

Joseph F. Feeney Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 10/5/1976
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Feeney, Chief Justice, Boston Municipal Court (1986 - 1991); Associate Justice, Boston Municipal Court (1982 - 1986); Aide to Speaker John W. McCormack, Massachusetts, discusses Kennedy's congressional campaigns, his early legislation issues as a young congressman, and the 1960 Democratic National Convention, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Joseph F. Feeney

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Joseph F. Feeney – JFK #1

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First Oral History Interview

with

JOSEPH F. FEENEY

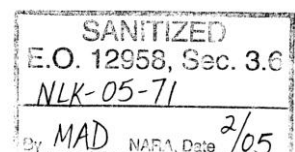
October 5, 1976
Boston, Massachusetts

By Bill Hartigan

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HARTIGAN:office of Judge Joseph Feeny on State Street in Boston. Judge Feeny has been active in Boston, Massachusetts and national politics for as long as I can remember and probably before the interview is over he may spell it out in the terms of years for me. Judge Feeny has been a confidant and advisor to the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, John McCormack [John William McCormack]. Judge Feeny's association with Congressman McCormack goes back before the congressman was a Speaker. He's a friend of the late president's since he first arrived in Washington, D.C. as a freshman congressman. He also is a close member, friend of the members of Congress and also President Kennedy's [John F. Kennedy] congressional staff in the early days of his terms in Washington. Judge Feeny, when did you first meet the President Kennedy?

FEENEY: Bill, I think I first met the president when he came to our office in Boston. When I say our office I mean Speaker John McCormack's office, who was then the majority leader in the House of Representatives in the Congress of the United States. John McCormack, as you well know, through the years had been a life long friend of the president's late father, Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.]. And the ambassador had called John McCormack on the telephone and asked him if he would see the president who then was recently out of the Navy, or had been out of the Navy, and had indicated that he was thinking



of running for Congress. John McCormack and Ambassador Kennedy had talked at that time, and it -- the president came up to see John McCormack in our old office in 1408, Suite 1408 in the then Federal Building, which coincidentally is now

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called the John W. McCormack Post Office and Court House in Post Office Square in Boston. I think at that time, if I recall correctly, Billy Sutton [William J. Sutton] accompanied him. I think, excuse me, his first time that he came to the office he came alone, and a subsequent visit he came with Billy Sutton to our office.

HARTIGAN: Was this before he ran?

FEENEY: I think this was before he ran, yes. If my memory serves me correctly, Bill, this was before he ran for Congress, and he had indicated to John McCormack that he was thinking of running for Congress and, as you know, I was John McCormack's secretary at that time. And they sat in the inside office and chatted for awhile. As I recall, the humorous aspect of the visit was that the president addressed John McCormack, who was then majority leader in Congress, as Mr. McCormack, in that delightful way of speaking that the late president had. It was a very respectful approach. As I recall it, my first meeting with the then Jack Kennedy, he had been in the Navy, and I had been in the Navy and we chatted about the Navy while he was waiting to see Mr. McCormack. And then he went in.

And he had indicated his--Mr. McCormack had indicated his friendship and respect for his father, and I sat with them for awhile and excused myself and they chatted in private. But I recall, not only in that meeting but subsequent meetings, Bill, the Speaker use to chat with the president, even when he was in Congress, about his grandfather, Mayor John F. Fitzgerald [John Francis "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald], who, as you know, used to visit in John McCormack's office all the time, when he came in to Washington, and used to take over the office as was his want. The president, I always felt, was always delighted to chat with Mr. McCormack because he, the Speaker, would tell him of anecdotes involving John F. Fitzgerald which I'm sure he couldn't have received from his family because they were not in the political arena and--to the extent, at that time, that they later became involved. But I was always impressed, Bill, with the president's very respectful admiration of John McCormack. And I think it was--despite what you and I later knew to come about between campaigns--that I think, I always believed very strongly that the president had great respect and affection for Mr. McCormack, despite the fact that they differed politically, as you and I knew, later on, on some things. But as your good friend and mine, Ken O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], often said, that he knew better, that Jack Kennedy had great affection and respect for Mr. McCormack.

HARTIGAN: This first meeting, would you say that it was the ambassador that wanted the-- Jack Kennedy to see the Speaker?

FEENEY: Oh, I know it was.

HARTIGAN: Prior to his deciding to run for the Congress?

FEENEY: Oh, yes. I think that he--as you know from way back, the ambassador and John McCormack had a very warm relationship. I recall later on in years, even when Jack Kennedy was running for president, that almost every Monday at noontime the ambassador would be on the long distance phone talking to John McCormack

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and touch base with him. And I recall through my years in Washington all the way back to the forties, the early forties, the ambassador use to come into our office and he and John McCormack would sit for long periods of time in the parliamentarian's office, cloistered with the whole world shut out, and touch base and go over things. And they had a great--a very warm relationship between the ambassador and John McCormack all through the years. And as indicative of the fact: I was sitting in the office with John McCormack, in the parliamentarian's office, when--the year that John McCormack informed the ambassador.... He had stopped off in Washington, and as you recall, the ambassador use to be dressed in black and had that black homburg hat and looked very distinguished--John McCormack indicated to him that they had asked him to run for the Senate way back in the forties and he thought that the ambassador, Joseph P. Kennedy, should be the nominee. And that was the year Joe Casey [Joseph E. Casey] ran. And the first offer for a public figure to be the candidate of the Democratic party at that time was John McCormack's suggestion that he would support Joseph P. Kennedy for nomination.

HARTIGAN: That's interesting.

FEENEY: Yeah.

HARTIGAN: Did the Speaker relate to you any of the conversation he had with the late president in that first meeting?

FEENEY: Well, I heard some of the conversations that--not only that first meeting but subsequent; before Jack Kennedy became an active candidate--he talked about who are the people he should see in the district. You remember that has been Congressman Tom Flaherty's [Thomas A. Flaherty] district. And it was Charlestown and East Boston, what we use to call the old eleventh district, and John McCormack's was the twelfth, and it was contiguous to it. So you had the North End in it and Charlestown and East Boston and then parts of Cambridge. But John McCormack relayed to him people that he should see in the district, and that he ought to talk with certain leaders in the communities. Because, despite the fact John McCormack's district was South Boston and Dorchester and Jamaica Plain and Hyde Park in those days, he always--as you recall, from your days in the state committee--he had a close relationship with the whole city and maintained his affinity with people in the leaders in the other parts of the

state. And particularly in the congressional districts, because he was always interested in the district and particularly because he was the Democratic leader of the House and always wanted to make sure that that district was a Democratic district. And if you recall, that was the same district that James Michael Curley had been the congressman even though he didn't live in it. And Tom Eliot [Thomas Hopkinson Eliot] had been the congressman from that district for a few years. So the Speaker had a great deal, a fund of knowledge concerning people who were in the district. And I know that he had indicated to Jack Kennedy, at that time, people he should see, and made suggestions to him as to people he should touch base with to get the feel of the district. And how he should plan his campaign if he were going to ultimately decide to run. And I think that from that almost initial meeting I think Jack Kennedy developed this respect for the political sagacity of John McCormack.

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HARTIGAN: Did they discuss any potential opponents that he might run up against in this campaign?

FEENEY: No, I don't think that John McCormack would discuss.... [In] other words, he always believed, himself, in running affirmative campaigns, as you recall, and that would not be his *modus operandi* to be worried about who was going to be the opponent. He always believed in affirmative campaigns and I'm sure this is what he told Jack at that time. That Jack should concentrate on his own efforts and his policies that he would advocate in that particular district. And of course he pointed out, I know that he pointed out from discussions with him, you know, that labor was very important in that type of a district. And even though he had the Cambridge ties and the Harvard yard ties, that nevertheless the Italian block was important in that particular district and he ought to cultivate friends in, of Italian heritage. And also the fact that Charlestown was very important and that he ought to have a solid base from which to develop a foundation on which to run.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall the, the staff that he had around at that time?

