

**Michael Monroney Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 10/27/1967**  
**Administrative Information**

**Creator:** Michael Monroney

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**Biographical Note**

Michael Monroney (1927-2010) was a staff member for National Citizens for Stevenson-Kefauver in 1956, the deputy national director of the National Stevenson for President Committee in 1960 and the Executive Assistant to the Postmaster General from 1961 to 1966. This interview focuses on Aldai Stevenson's campaign in the 1960 Democratic primary, the 1960 Democratic National Convention, and the inner workings of the Postmaster General's office during the Kennedy administration, among other topics.

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of ~~A. S. MIKE~~ MONRONEY  
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Michael Monroney  
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Michael Monroney– JFK #1  
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Oral History Interview

with

Michael Monroney

October 27, 1967  
Washington, D.C.

By John Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Why don't I first ask you what role you had in the 1956 campaign with Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] that involved John Kennedy?

MONRONEY: Well, I was the advance man that the Democratic National Committee or the Stevenson-Kefauver [C. Estes Kefauver] Campaign Committee sent to Massachusetts to handle Governor Stevenson's trips on each of the three occasions he visited Massachusetts that fall after the convention when he was the Democratic nominee. I had not met the then Senator Kennedy at the time that I first went to Massachusetts that fall. When I arrived in Massachusetts there was a great demand among the Democratic leaders in the state for Senator Kennedy to return to Massachusetts from other states where he was campaigning for the national ticket. The local Democratic leaders felt that the Stevenson-Kefauver ticket was in serious trouble in Massachusetts and that the only possibility for the Democratic Party to carry Massachusetts that fall was for Senator Kennedy to return home and campaign for the ticket.

I passed on this information to my boss at that time who was James Rowe, Jr., head of scheduling for the Stevenson-Kefauver ticket. And I do not remember whether my information was taken seriously or not; however, it is my recollection that Senator Kennedy did not return to the state of Massachusetts to campaign for the national ticket until the last week of the campaign. As a result, a number of people in

Massachusetts--and I assume that at that stage in Massachusetts political history these were the anti-Kennedy people--felt that he did not wish to return to Massachusetts to campaign for Governor Stevenson because he did not wish to tarnish his own political image in the state by being identified with a man he was convinced would lose Massachusetts. Now when he--I cannot remember; I can remember meeting him in Boston, when Governor Stevenson made a national network television appearance . . .

STEWART: At Mechanics Hall?

MONRONEY: Mechanics Hall, which is now torn down. And I can remember meeting Senator Kennedy at that time. I don't remember anything that was said, that I said to him. I don't think it was of any significance; it was probably more than anything just, "Hello. Nice to meet you."

STEWART: Did you pick up anything from people around Governor Stevenson as to what their opinions were of Senator Kennedy at that time, do you recall?

MONRONEY: My contacts with the people around the governor at that time were mostly with the staff that traveled with him. Bill Wirtz [W. Willard Wirtz] and Newt Minow [Newton N. Minow]. I certainly remember hearing nothing critical of Senator Kennedy, as far as the role he played in the campaign. I may not have heard anything about him. We may not have discussed whether he was really genuinely trying to help the Stevenson ticket. I assumed he was. There was no reason for him not to.

I don't believe I can make any significant contribution to the Oral History Project with any more that I know from the 1956 election . . . At the 1956 convention in Chicago, which I attended as a volunteer worker for the [Democratic] National Committee. I was present at the very dramatic speech that then Senator Kennedy made when he lost the vice presidential nomination to Senator Kefauver. And this was the first time he really made an impression on me. And beyond my having met him and met a number of his supporters, including Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch]-- I believe Lynch was his choice for state chairman in Massachusetts, as I recall, former Mayor of Somerville--and a number of his supporters, I met a number of his supporters in the state that fall of 1956, I don't think I had much to do with him until I met him again during the preconvention period in 1960.

