop] had come into Harrisburg and he wrote a very unsatisfactory story about what my position was. He made up his mind that I was—basically I was for Symington [Stuart Symington, II]. How he arrived there, I don't know, but he published this story. After this long interview, he was convinced that Lawrence was for Symington.

Then Mr. Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] came and we—he came with McCloskey into Harrisburg—met in the Penn Harris Hotel and nobody was there. The papers never discovered it. I went down there and had lunch with him instead of at the Mansion [Governor's Mansion] because the mansion would have been covered by newspapermen if they'd ever found out. Of course he couldn't understand why I wasn't for his boy, Jack. We had a very interesting lunch. He was very vigorous, and so on and so forth—very friendly but very vigorous.

This here part you'd probably have to be very discreet with, but there was a funny incident that impressed me anyhow. I said to him, "Mr. Kennedy, I'd love to be for your boy. I'd love to see him president of the United States, but I don't think he can win. I don't think any Catholic can win." I outlined some of my problems in Pennsylvania; that I barely skimmed

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through with 76,000 majority for governor. I was the first Catholic in the history of the state to be elected and that I was convinced that if the election was two more weeks off, I'd have gotten beaten, and so on.

He said, “You, you talk like a fellow from New York—a new president of a bank that I deal with. He was shooting his mouth off about, ‘Who’s this young Kennedy think he is? What right’s he got to be president of the United States?’”

So he said, “The vice president of the bank that I do a lot of business with, came to me one day and he said, ‘I’d like to bring our new president over, Mr. Kennedy, to see you.’ And he said, ‘Alright, bring him over, I’d like to see him’. So he brings the guy over and the old fella said to him, ‘I’ve been anxious to see you. I understand you were shootin’ your mouth off comin’ in on a commuter train in the morning about you spending all your time talking telling people why my Jack shouldn’t be president. Why the hell hasn’t he got as much right to be president as anybody else?’ So the guy just tried to defend himself the best he could and he said, ‘Well, I have a right to have my opinion all right.’”

So he looked across the table at me and he said, “I was so goddamn mad at that fella.” He said, “I had nine million dollars in that bank and I felt like I’d pull out of that bank that day.” [Laughter] Nine million dollars.

Well anyhow, we parted good friends and so forth. Then, of course, we got into the convention and it went off as we anticipated and we felt sure it would. Let’s see, he was nominated on Wednesday night, I recall. I think it was Thursday morning he called me up and he said to me, “Governor, do you feel the same way you felt Saturday about the vice presidency?” And I said, “I feel stronger than ever.” No, no, he called me up and asked me to come down to his room. That was it. So I got down there and there were a lot of politicians around—Mike DiSalle [Michael V. DiSalle] and a number of fellows, I remember, were there. We went into the bathroom for there was nowhere where you could talk. That’s where he said to me, “Do you fell the same way you felt Saturday about the vice presidency?” And I said, “I feel stronger than ever. I think that’s one way you’d be sure to win if Johnson could hold these people.” Well, he said, “We’re having a lot of problems with Michigan and some of these other states.” I think that Bobby was friendly to somebody in the Far West. He thought we ought to go to the Far West for him.

MORRISSEY: Was that Henry Jackson [Henry M. Jackson]?

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LAWRENCE: I think that’s right. I think he was friendly to Jackson, but I stressed as strongly as I could the Johnson thing. So then I said to him in this conference on Thursday morning that I felt there wasn’t any question about him. And he said, “I’m going down to see that gentleman now. I just wanted to get your views.” And he says, “Do you think these other fellows think the same way?” I said, “There’s no question about it.”

The next thing was later that day—I guess I forget what time it was when he got back—he called me up again and he said, “Well, I’ve seen that gentleman and he’s agreed to run and we want you to make the nominating speech.” Of course then I did that and the ticket went through.

Next, I campaigned with him through Pennsylvania every time he came in. Of course I could see the situation there. He drew tremendous crowds. We first had him at a \$100 dinner.

GIESEY: The Harrisburg.

LAWRENCE: At the Harrisburg, at the farm show. We packed them in and raised a lot of money. Then I was always fearful of the religious situation in the Pennsylvania Dutch area so I thought I might as well hit it hard right off the bat. I arranged for him to speak in Lebanon, which is about 30 miles out of Harrisburg and Lancaster, that's the capital of the county seat of Lancaster County, and Reading which is the county seat in Berks County, and York. They were four typical dyed-in-the-wool Pennsylvania Dutch Protestant counties, largely Lutheran and—What that?—E.U.B.?

GIESEY: E.U.B., United Brethren [Evangelical United Brethren].

LAWRENCE: United Brethren church dominated it. They were very religious people and they are very very wonderful people—good citizens, clean, decent, honest people.

Well, when I got to Lebanon that morning—I lived out in the country about 20 miles east of Harrisburg but in the direction of Lebanon. So instead of going in town to bring him out, I went over to Lebanon. When I got there the crowds were just.... Well I couldn't believe it was Lebanon, Pennsylvania.

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From wall to wall, building line to building line, the people were just packed. From there we went to Lancaster and there some woman got crushed in the crowd. The same thing was repeated in Reading. I'd been in Reading before '48 with Truman [Harry S. Truman] and the crowd far outdrew Truman, what he had there. Then in York the same thing, although our situation in York—we went to the York fair—was a different type. These others were in the public squares of these towns.

Well, I came out of those places thinking, "My God, we're going to carry Pennsylvania big with these people in this fashion." I mention this because of what the ultimate results were. I don't know offhand the figures in Lancaster and those places, but Lancaster and Lebanon are Republican counties. See, that's why I wanted that in, too. Two Republican counties and two Democratic counties. Berks and York are two Democratic counties. After all that demonstration and hoopla, Reading—what was that registration, 34,000?

GIESEY: Out of 33,000....

LAWRENCE: We had a 33,000 Democratic majority on registrations. See, they enrolled in Pennsylvania for the primaries. Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] carried that county by 11,000.

MORRISSEY: What's your explanation to that?

LAWRENCE: Religion. The same thing in York County. We had a 17,000 Democratic majority and Nixon carried it by 16,000. That repeated through all of those areas. Well, of course what happened was, in Philadelphia—I think in '36 Roosevelt got two-hundred-and-some-thousand—we got 330,000-and-some majority in Philadelphia. Out in Allegheny [Allegheny County] it was the same way, and then in hard coal counties of Luzerne and Lackawanna we got 63,000 from those two counties combined—thirty in one, and thirty-three in the other. So what we did was to make it up in those areas where there were many Catholics, and in industrial areas where there were working people and where we had a terrific appeal.

But the strange thing was, in those areas, and same thing in Montgomery County which is a peripheral county like Westchester [Westchester County] in New York City, and so on, just magnificent crowds of people would come out to see him. Well,

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they just wanted to look at him, I guess, and then voted against him.

But he, oh, he was a charming person. I was always very fond of him. We had him up in the hard coal counties. We took him from Wilkes-Barre to up near Pittston—an 18 mile run—to Scranton. We had him up there during the day. I remember we were stalled from just an hour in Pittston. The people were from building line to building line and wouldn't let the car move. They just stood there and cheered him for an hour and idolized and adored him.