FEENEY: Yes, I recall the staff. But speaking of his, Jack's, first campaigns, recall to mind, Bill, that there are some of the names that you and I know came later on. The very first campaign I recall that, in Charlestown, the.... One of the fellows that became very active, because we had our ties with labor, was a name that I've rarely seen involved in the so-called historical accounts of Jack's start in politics. In.... For the Congress. I recall that Bill McNamara, Billy McNamara, was the business agent, or delegate as they called them in those days, for the longshoremen's union. And he, in Charlestown, and if I recall correctly--I think Billy Sutton would have to attest to this--that McNamara and, I think it was Frank Dobey, whose brother, Paul, is still an official of the longshoremen's union--but, Jack became very friendly with the longshoremen. And it was through Billy McNamara, who was a delegate or business agent, and he and Frank Dobey took Jack around the town. And they were two of the very first people, I think, that if you look back, who took this Harvardian, if you will, these diamonds

in the rough as I like to call them, who walked around the city of Boston and the Charlestown section and the dock section with Jack Kennedy, in his first campaign. And I've rarely, if ever, seen their names mentioned in any of the historical accounts of people who, you know, were with Jack at the beginning. And I would think that you'd have to go back and check some of the notes, but--I was just a kid in those days--but I recall that those fellows were among the very first that we were involved with, you know.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall any, any other names of people that, who, to date, were...

FEENEY: Well Billy McNamara is, has passed away. His son, incidentally, by the way, right now, is the business agent and delegate for the longshoremen and the port's union and now lives in John McCormack's congressional district. We got him back. [Laughter] In his staff.... I remember his staff being, when he first came to Washington, as you recall, I think Bill Mullen [William Mullins], who was the political editor of the old *Boston*

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Herald in those days, had recommended me and wrote me a letter and said that Jack Kennedy had been elected to Congress, he was coming down, that he recommended that I be his secretary. And I had lunch with Jack Kennedy at that time, and--when he did come down. But I recall that I indicated to him that I had been with Mr. McCormack, and I was going to school at that time and that I felt that, as you know, John McCormack treated me as a son practically, because he had no children, and I had a very close personal relationship to him, and felt that it would not be propitious for me to. But I indicated to him that John McCormack's staff was going to have to be reduced because the Democrats had taken over the Demo--Republicans had taken over in that Congress. And I indicated to him that Mary McCarthy, of our office, who was a crackerjack executive secretary, might be available. And I--she knew Washington because she had worked in our office for a number of years. And the young congressman said he wanted to meet her and he came into our office and we introduced him to Mary McCarthy. And she went to work with him and stayed with him through the years [REDACTED]

And "Ted" Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] of course, came down at that time, who became Jack's chief secretary. And Billy Sutton, of course, came down as Jack's assistant secretary. Ted came to our office and with Jean Kenneally's tutelage and my own, we proceeded to explain to Ted the different people and the different government departments who would be of assistance to him. If they had a call from the Veteran's Administration we indicated who they should call. If he had a civil service problem we indicated who would be the contact there. This was in the days long before they had what they now call legislative liaison offices for most government departments.

But we indicated there was a real expert down at the civil service commission, William Hull, who had been executive assistant for a number of years, was a close friend of Jean Kenneally's, and we made available to Jack's staff, to Ted and to Billy Sutton--and of

course Mary McCarthy had access to all of our so-called contacts--and we turned all of those names over to Ted and to Billy. And Mary, of course, was able to be of, in my judgment, invaluable assistance to Jack Kennedy when he got started, because you know what a bureaucratic labyrinth Washington is. And it's most helpful to a young congressman to have an experienced secretary who can reach in to take care of the day to day requests and inquiries from his congressional district. And when Jack came down he sat with John McCormack many, many times, and John McCormack made available to Jack Kennedy the information, and so did Jean Kenneally and I, of how we handled our office. And I think he patterned his *modus operandi* in his own congressional office the way John McCormack handled his office. As we said one time, you know, the old man must be doing something right, he's been around for a long time. So I think Jack benefited from his experience.

But Jack Kennedy, not only then but later on, always maintained his own independence and it always seemed to me that Jack Kennedy was always his own man. He was not one to be dictated to, I always had that impression, and he had his own ideas. And despite what many, or some--let me not say many--some people thought, that he was not the shining light of the Congress, I think he felt frustrated in the Congress because, even more so than now with the change in the rules, the House of Representative paid so much attention to seniority, et cetera. And I think Jack Kennedy in those days felt it was inhibiting to him. And he didn't have enough seniority, in those days, to have a leadership position or a chairmanship. And I think that's one of the

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reasons why he ran for the Senate in 1952, because he felt he would have a better opportunity to express himself and do his own thing, so to speak.

HARTIGAN: The Speaker, in that Congress that President Kennedy came in as a freshman in, he was, a minority leader?

FEENEY: John McCormack?

HARTIGAN: Yes.

FEENEY: John McCormack was the, became the--had been the majority leader, then he became the Democratic whip and Sam Rayburn [Sam Rayburn] dropped down to majority leader. And then the following session of Congress, John McCormack became the majority leader again and Sam Rayburn became the Speaker.

HARTIGAN: Speaker.

FEENEY: I think during the period Jack Kennedy was down there, Joe Martin [Joseph William Martin, Jr.] was the Speaker for a term and then the Democrats took over. And subsequently the Republicans won again. And the Democrats took over and have maintained the leadership positions ever since.

HARTIGAN: The Speaker then, I'm assuming, had some influence over the then Congressman Kennedy in terms of the committees that he was placed on.

FEENEY: Oh, yes. I think Joe Martin said it best--who was from Massachusetts as you recall, and was a Republican leader and later Republican speaker--said it best when he said, "As the leader and the Speaker, no one, no member of Congress in my party, became a member of a committee if I objected." So, whereas the Democratic members to committees were elected by the Democratic members of the Ways and Means Committee in those days, nevertheless.... And the leadership, whether it was the Speaker, Sam Rayburn, and the Democratic leader of John McCormack, or whether it was the Democratic leader of, as Sam Rayburn, and the Democratic whip as John McCormack, which were the elected positions and--the whip had been appointed, of course, by the leader--but the leader was elected by the whole Democratic caucus. They had the input into the Democratic members of the Ways and Means Committee who elected each member of Congress to a committee. Now once they were on a committee it was almost routine that they would go back to the same committee and follow the seniority rule, in those days.

HARTIGAN: How do you recall the Speaker evaluating the activities of the then freshman Senator Kennedy, uh, Congressman Kennedy, in terms of the activity that first year?

FEENEY: I... As you recall from your years in Washington, Bill, a freshman congressman has very little input at that time, and--nowadays the rules are

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changed so that they have an opportunity to participate more actively than they did in those days. The rule almost, the unwritten rule in those days, was that a freshman member of Congress should be seen but not heard, at least not very often. And Jack Kennedy, in my judgment, always did his homework. Whenever he got up to say anything he was usually well prepared. He didn't participate in every session, or every meeting of the House, or every meeting of the committee. Usually he participated when he had some contribution to make. And I, I think that after he had been elected for several terms he became much more interested in the Congress than he was his first year. I think the first term he was just feeling his oats, so to speak.

HARTIGAN: His.... The record seems to indicate that his activities seem to center around the Labor Committee.

FEENEY: Yes. I think that was his first committee, wasn't it. It was then called Labor and Education Committee. And I think this was one of the reasons that he became such an expert in the field of education. And the.... And of course, when he later became president I think the record will prove that he and President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] made more marked contribution in the field of education, as the leaders of our country, than all of the presidents before them put together. I think his early years in the House, service on that committee, formed a pattern for his interest in the field of education. And of course, as you well know too, Bill, he, he was a studious person, as indicated by the fact he wrote his thesis on *Why England Slept*, as a very young man, which he wrote, I guess, while he was over in England with his father.

HARTIGAN: The leadership in the party, what was their attitude toward him, do you recall? In terms of his early days in the Congress.