He was, as I recall, an announced candidate for the Democratic nomination. I was administrative assistant to Congressman John Brademas from Indiana. John Brademas was from a heavily Catholic congressional district where the university of Notre Dame is located and, although he had been on Governor Stevenson's research staff in 1956 and was devoted to Governor Stevenson, he decided fairly early in 1960 or late in

'59 that he would support Jack Kennedy for the Democratic nomination. Although I don't believe he was actively supporting him, his preference for the nomination was certainly Senator Kennedy.

STEWART: Was this, may I ask, as a result of an approach, someone who approached him from Kennedy's office or from Kennedy's staff, or was this on his own, do you recall?

MONRONEY: I don't recall whether he made the decision on his own or whether he was talked into it by somebody. I know he was a great admirer of Jack Kennedy's and was one of several Democratic congressmen who in the spring of 1960 (as I recall, arranged for Senator Kennedy to come over to the House Recording Studios to cut tapes with the members of Congress. And I can remember being there when Senator Kennedy arrived and saying hello to him, and that's virtually all I said to him at that time. He did cut the tape with John Brademas.

At that time I felt very strongly that Governor Stevenson deserved a chance in 1960 to be a candidate for the presidency against someone he could beat. Tom Finletter [Thomas K. Finletter] called John Brademas from New York and asked John Brademas if he would give me a leave of absence to work on the Stevenson campaign. They were looking for someone to head up a Washington office to work on delegates for the Convention. There was a group of people--Tom Finletter; Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt]; to a certain extent, George Ball [George W. Ball]; and my father, Senator Monroney [A. S. Mike Monroney] from Oklahoma; Tom Finney [Thomas D. Finney, Jr.], his administrative assistant; and John Sharon, who was then in George Ball's law firm. John Brademas said no, he wouldn't let me have the leave of absence. And I can remember, it was the only time during the almost ten years I've known John Brademas that I was annoyed at him about anything. I felt that I should be allowed, that he should have asked me whether I wanted to do it and if I wanted to do it, he should have let me go. I told him so, so he did let me go. And I went to work here in Washington for Governor Stevenson, working on delegates.

Now, I don't know how to relate this to the Kennedy campaign, except to say that I can remember calling . . .

STEWART: Well, that's all right. You know, I don't think you have to relate everything you say to the Kennedy campaign specifically because, of course, it's all generally related.

MONRONEY: Well, we operated a suite of offices in the National Association of Letter Carriers building--I think it's 100 Indiana Avenue, N.W.--and felt a little bit self-conscious at the smallness, inadequacy of our operation compared to the large

and very apparent effort that was being made on Senator Kennedy's behalf in the Esso Building right around the corner. Most of the people that were active on Governor Stevenson's behalf at that stage of the game had absolutely nothing against Jack Kennedy, they just were for Adlai Stevenson and were unwilling to give up on the possibility of him being president of the United States.

I can remember calling a delegate in Alaska who we had heard was friendly to Governor Stevenson, I think his name was Dick Greuel [Richard J. Greuel] in Anchorage. I can remember his enthusiasm at getting a call from somebody who was working on Governor Stevenson's behalf on the national level. He said something to the effect, "Gee I'm glad to hear from you because I'm for Governor Stevenson, too, but just to give you an idea of what you're up against. Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] was by here last Wednesday night and took me to dinner.

And this was typical of the reaction I got as I talked to other Democratic delegates prior to the Convention in other states. They had already been contacted either personally by a member of the Kennedys' family or personally by someone working nationally on the behalf of Senator Kennedy's candidacy or one of his state representatives. But they all had received correspondence and been contacted by someone personally. We didn't have the funds or the staff to do that.

STEWART: How large a group was there?

MONRONEY: Well, in the Stevenson headquarters here in Washington at the Letter Carriers building, the staff consisted of myself and two paid secretaries and whatever volunteer help we could muster up, and we were able to muster up all we needed. There was never any lack of volunteer help. There was a lack of funds to provide the facilities to accommodate a larger staff. Mrs. Lasker [Flora Warner Lasker], Mrs. Albert Lasker, provided a good bit of the money to finance the Stevenson campaign at that state of the game.