That night was one of the eventful nights. The Delaware County people had set up a banquet and the only place they could get.... What they had to do, rather, was they got a tent and this was in October. They had a tent and put it out on the golf course and they heated it with rollers, you know. Well, this delay in Scranton, you see we were going to get out of there on a plane and get down to Philadelphia. When we got down to Scranton we were waylaid. Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] came to me and he said, "We should do something to try to cancel that Philadelphia meeting." And he said, "I can't convince him." Bill Green had been hauled into it down there and Bill was screaming. And he said, "We should talk to him."

So I finally got to green on the phone and told him what we were up against and I said, "This man is just played out. My God, we've been going since morning and it's just inhuman to do this."

"Oh," he said, "these people they've paid \$100 a plate out here in the tent." And he said, "We'll be here no matter what time you come."

Finally I went back and I said to O'Donnell and to the Senator, "There's nothing to do but go, no matter what time it is." So we agreed and we got in the plane and down we went. When we got out there it was about half-past one in the morning out in this place and raining pitchforks. Oh, it was terrible the place was so soggy. There were cars stuck in there for a couple of days. They couldn't get off the golf course.

But anyhow, when we got there one of the most interesting and funny scenes I think in my whole political

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career was.... Bill Green was there and Joe Clark [Joseph S. Clark] and they despised each other. But these people had been there from seven-thirty—they had cocktails and so on—until one-thirty in the morning. Well, you can just figure what shape they were in. They had a singer, but they were singing all the songs. Here was this Joe Clark, who's about a sixth-generation blue blood Main Line Philadelphian out here and Billy Green the leader of the Democratic City Committee. The two were up there leading these people in these songs—the most terrible sight you ever saw in your life. [Laughter] Finally we got around to get Kennedy to speak.

Well, they were in no shape to hear Kennedy but they were so anxious to cheer, you know. He'd just get about, "Now ladies and gentlemen, I'm happy to be...." Rooooooooooooooooo, they'd yell. [Laughter] Then he'd get another half a sentence down. Finally he just turned around to me and said, "Oh, we just can't go on with this."

Finally, a thought hit him that quick. He said, "Well now, I see you people are having a great time and I'm the last fellow in the world to be a party pooper—to do anything that would upset a party of this kind. We've got a hard schedule the Governor's arranged for tomorrow; we're going to get up early in the morning. Tell you what we'll do. We'll go ahead and you people go on with your party and we'll come back tomorrow." That was the only way we got out of the place. They just wanted to see him and to cheer him and that was really one funny incident. I don't know the importance of that or not, but my memory starts to move up when I think of those many funny incidents.

Well, then of course we went on in Pennsylvania and did the job, and I wound up in the legislature by getting control. In other words, I picked up ten Republicans and lost eight Democrats which gave us a net gain of two. It gave us a majority there. On the Senate side—we elect half the legislature each two years; they go for four year-terms—we split it right down the middle. We had 25 and they had 25. On tie votes the Pennsylvania lieutenant governor gets the deciding vote and we had the lieutenant governor. So it worked out pretty good for us for the final two years of my administration.

I guess the next episode, I was about to leave Harrisburg and go back to Pittsburgh. I was still chairman

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of the Urban Redevelopment Authority there which I organized twenty years ago or eighteen years ago. He wrote me a letter on January 2, asking me if I'd take over this job here as chairman of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in Housing. He mailed it from Palm Beach and he asked me to come to see him on the thing. So I came down. He was very concerned about the whole thing. He had issued this order on November 20, wasn't it, Walter?

GIESEY: Yes, sir.

LAWRENCE: November 20. He hadn't filled it and he was very much concerned about how he was going to set this up. The thing that concerned him then and still concerned the administration [Johnson administration] was the question of how broad the order would be. A great many people around him, the

advisors, wanted him to make a very broad order which would include the banks and savings and loan associations. There were two schools of thought. He finally decided on not including those so that's been a question ever since—the extension of the order.

President Johnson has just recently—I mean in his last message to the Congress—indicated that he was going to ask the Congress to pass legislation to provide for this rather than his extending the executive order.

So he urged me to take the job. I was somewhat undecided about what I was going to do, and my family and associates in Pittsburgh wanted me to go back, but apparently he had considerable trouble getting anyone to take on this job. The fact that as the mayor of Pittsburgh I had signed an ordinance on FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Committee] and on housing and also as governor I had signed forward-looking civil rights legislation. He urged me to take the place because he figured the Negro people would have confidence in me. In addition to that, I had a certain standing in the Democratic Party that would be helpful with some of the southern senators and so forth. So it was on that basis that I came here and am still here. I think that's about what I...

GIESEY: Well, I think there are some other things. I think those were the highlights, Governor, but I think we can go back. After the election, you recall, you came down to visit the president-elect at his home over in Georgetown. I don't recall precisely what that was for.

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I suspect maybe that was....

LAWRENCE: Yes, I was there twice. One of them was to urge Matt McCloskey's appointment as ambassador to Ireland, and the other, John Rice [John S. Rice] as ambassador to the Netherlands, both of which he did eventually name.

GIESEY: I remember one of the times he was making up the cabinet, as I recall, and he asked you what you thought of Bobby for attorney general.

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes. That day, too, he asked me about what I had thought of his naming Bobby as attorney general. I told him if he felt that if he wanted to do that, he ought to do it because I had always had a policy that I had followed and advised people I helped to elect to office. There were two positions in every man's administration that ought to be his men and no one else's. One was his lawyer and the other his secretary. They were there in the intimate recesses of the workings of whatever he was doing. They ought just be part of his conscience and his thinking and direction all the time. If he felt he would have that in Bobby more than anyone else, I thought that was the thing to do, which he eventually did.

MORRISSEY: Was there ever any question about the McCloskey and Rice appointments? Were there other competitors for those jobs?

LAWRENCE: Well, there may have been. I didn't know about it. But there was practically no resistance to it. He was very fond of Matt McCloskey particularly because Matt was chairman of the finance committee or treasurer, I forget which. He was very fond of him and apparently very happy to name him and the same way with Rice. He didn't know Rice quite as well. Rice was our state chairman at the time—he's back now, state chairman again. We had no applicants in for any of the other—like cabinet or anything.

GIESEY: Didn't the President name someone else to Ireland first, though? Didn't he have some kind of commitment to a friend of the family? He asked him originally and then appointed Matt.

LAWRENCE: Yes, I think for a short time.

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GIESEY: I think so, yes.

LAWRENCE: That's right.

GIESEY: Someone perhaps from Florida, I believe.

LAWRENCE: Yes. Some fellow from down there and I forget his name. That's right. That was cut short.

MORRISSEY: One of the things we did before coming over today was to go through the White House appointment books and find out the occasions when you were in to see John Kennedy. That's what this is. I was wondering if you could run your eyes down here. Those give the dates, the time you were there, and this is any additional explanatory material on the index cards in the index for these White House appointment books. If any of those spark any recollections of why you were there and what you were talking about, we'd be glad to get that on the record.

GIESEY: Well, I know what this one was—one of the unimportant ones. It had to do, Governor, with the tax-exempt bonds, municipal bonds. I think that's the perennial thing you go to see every president about. They're always afraid they're going to start taxing, taking the exemption off the bonds.

LAWRENCE: Yes, when they start taking the exemption off the bond, we're in a bad way. That's when winners are all officials.

MORRISSEY: What's the date of that one, July 31?

LAWRENCE: July 31. Briley [Beverly Briley], the county commissioner, they set up this meeting, I guess the conference of mayors. That's probably why Daley and I were there. Just lunch you know, off the record.

MORRISSEY: Why were you involved in the Woodrow Wilson typewriter presentation?

