

Joseph E. Rosetti Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 9/13/1967
Administrative Information

Creator: Joseph E. Rosetti
Interviewer: John Stewart
Date of Interview: September 13, 1967
Place of Interview: Greenbelt, Maryland
Length: 62 pages

Biographical Note

Joseph E. Rosetti (1921-1992) was a worker for John F. Kennedy's [JFK] 1946 congressional campaign, a staff member of the Boston office of Representative Kennedy from 1947 to 1951, an investigator from 1951 to 1961, and Chief Department of Security from 1961 to 1962. This interview focuses on JFK's 1946 and 1950 campaigns, the operations of JFK's Boston office during his years in Congress, and the workings of the State Department during the Kennedy administration, among other topics.

Access
Open

Usage Restrictions

Copyright of these materials has passed to the United States Government upon the death of the interviewee. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any

concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

Joseph E. Rosetti, recorded interview by John Stewart, September 13, 1967 (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Oral History Interview

Of

Joseph E. Rosetti

Although a legal agreement was not signed during the lifetime of Joseph E. Rosetti, upon his death, ownership of the recording and transcript of his interview for the Oral History Program passed to the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

The following terms and conditions apply:

1. The transcript is available for use by researchers.
2. The tape recording shall be made available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.
3. Copyright to the interview transcript and tape is assigned to the United States Government.
4. Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request for a fee.
5. Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library.

Joseph E. Rosetti– JFK #1
Table of Contents

| <u>Page</u> | <u>Topic</u> |
|-------------|---|
| 1 | Joining John F. Kennedy’s [JFK] 1946 campaign for Congress |
| 2 | Being asked to get names for the nomination papers |
| 4 | Being appointed to JFK’s Boston office |
| 5 | Italian population of the eleventh district |
| 6 | Public’s concern about JFK’s candidacy |
| 7 | Italian leaders in Boston |
| 9 | Meeting JFK |
| 10 | JFK’s work for his constituents |
| 13 | Staff in JFK’s Boston office |
| 15 | Relationships with Congressman McCormack’s office |
| 17 | Work with JFK’s Washington D.C. office |
| 18 | Going to work for the State Department |
| 19 | JFK’s 1952 run for Senate |
| 20 | Impression of Frank Morrissey |
| 23 | Contact with JFK |
| 25 | Staying with JFK in Georgetown |
| 27 | Impression of JFK’s Washington office |
| 31 | JFK’s image with Italian-Americans |
| 33 | Concerns about immigration reform in East Boston |
| 36 | Conflict between JFK and Foster Furcolo |
| 38 | JFK’s 1950 campaign for reelection |
| 39 | People’s desire to get close to JFK |
| 40 | Waiting for the results of the 1952 election |
| 42 | Italian-Americans’ views of Henry Cabot Lodge |
| 43 | JFK’s relationship with Lodge |
| 44 | Allegations of JFK’s infidelity |
| 46 | Responsibilities in the State Department |
| 48 | Working with President Sukarno |
| 50 | JFK’s friendship with Patsy Mulkern |
| 52 | Christopher Columbus Day celebration |
| 54 | Shah of Iran’s visit to the United States |
| 58 | Contrast between the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations |
| 60 | State Department during the Kennedy administration |
| 62 | Changed opinions of JFK |

Oral History Interview

with

JOSEPH E. ROSETTI

September 13, 1967
Greenbelt, Maryland

By John Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Why don't we start out by my asking how you got involved in the 1946 campaign of John Kennedy?

ROSETTI: Well, during the late President's first endeavor in politics, running for the eleventh congressional seat in Massachusetts, I was contacted by the key man or campaign manager, Mr. William Kelly of East Boston, who was responsible for getting workers--volunteer workers and paid workers--to assist in manning the polls and soliciting names for the President's--I mean... This is going to be confusing.

STEWART: That's all right; call him Senator. It doesn't matter.

[-1-]

ROSETTI: Senator or Congressman?

STEWART: This is always a problem. Call him... Alright, President. Why don't you just call him President all the way through.

ROSETTI: Alright. I'm trying to think where did I leave off?

STEWART: Kelly asked you to take a part.

ROSETTI: ...to volunteer to give my services to--I'm trying to think of the proper words to put in here--to complete or to fill out the nomination papers for the President during his... Why don't you hold it up for a minute? [Interruption] What I'm trying to say? When President Kennedy was running for the eleventh congressional seat in Massachusetts, I was asked by Mr. William Kelly, who was the campaign manager of East Boston, in behalf of the President to volunteer my services to obtain names on the registration--you see, this is what I'm confused at, the terminology--the nomination papers, and especially the Italian element

[-2 -]

in East Boston. You must realize that I had no knowledge of the President at that time, knew nothing about his background or his naval career. However, with all the publicity and research on my own part to see what kind of a man he was, whether or not I wanted to work for him and volunteer my services, I took this upon myself. In any event, I complied with Mr. Kelly's requests and was happy that I did perform in a very small way.

STEWART: Had you been involved in politics before?

ROSETTI: No, this was my first endeavor. I had no thoughts of getting into the field of politics. I was so-called in a 52-20 club right after the war in '45 and thinking about going back to college, but that sort of fell through at the time. So, therefore, I was unemployed at the time and looking for something, basically, to do. Well, upon the conclusion of the elections, I was called by a very dear friend of mine, the late Arthur Sullivan, who was registrar of the probate court, and he informed

[-3 -]

me that there was a possible position in the congressman's office, but that he didn't have enough information to relate to me in this regard, and would I please see Francis X. Morrissey, who was his administrative assistant in the Boston office. Upon my interview with Frank Morrissey, after he told me what I would do, that I would be the Italian representative of the eleventh congressional district, I said that I was very much interested in this position. On approximately January or February of 1947, I believe, I was appointed as one of the secretaries in the President's office.

STEWART: Was this normal procedure for the representative to have a so-called Italian representative in the office?

ROSETTI: Not in every case in the congressional areas of Massachusetts, but...