FEENEY: Oh, I think, I think everybody would have to agree that he was very well liked. He had some warm friends down there, as you recall, you know. I recall George Smathers [George A. Smathers] was a close friend of his, who was a young congressman from Florida; and Torby Macdonald [Torbert H. Macdonald] who had served with him in Harvard, joined him down there while he was in the Congress. And after Torby's service with the National Labor Relations board, he ran for Congress, which, I guess was his first political office. He emulated Jack Kennedy in coming down to Congress. But he had a group of young congressmen who seemingly gathered together. And I don't think there was any question that Jack Kennedy was their leader, even though it was a very small group, and they became close personal friends as evidence in the subsequent years.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall any other congressmen in that freshman class other than Smathers and...

FEENEY: Oh sure. I remember he became very good friends with Bill Green [William Joseph Green, Jr.] from Philadelphia who later became the Democratic leader in...

HARTIGAN: Philadelphia.

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FEENEY: Yeah, Philadelphia. And going back, he became friendly with Vito Marcantonio [Vito Anthony Marcantonio], I recall, and who had been accused of being a wild-eyed leftist, as you recall, in that time, but nevertheless a competent public figure, in my judgment. I think Jack Kennedy always respected ability even though he may have differed with the views. His desire for excellence, in my judgment, was even apparent in those days. If somebody had talent and ability, Jack Kennedy, in my judgment, seemed to gravitate towards them. He liked competence.

HARTIGAN: I notice, for the record, that he and....

FEENEY: By the way, I might add that I think his service on the Labor Committee stood him in good stead in later years because he got to know all of the labor leaders all over the country. And that certainly inured to his benefit later on, and he made fast friends. I think anybody who had any relationship with Jack Kennedy liked him because he had such a warm personality. And I think the friendships that he made in those early years stood him in good stead and his voting record on the committee was very much pro labor. And he became an expert in the field, as witness the great job he did subsequently in the Senate when he handled the labor bill on the floor all through those many, many months. Unfortunately Ladrum [Philip M. Ladrum] and Griffin [Robert P. Griffin] had more input into it than Jack Kennedy wanted, but in the, in the--he wanted to reform the labor unions in order for them to become more democratic. And some of his ideas were excellent. I think that his advocacy of that bill caused the other members of the Congress to have much greater respect for him than they had earlier because he had not been so active in taking leadership in advocating legislation.

HARTIGAN: The threat of labor through his whole career prompts a question. Do you know whether or not this was his first choice of committees, or was this one that he was assigned to? It seems to me that...

FEENEY: I don't know. I think.... I don't know where the thought permeates, or how the thought permeates the mind. I think he was, indicated he was interested in Foreign Relations Committee of the House. Is that the thought that strikes you? And it was--he didn't have the seniority to warrant him getting a position on that committee in his first term, which was not uncommon. The.... Usually positions on the major committees in those days were given to people with more seniority. But I think that was his first choice, but I.... And I.... I honestly, Bill, can't tell you why I recall that, but....

HARTIGAN: Did you think it was a bit unusual that on April 16th, in 1947, that, that he had made several speeches on the Labor Management Relation Act of 1947? That was pretty soon for a freshman congressman to be into the thick of a, of an issue like that.

FEENEY: Well, that was the so-called Taft-Hartley Act in those days, wasn't it?

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HARTIGAN: I think it eventually stemmed out of that, the--it was the Labor Management Relation Act of 1947...

FEENEY: Yeah, that was the Taft-Hartley Act.

HARTIGAN: And I know that he, his position, he was against, and fought very vigorously against, the terms welfare and interest versus the terms health and safety.

FEENEY: Uh huh.

HARTIGAN: And as the debate proceeded they were trying desperately to get him to concede these two words. And he fought bitterly over it and was successful in keeping it. They wanted him to change health and safety for welfare and interest, and he said they weren't related.

FEENEY: Yeah.

HARTIGAN: But as a freshman, that seemed to me to be quite a feat.

FEENEY: Yeah. Yes, I agree. It--not too many freshman got that active that early in their career, as I recall it. And I spent over fifteen years down there in Washington, and eight of which I was legislative clerk of the House, as you remember, and so I was on the floor every week. And Jack was active in the labor field because he came out of that committee. But I think that the district that he represented was a solidly labor district and I think that he had developed such good friends in his initial campaign with labor representatives who worked hard for him. And I think he felt that he had an obligation to improve the lot in life of the laboring class.

HARTIGAN: Looking back, if it wasn't done by design, it certainly was the right step to take even if it was by accident. I'm not quite sure, because your observations in terms of--he certainly needed labor through his whole career. And labor.... And he had earned...

FEENEY: And he had earned their respect early in his career.

HARTIGAN: So it.... And the interest he took in it, according to the record, seemed.... That's why I asked the question whether it was his choice or not. I would--I'm guessing that it probably was. I'm sure we could find out from the record, but....

FEENEY: I honestly don't know. But I, I know that John McCormack had talked to him and thought that coming from the district that he did, that Labor and Education was an excellent committee. And, of course, I think that with Jack's background about, you know, as to *Why England Slept*, and so forth, he had a good knowledge for a freshman congressman of foreign affairs. And as you know, he later became

very much interested in foreign affairs, and participated in the.... I recall very vividly in, when there were appropriation bills, going all the way back to the founding of the state of Israel, Jack Kennedy was a very knowledgeable participant in legislation affecting Israel. And I'm sure that the record will show that he had considerable influence in connection with some of that legislation.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall any other major piece of legislation during his early years that he got his teeth into?

FEENEY: Off the top of my head--and, you know, you come upon me without any opportunity to go back over some of the data that I accumulated from my years there, but--I, I would say that Jack Kennedy got involved in almost all legislation involving foreign affairs. You know, there are two facets to foreign affair's legislation that most people are not familiar with. First of all there has to be the authorization by the Congress for the particular objective and then, subsequently, the appropriation. So there's a two-pronged effort in the House of Representatives. And as you know, all appropriations must initiate in the House and therefore the ground work has to be laid, so to speak, in order to cause the ultimate result to come into fruition. You have to fight like heck for the authorization of the bill to create the entity and then you have to fight to get the appropriation to fund it in order to make it go. And I recall on so many of the foreign aid bills there would be a fight in the authorization because you had a much more, in my judgment, reactionary Congress in those days than you do today. And almost--you had a, the aftermath of a, an isolationist period after World War II. Everything that was enacted for effective legislation had to be a continual battle in order to make the thing work. You know, the Marshall Plan, the foreign aid, and so forth, to bring Europe up out of the doldrums of World War II, the aftermath of World War II. And I think Jack Kennedy played a very important part in that, even though he may not have received the publicity and the acclaim, he was an active member of the House and I think the congressional record may not, may prove, will prove that. But more important, his presence and his thinking influenced the younger members of Congress.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall any--his activities. What, that you recall.... You're bringing to my memory a particular floor speech he made on aid to Italy for rebuilding Italy after World War....

FEENEY: Well, this is one of..

HARTIGAN: Yeah, because....

FEENEY: ...the points that I alluded to, that he had this, in my judgment, superior knowledge of foreign affairs for which he never, in my judgment, received credit by people in this state or elsewhere. He was a good student and possessed knowledge far superior to that of the average member of Congress. And he became active, as I say, in foreign affairs to the extent that he was able to influence legislation such as that that you just mentioned.

HARTIGAN: Just reading, to refresh your memory, a few of the titles of the speeches he's made while he was a, in his first years in the Congress. We mentioned the Labor-Management Relations Act which ultimately, I believe you said, probably was a forerunner of the Taft-Hartley Act.

FEENEY: Was the Taft-Hartley Act. Yeah. That's what the legal title is, Labor Management Relations Act.

HARTIGAN: And the Rent, the Housing and Rent Control Act of 1947, also. Then the appropriation for school lunch program. As I read them off if you recall any...

FEENEY: Well, the....

HARTIGAN: ...stories about any of these?

FEENEY: I don't recall any particular stories, but I recall meetings that were held in John McCormack's office, as the Democratic whip and a leader.

HARTIGAN: Yes.