LAWRENCE: Well, I don't get that at all.

GIESEY: I wonder if there isn't another David Lawrence.

LAWRENCE: Oh yes. That could be David Lawrence the writer.

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MORRISSEY: I bet it is the columnist because he had the association with Woodrow Wilson.

LAWRENCE: With Woodrow Wilson. That's right.

O'CONNOR: That's in with your cards of presidential appointments.

GIESEY: He's in Sorensen's [Theodore C. Sorensen] index and Schlesinger's [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] index too.

LAWRENCE: On one of those books, too, he's got me in with that guy.

MORRISSEY: I won't ask you what you think of that mix-up.

GIESEY: I wonder if there were some others....

LAWRENCE: I've had a lot of trouble with that guy. I've known him since the Wilson days and I've always considered him a rat. Woodrow Wilson was a good friend of his. He went to Princeton, you know, and when Wilson came here, he was working for the *New York Post* at that time. The story was that Wilson favored him here and there and would do anything to help him. He was one of the first to turn against Wilson very violently. Then of course he got in with a lot of rich fellows and started that paper and he became terribly reactionary. He's to the right of Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater], far to the right. He was just terrible.

I've had a lot of trouble with him over the years. The names get mixed. For instance, I always stayed at The Mayflower until I came down here with this job, and he lived there. And our mail would get mixed up. Well, I decided when I came down here that I would move out to the Sheraton [Sheraton-Park Hotel and Motor Inn] over here. Too many people would get at you.

So I'm out here not ten days and I meet him in the hall and I say, "What are you doing out here, Dave?" And he said, "I decided to move out here." Within ten days he had moved out there. Ooh. I avoid him and I don't read his column. I get mad when I read it so it helps my blood pressure not to. [Laughter]

GIESEY: I could help out on a couple, not in chronology, Governor, but I suspect that June 26 meeting....

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LAWRENCE: That February 15, '62 meeting must have been a doozy with Joe Clark for fifty minutes. That was on jobs or something...

GIESEY: Well, I suspect either that one or—but I suspect the June 26 one. Now one of those would probably have to do with the Pennsylvania situation. Might that have been the February 15 one on Dilworth [Richardson K. Dilworth]? I suspect it was.

LAWRENCE: That could very well have been about the state. Yes.

GIESEY: I would think that's it. February 15 was to get the President to talk to Bill Green to get him to go along with Dilworth for governor.

LAWRENCE: Yes.

MORRISSEY: Was that an especially difficult task?

LAWRENCE: Yes. Bill Green didn't want to be for Dilworth for governor. As it eventually turned out, Bill was right and we were wrong because we took a terrible lacing. But the President thought well of Dilworth. He urged me to be for Dilworth, but he didn't need to do much urging because I thought so, too.

In fact, when I ran Dick Dilworth was a candidate then. Green blocked it and they agreed on me as a compromise. Dilworth should have been the candidate then and probably would have won. But we had a very bad set of circumstances in '62 and he got a terrible licking, just a terrible licking.

MORRISSEY: Just out of curiosity, do you ever recall John Kennedy commenting on William Scranton [William W. Scranton] as a possible opponent in a future presidential race?

LAWRENCE: No.

MORRISSEY: You don't.

LAWRENCE: No. One of the last days I talked to him.... That's something I might

tell or go over. In the Dilworth campaign he came up and campaigned. In the daytime we went out to Washington County and Fayette

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and some of those counties. And riding along that day he was very much concerned about the future because the civil rights thing had cracked wide open and all, and he figured we were going to lose the southern states. We would have to build, and he was naturally picking up the pessimism around the Dilworth campaign. We were going to lose the statehouse at Harrisburg, and that would have an effect on the '64 election. He was very, very much concerned about that.

MORRISSEY: I recall a trip you made to Philadelphia when Mayor Tate [James H.J. Tate] was campaigning and that was the time that “backlash” first came into the vocabulary. Do you recall him ever commenting about backlash?

LAWRENCE: Yes, I was with him that night. He was up there at Tate's election, and coming back on the plane he told one of the best stories I've heard on this housing. I've got to be careful what words I use. We were sitting there and they had some hors d'oeuvres, beer and so on. He said to me, “Governor, do you remember the old knock-knock gags? ‘Knock-knock, who's there?’” And I said, “yes.” He said, “I've got one for your department.” And I said, “Yes?” He said, “Are you ready?” I said, “Go ahead.” He says, “Knock, knock.” And I said, “Who's there?” And he says, “Iza.” And I say, “Iza who?” He says, “I's ya next door neighbah!” [Laughter] That was a good story. “I's your next door neighbor.” I can hear him say it.

I think that was the last night I was really with him because he....

GIESEY: Well, were you with him, Governor, before you went to Dallas when you were over there, or were you just with Kenny? You remember you were over there? It seems to me you must have seen him. When was Wilson [James Harold Wilson] here? Was that at that time?

LAWRENCE: Oh, no. The day before he went to Dallas I was over there to see Kenny, I think it was, or somebody in the office. Oh no, not him. He came out—the last contact I had with him—to wave hi or something like that. He came out the door into Kenny's office. I remember sitting there that day a thing happened.

GIESEY: This is what I was talking about.

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LAWRENCE: Yes. A thing happened that made me shiver after. There were some Secret Service fellows there and apparently one of them—or

somebody sitting by Kenny's desk, a Texan—and this Secret Service man was on the phone and the Texan said something to him about the message he got. The message apparently was something about Mrs. Connally [Idanell Brill Connally], where she was going to sit in the car down there. In other words, the way they were setting it up, I think they were trying to get the President, Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] and Connally [John B. Connally, Jr.] in the back. And Mrs. Connally would sit up with the driver. She objected to it and they had to change it back. That might have changed the whole seating arrangement in the back of that car.

MORRISSEY: That's something I had never heard before.

LAWRENCE: Well, I don't think many people knew it except those men that were there.

GIESEY: Someone was complaining about her, Mrs. Connally. Some rather unfavorable....

LAWRENCE: There was some comment. This one guy that had answered the phone, he says, "You Texans," I remember him saying that, "You can have Texans." Yes. Yes.

GIESEY: I'm looking through this schedule. I don't think it's going to tell us very much.

LAWRENCE: It was September, '62 that he spoke up there on Independence Day. I remember that very well. That thing there, you know. We had this.... What was it? The twenty-fifth?

GIESEY: It was the conference of governors. You mean the Independence Day thing?

LAWRENCE: Yes. We had the conference of governors in Pennsylvania. I got him to come up to this on the fourth of July when the family naturally wanted him to be at Hyannis Port. But he flew up and went through the thing.

GIESEY: Very reluctantly.

LAWRENCE: Very reluctantly, yes. I imagine he was probably getting the devil at home.

Yes, this was October 12 and 13. That's when I was telling you about him out in the campaign tour in Pennsylvania. That's when he was worrying about the next move.

GIESEY: Well, that October 24 meeting you have on there, for whatever it's worth, in '61, according to the schedule I have, he couldn't have done that. It might be the other Dave Lawrence. October 24, '61, now you were in Washington in the afternoon.

LAWRENCE: Was I?

GIESEY: But you attended a funeral for Secretary Davlin [William R. Davlin] in Harrisburg that morning.

LAWRENCE: Yes.

GIESEY: Then you were to be at the tourist promotion luncheon. Now it may be that you cancelled your tourist promotion luncheon and flew right down. But you weren't to take off...