STEWART: I mean in that one.

[-4-]

ROSETTI: In the eleventh congressional district the Italian population was increasing, and the Italian vote was very important for the individual running for that congressional seat to win. And so, I don't know if the President's predecessor of the eleventh congressional seat had an Italian representative or not. In any event, as I said, I took the job.

STEWART: Could I back up just a little? As far as the campaign, do you recall any real problems as far as Italian people were concerned? Well, as you may remember, there were a couple of Joseph Russo's in the campaign against Kennedy, and he didn't do that well in the North End or even in East Boston, I don't think.

ROSETTI: Well, that is true. And there was also Michael LoPresti and there was--I'm trying to think of the funeral director's name in that area. His wife was very influential in politics, was very close to James Michael Curley. I just, the name eludes me now.

[-5-]

STEWART: I think I've heard of it, but I...

ROSETTI: And they all felt that the President wouldn't have a mind of his own, that he would be, shall we say, led by the hand by his father in every decision that he made for that district. They also felt that he was too rich and wouldn't have the Italians' prerogative, shall we say, in mind. And so, therefore, there was a great deal of pressure being put on the old political line Italians who didn't want him in that seat. However, he did have quite a few Italian organizations down around A Square and Chelsea and also one in East Boston back him up in the papers and whatnot. But I didn't see any real problems. I know that it cost a lot of money because he was new at it and he did have to get people to work for him, whether he had to pay for them or whether it was on a volunteer basis.

STEWART: Were there many paid workers?

ROSETTI: I don't have the statistics on that, but, for

[-6-]

example, during the time I volunteered, I accepted a gratuity from Mr. Kelly to compensate for my time and any expenses I might have incurred. And how many similar people such as myself accepted money, I don't know. In such an operation, there's cab fares, perhaps buying somebody a drink or a soft drink, but there are many reasons why this money was needed.

STEWART: Who would have been--you mentioned some people who were so-called leaders, political leaders of Italian people around Boston at that time. Do you recall any names? Gabriel Piemonte and...

ROSETTI: Piemonte, Gabriel Piemonte, Michael LoPresti... There was a young man there; he had a great future ahead of him, but he would never leave the state House of Representatives, and I can't think of his name right now. He was down at East Boston Court, and I just can't think of his name. But he, I believe at that

[-7-]

time, was not with the President in his efforts to win the congressional seat there in the eleventh congressional district. We had many other Irish representatives there who were against the President in this election--I'm trying to think of the names of these people, and I know if I had time to sit down and weed them out, I'd come up with them. Of course, there was a fellow in the Cambridge area, Mike Neville [Michael J. Neville] who...

STEWART: Who had been mayor, or who was the mayor.

ROSETTI: ...who was the mayor, but he ran against the President for the congressional seat and a few other people that I just can't think of right now.

STEWART: There was a WAC [Women's Army Corps] major, Catherine Falvey....

ROSETTI: Yes, I don't recall her too well.

STEWART: And then these Russos. I checked on this before I came up. There were ten people running in the race, and there were four Italians. Of course, people have charged that a number of these had been put up by the Kennedy people to split the Italian vote.

[-8-]

ROSETTI: This I don't know; this is a political maneuver by any candidate running to offset their opponents if they're Irish or Italian. The Irish sometimes put two or three people in who are Irish, and the Italians

would do the same thing. Whether or not the President used this type of political maneuver, I wouldn't know; I wasn't in basically on the ground floor.

STEWART: Did you see him at all during the campaign, see him campaigning or anything?

ROSETTI: Just when he made a speech in East Boston. And that was about it. The next time I saw him after East Boston, after he won the election, was in his office in the Federal Building in Boston when he came up. And I was introduced to him, and he smiled, and he laughed, and he said, "My God," he said, "I expected to see a little short Italian with a cigar sticking out of his mouth, stealing the eyes out of my head!"

STEWART: Really?

[-9-]

ROSETTI: Yes. This is a verbatim statement. And he wished me well and hoped that I could undertake the job and do a good job for him. He also, during his campaign, with Dave Powers [David F. Powers] in Charlestown during his second term as congressman, rang the doorbell, unbeknown to him, of my aunt, who lived at 50 High Street, and her name was Lynch. And so the President asked her to vote for him, and any of her friends. And she began to inform him that there was no question in her mind, that her nephew worked for him in the office. And he said, "Who is that?" And she told him that it was Joe Rosetti. Upon his return from this little campaign trip, he said to me, "I thought you were my Italian representative." He said, "I've met more Irish friends of yours than Italians." [Laughter]

However, he did have a sense of humor; he was very quick; he was very interested in the needs of the people of his district, especially the Navy Yard people. At one time there, the Civil Service Commission

[-10-]

recommended that all the employees at the Navy Yard take an examination. Well, many of these were Italians who could do the work, but couldn't put it down in writing. They could read blueprints and everything else. So, naturally, three quarters of them failed the exam, and they had twenty-eight years service in, etc. Well, the Congressman fought quite hard to be sure that they had an opportunity to get their thirty years service in and to help them.

The other amazing thing is in the old days of the Curleys and the state senators and the state representatives, many of his congressional people, constituents, used to come to our office and seek assistance, whether we accomplished the request or not, that was beside the point, we gave them a truthful answer. However, when we did accomplish something, the following day moneys would be left on the desk in appreciation for what we did for them. Our procedure at that time was to make out a money order and send a

[-11-]

letter under the Congressman's signature thanking them for their contribution but that this was why he was elected to office, to help the people, his constituents, in any vein. However, there were a lot of his constituents who came in who stated that they had dealt with a local or state representative, a senator, and that they had to contribute moneys to them who they, in turn, had said they had to give it to those who were doing the groundwork on the person's assignment or position he was seeking.

STEWART: This is primarily on state jobs, city jobs?