I can remember her going to Los Angeles. The Democratic state chairman in Wisconsin, Jim Doyle [James E. Doyle] was appointed national campaign director of the Stevenson campaign, and he went to Los Angeles to arrange for Governor Stevenson to have space in the Biltmore Hotel for meeting delegates. They had given Senator Kennedy, Senator Symington [Stuart Symington] and Senator Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] I believe, all large quarters in the Biltmore Hotel for their delegate reception area.

Paul Butler [Paul M. Butler] the Democratic national chairman at that time, had said that Governor Stevenson was not entitled to such a base because he was not a declared candidate for the Democratic nomination,



and when Jim Doyle got to Los Angeles, Paul Butler refused to see him to discuss any space or any accommodations of any kind, including passes to the gallery for Stevenson supporters or passes to the floor. And because I had worked for John Brademas and knew Paul Butler because Paul Butler was from South Bend, Indiana, they sent me out to Los Angeles to see Mr. Butler. I had a difficult time seeing him, but I did get him on the telephone, which is more than Jim Doyle had been able to do. And we finally did get space in the Biltmore--some parlor space which I honestly believe was the only space Paul Butler had left to provide us with.

The Convention itself is somewhat like a kaleidoscope in my memory. It was so hectic for those of us who were working for Governor Stevenson because we were spread so thin. I was assigned to the California delegation, and I can remember the realization of some of the Johnson people in Los Angeles that Johnson might be in trouble, that Lyndon Johnson might not get the Democratic nomination despite the fact that he had all the Democratic senators lined up to support him, as well as having Sam Rayburn to line up all the members of the House. I think they finally discovered when they got to Los Angeles that congressmen and senators don't control the convention.

I can remember one thing that might be of interest. The California delegation was particularly important to us because Pat Brown [Edmund G. Brown], the governor of California, was very late in coming out publicly for Senator Kennedy. We were quite sure that ultimately he would come out for Kennedy. It would have been a great blow, I think, to Jack Kennedy's candidacy if he had not. But the Stevenson strategists in Los Angeles--the few of us that were there--felt that, if, in spite of Pat Brown's endorsement of Jack Kennedy we could get more votes in the California delegation than Jack Kennedy did it would be quite a blow to Kennedy's candidacy, in view of the fact that California came early in the ballot.

So I was assigned full time to work on the California delegation, and it did develop at that point in Los Angeles into a stop Kennedy movement among a group of people in the Stevenson and Johnson and Symington camps. And I can remember talking to Charles Brown [Charles H. Brown], a congressman from Missouri who was handling Senator Symington's campaign in Los Angeles, and I can remember talking to Bobby Baker [Robert G. Baker], who was on Lyndon Johnson's staff, and telling both of them that we thought it would be important for Governor Stevenson, who had a tremendous number of supporters in the Los Angeles delegation, to get more votes than Jack Kennedy on the first ballot no matter what Pat Brown did. And we had the California delegation pretty well tabbed as to how each of the 162 delegates were going to vote, each with a half vote for 81 votes.

I can't remember exactly what it was. I asked Charlie Brown if he could give us one-and-a-half or two Symington votes, meaning three or four delegates to switch from Symington to Stevenson, and I asked Bobby Baker if he could give us two or three Johnson votes, that we would beat Kennedy on the first ballot, that we'd have more votes than Senator Kennedy.

And we darn near did. I can't remember the exact tabulation, but despite Governor Brown's endorsement of Senator Kennedy, Stevenson, I think, came within one-half vote or one vote of getting more and may have gotten more votes. I'm not sure, I just can't remember exactly.

STEWART: There was a big squabble over when they were going to act in caucus. The Kennedy people wanted to delay it, I think, and you people wanted to have the caucus right away, or maybe it was the other way around. Do you recall that, as far as the timing at the beginning of the week? Because there was a . . .