LAWRENCE: I was in Washington?

GIESEY: You were in Washington, according to this schedule, in the afternoon. You left Harrisburg at 3:30, but maybe this was changed. I don't know. I don't know what that would have been.

LAWRENCE: I was there then again the next day, 10:07 in the morning... What the hell was that committee?

GIESEY: You see, this would have been a local election year. It wouldn't have been anything involving the election, I don't think.

LAWRENCE: No.

MORRISSEY: Was there anything he proposed to do about either backlash or civil rights?

LAWRENCE: No, but I could see what was running in his mind. I don't want to use the expression, but he thought he was going to kiss the southern states goodbye as far as he was concerned. He had to make all the stronger drive in the northern states, and of course, I can remember giving him my opinion. I thought there was no question that

that's what would happen. He'd be so much stronger now that the first brush of voting for a Catholic was out of the way. There wouldn't be the same howl that would go up the second time out, but he'd be caught in popular fancy of people. He could definitely corral the Negro vote, won it by his sincerity and what he was doing in pushing these laws and the Meredith [James Howard Meredith] case and all this stuff.

MORRISSEY: During the campaign against Nixon he had emphasized that Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] with the stroke of the pen could end discrimination on housing. Did this come back to haunt you?

LAWRENCE: Oh, God, it's haunted us something awful. Yes, whoever got him to say that—of course they hit him with it constantly. And, of course, it's been hitting us here since he passed away and was president. And that's what we're up against now. Of course he's going to put it through the legislative route. They're still at it. I heard just yesterday from—what's that....

GIESEY: National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing.

LAWRENCE: Yes. They're coming down to see me about it. They wrote a letter to the President and he sent it over here.

MORRISSEY: When Kennedy was campaigning in Pennsylvania in 1960, do you recall how he thought he was going to do in that state?

LAWRENCE: In Pennsylvania? Well, we were very sanguine about Pennsylvania after it got rolling. You see, I had this picture of the Dutch counties and those crowds. I remember the day we campaigned through Delaware and Montgomery and Bucks. We were all so optimistic. Joe Clark bet him five dollars that his majority would be at least three hundred thousand. I went along with him. I thought it would be. But the Republicans started catching up with us.

MORRISSEY: The crowds were big in Ohio, too.

LAWRENCE: Yes.

MORRISSEY: I was wondering if they were not necessarily persuaded that the size of the crowds meant a big win?

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LAWRENCE: Yes. Oh, I'm sure. We felt the crowds was the question—oh, three hundred thousand. Because we could see this thing in Philadelphia and in Pittsburgh and in the Scranton area. Of course we consumed—Philadelphia was three hundred thirty, Pittsburgh was one hundred two.

GIESEY: One hundred ten.

LAWRENCE: One hundred ten. That's four hundred forty, and the Scranton and Wilkes-Barre were sixty-three. That five hundred thousand in those three spots. He was such a big hit in those other places. It was terrible.

MORRISSEY: Does the credit for the big plurality out of Philadelphia belong to Billy Green?

LAWRENCE: No. It belonged to no one. Billy Green was a smart politician and a good politician and an indefatigable worker and a good organizer and all that, but nobody dreamed of even that amount. Nobody dreamed of it. It swallowed us up. We knew we were going to win big in those areas because we had the organization there that could do it and we didn't have the religious hindrance that we had at Gary and those other areas of Pennsylvania. Well, it's a lot like upstate New York or in the middle of Ohio. It's the same sort of thing.

MORRISSEY: Out in Los Angeles you announced your support of Kennedy at a time when there was a lot of Stevensonian sentiment springing up. How did that burst for Stevenson strike you at the time? Did you think that it really meant anything?

LAWRENCE: No. I forget, I said something out there. I remember they quoted, I said, "We've got the delegates," or something. They got scared of this demonstration, you know, and the writers picked it up. But we had the delegates. Once you have the delegates it's hard for the other fellow to win.

MORRISSEY: Did you talk to Stevenson at any time at the convention about his candidacy?

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes, yes. I've always been very close—well, for many many years—to the Illinois delegates or party out there dating way back to Mayor

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Kelly [Edward Kelly]. It still exists between Daley and myself and Jack Arvey.

They invited me to come to the Illinois caucus which was Sunday afternoon over at their hotel. I went over and spoke to the delegates—just a social visit. They declared for Kennedy. Well, I didn't need any convincing—that was it. So Daley and Arvey talked to me and they said I ought to go and talk to Stevenson. So there was a dinner that night. Do you remember?

GIESEY: Yes. It was "black tie" and everything.

LAWRENCE: It was a “black tie” affair and we all had to go there. So I made a date to see Stevenson after the dinner. My boy Jerry [Gerald Lawrence] was with me and Jerry and I went over to that place where he stayed. He was there and Mike Monroney [Almer Stillwell “Mike” Monroney] was there and I think George Ball [George W. Ball], I’m not sure, but I think he was there.

I told him why I had come. I said, “Our delegation tomorrow is going to declare for Kennedy. I wanted you to know before it happened.” And I said, “Adlai, I’m convinced that there’s not a chance in this thing for you. I hate like the devil to see you, after your record, to be turned down by the Democratic Party. Twice they gave you their nomination and that’s quite an honor for any man to have. It’ll hurt me, it’ll hurt many, many ardent Stevenson fans throughout the country to see you defeated. My idea is what you should do is to announce you’re out and nominate Kennedy.” I said, “This would have a far reaching effect on all of this country and help him immeasurably if you could do that.”

But I couldn’t budge him. He took the angle, and he’s a very sincere guy and you’ve got to take what he said. He said, “I get your point and I appreciate the situation you’re in.” But he said, “I hate to walk out on these people that are here—these people that are demonstrating and a good number of them are delegates. They’ve come all the way across the country—spent their money—to come here to vote for me.” And he said, “I just don’t want to walk away from them, desert them and so on.”

Well, of course I’m convinced that basically, it was the pressure of Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] and Herbert Lehman [Herbert H. Lehman] on him to stay in. You see, there were a lot of people that felt that he could only get five hundred and some votes, Kennedy. Johnson would have three hundred fifty and it would be a stalemate. There was still that ray of hope they kept

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holding out before him which didn’t work out. I think it was brought out in Schlesinger’s book. Frank Graham, you probably read that, what Frank Graham said.

GIESEY: Not Frank, Phil.

LAWRENCE: Phil Graham [Philip L. Graham], the *Washington Post* man. He told him at that time that that was the situation. He was a Johnson man—Graham. But I made no impression on Stevenson. Oh, I was there until after three o’clock in the morning. We sat around and gabbed and so on.

GIESEY: And then the next morning, if you remember, before the caucus there was a breakfast of the delegates.

LAWRENCE: Yes.

GIESEY: Kennedy, Johnson and Symington all addressed the delegation. I don’t recall if any of those came out or not. I think someone came out for

Stevenson but I don't remember who it was. Do you remember if it might have been Mike Monroney?

LAWRENCE: It could have been.

MORRISSEY: I think it was.

GIESEY: Then we went into the caucus as I recall—that private caucus which someone had bugged!—all your top equipment for NBC.

LAWRENCE: Yes, we had the caucus in the morning and the caucus overwhelmingly went for Stevenson.

GIESEY: No, Governor.

LAWRENCE: I mean Kennedy.

GIESEY: But still you had the Stevenson sentiment. You remember Joe Clark, by the time we got to the convention floor he was getting telegrams and things.