FEENEY: And, you know, you had some very able members of Congress who were there at that time. And you, you had to have a coordinated effort for what we like to call progressive legislation. And Jack Kennedy--I remember many of the meetings in John McCormack's office, because he was the Democratic leader and the Democratic whip through that period, the meetings were usually held in his office. And, as you recall, my desk was in the same room as John McCormack's desk, so I was usually present. And Jack and Congressman Phil Philbin [Philip Joseph Philbin], whom you remember, and Harold Donohue [Harold Daniel Donohue] of Worcester, and Phil Philbin of Clinton, and, back in those days Foster Furcolo was there, for about ten years during the period that Jack Kennedy was there. There was a coordinated effort by the Massachusetts group, who I thought had, probably, some of the most able members of Congress in their delegation, for progressive legislation. And the school lunch program was the, part of the progressive legislation that came out of some of those meetings. And the interesting thing is that they worked it so that the private schools were to receive the benefit of the school lunch program and there was quite a hassle over that, as I recall it, where they talked about the separation of church and state, and they worked it out between them as an effort to become a, a--they indicated that the lunches were for all school children, as differentiated between private and public, you know.

HARTIGAN: The, the airline subsidies was a big issue in, in his first years in the Congress, and it seems to be quite an issue even today. Were you aware of any of the...?

FEENEY: No, I was not. I didn't have that much...

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HARTIGAN: What about the housing?

FEENEY: Well, Jack Kennedy--we had a very special knowledge on housing and he worked hard for the housing program, as I recall it--he was very much interested in housing.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall the, the problems with the, with the veterans that he ran into in the Congress in his early years?

FEENEY: No, I don't. No. I remember that he did have a problem with, on veteran's preference. And there was some question as to his support of veteran's preference in those days, but I have a faint memory of it.

Can I hold you here, Bill?

[INTERRUPTION]

FEENEY: ...put that on yet. What was his name? Joe Spic, was his phony head of the Polish club.

HARTIGAN: The.... Some of the other titles that might refresh your memory, Judge, in the 1947, '48. The extension of the rent controls?

FEENEY: Yes, I recall, I recall that.

HARTIGAN: Any interesting observations from that?

FEENEY: Well, I, I recall that that was the kind of liberal legislation of interest to the consumer that Jack Kennedy would be interested in. He.... They had a great congressman from Kentucky, Brent Spence, who was not a great debater but, as I recall it, Jack Kennedy...

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

HARTIGAN: Begin now if you want to continue where we left off.

FEENEY: Well, if you recall, Bill, the--back in the years of '49 and '50 and along, and those periods of '51 and so forth, that the end of World War II there was considerable labor legislation in that period. The Labor, National Labor Relations Act of '49, and again there was a subsequent labor act that Jack Kennedy got involved in, and the Housing Act of 1949. And I think it follows through with his talks with reference to the combination of labor and education. He participated very vigorously in the Minimum Wage Bill advocating an increase in minimum wage, and he participated in the fight for providing assistance to schools because of the impact of the national defense program. As you remember, the national defense program provided for these large military camps and yet there was no funding available for providing for education to people who were in those defense, so-called defense reservations, as they call them in the defense areas. And the combination of labor and education out of Jack's committee was something that he became, in my judgment, very much an expert. And back in those years, I recall, that he was

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very active, a very active member of the Labor and Education Committee because that was, those were the two fields in which he was primarily concerned. And as it follows, the labor and education, you needed the appropriations for those bills as well as the authorizations. And if you look through his records you find that he spoke very actively in the creation of educational programs and the appropriations for those programs as well as the National Labor Relations Act.

HARTIGAN: In '52, do you recall any of his activities with reference to the, to the Health of America?

FEENEY: No, I don't recall that so much. But I, I do recall in that period of time there were several bills that were of particular interest to him. He became very active in the Universal Military Training Act which, if you remember, was the extension of the Selective Service Act.

HARTIGAN: Some of these things, some of these titles, certainly indicate that the problems that they're discussing in the Congress today certainly are not new.

FEENEY: No. They were new in those days after World War II. If looking at the record again of Jack's service in the House of Representatives in the 82nd Congress, he indicated that the--and he even spoke about the federal government giving up its rights to lands out to the three mile limit. Here we are now in 1976 talking about the two hundred miles. And now even in Massachusetts they're

digging off the Georges Banks and exploring for oil there. It's, it's--you can look back and think that way back in 1952 Jack Kennedy was talking about the states being involved of California, Texas, and Louisiana.... And he indicated at that time his knowledge that the estimates of oil off those shores would run into billions of dollars. And Jack Kennedy at that time thought that the nation as a whole should benefit rather than just a small group. And he thought that way back then, he advocated the earmarking of that aid for education. And it's significant, I think, that he was arguing in those days for help centers under what we use to call the old Hill-Burton Act which was a bill that provided incentive for the building of hospitals. So I think that looking at those bills indicates his liberal bent, if you will, of what we called liberal in those days. The so-called conservative and Republican members of Congress fought him vigorously and objected to the passage of that legislation. And obviously he was years ahead of his time, in retrospect.

HARTIGAN: Moving on, that brings us up through 1952. Coming into 1953 when he was in the...

FEENEY: He went to the Senate...

HARTIGAN: Yeah.

FEENEY: You remember in '52, in that memorable campaign that we were all involved in at that time.

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HARTIGAN: Do you recall anything at all before we move into his Senate career about the election of 1952?

FEENEY: Yes, I, I recall John McCormack, strangely enough, as you know, had always had a great affinity for the people of the Jewish faith. And he had close ties because John McCormack's background was such that from way back in the beginning he became identified with some of the leaders of the Zionist cause like the late Elihu Stone [Elihu David Stone], who had been assistant United States attorney and a prominent leader in the Jewish community. As was our old friend Rabbi Joseph Shubow who became, was, in later years, the rabbi of Temple Shalom out in, B'nai Moshe out in Brighton or Brookline. And there were two of his friends, Max Kvatzuik, as I remember, was one of the leaders of the Zionist cause. And through the years John McCormack had a close identification with them, and he developed that relationship and Jack Kennedy became identified with them. And in 1952 when there were allegations of Jack Kennedy's so-called lukewarm support for the cause of Israel--and I think this had something to do with his late father's identification with the problem--John McCormack came to the fore. And Jack Kennedy--and indicated too--I recall, specifically his speech at the, John McCormack's speech at the Democratic State Convention strongly urging the election of Jack Kennedy to the Senate because he felt that Jack Kennedy had made marked contributions to the cause of Israel. And I recall that John McCormack sent a letter out to

almost everybody in the state who was a member of the Jewish faith and he called upon his friends in the Jewish community to support Jack Kennedy in that campaign. And I think that his advocacy of Jack Kennedy's cause was a marked contribution at that time. And I know Jack Kennedy gave John McCormack a great deal of credit for his win at that time. Because if you recall, Jack Kennedy ran against Henry Cabot Lodge at that time and Jack Kennedy defeated Henry Cabot Lodge somewhere in vicinity of sixty thousand, odd thousand votes, as I recall it. And it was a close and a very hard fought campaign.

HARTIGAN: With reference to some of his activities. Do you have any in--with reference to the campaign activities in the 1952 campaign--do you recollect anything else that would be of interest to....

[INTERRUPTION]

HARTIGAN: Do you recall any other names that, of that, in the course of our conversation?

FEENEY: I think that in the '52 campaign the younger element who were in my age group, who were active with Jack Kennedy in those years. I recall Mark Dalton [Mark J. Dalton], who later became the counsel and one of the leaders of the teacher's union, Mark Dalton was very active with Jack. And Dick Maguire, who later went with the president on his White House staff as one of his counselors, or anonymous assistants as they called it in those days. And I guess those were the years when fellows like Arthur Garrity [Wendell Arthur Garrity, Jr.], who's now the federal judge of busing fame, became involved with Jack Kennedy back in those days. I recall Dick McGuire was sort of the leader of the young lawyers who had the Harvard ties. And, of course, I remember well, Kenny O'Donnell was active with Jack in those years, together with

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so many of the people who had been with him in the congressional fights. But, Bill Connors [William F. Connors] and names that I can't recall, were active for Jack in that '52 campaign.

HARTIGAN: After he moved to the Senate, did you follow his career as closely as you did in the House?