MONRONEY: Oh, we wanted to delay it, as I recall, and the Kennedy supporters within the California delegation wanted to have the vote immediately after Pat Brown's endorsement of Kennedy. One of the reasons that the Stevenson supporters wanted to delay the caucus and the vote tabulation of the California delegation was to give Mrs. Roosevelt a chance to address a caucus of the California delegation. And we were successful, as I recall, in delaying it until after Mrs. Roosevelt got to Los Angeles, rather late, and did address the California delegation. We felt that would have some impact.

But I had no contact, obviously, with Senator Kennedy during that period, but I did see Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] in Los Angeles. I can remember walking through the lobby of the Biltmore Hotel, and Bob Kennedy was sitting in one of the chairs. And I knew how hard he was working for his brother, and he knew how hard I was working for Governor Stevenson because they'd had a big rally here in Washington, DC, in the spring of 1960--a Democratic state central committee rally at someone's house out on Foxhall Road. And they had asked for speakers to represent the various presidential candidates. Bobby Kennedy had spoken for his brother, and Jimmy Symington [James W. Symington] had spoken for his father. India Edwards had spoken for Lyndon Johnson, and I had been the speaker for Adlai Stevenson. So Bobby knew where I stood. And I can remember I was surprised at how pleasantly he greeted me in Los Angeles. I was a little taken aback that this fellow who had a reputation for being so cold could be so friendly to someone who was obviously not working in the cause he was dedicated to.

STEWART: This must have been at the stage where they figured they would need a reconciliation afterwards. They must have been so confident that. . . . Let me ask you that: Was this a

thought in your mind and in the minds of others, that if this whole Stevenson movement was carried too far that there might be a real bad split that wouldn't be healed afterwards?

MONRONEY: I can only speak for myself, personally, and frankly it never occurred to me. It never occurred to me that the Kennedy supporters would not be able to accept Adlai Stevenson as the presidential nominee if. . . . As a matter of fact, that's why we felt we had a chance that if Jack Kennedy didn't make it on the first ballot and saw that he wasn't going to get the Democratic nomination that he would throw his support to Adlai Stevenson rather than see Lyndon Johnson get the Democratic nomination. And as a result, we felt that we would be the compromise choice of the Kennedy people and, ultimately, of Symington, so we'd have a less difficult time healing wounds with the Kennedy supporters than perhaps with the Johnson people. At least that was my recollection.

I can remember one incident that was the first apparent indication that Jack Kennedy was steamrolling the Convention, or was going to win the Democratic nomination. My father had called Governor Lawrence [David L. Lawrence] of Pennsylvania in Tel Aviv--Governor Lawrence had been in Tel Aviv, in Israel, that spring before the Convention--and discussed the Stevenson candidacy with David Lawrence. And at that stage of the game, Governor Lawrence--who was Catholic and who also felt that a Catholic candidate for president would have a difficult time winning--leaned to Governor Stevenson philosophically and, I think, favored him personally. He promised my father that he would try to bring the Pennsylvania delegation--as I recall they had eighty-one delegates in Pennsylvania--to Los Angeles split on the first ballot between the four candidates as evenly as he could, in other words, about twenty votes each for Symington and Johnson and Kennedy and Stevenson. Maybe a little bit more for Kennedy, mainly because Bill Green [William J. Green, Jr.] in Philadelphia was pushing so hard for Jack Kennedy.

Well, Governor Lawrence arrived in Los Angeles, I think, on a Sunday before the balloting--maybe it was Saturday. But on Sunday night, late Sunday night, Governor Lawrence went out to the Beverly Hills Hotel to meet with Governor Stevenson in Governor Stevenson's cottage. I can remember I was at the Sheraton West Hotel with Tom Finney and John Sharon, both of whom were extremely active in the Stevenson campaign at that stage of the game, and we were very curious as to what was going on in the governor's bungalow behind the Beverly Hills Hotel. And about two o'clock that morning I called, because I knew my father was attending that meeting. And I got my father on the phone just as David Lawrence was leaving. I said, "What happened?" He had a very, very discouraged tone in his voice. He

said, "It's all over. David Lawrence has just told us that he cannot control his delegation, that it's going to go pretty solidly for Kennedy, and there's just nothing we can do. This is a real body blow to our hopes for the governor."