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LAWRENCE: Oh yes, that's another angle to it. In the caucus... Of course some of the members and I started to work, then, all day Monday on trying to get the Stevenson people to getting them to line up for Kennedy. But when we got to the convention, Joe Clark—of course it made the "air." And when we were just getting the thing in very good shape, he upset us by making an announcement that unless Kennedy got the nomination on the first ballot, he was going to ask for a caucus of the Pennsylvania delegation to take another stand. We always figured that the reason for that was the ADAers [Americans for Democratic Action] were wiring him from back home saying that he was deserting Stevenson, and so forth and so on. We were pretty provoked at him at the time. Of course it never got to the necessity of doing that.

MORRISSEY: Why do you suppose you were chosen to deliver the nominating speech for Lyndon Johnson?

LAWRENCE: Well, I think what they wanted on that—I never had any expression from either one of them about it afterwards. But my own surmise was that they wanted a liberal from the North to offset some of the anti-Johnson sentiment among the liberals. Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams] and Walter Reuther [Walter P. Reuther] and a lot of that group that were for Williams or someone of that caliber were raising the question. I was sort of an antidote to that with the liberals, being a Stevenson man and all that sort of thing. But that was the reason.

MORRISSEY: At any time did you talk with Sam Rayburn about Lyndon Johnson for vice president?

LAWRENCE: He brings these big things out that are important. Did you know anything about that?

MORRISSEY: I'll change the tape right now.

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

MORRISSEY: Let's hear the Rayburn story.

LAWRENCE: When Senator Kennedy called me and told me that that was my chore, I called Rayburn and told him. Of course we'd been friends for thirty years, close friends and he said, "I don't know anything about this.

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What's going on here?" And I said, "Well, I've been asked to make the nominating speech for Lyndon Johnson." And I said, "I want to come down and talk to you about it and see what information, what you might do to help me." "All right, come on down." I dug up Walter—I wanted him to write the speech—and down we went to Rayburn. By that time he'd cooled off a little bit and he dug up some guy. Who was that guy?

GIESEY: I still don't know, Governor. I don't know which one it was. Most of them...

LAWRENCE: He met him long ago somewhere and he said, "Do you know who I am?" I said, "I know your face." He said, "I'm the fellow who had helped you with the speech." He was some fellow who had worked for Johnson apparently and knew all about him. He said, "This fellow has been with Johnson for years and he can be very helpful to you." But old Sam was very crabby about it.

GIESEY: Wasn't Pauley [Edwin W. Pauley] there?

LAWRENCE: Yes. Ed Pauley was there with him when I got there and of course we were old friends. I think Pauley was probably a Johnson man out in California.

GIESEY: If you remember, the speech was written in Rayburn's bedroom.

LAWRENCE: Yes, that's where we wrote the speech down there. And this fellow was helping Walter with some facts.

GIESEY: But then all of the Johnson staff had gone off. They'd all left when he

lost it. I remember there was one guy there...

LAWRENCE: It was like a morgue.

GIESEY: Then we went down to get it typed down in the Kennedy headquarters and they weren't any more enthusiastic. It was a speech that was almost never done, because neither of those camps was particularly happy about it.

LAWRENCE: They weren't thrilled about it.

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MORRISSEY: How much time did you have to get the speech ready?

GIESEY: Not very much.

LAWRENCE: No.

GIESEY: We came over by motorcycle escort and I think that you didn't have a chance to read it, I don't believe.

LAWRENCE: No.

GIESEY: It was a matter of probably two hours from the time the call came until the speech was given.

LAWRENCE: That's funny you mentioned about Rayburn. You see, Sam had talked to me. Of course I was in a devil of a stew about this whole thing. You see, after you get in this game you get to know people and so forth and get to like them. Like I was with Kennedy, you know. It seemed I never had a natural flow of being for the fellow. There was always something you tied in with and it overlapped over into your political career. I was very fond of Stevenson. He was a great man, a great man of this country. He should have been president instead of that Eisenhower. He was so far superior to him, there's just no comparison.

GIESEY: But you'd seen Rayburn during the summer hadn't you?

LAWRENCE: Oh, he was after me all the time to line up for Johnson. He said, "You'll never nominate this Kennedy. He'll never be nominated. He'll never get a stone's throw of a chance." This is the only fellow they could all agree on. Of course Johnson said to me one day when I was over in that office he said, "Maybe I ought to withdraw from the fight." I said, "Oh, no." I said, "Don't say anything like that." Arthur Schlesinger was with me when we went in to see him. You see, the problem at that time, the thought of nominating a southerner in '60 was just out of the

question. He couldn't win, or at least we felt that way. Maybe we were wrong. But he was getting very few votes in the North, very few delegates.

MORRISSEY: Was there any time after the '56 campaign that you felt Stevenson was on the verge of announcing his candidacy for 1960?

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LAWRENCE: No. But I felt he always still had the desire.

MORRISSEY: Would it be fair to say that he had the desire but he didn't want to get into a party brawl?

LAWRENCE: That's right. He didn't want to. I talked the other day.... What was that item I had with Schlesinger?

GIESEY: It was on the Phil Graham suggestions that you didn't like Stevenson.

LAWRENCE: Oh yes. He had a passage in that book where he quoted Phil Graham—in public no doubt—literally where Graham had come to him and said that Kennedy could only get 530 votes. That was his peak. And that Johnson would have 350 and there would be a deadlock. Then it would be Stevenson's chance. But he said that these four leaders would probably stop him: Truman, Lawrence...

GIESEY: Daley.

LAWRENCE: Daley and DeSapio.

GIESEY: He didn't like Stevenson.

LAWRENCE: So I wrote Schlesinger a letter and told him this wasn't a true statement of the facts. I said, "I don't like that." I told him that I talked to Stevenson the day before the fourth of July out at the Liberty Bell before he went to Europe on that fatal trip. I made a date with him to have lunch or dinner with him sometime immediately after he came back. We were the warmest friends, and so on.

I have a letter back from Schlesinger in which he said in the additional copies he'd correct them. But he just said in there we didn't like him, the four of us. I don't think Truman was ever keen about him, although I think.... In the letter he sent he said, "I know Adlai was very fond of you." He put in parentheses, "also Daley," which was sure.

Dick Daley and I got off on this tangent—when you asked the question about whether he was a candidate—so I called Dick when this came out and Dick said, "The hell with him. I wouldn't write him a letter." He was very arrogant. I wrote him anyhow.

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He said he went to Stevenson earlier that year and told him, “If you’re going to be in this you’d better get out and into these primaries.” He said that Stevenson threw up his hands and said, “Oh, that’s terrifying to think of going into those primaries.” He said, “I’m not going to do anything like that.” And Daley said, “You won’t have a chance if you don’t.” So that’s why Dick felt perfectly justified in going for Kennedy when he did.

MORRISSEY: Do you think that Governor Stevenson honestly expected a deadlock in the convention?

LAWRENCE: Well, yes. I’d say yes because I found this out after a long, long study. Once any man gets the bug to be president he never loses it. It ruined Al Smith [Alfred E. Smith]—Al Smith got the bug. It ruined Jim Farley [James A. Farley] politically—he got the bug; it ruined Byrnes [James F. Byrnes]. Once they get inoculated with that phobia they get, they never shake it off. There’s always that ray of hope that they can do it. I think he still had that. “Here’s the chance now and we’re going to win. There won’t be any Eisenhower to run against. This time there will have to be somebody else and I think we can lick Nixon.” I can just hear Stevenson feeling that way about it.