FEENEY: Well, not to the, not as close as we were in the House, but he always maintained a close relationship with Speaker McCormack. John McCormack was then the Democratic leader again and they maintained a good relationship, in my judgment. They--and it was always a sort of a relationship as one who would be more senior. I recall that Senator Kennedy, even as the United States Senator, always addressed John McCormack as Mr. McCormack, which I

always felt was a mark of respect. He seemingly identified John McCormack with his father through the years and he had that very respectful attitude towards Mr. McCormack all the time, as he felt.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall the, the convention in Chicago?

FEENEY: In '56?

HARTIGAN: In '56.

FEENEY: Very vividly, because I had, I was assistant counsel to the Democratic platform convention, at the convention. And John McCormack led the fight for Jack Kennedy, and--despite what *TIME* magazine said in its, one of its articles. And I recall that Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] was furious about the article in *TIME* magazine indicating that John McCormack hadn't made the contribution that he did. And I recall that John McCormack had a great deal to do with swinging the whole Texas delegation to Jack Kennedy. Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson were the leaders of the Texas delegation. And I accompanied John McCormack right over to the Texas delegation when they were meeting in caucus off the floor in the so-called back of the yards location of the convention meeting place, Convention Hall. And it was an iffy question at that time as to whether or not Texas was going to support John McCormack, because, as you recall, Estes Kefauver was a southerner, coming from Tennessee.

And John McCormack had a very close friend by the name of Vann Kennedy [Vann M. Kennedy] who was a leader in Democratic politics in the state of Texas, and he was a member of the platform committee, and he was a delegate to the convention. And he and John McCormack had a close personal friendship. And Van Kennedy was one of the leaders, and Van Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn all worked very hard for Jack Kennedy to swing that Texas delegation to Jack Kennedy. And as I recall it--I'm just picking this out of the air at the moment, Bill--he, I think he received ninety delegates from Texas at that time, or thereabouts. And they, the Texas delegation, went with John McCormack, for John McCormack, for Jack Kennedy. And I remember the hassle involving the New York delegation: Carmine DeSapio [Carmine G. DeSapio] was involved and Ed Flynn [Edward J. Flynn] and those people. And there was some question as to how the New York delegation was going and John McCormack worked very hard in that delegation with the leaders. And

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being the leader in Congress, he had a close relationship with the different members of Congress. Congressman Jim Delaney [James J. Delaney], back there, had been in Congress, and out, and then came back in. And Gene Keough [Eugene James Keough], as you recall, Gene Keough was an influential member of the New York delegation at that time. John McCormack worked very hard to--with them. I recall very vividly that John McCormack went so far as to talk to Albert Gore [Albert Gore, Sr.] who was the United States Senator from Tennessee who had been in the House for a number of years, and a very close friend of John McCormack's. And I don't think there was that much love lost between Albert Gore

and Kefauver. And I remember Gore felt he would love to go along with John McCormack but being pragmatic, and from the home state of Tennessee, he felt that he had to go along with Kefauver. But I remember Emmett O'Neal, Congressman Emmett O'Neal from Kentucky, John McCormack spoke to him and picked up votes in Kentucky for John, for Jack Kennedy. And Bobby Kennedy knew this because I was in constant touch with Bob Kennedy at that time. And Torby Macdonald, as you recall, was very active on the floor at that time for Jack and the vice president...

[INTERRUPTION]

HARTIGAN: Okay. After that interruption, Judge, we can continue. We were talking about the 1956 Convention.

FEENEY: Convention, yeah. And I thought that the role call, as you recall, in that convention was, created an atmosphere of suspense because here was a relatively young United States Senator competing against Estes Kefauver who was a national figure because of his service on that so-called crime commission, in his latest coonskin cap, et cetera. But Jack Kennedy almost pulled it off. And he was defeated. But he accepted his defeat so graciously in a speech before the packed convention after the role call that I think he made a tremendous impression, not only on the delegates to the convention, but on the nation as a whole, as a gracious loser. And in retrospect it was very fortunate that he did lose the '56 convention because he came back in '60 with the marvelous win that he had. But an interesting aspect of that convention, I thought, was the fact that Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson], as the nominee, decided to throw open, throw the nomination for vice president open to the convention, and did not exercise the usual prerogative of the candidate to pick his own candidate for vice president. And this made possible the competition between Estes Kefauver and Jack Kennedy at that time.

HARTIGAN: There have been some suggestions that the, that the way that the, the delegates were called, when it came down to the wire--has the Speaker ever talked about that situation? In other words, had he called another state other than the ones he did, or in the order in which he did, that he wasn't recognizing certain states that would have been more favorable to Senator Kennedy at that time, versus Senator Kefauver? Did he ever discuss that with you?

FEENEY: Oh, not only did we discuss it, but I was a part of it, Bill, because I was right there. I, as you recall, I was almost at John McCormack's right arm all the time that he was on the convention floor. I ate with him and practically lived

with him, and was with him every minute. And there's absolutely no substance to that type of an interpretation, and, and I can assure you that it's an absolute falsehood to even suggest otherwise. If you think back to that convention it was absolute bedlam, and John McCormack was presiding in the chair at the time. Sam Rayburn was in the chair at different times, and Sam Rayburn was the presiding officer who called the, on the different state delegations, not John McCormack. John McCormack was around hustling votes for Jack Kennedy, and I was with him. And the--Sam Rayburn, if you recall, there was some--I went up to Sam Rayburn with messages that there was going to be a changeover with this or that and.... At John McCormack's direction, because he felt it would not be propitious for him to go up. And he sent me up and I carried messages up to Sam Rayburn at that time. And John McCormack later went around onto the platform where Sam Rayburn was presiding. It was not John McCormack who selected the different state delegations, it was Sam Rayburn. But it was a fascinating convention.

HARTIGAN: It certainly was.

FEENEY: And I'm sure that while your own relationship with the president was such that the stories that came out of it were absolutely untrue, and particularly that item in *Time* magazine, because John McCormack sent them a red hot wire insisting that they apologize. And *Time* magazine carried Bobby Kennedy's telegram to them where he said that no one worked harder for Jack Kennedy for the vice presidency than John McCormack and his staff.

HARTIGAN: In his, in his term in the Senate, continuing, I would imagine you were quite busy still on the, on the House side. But could you possibly refresh your memory with some of these positions that--of speeches and bills that he were active in, while in the Senate? Are you familiar with any of the Speaker's concern about them, or your own personal observation?

FEENEY: Well, the, the Speaker was always concerned. I recall particularly the St. Lawrence Seaway because I think New England was strongly opposed to the St. Lawrence Seaway back in 1954 while Jack was in the Senate. And I remember Jack voted for the St. Lawrence Seaway, if you recall it, and there was considerable objection to his vote at that time by the labor people. They thought that the docks would be--and the longshore industry--would be adversely affected in the Boston area by the creation of St. Lawrence Seaway. But even in those days Jack Kennedy had a national outlook, and did vote, as I recall it, for the St. Lawrence Seaway. I remember a particular incident where Jack Kennedy was very active in those years, amending the national--what we call the Labor-Management Relations Act, the so-called amendments to the Taft-Hartley Act. And I know one case where John McCormack and Jack Kennedy worked very closely together, when they were trying to save the Boston Army Base pier. John McCormack had worked in the House to get a substantial appropriation of money because the army base pier, at that time, was reputed to be unsafe. And it amounted to millions of dollars. And Jack Kennedy, at that time, indicated that he, working with John

McCormack, introduced a bill to, what he called prevent a scandal which if permitted to develop would cause a financial loss

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not only to Massachusetts but to the taxpayers. They were concerned at that time to get the army base, which had been built by the federal government in 1918. And they felt that the army base needed to be saved because its cargo shipments were very important to Boston and the east coast as a matter of fact. And it was badly in need of repair and the, they subsequently appropriated eleven million dollars, I, think it came to, to save the army base pier, because it had been a very important pier at the Boston Army Base during World War II as a port of embarkation during the war. And the.... As a result of the cooperation between John McCormack and Senator Kennedy, and Senator Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall] joined with them as I recall it, that they did appropriate all this money. They had an additional appropriations of several million dollars and then finally they rebuilt the whole pier at the cost of about eleven million dollars. And that was a magnificent achievement for the port of Boston at that time.