I knew that my father was scheduled to speak to the Pennsylvania delegation the next morning in caucus, so I asked him what he was going to do. And he said, "Well, I'd rather go out like a tiger than like a lamb," or "I'd rather go out like a lion than like a lamb. I'll go ahead and make the speech." And I understand he did give a very impassioned plea for Governor Stevenson the next morning at that caucus.

The one thing that I have never asked him that I have often wondered about and I've always assumed I'd have the chance some day was Governor Stevenson's attitude at that time. I know publicly--and privately to me he gave the impression that after he had lost in 1956--he had said that he would not be a candidate again, and he felt that this young senator from Massachusetts had, on the basis of that commitment from Stevenson, had gone ahead and campaigned for the presidency and that would be unfair to Jack Kennedy and the other candidates, active candidates for the presidency, for Adlai Stevenson to go back on his word. And while I think he desperately hoped to get the nomination, he was reluctant, as a matter of fact, completely unwilling to say that he wanted it publicly, to announce that he would accept it, even.

STEWART: And at the same time he was torn between announcing his candidacy and going, swinging for Kennedy because he felt he would let all these people down who had done so much and who had tried to do so much.

MONRONEY: I don't think there's any question that that's the case. I think the only reason that Adlai Stevenson did not announce his support of Jack Kennedy prior to the balloting was because he was unwilling to pull the rug out from under those of us who had worked so hard on his behalf.

STEWART: There were some close to him who were advising him to do this, weren't there?

MONRONEY: Yes. Yes, there was. And I can remember pleading with--oh gosh, I can't even remember. I can remember one time when the governor came to the Biltmore at the time that Mrs. Roosevelt arrived to conduct a press conference. Tom Finney and Governor Stevenson and I, just the three of us, were standing in a small room in the Biltmore Bowl waiting for Mrs. Roosevelt to arrive. Tom Finney and I had been working night and day for months on this Stevenson effort, and Tom was trying to persuade Governor Stevenson to appear before a caucus of the Minnesota delegation the next day.

The governor was not being particular receptive to this. He kept saying, "But I'm not a candidate. I can't do that. It would be unfair to the other candidates." And finally Tom Finney burst into tears and walked over and put his hand up on the wall of this little partitioned room, and he put his forehead on his arm and just, tears were just streaming down his face. And the governor turned to me and said, "What in the world is wrong?" My answer to the governor was something to the effect that, "Governor, we just want you to make some effort to help us so badly. We've been working so hard, and you won't cooperate." And the governor looked at me with sort of a curious expression in his face for a second or two, that I'll never forget and then he turned and went over and put his hand on Tom Finney's shoulder and said, "All right, Tom. I'll do it." And he brought the house down, I might say.

But this is just a slight insight in the governor's reluctance at that time to publicly oppose Jack Kennedy. But I do believe that if he had felt that his supporters were jeopardizing both his chances and Jack Kennedy's chances that there might have been a consolidation.

STEWART: He was then dead set against Lyndon Johnson?

MONRONEY: No, I think that, if he didn't get it, he just would have preferred Jack Kennedy get it. I don't know that he was against Lyndon Johnson. And I think most of us felt that way. I was hoping we could stop Jack Kennedy so that Adlai Stevenson could be the Democratic nominee, and I never thought much past that point. But I think Jack Kennedy was the second choice of most of the Stevenson supporters.

STEWART: Were there any other states that you recall that you were heavily involved in where there was a real chance?

MONRONEY: Well, as I say, it was a kaleidoscope. So much happened during that period. And I can't remember whether I was involved or whether I've heard other people discuss the situation that existed within the Iowa delegation, where the state convention had sent the delegation to Los Angeles instructed on the first ballot to vote for Herschel Loveless (Iowa governor) as a favorite son. And I know there was a heated argument at the rostrum between Governor Loveless and a young lawyer who was a delegate from Des Moines named Sherwin Markman. Sherwin Markman was an ardent Stevenson supporter at the convention and, incidentally, is now on the White House staff. Sherwin was arguing with Governor Loveless and with Clarence Cannon that, according to every precedent of the parliamentary rules of the convention, Herschel Loveless had no right to release the Iowa delegation, that they had to vote for him as a bloc on the first ballot as a favorite son.