GIESEY: Well, then he had people like Mike Monroney, Governor. Do you remember he called you in Israel that same time trying to get together with you on.... I think that might have been after the Wisconsin.... I’m not sure if it was after Wisconsin but maybe it was after West Virginia, when Monroney wanted to get together with you.

LAWRENCE: No, I think they must have sensed West Virginia, because he phoned me in Jerusalem one night when I was in a restaurant there and urged me still not to panic about the situation.

MORRISSEY: I can recall the time that the U-2 plane was shot down and there was great concern about our national strength, that the Stevenson-for-president boom increased. Do you recall that time?

LAWRENCE: No.

GIESEY: Of course I recall during the convention that Mary Lasker was after you, you remember. All these

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people were trying—before the caucus, I think, if nothing else—for you to hold out. I think there were some of those who were suggesting favorite sons or anything just to hold that. They were all so deadly afraid that Kennedy would get in on the first ballot, and also pretty certain that if he didn’t get on the first ballot, I think they figured

the Kennedy strategy was, “We’ll get it on the first one or we’re done.” They were going to do anything they could do by any means with Meyner [Robert B. Meyner] or someone to stop that first ballot thing. That’s why that Joe Clark comment was so dangerous.

LAWRENCE: Dangerous to us, you see.

GIESEY: Suggesting that we could meet again and change their minds.

LAWRENCE: That we’d caucus right away and then a lot of people would desert Kennedy.

GIESEY: I don’t think that was true, Governor. The whole strategy was to get the maximum vote on the first ballot.

LAWRENCE: Yes. It was to get every last one we could get. Do you remember I was sounding for those fellows on the floor?

GIESEY: Oh, and I had one guy crying out in the beer joint. You remember that day, that guy from Ambridge, Pa. Skapik [Martin S.J. Skapik].

LAWRENCE: Martin, he was at a meeting the other night in Pittsburgh—Martin Skapik.

GIESEY: Now you did get some—a couple of those—for Stevenson.

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes, we straightened a good many of them out. I remember Joe Lawler [Joseph Lawler] was bringing them up to me.

GIESEY: But they were almost entirely.... Of course, there was a great fondness for Stevenson, but basically they were from Protestant areas.

LAWRENCE: Yes, you see that was it. You see there were a lot of them from Protestant areas from upstate and it was local suicide to be for Kennedy.

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MORRISSEY: You mentioned Joe Kennedy’s visit to Harrisburg. Throughout those years in the late 1950’s I would assume that you had many visitors from the Kennedy camp in addition to the Ambassador. Who else was coming to see you and what were their arguments of why you should support John Kennedy?

LAWRENCE: I don’t know, Walter, that there were so many.

GIESEY: I don’t recall. But you’ve got to remember that Paul Butler [Paul M.

Butler] was the national chairman. There was a feeling, I think you felt it, Governor—didn't you?—that at least in the beginning of '60 or maybe in the latter part of '59 Butler had been signed up in the Kennedy camp. The Governor and Butler were on most unfriendly terms, so there would have been not that kind of intercourse. I think maybe more likely would have been people like Matt McCloskey, who was probably friendly toward him, but I don't know that he ever tried to....

LAWRENCE: No, Matt was always friendly with me. He never tried to use any pressure.

MORRISSEY: How about John Bailey? Did he come to see you?

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes, Bailey did. Yes.

GIESEY: How about Buckley [Charles A. Buckley]? Did he ever mention it to you, Governor?

LAWRENCE: No, but I can remember in '56 Buckley was raising hell with Bill Green. You see, Bill was with us on the thing, and of course he and Buckley were good friends in Congress. He told me he met Buckley, and Buckley was raising hell with him. You know, "Oh, what the hell kind of Irishman you are. Christ Almighty, here's a chance to be for a fellow like Kennedy and you're for that goddam guy." Of course Kefauver, you remember, had that investigation committee out in Chicago and had raised a lot of hell with a lot of Democrats, you know. That's what got him bitter at him. That was the embarrassing thing out there, because Kennedy, you remember, made the nominating speech for Stevenson in Chicago.

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MORRISSEY: Kennedy interpreted that to mean that he was not going to get the vice presidential nomination.

LAWRENCE: Did he?

GIESEY: Well, but Stevenson people of course knew the arrangement you had with Kefauver, and most people did, I think.

LAWRENCE: And that's why Stevenson threw it wide open, you remember.

MORRISSEY: Did that surprise you, by the way?

LAWRENCE: Yes. Finnegan, you know, managed the thing, and of course Finnegan was in a panic in a meeting with him. He said, "Oh, I need you." I remember he said, "I need you."

We went into a meeting with Rayburn and Butler—I forget who else was there—Finnegan and myself. Much to Rayburn’s disgust with me, I sided with him to leave it wide open. Sam couldn’t understand that. He said, “I never saw a convention where anything like that ever happened.” He said, “You’ve got to name the man.” He didn’t want to get into that brawl. He saw it coming.

MORRISSEY: I think Joe’s got a few questions.

O’CONNOR: Yes. I was wondering if you had any contact with Stevenson after he became ambassador to the United Nations? Did you ever talk to him about anything?

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes.

O’CONNOR: Can you think of anything in particular—for instance, the Bay of Pigs invasion?

LAWRENCE: No. No, he never went into anything. One night.... Well, I guess it was while Kennedy was still living, I was over there for dinner at his place in the Waldorf [Waldorf Astoria]. That night he sort of complained to me that he was dissatisfied in the position he was in. He sort of felt that he ought to.... He’d be happier if he were down here and had more to say about

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policy, about policy making. That he was just sort of up there and they decided a policy, and then they’d call him up and say, “Well, here it is.” I think that was it.

GIESEY: Then you talked to him on the phone. Didn’t he indicate that he wanted....

LAWRENCE: Well, I felt after my conversation with him on the third of July, or second of July—right before the fourth—that that was what he again wanted. He said, “I need your advice.” He said, “When I get back in a couple of weeks I want you to come and see me. We’ll have dinner or lunch and go over the thing.” I guess he felt he had spent his time there and wanted to do something else.

O’CONNOR: It’s often said that he felt very badly that he wasn’t given the right information regarding a few instances, the Bay of Pigs being the outstanding one.

LAWRENCE: No, I never discussed the Bay of Pigs with him.

O’CONNOR: One other question goes back to the convention in Los Angeles. When you were suggesting that Lyndon Johnson be the second man on the

ticket, did you have any inkling that he'd accept the nomination for vice president?

LAWRENCE: Well, I'd always felt that almost anybody would, so therefore I applied that principle. I've heard it so many times a man to say, "No, I'm not going to take the second position like lieutenant governor." When the top place was gone, they usually move in. I figured he would. In fact I said to Kennedy on the Saturday meeting, that they felt that Johnson had been pretty strong in statements that he wouldn't take the second place, but I said, "Don't go for that. He'll take it."

O'CONNOR: But you never had any specific contacts with people from the Johnson camp on this question?

LAWRENCE: On the vice president?

O'CONNOR: Yes.

LAWRENCE: No, no. It was purely Kennedy and myself just as I related it. I told him about that because I was concerned about it and concerned about the South—what was going to happen there. I could see it coming.