ROSETTI: State jobs, city jobs, and also federal jobs where they said they had certain contacts whereby they could help the individual, but, however, that person had to pay moneys to another source to insure that the name on the register was reached, et cetera. Well, we assured the constituents that this is not so, that if they were entitled to the position, they would get it on merit. We would insure that they would get

[-12-]

it on merit because we had, shall we say, checked the list out quite thoroughly.

STEWART: Who else beside you and Frank Morrissey were in the office at that time?

ROSETTI: At that time it was just Grace Burke and myself and Frank Morrissey. We had many friends in city hall, Dick Conroy [Richard Conroy], who is now deceased and who helped us greatly, and who was sort of in the welfare end of it in city hall under the Curley administration. And he assisted him from time to time. The office, as you know, was very small and the constituents were quite large, I would say. And in that district--we had the working district so it was more difficult.

STEWART: What other types of cases besides jobs that you have...

ROSETTI: Oh, we had people who had sons in the service who wanted to get out of the service, and they petitioned the Congressman to write to the Department of Defense to see on a hardship basis

[-13-]

whether or not they could be relieved of their duties and sent home. Normally, when people came to the Congressman's office, they had gone through every other avenue and met with so

called negative results. And so when we got the challenge, it was almost as though it was a dead end street.

And, of course, it was quite difficult for us to work in the early days because John McCormack, the majority leader, had been in for forty years, I guess, now, and he had all the key positions in all the government agencies and in the state and city pretty well sewed up. So many time that the Congressman's representatives made a phone call, they said, yes, they would consider this appointment of the individual, but we never accomplished too much in the early stages until the Congressman got certain seats assigned to him, committees which enabled him to have more patronage, shall we say.

STEWART: What were your relationships like with the

[-14-]

McCormack office up there?

ROSETTI: Fine. My personal relationship with some of his administrative assistants--again, I'm lost for the names right now. For example, during the Christmas seasons, we in the Congressman's office had patronage maybe for about thirteen to fifteen hundred students, veterans, or call it what you may. And Congressman McCormack's office had approximately three thousand such positions available to him, which took away from his district any unemployment problems whereby we just got the crumbs in those days. This changed eventually whereby we had more contacts in different government agencies such as the postmaster Joe Finn [Joseph Finn] who replaced Postmaster Crowley [Patrick Crowley]. He was backed by President Kennedy and recommending Joe Finn as Postmaster.

STEWART: Is he still living?

ROSETTI: I don't know. He lived in Charlestown for many years. I doubt very much if he's still

[-15-]

living.

STEWART: Yes, he's probably very old.

ROSETTI: Joe was quite elderly when I met him. Of course, again, we had a Democratic administration; that helped a great deal. And Congressman Herter [Christian A. Herter] was on the same floor as we were. And we worked with them in assisting them to get some of their constituents, not only on the census taking but in the post office. And this paid off eventually when Congressman Herter became governor of Massachusetts. So when the Congressman's office wanted to help some

constituents on the state level to get employment on state roads or public roads, race track, you name it, our contacts with them were very close, and they accommodated us when they had the patronage.

STEWART: What were the arrangements as far as referring cases down to Washington to Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.], or....

[-16-]

ROSETTI: Oh, these are the cases where we could not take any action locally, and it had to be on the Washington level because all the contacts were down there: the Navy Department, the Veterans' Administration, cases involving dishonorable discharges where people petitioned because of the conditions and the situations to see if they could get a discharge under honorable conditions which would at least save them face and they could go out in the world. This was done quite a bit. Frank Morrissey handled most of these and through Grace Burke and then down to Ted Reardon. And Bill Sutton [William J. Sutton] was down in Washington also assisting Ted Reardon.

STEWART: Whatever happened to him? He left.

ROSETTI: Bill Sutton left--I don't exactly know what year he left. I think he left shortly after the President became Senator and went to work for somebody in the city, in city hall. And I guess he had some pretty rough years, but

[-17-]

as far as I know, he got back in the good graces of the President afterwards, in the future years. He had some run-in...

STEWART: During the time when President Kennedy was in the House? Was a Representative?

ROSETTI: In the House, as a Representative, or when he was Senator there were some words that--I don't recall the incident, but that's when Bill Sutton left. And I know the Congressman would have taken him back because he was very forgiving. He got angered for a short period of time but never held it against anybody. He had a very open mind in this field. But he did want loyalty. And if loyalty couldn't be given to him, then, of course, he wished that you would leave. I know in 1951 I went to him, and I asked him to assist me in transferring from his office to the State Department. The job didn't pay very much in those days. We got approximately thirty-one hundred dollars a year. The abuse was something terrible

[-18-]

from some of the people. They never remembered the things we accomplished but only the things we couldn't do for them. And he offered me more money, and I said no, that politics wasn't my cup of tea, and I enjoyed working with him, that I would assist in any possible way in the future. So with this we parted very good friends, and then he ran, of course, for Senator against Henry Cabot Lodge. And in the year where President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] came up stumping for Lodge and, with this, I think, Lodge was about the only one who was defeated and that was by the President.

STEWART: Did you know when you left that he was going to run for the Senate? Had there been any decision made?

ROSETTI: No, at that time I knew that his major goal in those days was to become the senior senator of Massachusetts. But his personal feelings or endeavors for the future, I was not aware

[-19-]

of other than senatorial. But no, I saw him many, many times when he was Senator.

STEWART: I've heard a certain amount of criticism of Frank Morrissey because, as one person said, he intended to promise a lot and then either shuffle a case off to Ted Reardon to get something done or one way or another didn't produce.

ROSETTI: Frank Morrissey had a, shall we say, a way of slapping everyone on the back, knowing full well that whatever the individual was asking could not be accomplished. Now maybe this is a good sign of a politician, but, however, sometimes it doesn't wear well if this is done too frequently and the word gets around, and, of course, it doesn't help for reelection. Frank Morrissey--whether he would be privy to this tape or not...

STEWART: No, no, absolutely not.

ROSETTI: I know that the Kennedy family would be. And

[-20-]

I know that Frank Morrissey was very close to Joseph P. [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.]. However...