As one who has been counsel to the longshoremen, the International Longshoremen's Association, I know that he developed a warm friendship with the late Red Moran who was, was the vice president of the longshoreman's association, and a strong supporter of President Kennedy during his years in the Congress and in the Senate, in the House and in the Senate. And Jack Kennedy had a continuing interest in the transportation problems in Boston and the New England area, and he sponsored legislation to investigate and study the problems at that time, I recall that he had these excellent connections with the labor people as far back as the early fifties. But if, thinking back, if you recall, his service in the House stood Jack Kennedy in good stead because he continued his deep interest in labor and health and education and welfare appropriations through the years in the fifties. And if you look through his speeches in the Senate that he had, he was continually advocating increased education and training allowances, not only for veterans, but for the--in the whole field of education. And his contacts and his knowledge of the labor problems caused him to advocate, be the advocate for amendments to the Railroad Retirement Act and the Railroad Unemployment Act. And I think that the, looking through his whole career during this time, he usually was found advocating the cause of labor. But as...

HARTIGAN: What about the...

FEENEY: ...but he usually picked his spots, so to speak. I don't think that he was a senator, in those days, who tried to be an expert on everything. He had certain areas of personal interest and interest to his constituency which he became a specialist in. And I, I would always consider him to be probably one of the foremost advocates in the Senate for improving the lot of our citizens in the field of education. I think he was recognized in the Senate as an expert in that field.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall the, the Speaker's positions with reference to Senator Kennedy when he was lobbying to, or when he was actually working to, to get reforms in the electoral college? Did the Speaker have any observation with reference to that?

FEENEY: No, but the Speaker was much more a dedicated party man, I would think, than Jack Kennedy was. I think that Jack Kennedy had a very broad

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perspective as contrasted to other members of Congress in the sense that he was never looked upon as a dyed in the wool, down the line Democrat, if you recall. Wouldn't you agree with that observation, Bill? He, he was...

HARTIGAN: His interest...

FEENEY: ... a dedicated Democrat but he...

HARTIGAN: His interest was...

FEENEY: ...not somebody.... Yeah, his interests were such that.... And he was so independent in his thinking that he wouldn't vote--in my judgment anyways--he wouldn't vote for a piece of legislation just because it was a Democratic measure, you know? I think he had a broad national outlook. And at the same time, obviously, he was a good Democrat, because the Democrats nominated him later. But I, I think, I recall in the years in '57, '58 and '59 his greatest contribution, I think, was in laying the field of labor reform. I think that's--and his amendments to the national, his amendments to the Longshoreman and Harbor Workers Compensation Act was a very important piece of legislation to the longshoreman. And his, his work with Sam Ervin [Sam J. Ervin, Jr.], as I remember it, in the years, in '59, during that period in the Eightieth Congress was--in the Eighty-sixth Congress, I think it was--was in that period of time when he worked with Sam Ervin to bring upon, bring about reforms in labor management relations, and the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act. And then, as you recall, he had this strong interest in providing health protection for the senior citizens, as we now call them.

And way back in the beginning of--in the Eighty-sixth Congress he was one of those who was advocating insurance for the older citizens because of the high cost of hospital and nursing costs. When you look back now those costs were rather reasonable compared to what they are today. Yeah, he, I would agree with you that, you know, he had this strong concern for the human needs of our citizens. And I think this is indicated by his advocacy, again, of minimum wage legislation and the amendments to the Social Security Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act. Again, if you note that my recital is in the field of which I'm particularly interested, labor. And usually the--he would....

And he was looked upon as an expert in this field. No? This is, it's rather significant, I think, that he, he, I think he attracted nationwide attention because of his advocacy for

reform. And at the same time he demonstrated his competence and came to be recognized in the Senate for his competence in the, in this particular field where he had not attracted attention prior to that time for being the so-called diligent workman. He did do a, as you recall, a tremendous job in the so-called McClellan Committee even though others got more national publicity than Jack Kennedy did. But I think he earned the respect of his colleagues in the Senate by his work in the labor committee, and his expertise in that field. And I know that he earned the respect of the leaders of labor even though he was urging a reform of some of the practices in which they were engaged in. And yet he was able to pull it off that he earned their respect and at the same time advocate, advocated change. And the reforms acts, Landon-Griffin, became so complicated, in his judgment, as I recall it, and we had a great deal of contact with him at that period of time both because we were interested in

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the labor field and because we were working intermittently with Speaker McCormack at that time, who was very much a strong labor advocate himself.

HARTIGAN: We were up to the point of 1960, which brings up the presidential campaign. Would you care to relate some of your activities during that campaign with you and the Speaker?

FEENEY: Well, unfortunately, or fortunately depending on your relative point of view, I was not, did not become that active on it because I had gone on the bench and just prior to the 1960 election. And with my appointment as a special justice, I didn't lose my interest in it, but I became restricted as to my activity. I continued to serve with John McCormack as special counselor for him from time to time and continued, as you know, my relationship with Ken O'Donnell and the staff. From time to time, for John McCormack, it was necessary to go to the White House on occasions on matters that, of interest to both of them. But John McCormack and President Kennedy continued their relationship, and John McCormack not only toured the state, but toured the country speaking for Jack Kennedy in that campaign. And we accompanied him many places and I recall that John McCormack was very active in contacting the different members of Congress to exert their efforts in the several states.

HARTIGAN: What was, how was the Speaker's position best described in terms of the convention, in as much as close friends of his, Rayburn and Johnson were actively campaigning in the other direction?

FEENEY: Well, it's interesting that the first time I heard of a particular ticket, as such, in the campaign was when John McCormack was a, a speaker, or the guest, if you will, on I think the program was Capital Cloakroom. And it was necessary and he was interviewed by CBS reporters at that time, and they asked him a question about the coming convention and his position in it. And he thought, he expressed the thought, at that time, that he believed the strongest ticket to be a Kennedy-Johnson ticket; and this was six months before the actual convention. And as I remember the

event, Sam Rayburn called John McCormack to task and said, suggested that John shouldn't be talking like that because if there ever were going to be such a ticket, Lyndon Johnson should be in first place and not Jack Kennedy. And John McCormack, with his great affection for Sam Rayburn, pointed out to Sam Rayburn, as I recall it, that he felt that Lyndon Johnson had not exerted the effort that Jack Kennedy had by going into the primaries and making himself available in the primaries. And that he felt at the time they were talking that Jack Kennedy would be the nominee and that by winning the primaries it would be, as he was away from the very--you remember he went into the early states that were available--that he was creating a public opinion atmosphere favoring Jack Kennedy.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall...

FEENEY: As I recall at the convention, John McCormack, as you remember, was the chairman of the Massachusetts delegation at that time. And there was a, he

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had a--John McCormack, as I showed you the pictures there of the--John Tynan [John T. Tynan] sat next to us, who was a representative from South Boston. And I was sitting with John McCormack, and he proceeded to, he was in direct communication with Bobby Kennedy, who you recall had a trailer set up outside manning the phones where he had contact with all the different state delegations. And where Bobby Kennedy and some of the others who were working on the so-called floor plan had a problem with a particular state delegation, Bobby Kennedy would talk with Mr. McCormack. And Mr. McCormack would leave the Massachusetts delegation and go over and talk with the different delegations and, to reinforce the Kennedy vote, if you will, with his persuasiveness and his prestige. And I recall later on we went to the hotel when Jack Kennedy wanted to see Mr. McCormack, and Bobby was there and the president to be, he was at that time, about the selection for vice president. And John McCormack urged that he pick Lyndon Johnson as his running mate. And John McCormack, after talking with Jack Kennedy, went to Sam Rayburn. And, if you recall, there was considerable doubt as to whether or not Lyndon Johnson would accept the position after he had been defeated. You recall the different nominees--and Jack Kennedy had such a great win at that time--and then the aftermath were meetings in the hotel rooms when we went up after Senator Kennedy had been the nominee and then there were the conferences as to his running mate. And John McCormack was probably the strongest voice at that time in favor of Lyndon Johnson being his running mate because he felt that Lyndon Johnson could make a great contribution to the success of Jack Kennedy's campaign in the south, particularly. And Texas, more important than many of the other states because they had such a large voting block in the electoral college.