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I had a lot of dealings with the South in previous conventions on unseating delegates and things of that kind, and I was just greatly alarmed about it. Well, look what eventually happened in Mississippi and so on.

O'CONNOR: How about after he became vice president? Do you have any comments as to his position within the Kennedy family or within the Kennedy administration?

LAWRENCE: No. I never knew much about him. Of course, you see, I came down here on February 1 of '63 and I didn't see too much of Johnson. He and I went down to a conference of governors in Florida.

GIESEY: Yes. Well, then you went up there after you were sworn in to talk to him because he was chairman of the employment committee.

LAWRENCE: Yes, that's right. You see, he was chairman of a relative committee to mine. He was chairman of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity [President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity]. I went over, and in fact President Kennedy suggested I go and see him. So, Walter and I went over and had a talk with him about that setup. That was about the only official connection I had with him.

GIESEY: That's right and then you ran into him down in Miami at the governors' Conference.

LAWRENCE: We went down and at a breakfast we had him speak to the Democratic governors—Johnson.

O'CONNOR: The reason I asked that is because it has often been commented that Kennedy did not use Johnson as effectively as he might have in his relation to the Hill [Capitol Hill].

LAWRENCE: Yes. I don't know. I never got very deep into the phase of the thing. Of course Kennedy always spoke of him in the kindest terms to me, but I knew nothing about these inner scramblings that were apparently going on among the factionalists.

O'CONNOR: Well, unless you've got something on that subject, I'd like to go back a little farther.

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MORRISSEY: One thing occurs to me. Do you recall the occasion in which John Kennedy announced that Robert Weaver [Robert C. Weaver] would be his appointee for a new cabinet position of urban affairs, but then the bill was defeated on the Hill? Did you ever discuss this with Kennedy or ever hear him comment on it?

LAWRENCE: No.

GIESEY: It preceded him coming down here.

LAWRENCE: Yes.

MORRISSEY: It did?

LAWRENCE: Yes.

MORRISSEY: One other question....

LAWRENCE: Wait a minute. Wasn't that during the campaign?

GIESEY: No, no. No, it was after, Governor, after he.... I would suspect that statement was made sometime in the fall of '61 when he introduced the legislation and announced his intention to appoint Weaver....

LAWRENCE: Oh, I think he was scratching a pen. That was it, yes.

GIESEY: That's right.

LAWRENCE: That's what I was thinking about. That was after the bill was moving.

MORRISSEY: You mentioned at the outset that John Kennedy came out to Pittsburgh and spoke to the Young Democrats in 1947 and then he came back for the Knights of Columbus affair in 1956. How was he different over the period of ten years? Was he a different kind of speaker, for example?

LAWRENCE: Well, yes. He'd improved measurably and he, of course, matured in his appearance. He was rather slim and boyish in the early stages and he filled out, and so on. He noted that in a state convention up there. What year was that when he ran for the Senate?

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MORRISSEY: In 1952?

LAWRENCE: Yes. Yes, Paul Dever [Paul A. Dever] was running and Paul and I had become good friends. I met him down here during the war period. He had come out to Pittsburgh when I was sworn in as mayor, he and some other fellow I used to meet up with down here. Paul asked me if I wouldn't make a speech. Kennedy wasn't at the convention. I can remember that day there was a lot of complaining about the fact that he wasn't. He was out attending some teas that the women had gotten up for him, and here was the state convention even though the candidate wasn't there.

O'CONNOR: Well, back in 1959 there was the steel strike that you were very much involved in trying to settle. I recall that Senator Kennedy urged a Senate probe of the steel strike. I wonder if you remember anything about that.

LAWRENCE: No.

O'CONNOR: You didn't have any contact with him at all in connection with the strike.

LAWRENCE: We didn't.

GIESEY: I don't recall.... Of course there was....

LAWRENCE: Walter was with me in the mayor's office, too.

GIESEY: Well, of course that was '59, though, when you were governor.

LAWRENCE: Oh, oh, oh, yes.

GIESEY: And I recall we tried to get the governors together. You remember, we Boggs [J. Caleb Boggs] and the others trying to get them together to do something to bring pressure on Eisenhower, I can't recall specifically, but I doubt that we specifically worked with Senator Kennedy. My guess is we might have been using Clark and anyone else to try to bring pressure on the Eisenhower administration to do something to solve that strike. I do remember the governors' conference group that worked on it.

LAWRENCE: Yes.

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GIESEY: The pressure was brought on the national administration which did not react to the governors. It may very well have been some of the senators themselves, although it seems to me there was some effort made to get some activity in the Congress. Again, it was part of this whole thing to get the Eisenhower administration to try to use its power to bring these parties to settle that. I'm hazy as to detail of it.

O'CONNOR: Do you recall what the attitude of the Pittsburgh labor leaders—for example, David McDonald [David J. McDonald]—was toward Kennedy in the late '50s at the time of the steel strike or later than that?

GIESEY: Of course, Dave McDonald was a member of the delegation in '60 and was for him. He was for Kennedy. I don't recall him ever indicating any preference, do you, Governor?

LAWRENCE: No.

GIESEY: Somehow or other I get a feeling he wasn't too hot on Stevenson—Dave McDonald.

LAWRENCE: No. Oh, no. Do you remember he voted for Harriman [William Averell Harriman] in '56? He came there and made quite a speech at our caucus about, "I have two friends...." Very dramatic. Oh, he gave a hell of a spiel about these "two friends" and he had to make a decision between these two great friends of his. Well, Dave was a great fellow, you know, for spreading himself. He loved that theatrics, you know. Of course, he was very shocked when the delegation voted almost unanimously for Stevenson.

GIESEY: Who were his two friends, Governor?

LAWRENCE: Stevenson and Harriman. Everybody's friends.

GIESEY: I thought it was going to be Harry Truman and somebody else.
[Laughter]

LAWRENCE: No. So therefore he was for Harriman. Of course, you remember Truman came out for Harriman.

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GIESEY: Yes.

O'CONNOR: I have one other question that is kind of peripheral. You made a comment about Paul Butler a while ago, and I came across this statement in 1959. Paul Butler was saying that David Lawrence was siding with the segregationists to oust him. I wonder if you have any comments on that, what that was all about. Whatever made him choose that?

LAWRENCE: I don't recall that.

GIESEY: Would that have been in the New Orleans meeting, Governor?

O'CONNOR: It was in September of 1959 when he made the statement.

LAWRENCE: You see, I was against Butler's getting the place as chairman, and then it was just sort of a running fight between the two of us. There was a lot of dissatisfaction with him. Butler was a bitter sort of a fellow. He brought personalities into all of this stuff. Of course my friends in Indiana were McKinney [Frank E. McKinney] and McHale [Frank M. McHale] for many, many years—still are. He was of the opposite faction. He sided up with our enemies. Then he came in through Steve Mitchell [Stephen A. Mitchell]. I was never very friendly with him. It never started out very friendly. He sort of had it in for Arvey and myself—sort of an old desire, I'd guess you'd call it. But I don't recall the segregationists....

GIESEY: Unless, was there any movement on the part of southerners against him, too, when you had the New Orleans meeting?

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes, yes.

GIESEY: That was probably it.

LAWRENCE: Well, I think he was trying to needle me, you know, because I had a big Negro following in Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania. He was probably

trying to say something that would hurt the most with the Negro....
That I was siding with the segregationists. Of course, they didn't like him for one reason; I didn't like him for another.

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GIESEY: You were for Finnegan and of course Finnegan was for...