STEWART: Let me just give you one flat, absolute assurance that there hasn't been a single member of the Kennedy family listen to any of these tapes, aside from their own. And they have absolutely no intentions. We've

had people question this and go to Robert Kennedy or Edward Kennedy, and the answer is very, very firm that they are interested in the library; they are interested in the oral history project; but they have not, and they have no intentions of going through to any of these transcripts. So there's no--I can assure you--there's no problem as far as that's concerned.

ROSETTI: Well, to get back to that. Frank Morrissey did have a way of passing this information on to Washington to be handled by Ted Reardon and the staff down here. Frank Morrissey also always wanted to become a judge, whether it was at a low level or federal level. And

[-21-]

Frank spent a great deal of time in court, which created problems for me because I didn't know where he was, until one day he and I had a few words: that I wanted to know where he was during the eight hours we were together in case the Congressman called or his father called to seek him out. And this came to my attention from a very good friend that he saw him in courts in Roxbury and he'd come in and say he was liaisoning and doing a great job for the Congressman, so that's when I challenged him as to outside endeavors. This was straightened away and Frank Morrissey and I were very good friends, not socially so much but office-wise, we got along pretty well after the ground rules were set. Of course, I was much his junior, and knowing very little about politics, I had to feel my way.

But the Congressman was very interested in his--we kept a scrapbook for him on any speech he

[-22-]

ever made and any incident that involved his congressional district or Massachusetts as a whole whereby he might possibly introduce legislation to help out the peoples of Massachusetts, not only of his constituency. He had that feeling that whatever he did was for all the people and not just his district. Maybe he had in mind that this would be of great use during his senatorial race with Lodge, which was proven when Lodge's record wasn't too good as far as voting. I think it was also in a reverse with the Congressman. They said his voting record wasn't too keen.

STEWART: How often or in what type of situation would you hear from President Kennedy directly? Or would he come to the Boston office or call there?

ROSETTI: Well, it's quite hard to say how often he came up. He came up for speaking engagements or

[-23-]

going down to the summer home and he would always stop by the office. And, of course, he had his apartment at 122 Bowdoin Street where we met and chatted and discussed certain problems, certain political figures, certain statements that might have been made about him by these individuals, and what the general feeling was in the district about how he was supporting the district. But that was only--oh, I don't know, it would be hard to say--two or three times a month to once a month. Bob Morey [Robert F. Morey], who used to drive the Congressman every time he came in town, as you know was made later U.S. Marshal up in Boston.

Oh, during my length of time with him, I came down to Washington for a few months, and Reardon and Sutton went to Boston and he asked me to stay, the Congressman asked me to stay, until, oh, I don't know, April or June. Well, it so happened that I was engaged

[-24-]

at that time and planned to get married in July, and so, with this, I broke off a little bit early.

But during my stay down here, he invited me in his home in Georgetown to live. And he had a woman there, oh, a family friend, Margaret Ambrose who could never make coffee, and he always made comments about this. But I always enjoyed it because it was very strong. And he was always rushing off to his office to read his mail. He read a great deal, all of his personal mail, and made many of the responses himself. It was quite difficult living there because of all of the entertainment and Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] would stay there, of course, and other members of the family. And demands were rather great.

And so with this I decided to move into an apartment close to the Old House Office Building. He offered to pay half my rent and any other bills I might have incurred. He was a great

[-25-]

one for looking over my expense account at the end of each month. Although it was maybe twenty-two or thirty dollars a month, he'd challenge me on it and say, "What is all this for?" And I said, "Well, those are your expenses." He was a great one; he never had any money in his pocket, you know. And he'd say, "Give me a dollar," not only in church, but if somebody asked for a donation.... But if I gave him a bill for a thousand dollars, I know he would never challenge it. He sort of had the attitude penny wise, pound foolish. These are some of the little things that people don't know about, or maybe they do know about.

STEWART: Was there any talk of the future, do you recall?

ROSETTI: Just when he said he had desires of running for Senator. He didn't know what time he was going to pick. I don't believe he would have

[-26-]

chosen to run against Senator Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall]. They were very close familywise, socially, and with Lodge I know it was social too, but not that great. And as you know, he worked very closely with Senator Lodge and the St. Lawrence Seaway bill, and, even though he got criticized by the people of Massachusetts and the port authorities, he felt that would be good for the country, and he went ahead and did it. He voted for it, and it didn't hurt Boston too much in the long run. They thought it would, but it didn't.

STEWART: What do you recall as far as his Washington office during the period you were down here? Was it a fairly efficient place? Were there any real problems of his handling the volume of work?

ROSETTI: Oh, there was a problem, I would say, a personnel problem there. He had a young lady

[-27-]

there called Mary Davis who worked for him for about three years. But she always thought that she should have been the administrative assistant rather than Ted Reardon.

STEWART: Oh, really?

ROSETTI: She was very...

STEWART: Did she come down with him?

ROSETTI: No, I think she was down here. I don't even know what state she hails from. I don't think she was from Massachusetts, but a lot of these girls are on a list, and whenever a vacancy or a new Congressman or Senator comes in, their names are given to that office, and they're interviewed and picked up. They're a great help because a new Congressman or Senator coming down here is really lost in making a new staff unless they know their way around. And she was very clever and very good, and so she felt as though that she should have gotten top money and the title, and, of

[-28-]

course, the Congressman at that time didn't feel as though she should, that Ted Reardon would be the one.

STEWART: Do you recall any real instances of President Kennedy's being less than dedicated or enthusiastic about what he was doing?

ROSETTI: No, he was always, in my opinion, very dedicated, very sincere, in all of his endeavors. I know that he was a little disappointed in some of

the people who surrounded him because he didn't have the knowledge of politics and what these people were seeking, their own individual aspirations and whatnot, to use him and his office for whatever gains they could make. There were a lot of sincere people. And there was a fellow by the name of Mark Dalton who was a lawyer. To the best of my knowledge and recollection, he was of great assistance to the Congressman at that time. There were many other people, John Galvin,

[-29-]

John Droney was very, very close to the Congressman, from Cambridge, and never asked for anything but always gave his services; and a few other people--I just can't recall their names right now.