HARTIGAN: How much pressure was brought to bear on the Speaker from Rayburn and/or Johnson to reverse the, the ticket prior to the convention having it a...

FEENEY: Oh, I don't think that there was pressure as such, because John McCormack was a very strong figure, as you recall, in the Congress at that time. And Sam Rayburn was not as strong physically as he use to be. He had been ill for, intermittently at that time, and.... But I don't think there was any doubt in anyone's mind that Sam Rayburn wanted Lyndon Johnson. And I, I don't think there's any doubt, I know there's no doubt in my mind, that John McCormack was a strong advocate for Jack Kennedy. And I witnessed it, I was there when he talked with Sam Rayburn on the floor and Sam asked John to go along and John said he was committed to Jack Kennedy and he thought that Lyndon....

[END SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2]

HARTIGAN: Judge, do you recall any interesting activity that you might have participated in or witnessed, or heard about, with reference to the state committee fight between Burke [William H. Burke, Jr.] and Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch]?

FEENEY: Yes. I recall that at that time, Bill Burke, who had been chairman of the Democratic state committee, and I think the.... Jack Kennedy felt it was time

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for a change, if we may use a trite phrase, and he felt that Bill Burke was not the candidate who should be the leader or the chairman of the state committee at that particular time. John McCormack, as you well know, Bill, had always felt that if he gave his word to anyone he would never break it, and prior to the actual election, Bill Burke, who had been a loyal supporter of President Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt], and Harry Truman [Harry S. Truman], as you recall, came back and indicated that he wanted to serve the committee again and John McCormack committed himself to Bill Burke before Pat Lynch was in the race, and before President Kennedy, then Senator Kennedy, had discussed the matter with John McCormack.

Subsequently, after that, before the committee election, John McCormack learned that Pat Lynch was going to be a candidate for the state committee with the active support of Senator Kennedy and John McCormack felt that he had committed himself to Bill Burke and felt honor bound to support him, and he did. And if you recall, at that time, his support consisted, you know, of talking to the friends that he had on the state committee. But he, John McCormack, did not conduct, you know, the type of campaign that he.... He did everything possible that he was asked to do that would help Bill Burke, but I think Bill Burke was looked upon as the favorite to win the state committee chairmanship, and as it turned out, Senator Kennedy carried on a very vigorous and active personal effort in behalf of Pat

Lynch and was successful. And Bill Burke was defeated and the allegations that were made that created that bitterness were not true. It was never a John Kennedy-John McCormack fight as such, even though the media played it up to be that.

John McCormack had a strong personal friendship with Bill Burke, he didn't know Pat Lynch that well because Pat Lynch came from what we in South Boston would call the other side of town, coming from Somerville, which was considerably removed from the John McCormack source of the strength which would be the Boston area and the South Shore. Now Bill Burke had been down here for a number of years, all the way back from the early days of the Democratic, since when he came down from Hatfield to become an active member of the state committee and Bill Burke had been a very loyal John McCormack supporter and John McCormack felt he had an obligation to support Bill Burke.

HARTIGAN: How would you describe the Speaker's brother's activities, Knocko McCormack [Edward J. McCormack, Sr.] in this particular...

FEENEY: Well, Ed McCormack was a very good friend, a much closer friend, I would say, of Bill Burke than the Speaker, because Eddie, as you recall when you served on the state committee yourself, Eddie was the elected member...

HARTIGAN: This is Eddie, Sr.?

FEENEY: Ed, Sr. was an elected member of the state committee and actively ran for office as an elected member of the state committee and served as the chairman of the 4th Suffolk District which encompassed South Boston and Dorchester and Roxbury and he was a strong Bill Burke advocate. But, Eddie McCormack, Sr. was not one who checked with John McCormack as to what he should do before he acted all the time. As you well know, Ed McCormack had an independent strain of his own, and in as much as

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John McCormack was 500 miles away in Washington, Ed McCormack was his own man and he was a much more vigorous advocate for Bill Burke than was John McCormack in person. I'm sure John McCormack was completely loyal and dedicated and wanted Bill Burke to win, but Eddie McCormack, Sr., Ed McCormack, Sr., the attorney general's father, was much more active and loquacious, if you will, in behalf of Bill Burke than was the Speaker.

HARTIGAN: Are you aware of any time that the Speaker during this period, contacted Senator Kennedy asking him to remove Pat Lynch from the fight?

FEENEY: No, I am not. No, I don't think that ever happened. That's not the way John McCormack would operate. I'm sure that, as you well know from serving with the president and with the president as the candidate

in other offices, that many rumors are bandied about which have no substance and I heard that statement made and so far as I know, it's absolutely untrue. And I'm sure that if he had done that I would have known it.

HARTIGAN: The Speaker, as I recall, as you so ably put it, was not as vigorous as he could have been in his position as Speaker of the House.

FEENEY: Oh yes. He.... John McCormack has never been known, as you know Bill, as an arm twister. You served as the deputy postmaster general of the United States and John McCormack was the speaker at that time and I'm sure in all your relationships with him, you knew of no instance where he ever used his position to so-called twist arms. That's not his *modus operandi*. He is not that type of a public official. He always.... He might be a strong advocate for a cause but he would never—he would consider it beneath him to do anything like that.

HARTIGAN: What was the...

FEENEY: He has too much integrity to do anything like that.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall, or are you aware of what activities were being carried on at this time by Ed McCormack, Jr. [Edward J. McCormack, Jr.]?

FEENEY: No. At that time, most of my time was in Washington so we were usually 500 miles away so I wasn't that familiar with Eddie McCormack, Junior's activities.

HARTIGAN: Getting up to the famous election of 1962, between the Speaker of the House of the United States Congress' son, uh, nephew, and the brother of the President of the United States running against each other for the seat vacated by President Kennedy. Do you have any observations about that campaign?

FEENEY: Well, I have...

HARTIGAN: And I know I met you several times during it.

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FEENEY: I have some knowledge of some of the activities going on at that time because I served for an intermittent period with the Speaker as special counsel on certain assignments that he had. And I did have some relationship with the president's chief secretary at that time, the very able Ken O'Donnell, from whom I have the greatest respect. And I think that Ken O'Donnell would be a much more knowledgeable public official as to what actually happened at that time. I felt, very frankly, that the president would have preferred that Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] not be the candidate. I felt from my knowledge of what I had heard, and what I knew, that Joseph P.

Kennedy, the father, was more the advocate for Ted being the candidate for Senator than was the president. And I think the students of history could be more enlightened by some input from Ken O'Donnell as to what actually was going on at that time. I know this, that John McCormack did not wish that Ed would be a candidate against Ted Kennedy.

HARTIGAN: Is that right?

FEENEY: Yeah. He felt that there was no need of a clash between the bearers of famous names and it could be avoided by one running for Senate and one running for governor. And I personally felt that Ed McCormack should have been the candidate for governor at that time.

HARTIGAN: That was the first time in history that such a matchup...

FEENEY: Well, I think it was.... I think the media played it up as you recall it yourself. I'm sure, the media played it up to be a battle of giants when in fact it wasn't. I know of no instance, very honestly, where the president got involved to the extent that he did any arm twisting to put people on the line for Ted Kennedy, nor did the Speaker. The Speaker sort of kept a hands off attitude. He was, of course, he favored Edward and his great affection for Edward, and the Speaker supported him, but the Speaker did not get into the middle of it because he was in Washington much of the time.

HARTIGAN: I think you're right. I think they both handled it with a great deal of dignity.

FEENEY: Oh yes. And I think they, the Speaker had good contacts throughout the state and knew of the excellent organization that Senator Ted Kennedy, now Senator Ted Kennedy, was able to put together with the assistance of the so-called Kennedy secretariat, if you recall the line-up of the so-called forces. And Teddy inherited that group, which was a state-wide organization built up through the several campaigns of Jack Kennedy for the Senate in 1952 and 1958 and Ted had the benefit of the state-wide organization which was a very loyal Kennedy organization.

HARTIGAN: Were you familiar with any of the polls that were taken at that time?