LAWRENCE: I was for Finnegan. You see, I tried to beat him in New Orleans, but Finnegan took sick on me and couldn't get down there, so we were badly beaten.

O'CONNOR: You also were very much opposed to the Los Angeles site in 1960.

LAWRENCE: Yes. Well, then he and I really went to bat on that. I fought that vigorously. It cost us a lot of money to get our people out there and all that. It was one of the reasons there never was a convention more dissatisfied with the city than that one was. The smog came up on the thing and it was very expensive for our people to go all the way across the country. That was what was worrying me. While we, on the face of it, were for Philadelphia, basically we were for Chicago which I think is the best convention city in the country—central to everything and not too burdensome to anyone. You see, for the average to go out to Los Angeles, it would cost him about five hundred dollars the minimum, you know. That was his contribution for the year. He didn't have another five to put in the campaign, so that was my very practical reason.

GIESEY: Even after that, Butler was quite petty in his assignment of hotels.

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes. He put our delegation out in Pasadena. [Laughter] Yes. Chicago was worse. They were in the "flea bag" downtown. Of course, he hated Arvey and Daley and them, you know.

GIESEY: When you went up to the caucus, you remember, the elevator broke down.

LAWRENCE: Oh, yes, they invited me over to their caucus. They had a roof garden over at this place and we were going up there afterwards. Jeez, we got caught—there must have been ten or a dozen of us in the elevator between two floors. We had a hell of a time. Scared to death it was going to drop, you know.

Strange to say, our delegation was delighted at the fact that they were out at Pasadena. They were at the Huntington [Huntington Sheraton Hotel] which is a lovely hotel. I've stayed there

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myself years back. They had a big swimming pool there. Our people had the gayest.... They had a hell of a time. They thought it was all right. The only problem was, it was as expensive as hell going back and forth in a taxicab, you know. It would cost them four, five or six dollars and it was just too much.

MORRISSEY: Well, I think we've just about covered it. You've been on the griddle for ninety minutes.

LAWRENCE: Yes, I can't think of anything else.

GIESEY: Well, I think there are other things, Governor, if you want to take another time.

LAWRENCE: Yes, don't hesitate because I'm here a good bit of the time.

GIESEY: I think when you were traveling with Kennedy and on those tours there might have been some other conversations and stuff. Then, going through this, I know a number of members of Congress went to see him about Scranton and [inaudible] when he was president.

LAWRENCE: That would be governmental stuff, wouldn't it?

GIESEY: Yes, I can try to refresh my memory from this.

LAWRENCE: There's one of these things here. Should I tell them about that day I rode out to the Shoreham [Hotel] with him?

GIESEY: Yes. I don't remember....

LAWRENCE: It was a bitch, you know. I don't like to bring Joe Clark into it.

GIESEY: Well, I don't see anything wrong, Governor. We can cut it out if....

MORRISSEY: Yes, sure.

LAWRENCE: One day I wanted to see him about some patronage problem. We were having trouble with Clark. He was very upset and provoked with Clark; Clark was causing a lot of trouble. So I went over to go out with him. Oh, I must have gone over to talk with him about half past ten and there was just a flow of people in. Of course, I was on the

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payroll then and he could kick me around as much as he wanted. He just kept putting me back and putting me back. Finally, he came out and he said, "Governor, would you mind

riding out with me to the Shoreham?” His sister was having a luncheon out there for these retarded kids. He said, “We can talk about that on the way out.”

The reason I place this as significant is what he said. We were on the way over and we were discussing this patronage back and forth, you know, and he was getting very provoked at Clark who was causing this annoyance and so on. He recognized the fact it was a fight between Billy Green and Clark. I was siding with Green on what he wanted to do about some appointment. When we got out to the Shoreham—they drove into the driveway in the back of the Shoreham—he was getting out of the car and he just sort of turned around and he said, “When does that guy run, in ’66?” And I said, “No, Mr. President he doesn’t come up until ’68.” He said, “Well, probably neither you nor I will be here then.”

A chill went up my back. I said, “Wait, a minute, wait a minute.” I said, “That might apply to me at my age, but not to you.” He went on into the hotel. I’ve thought of that a hundred times since, you know. He must have had a premonition he wasn’t going to live too long in any event. You know, I didn’t like him to pick me.

MORRISSEY: I was going to suggest if there are other things that come to mind after we leave, jot them down. Of course, you’ll get a transcript of this and we can always append to the transcript any odds and ends that occur later, or we can come back and have another session with the tape recorder.

LAWRENCE: Sure, fine.

GIESEY: I would suggest, why don’t we look at the thing and then maybe the Governor and I can talk it over and go back, because there are lots of gaps here, I think. Particularly we jumped from the campaign to the election to the.... Well, I don’t know that there is anything too pertinent. Maybe in going back you would think of something of this kind that

LAWRENCE: Well, of the things I might mention, Walter.... One of the things I admired so much of Kennedy—probably as much or more than anyone I ever knew—was his charm. And I mean charm in the broad sense. I don’t

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think I ever knew anyone who had the natural charm he had. A lot of people have charm but they put on. It’s theatrics, you know. But his was so real. And then, I noticed the several instances of how he made people feel they were important. He never hurt anybody—unlike Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln] who told how cranky he was. Of course, maybe I saw him under more favorable circumstances.

I’ve quoted this a number of times, but I’ll never forget the day I took my committee over to be sworn in. We had a little girl here that worked for him when he first started to run for president.

GIESEY: Probably one of a couple hundred girls.

LAWRENCE: One of a couple hundred girls that was working up there. And this little girl, she was here on the staff. They all wanted to go up—in fact, the whole staff wanted to see the President, you know. We had all these men in there: Lew Weinstein [Lewis H. Weinstein] who was on the Harvard faculty and a lawyer from Massachusetts; Magnin [Cyril I. Magnin], the department store man from San Francisco; a lot of pretty good people, Jack—what is his name? That CIO man?

GIESEY: Conway [John O. Conway].

LAWRENCE: Jack Conway and fellows like that. And he picked this little girl out of this whole group going around, you know. And he said, “Peggy [Peggy Dougherty]. I didn’t know you were with the Governor.” God, she was walking on air. I mean he picked out probably the most humble person in the whole gathering, you know, to say hello to and make feel good. That was the thing I liked in him probably more than any other one thing—that he always made people feel they amounted to something. And I don’t think there’s anything that any of us human beings feel better about. By the same token it’s in reverse if they slight them.

Then I noticed too, with my wife [Alice Lawrence]—of course we were in the upper age bracket for him and his social contacts—but whenever she’d come down, which wasn’t very often, he would wend his way around and pick her out and say something nice to her. God, she has his picture in every room, I think, in our house. She has a photolight in front of one of them. She just idolized him as if he were a son. I think that was the thing you’ll probably not see for many a day in any president—that type of personality

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MORRISSEY: Were you in this office on the afternoon of the assassination?

LAWRENCE: No, of all places—I look at that phone every day—I was at the YMCA [Young Men’s Christian Association] health club in Pittsburgh in the steam room. They called me out and said I was wanted on the phone; it was very important. Every time I’m there I pass that phone and I think of that call. Of course, they first gave me the story that they thought there might be some hope. We sat around there praying. But then we got word he passed away.

MORRISSEY: Well, shall we stop there?

GIESEY: It sounds like a good idea.

MORRISSEY: Well, thank you very much.

LAWRENCE: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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