STEWART: Did Langdon Marvin work for him then? Does that name ring a bell?

ROSETTI: The name rings a bell, but I can't connect...

STEWART: Well, maybe that was later when he became a Senator. He worked in his office for a time.

ROSETTI: Was he a research man out there? I don't know, a legislative researcher or something?

STEWART: He was an old friend from somewhere. I don't know exactly where, whether...

ROSETTI: The name that rings a bell was Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings]. Lem was very close to him and saw a great deal of him. But this other name, I don't recall.

STEWART: Do you recall any of the problems that resulted from President Kennedy's refusal to

[-30-]

sign the petition for Curley? McCormack and the other Massachusetts Congressmen had a petition to try to get Curley out of jail because of his failing health, and President Kennedy wouldn't sign it.

ROSETTI: No, I recall the incident, shall we say, but I don't recall what reactions we got from the district. I couldn't be of any help in that.

STEWART: Do you recall any other instances of mistakes or things that irritated President Kennedy as far as dealing with any constituents or anything of this type?

ROSETTI: No, not offhand I can't, John.

STEWART: What about this whole matter of his image or his relationships with Italian people around Boston, would you say this improved greatly as...

ROSETTI: As time grew on, it just pyramided. In fact, there was one Sunday morning after we went to church--and again, I can't recall the man's

[-31-]

name. He was in the laundry business, I believe. He invited the Congressman to his home for lunch in East Boston. It was on Bayside Road in Arlington Heights. We went there, and this man had other friends there, and he enjoyed himself implicitly. And he came to my home right after that to meet my father and my sisters, which was very nice.

But the people of East Boston--and I speak about the people of East Boston because that's where I hail from--had a great liking for him after they saw what he was trying to do for them. And, of course, I had to go to a lot of Italo-American clubs in those days to represent him. And this was also very difficult because I could not speak for him; I could only make apologies for his not being there, but to show that we did have an interest, and anything that transpired would be related to him; and if anyone had any specific problems, that they

[-32-]

could relate them to me, and then I would bring them back for his consideration. And he was a great one for always answering the smallest--well, criticism or the greatest praise. I mean he always answered them one way or the other.

STEWART: What were the things that Italian people in East Boston were particularly concerned with at that time?

ROSETTI: Mainly, the employment situation. I think that was the greatest thing.

STEWART: The whole matter of immigration reform and this type of thing?

ROSETTI: Immigration did rub off a little bit, but not so much. It's just hard to convey. It's just a matter of the working elements: the job situation, you know, to keep mainly the Navy Yard open, to try to get other

business into the port of Boston, to keep the longshoremen happy and working, and--I'm just trying to

[-33-]

think--oh, public housing was a great thing in those days.

Down in Chelsea, Day Square area, there was a great deal of, shall we say, poverty and poor housing facilities. It was close to the airport. And through federal intervention, the funds that were allocated to the city of Boston--and I think that's where Dave Powers came in. Dave, of course, was very close to the Congressman and could be the watchdog over the funds being expended for this type of housing to see that we got our money's worth, shall we say, and to see that the proper people were placed in these homes instead of the political types who made over the amount necessary to be privileged to get in there. There was a lot of talk--I mean they appreciated all this, but there was a lot of talk that we had small ghettos, I guess you'd call it, ruffians in certain areas; now we got them all under one roof rather than in different

[-34-]

sections of East Boston. But those were some of the things I recall.

STEWART: Do you recall President Kennedy ever expressing a dislike or a distaste for some of these political maneuverings or political activities?

ROSETTI: That he personally himself had to get involved with and...

STEWART: Yes.

ROSETTI: ...didn't feel as though he really believed in this...

STEWART: Well, his interest primarily in patronage or, as you were describing, looking over the public housing situation as far as people who were getting in and so forth. Did he always feel this was just something that a congressman had to do, or do you recall him being genuinely interested in this type thing?

ROSETTI: No, in anything he ever attempted to do, he was always, in my opinion, genuinely interested in reaching a favorable solution as far as

[-35-]

constituencies. I don't recall an incident where he got himself involved in any legislation that he never really approved. I don't think he approved of Foster Furcolo, otherwise he would've made a nominating speech for him when he ran against Senator

Saltonstall. If he had done so at that time, Foster Furcolo would have beaten Saltonstall because I think he only won by eleven thousand votes, I'm not sure.

STEWART: Very close.

ROSETTI: But, he got into a hassle with Furcolo. Furcolo--I guess this all happened at a radio station. I don't have all the facts; I wasn't there. So this is only hearsay information. But of course, Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] came over from the camp of Furcolo to help the President.

[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I]

And I don't think Foster Furcolo liked this, but Larry was a tremendous asset to the President,

[-36-]

as you know, in future years.

STEWART: I was going to ask you if you recall anything about relationships with Foster Furcolo when he was in Congress. Furcolo was in Congress, I think, from '48 to '52.

ROSETTI: No, I don't because I was only down here for a short period of time. And I did meet Larry O'Brien down here, and then I went back to Boston, and of course, really '51 is when I left, so I had very little knowledge of their association as Congressmen together. I wouldn't have any...

STEWART: There have been stories that this was the start of their falling out when they were both in Congress and... Of course, there are all different kinds of stories as to why they fell out and why they never got along.

ROSETTI: This I couldn't answer; I don't have that information. In fact, it never came to my attention during my period of time there.

[-37-]

STEWART: Do you recall anything about his campaigns in 1948 and in 1950? There was absolutely no problem as far as getting reelected.

ROSETTI: There was no problem about his getting reelected. I think, he got a tremendous vote. But it was still campaigning and going into the districts, listening to the people. And everyone wanted him to speak at

their place for their own gains specifically. And even some of the Italians in East Boston who were Republicans backed him up to first reelection.