FEENEY: Yes. I was familiar. Congressman Bill Green who was then the Democratic leader in Pennsylvania, had some input in connection

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with a very comprehensive poll that was taken early after the announcement of several candidates. And Ken O'Donnell made that available to me and to Speaker John McCormack. And the results of that very extensive poll indicated that Ted Kennedy would be the victor in a competition between Ed McCormack and Ted Kennedy,

and also indicated that George Lodge [George Cabot Lodge], who was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge's son, would be a formidable opponent for Edward McCormack. But the poll indicated that Ted Kennedy would defeat George Lodge and as it turned out, that's exactly what happened. The poll was very accurate and, as I recall it up 'till that time, I think it was probably the most extensive poll that had been taken, up to that time, in Massachusetts. It was a very detailed poll and covered practically every city and town in the state. I know that when I went over it very carefully, and spent a considerable study of the poll, I was frankly surprised and amazed, if you will, at the thoroughness of the poll.

HARTIGAN: I believe that was a poll that really convinced the president to let the contest go. I don't think, as I recall, he was somewhat reluctant to get he and the Speaker in the limelight under such circumstances and I believe that was the poll, wasn't it, that convinced him that there was a possibility of losing the Senate seat up here, according to the poll?

FEENEY: Yes. That's right. The poll indicated as I recall it, the Kennedy forces, whether it was under the direction of the president's father or some of his cohorts, did not have the usual poll taker who was looked upon in those days as the favorite Kennedy poll taker, make the poll because they were concerned about any predilection on the poll taker's part in favor of a Kennedy. And they had outside entity make the poll, and that was done by people that were friends of Congressman Bill Green of Pennsylvania. And they conducted the poll and did it in an impartial manner according to the information that I had. And the results of it were as I related to you earlier, that the president, I heard later on, was very much surprised at the results.

HARTIGAN: He was, but he was honestly concerned about the seat going Republican, too.

FEENEY: Yes. I heard that. But the poll indicated that Ted Kennedy could beat George Lodge whereas it was an iffy question with relation to Ed McCormack and George Lodge. Of course, those of us who were pro-McCormack felt that Ed McCormack would defeat George Lodge, despite the poll.

HARTIGAN: That's true.... I think that, if my memory serves me right, it satisfied the president to let Teddy go. He was very concerned, I believe, about this contest, the way it was coming up.

FEENEY: Yes. But I felt, very frankly, in those days, that it was not so much.... I don't think there was any input from the president, as such. I think the input came more from the president's father, and from Bobby, Bobby Kennedy, to give Teddy the shot at the, because Teddy was so very young at that time.

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HARTIGAN: Right.

FEENEY: Just to be 30 and be assumed the seat in the Senate.

HARTIGAN: Well, to say the least, it was an interesting campaign.

FEENEY: I would agree wholeheartedly with that definition of it, Bill.

HARTIGAN: Well, I've had you on tape now for over two and a half hours, here. What...

FEENEY: I hope we've made some contribution.

HARTIGAN: Well, we may even go into more depth into some of these incidents that we only skimmed over so far. What.... Let me put it this way. Where were you at the time of the president's assassination? Do you recall?

FEENEY: I think I was at the court.

HARTIGAN: Any recollections from that day?

FEENEY: Horror! Shock!

HARTIGAN: How were you informed?

FEENEY: I think we heard it on the radio when we came in. They told us it had happened. I was working on a.... It was just horrifying. Disbelief and...

HARTIGAN: Did you have the opportunity to talk to the Speaker shortly after?

FEENEY: Oh, yes. I was with him.

HARTIGAN: What was his reaction to the assassination?

FEENEY: He was crushed. As you know, the Speaker and the president developed a warm relationship despite what others thought, as our good friend, Ken O'Donnell, can attest. He was crushed and I went down and joined him shortly thereafter. Mrs. McCormack [Harriet McCormack], for whom the president had a great affection, as you recall, she was just heartbroken. The president was always very gracious with Mrs. McCormack.

HARTIGAN: Did the Speaker at any time feel as though there was a conspiracy, in as much as you had the president and the vice president both in the city at the same time and, I believe, the top ranking members of the cabinet

were off on a trip someplace at the time? Did he.... Did that thought ever come to mind?

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FEENEY: No. He never indicated any such thoughts. As you know, the Speaker has never permitted any books to be written quoting him with reference to any of his years in public service, and he will not permit any biographies but he.... I can attest to the fact that he never has indicated to me, in any event, that he had any such thoughts. He believed in the integrity of the Warren Commission and knew and had some input into the membership of the Warren Commission because, if you recall, President Ford [Gerald R. Ford] was a member of it and Hale Boggs [Thomas Hale Boggs], who was a ranking member of the House and later became the leader in the House of Representatives. He suffered a tragic death, lost in Alaska. He was a member of the committee, the people that President Johnson placed on that commission were some of the most outstanding citizens of the United States.

HARTIGAN: Did you have a chance to read the Warren Commission Report?

FEENEY: Oh, I certainly have.

HARTIGAN: As a lawyer, what's your reaction to all these little innuendos that keep coming up with reference to the validity of the report?

FEENEY: Well, I can't, Bill, cannot accept the fact that some of the leading public officials in our country and our times, would be party to sweeping under the rug, information that would not be in the best interest of our country. I just can't conceive of Earl Warren, who served as an attorney general and governor of the great state of California, and later became a candidate, as you remember, for vice president of the United States and becoming the Chief Justice of the United States in such a magnificent liberal record, ever being a party to any conspiracy, if you will, to keep that information secret from the people of the United States. I'm sure that if there were information that they felt was not in the best interest of the United States to be related, they would not injure the United States but I'm sure that the question was too important to hide anything and I'm convinced.

HARTIGAN: So, as a lawyer and a judge, you're satisfied...?

FEENEY: Oh, I'm satisfied with the Warren Report.

HARTIGAN: Are there any other final observations, Judge, that you'd like to make with reference to your living through the era of the Kennedy regime?

FEENEY: Well, I think that his tragic death was a great, tremendous loss to the country. I feel that the thousand days of his presidency did not permit him to achieve his full potential, if you will. As one who is a constant

student of government, I felt that he was laying the ground work in his first term that would have created what Adlai Stevenson called “brighter tomorrows” in the later years of his service as President of the United States. I believe that the country would have been enriched by a second term. And the fact that Lyndon Johnson was able to bring into fruition much of the legislation causing

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the education of our children to be made available to thousands, millions of youngsters who might never had attained an education was because of the groundwork laid by Jack Kennedy. I think that was a special field in which he demanded excellence and I think the results that came afterward were due to the magnificent contributions that Jack Kennedy made as the President. And I think that the Congress’—relations with Congress were improving all the time as he came into the later years, later months, of his presidency, keeping in mind that he had such a great deal of work to do. You served in the federal bureaucracy in the bureaucratic labyrinth, as I like to call it, and you know that it takes many, many months to undo practices that have gone on. You had eight years of the Eisenhower Administration [Dwight D. Eisenhower] before Jack Kennedy took over. And the first two years and the first part of the third year required a transformation, if you will, of practices that had gone on for eight years under the Republicans and, therefore, he had to move slowly, if you will, to replace the people who had been serving for eight or more years. He moved slowly in placing people who had an enlightened and progressive viewpoint to create a new federal command post, if you will, by these people. And I think that as far as I was concerned anyway, if you want a personal subjective opinion, I felt that it augured well for him. I just think he would have been a magnificent president in his second term and I know John McCormack felt the same way and he knew how long it took to.... The wheels of government, like the wheels of justice, grind slowly but exceedingly fine.

HARTIGAN: Judge, I wonder if you would be agreeable to going through your memorabilia of your career and anything that you felt would be of interest to the Library, see your way clear to donate it to them for the—in helping expand it not only with oral histories but also with...

FEENEY: I will be happy to.

HARTIGAN: ...papers and tapes. I know you’ve given me several pictures that we probably don’t have and I’ll take them back and turn them over to the archivist. But if you can gather this material together, we’ll have an archivist come out and look at it and make sure it’s given its proper place in the Library.

FEENEY: Fine. I’ll be happy to cooperate.

HARTIGAN: Thank you very much, Judge.

FEENEY: Thank you, Bill.

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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