STEWART: Vincent Celeste ran against him in 1950--the fellow who later ran against him in '58.

ROSETTI: Celeste, he was, I think if I recall, from the North End or West End of Boston, I'm not positive of that.

STEWART: He wasn't from East Boston? I thought he was.

ROSETTI: Well, I'm not positive of that, not positive of that. I don't recall him as coming from

[-38-]

East Boston, but maybe he did. But I thought it was somebody from the West End or North End of Boston that threw the hat in the ring. And I think mainly for political payoff to get him out of the race, to drop out, which the Congressman would never concede to do. If somebody wanted to run, let him run.

STEWART: Was this always a problem of people trying to get close to him, trying to appear to be very close to him?

ROSETTI: Yes. I think the best example of that is when they formulated the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., Veterans of Foreign Wars. Ed McLaughlin [Edward F. McLaughlin, Jr.] was very sincere but there were other people who joined this VFW to get close to the President, to win his favor, and to sort of pyramid in whatever field they were in. But if some other shining star came along, they would so-called leave him and go with them.

[-39-]

So the sincerity was just surface. But that was a good example of how many of them joined the VFW to ride his coattail, shall we say.

STEWART: Okay, you left then in '51. You say you saw him periodically when he was in the Senate.

ROSETTI: When he was in the Senate and.... Well, I was, let's say, associated with him the evening the results came in on his defeating Lodge. We were in a little place across from the Federal Building drinking milk--I say that, milk, because it was three in the morning when some of the results came in that showed Dever [Paul A. Dever] was fifty thousand votes behind, that Governor Herter was

going to be elected. At that time the President was ahead by approximately seventy thousand votes, and we still hadn't gotten all the results in from the western part of the state, which is a Republican stronghold. But fortunately we got New Bedford--the newspaper

[-40-]

went with him--and that carried us. He maintained that margin of victory. I think it was approximately seventy thousand votes. So I was with him on that eve. The fellow who replaced me, Joe something. He was from Cambridge. An Italian boy who was a Harvard graduate.

STEWART: Oh, there are two Italian people from Cambridge. DeGuglielmo [Joseph A. DeGuglielmo]?

ROSETTI: Not Joe DeGuglielmo. Joe was the...

STEWART: Galluccio [Anthony Galluccio]?

ROSETTI: Tony Galluccio, that's right.

STEWART: Tony, yes.

ROSETTI: Tony Galluccio. But the other chap you just mentioned, DeGuglielmo. He was in my opinion, very close to the President during the congressional year, not at first, but eventually he did come over. And he was a great help to him. I don't know if that DeGuglielmo was close to Tip O'Neill [Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.] or not, I don't know,

[-41-]

but he was very influential in Cambridge, I know that.

STEWART: Did you take any part in the '52 campaign? Or were you Hatch Act?

ROSETTI: No part. That's right. No, many of my friends took part upon my request, but I didn't participate fully. I had many friends write letters from their wives to the constituents that they knew. But to actually campaign or anything, no, this was prohibited when working for the State Department.

STEWART: You were actually down here working.

ROSETTI: I was up in the Boston field office as an investigator of the State Department doing investigations, and then I came down here in '54 and '55. But '55 I made my home down here.

STEWART: There was a big problem with Italian people in that '52 campaign. Lodge had a fairly good standing.

ROSETTI: Well, Lodge, his brother John [John D. Lodge], married an

[-42-]

Italian girl. She was an actress, and she went over to East Boston and gave a speech in Italian. This, of course, went over quite large. I think it was down--I forget the name of the park. It's off Day Square. But she gave a big, tremendous speech there. And so he did have some Italians who voted for Lodge. But I don't think it hurt the President in any way. But that was nip and tuck there, of course, and... But yet, they were friendly. One night I happened to be in the car when he was driving to debate Lodge. And it was raining cats and dogs. And who pulled up aside of us at a red light was Cabot Lodge himself and... the President...

STEWART: Oh, this was in Waltham?

ROSETTI: We were going to Waltham, and he lowered the window down, they both did, and said, "Isn't this a hell of a way to make a living?" [Laughter] And both smiled and drove off. But

[-43-]

once they got into the debate, it was hot and heavy. So the friendship ended during the debate.

I was just trying to think of some other interesting facts. He was a great man to, shall we say, hold your confidence. There were a few situations where somebody made some strong allegations about his running around with other women. And this man was a Nixonite and is a very influential man, moneywise, in the oil industry.

STEWART: This was in 1960.

ROSETTI: This was, yes, in 1960. And I informed the Senator, at that time the President was Senator, about these allegations, that they could be publicized and bandied around, could hurt him. And he wanted to know who made these statements, and I told him. And he said, "If I challenge this man, would he know from where it came?" And I said, "Yes, but I don't care." I happened to be on an airplane and four

[-44-]

people were sitting at a table, and this man started to make these allegations, and with that I got up....

STEWART: It was a Senator?

ROSETTI: No, it was--actually, he was the Chief of Protocol of the United States government. Wiley Buchanan. And so with that I left the table and went back to the rear of the plane. And Mr. Buchanan came down, and I asked him if he knew my background. And he said yes, he did. And I told him I didn't appreciate his comments in my presence and that even though he outranked me, that I expected this courtesy. And never again did he speak ill of the President when he was Senator. But these remarks, of course, were made when they wanted to know who was going to run for President. It looked like the chances were the Senator, Senator Kennedy, and Senator Nixon, at the time--I guess

[-45-]

Nixon was Vice President at that time. And Mr. Buchanan also wanted the ambassadorship to the Court of St. James. And so he was very bitter. Anyway, those are some of the things that happened and how he handled the situation. He would never challenge the individual if he knew it was going to reflect on me as an individual.

STEWART: What other types of contact did you have with him in the Senate years?

ROSETTI: Well, when he became President, it is my responsibility in this position to protect classified information and to ensure that we don't have leaks of information. So, therefore, when the Secretary of State travels with the President, our men travel with him or with the party to ensure that the documents and treaties that we are carrying are protected. So when I was in Canada, he came into the chancery upstairs and he saw

[-46-]

me standing there and said, "Joe, what are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, looking out for your protection, Sir." And with that he smiled and, of course, introduced me Ambassador Merchant [Livingston T. Merchant], whom I had already known. But he never failed to say hello or to chat or to introduce me, and always made a remark that "Joe Rosetti used to work for me and is now with the U.S. Department of State."

The first day he held his press conference, it was our responsibility here in the Department of State to set up security in cooperation with the Secret Service. And so, therefore, I was in the basement when he arrived. Even the Secretary of State was there. And as soon as he got out of the car, we shook hands, and he introduced me to the Secretary of State, of course. Again the Secretary knew me. But he never failed to do this.

And with President Sukarno, with Prime Minister

[-47-]

Macmillan [Harold Macmillan], he always made his introduction. It was quite difficult, you know. He saw President Sukarno several times and thought there would be a way out of this situation. But on one occasion I had to pick up Sukarno in Los Angeles and then fly with him and take him directly to the White House. And when we got there, of course, the President took Sukarno over to the play yard where Caroline played. And on their way back, President Sukarno said, to the President, "I want you to meet Joe Rosetti who is a very good friend of mine. He's always been with me when I visit the United States." And with that, the President Kennedy said, "Well, Joe used to work for me. I know him. And I'm glad that he is servicing you when you come." Well, this, I think, upset President Sukarno somewhat because I did not confide in him that I formerly worked for the late President and, perhaps, could've created a barrier

[-48-]

between our communication. I don't know, but he had a fallen look after the President...

STEWART: Really. That's interesting.

ROSETTI: I never discussed my association with the late President with anybody. It came out from time to time, but I didn't feel that I should make mention of this to assist me in any way in the State Department. And it worked out nicely that way.

STEWART: As a Senator, you saw him periodically?

ROSETTI: Yes, I used to go up and chat with Ted Reardon after work, and of course, he was always working late, and we'd chat for a little while but not in any great depth on politics or anything of that nature.

STEWART: Is there anything else about the 1960 campaign that you were involved in or had any dealings with?

ROSETTI: No, that's about the extent of it. I did attend a few banquets where he spoke. But that was a highlight, just that evening when we were waiting for

[-49-]

the returns to come in.

STEWART: That was in 1952?

ROSETTI: This was when he ran against Senator Lodge.

STEWART: Yes, yes.

ROSETTI: Yes, in '52.

STEWART: Yes, I wanted to get back to that. Did you stay right till the end? I've heard it--someone once told me that everyone, as the evening wore on, just slowly drifted away, and when the final concession came from Lodge, there were very few people remaining there. A fellow by the name of Patsy Mulkern [Robert J. Mulkern].

ROSETTI: Oh, Patsy Mulkern. Well, Patsy was a rare individual--rare, unique, call it what you may. He was very crude; but the President always enjoyed his company because of the sense of humor, and he just never met an individual like that before in all of his life. The man used profanity a great deal,

[-50-]

but he knew politics, knew everyone in the city, knew what was going on; he was a great earphone, shall we say, and some of the stuff was accurate and some wasn't, of course. And you had to evaluate it. And he used to go down with the President down to the summer home. And Jack liked to have some fruit, and Patsy didn't use a spoon; and he used to use his hand and take it out and eat it and spit out the pits, you know. And Jack would shake his head and say, "Patsy, please, you know, use a spoon." He'd say, "What's wrong? My hands are clean." You know. But that's the type of individual that...

STEWART: He died. Just a...

ROSETTI: I'd heard that he passed on, yes.

STEWART: ...couple of months ago.

ROSETTI: Well, I think the President helped him out a little bit financially. Although he might have been on the city payroll, he didn't make much money. And he was always on the corner

[-51-]

chitchatting with all the politicians and picking up bits of information. At one time, he spoke derogatorily against the Senator, at that time, and there was a slight parting of the ways, but he apologized. He was angry that I guess he didn't get his paychecks or something. And he

came back. But it's best to have a man like that on your side rather than against you because some people do listen. And even though it's not the truth, but they listen.

STEWART: Do you remember any other reactions of foreign presidents or prime ministers to their visits with President Kennedy? Macmillan, for example, he got along quite well with, I think.

ROSETTI: Oh, very, very well. Of course, I wasn't privileged to sit in on these meetings, of course. One very delightful thing happened prior to his assassination. There was a Christopher Columbus celebration at the White House, and we were invited and the entire

[-52-]

family. And we listened to the festivities--the talks and whatnot--and then we were invited to have coffee in another wing in the White House. And upon leaving there, we had the seven running around. We were walking by the Rose Garden, and the President came out and stopped and, "Joe, are these all yours?" And we said, "Yes." And he picked them all up and shook their hands. And this is something they never forgot. No matter how small, they all remember this quite vividly. And I believe that was the last time I actually saw him, it was on that day.

STEWART: But you frequently would meet people coming to see him?

ROSETTI: Well, it was our responsibility. Any head of state at the invitation of the President comes under the responsibility of the Department of State Security to protect them while they are in the United States as his guest. The Secret Service do not have this responsibility.

[-53-]

And so, therefore, we would have to usher them into the White House, but then the Secret Service would take over, and we just stand in the wing. But once he left the White House or came over here, well, traveled throughout the fifty states, it was our responsibility to ensure that their trip went well, and we had no problems because there are many threats on these dignitaries when they come to the United States. No, Macmillan was when I had to take him up to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], he made a speech up there and then we flew back that same night, and then the next morning met the President, of course. But Sukarno and King Hussein of Jordan and, of course, the King and Queen of Greece, and then the King and Queen of England, I mean the Queen of England and Prince Philip.

STEWART: The Shah of Iran [Mohammad Reza Pahlavi] came and....

ROSETTI: The Shah, I never had that assignment, the Shah. But in the old days he wasn't very

[-54-]

controversial; he was sort of a glamour boy. Of course, the last time he came in we had many demonstrations against him by the Iranian students which creates a great deal of problems for us and for the Metropolitan Police department, too.

STEWART: Kennedy got along quite well with the Shah, I think. It's often been said that, you know, on a personal basis he got along with those people who were very successful politicians in their own country; he had a compatibility, I think, like the fellow from the Ivory Coast who was recently here, President Houphouët-Boigny [Félix Houphouët-Boigny].

ROSETTI: Well, I'm not in that business anymore, but those are the ones I remember specifically. Again, the first press conference he ever had when he came in after his press conference he had to make a speech, give a speech. And right away he said, "Joe, call Evelyn Lincoln and make sure that that speech is sent over

[-55-]

before the press conference is over." I said, "Yes, Mr. President. I'll take care of it." With that I saw Jim Rowley [James J. Rowley] who was then the chief of the Secret Service, and I said, "Jim, we're going to have problems. The President still thinks I'm on his staff. I'm not, but if he gives me an order, it's got to be done. I don't care how or by whom. But I think, such as just happened," I said, "you better get on the phone, call Evelyn Lincoln, get a car over here with that copy of the speech. And you present it to him. Then you tell the President any further communications of this nature should come through you, not through Joe Rosetti, because we could get into a great bind, especially if somebody dropped the ball, shall we say." And so we sort of nipped this at the bud.

STEWART: There were never any problems after that?

ROSETTI: No, none whatsoever.

[-56-]

STEWART: Well, that's just about all the questions I have. Is there anything else you can think of?

ROSETTI: No, I suppose after you leave, John, there'd be a thousand little things that would come to mind, or incidents, that might have occurred. But

that's about all I have to say. It was a great shock of course when I heard about the assassination; I didn't believe it. I must know how Ken O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] felt and Dave Powers, being with him and so close. The impact it had on them must have been tremendous.

STEWART: Did you, during the funeral... At the time of the funeral, were you still in the business of handling the foreign dignitaries?

ROSETTI: No, no.

STEWART: You didn't get involved [ILLEGIBLE]

ROSETTI: With de Gaulle [Charles de Gaulle] and Selassie [Haile Selassie] and all that group. It was handled by [ILLEGIBLE]

[-57-]

came from. And that was quite an operation for them. No, my role, shall we say, during that period was sort of in the background. I didn't come out openly or anything like that.

STEWART: Do you see any great changes in the State Department, you know, in comparison with under the Eisenhower Administration?

ROSETTI: Oh, yes. There has to be because when President Eisenhower was there, he gave John Foster Dulles a great deal of... John Foster Dulles used to go to a conference overseas, and we were responsible traveling with him. And whatever he said went. He came back and reported to the President, "This is the decision I made."--whether it would be good or bad. But John Foster Dulles was a very hard-nosed Secretary of State, a very warm man within. He was always very concerned about his wife on these trips, especially when we had threats against them. But I think that when Mr. Herter

[-58-]

took over as Secretary of State, there was a general change in his approach to our foreign policy, a softer approach I would say. I think he was criticized for this because it was pretty difficult following the footsteps of Mr. Dulles.

However, during the late President's Administration, Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk], I think, has done a wonderful job. His is a most difficult position for the simple reason that, of course, we've had troubles all over the world. And I think that Secretary Rusk has helped out President Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] tremendously, too. And I doubt very much if he'll stay on, according to comments, after the elections of '68. I think he'd go back most likely to Rockefeller [The Rockefeller Foundation] where he could make a more

lucrative livelihood. And I think he's dedicated himself above and beyond the call of a patriotic citizen, shall we say.

STEWART: But could you see a change as far as the

[-59-]

internal operations of the Department or the general attitudes or morale of people during the Kennedy Administration?

ROSETTI: You had to realize that eight years the Republicans were in. Then a complete transition takes place. And the transition was slow. And then it leveled off. And then, of course, the Bay of Pigs and all that sort of business came about. My personal observation: the morale was pretty good in the State Department, people settled down, people knew their direction. But to go into any depth of the morale of the State Department, I couldn't expound on that although the atmosphere was one of, shall we say, contentment. And so I'm not in that circle where I would...

STEWART: No, no. I just meant your own observations of, you know, your own office.

ROSETTI: Oh, our own office. Of course, a lot of people know that I was associated, and so most of their comments would be favorable to him in my presence. But, for example, let me go back

[-60-]

to an incident when the late President was running for Congress.

My father-in-law, who is since deceased, became a Democrat because of David I. Walsh, but normally he was committed to the Republican way of life. And he never had a good word to say about the Congressman until he found out I was going to be associated with him. Well, that's because he had dealings in the old days with Joseph P. in the theater business when a lot of people, when money was hard to come by in '33 and that era bought stock and he was one of the ones that bought stock. And then all of a sudden Mr. Joseph P. Kennedy decided to sell. And certain people got word to sell, and other people got word to buy. Well, my father-in-law sold and somebody else bought, and when they bought, the stock went up. And he felt as though that this was underhanded, and he felt, like a lot of people felt, that

[-61-]

the late President would be run by his father in any decisions he might make whether as Congressman, Senator, or President, you see. But this soon became evident to all, that he spoke on his own, made his own decisions. He might have conferred with his father and his

brothers to get a general reading from them whether he was taking the right direction or not, **but** I think he came--well, shall we say, he changed the minds of a lot of people, that he was standing on his own two feet.

So I just wanted to bring this out because a lot of people felt this way, but I think he changed their minds when he became President and the job he was doing, especially when he blockaded Cuba. Because of the impact and the repercussions that he was going to get, he knew he was going to get, you see.

John, that's about all I have to say and I thank you for this opportunity. I'm sorry I jumped around so much. It was difficult to remember these...

STEWART: That's alright. Thank you.

[-62-]