Herschel Loveless had been told--as had I believe a number of other people--that they would make a good vice presidential candidate. Now I don't think they'd been promised the vice presidency, the vice presidential nomination, but Governor Loveless wanted to release his delegation to support Jack Kennedy. And I can remember that Clarence Cannon--and that always has surprised me because he was from Missouri, and it would have been to Stuart Symington's best interest for the delegation to remain solid behind Loveless on the first ballot as a favorite son--ruled that Loveless could release the delegation. That was a blow to the Stevenson camp. It sounds almost like heresy to say it, under the circumstances that have developed since then--but it was a blow to the anti-Kennedy group in Los Angeles.

STEWART: How about New Jersey? Were you at all involved . . .

MONRONEY: No.

STEWART: . . . with Governor Meyner [Robert B. Meyner] or . . .

MONRONEY: No, I wasn't involved with Governor Meyner at all, except that I do remember why the Stevenson demonstration on the floor of the convention was so huge. They'd given, I think, each candidate 125 demonstrator passes, and we had our 125 demonstrator passes after Gene McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] nominated Governor Stevenson. But we also had a tremendous number of Stevenson supporters in the Los Angeles area, and I must say I think most of them hurt us more than they helped us--there were some very obnoxious Stevenson supporters in Los Angeles with the delegates. But we got the Meyner demonstrators to hand their passes to people who were carrying Stevenson signs and, as a result, we doubled our demonstrators. I think actually we about quadrupled them, because we arranged to have the Symington demonstrators and a number of the other candidates' demonstrators hand their passes to pro-Stevenson people. I don't know why the doormen didn't stop this avalanche of people coming through, but there obviously was a lot more than 125 coming through the doors in that demonstration.

Now, the only other comment, I think, that might be of interest as background to the convention is that I know during the convention and after the convention Paul Butler, the Democratic national chairman, was stung and hurt by charges that he had been pro-Kennedy and had rigged the convention on behalf of Senator Kennedy. Well, let me just describe something that happened. After the convention, I got back to Washington, and John Brademas, Congressman Brademas from South Bend, was talking to Paul Butler on the telephone one day about arranging to drive back to South Bend, Indiana, together. I was in the office, and John buzzed me on the intercom and said, "There's a friend of yours on the telephone who wants to talk to you." I didn't know who it was, so I got on the phone, and Paul Butler said, "Mike, I haven't seen you since the convention," which was ironical because he refused to see me during the convention. But he said, "In view of what happened,

I just guess you'll have to admit that I really didn't rig the convention in favor of Senator Kennedy."

Well, I liked Paul Butler. I liked him because I think he represented the conscience of the Democratic party for a long period of time. And I didn't mean to upset him, but I think I did because I said, "Well, I don't know whether you rigged the convention or not, Mr. Butler, but do you know how we got all of the Stevenson supporters in the gallery at the convention?" And he said, "No. How?" And I said, "We got them to go to the Kennedy headquarters and get buttons and then go to the Democratic National Committee with their Kennedy buttons on and get gallery passes." And he obviously did not like my making that comment . . .

STEWART: This is true?

MONRONEY: . . . but that's a true story. Yes.

STEWART: That's how most of those people got in?

MONRONEY: Yes.

STEWART: I don't think I've ever heard that.

MONRONEY: I don't know whether the Kennedy people knew that the Democratic National Committee was handing out gallery passes to people with Kennedy buttons on, though.

Somehow or other, we found out about it and arranged to get a lot of these people from southern California who kept coming in and saying, "We want to help," well, we just said, "Go over and get a Kennedy button and then go to room such-and-such at the Biltmore and get a gallery pass and bring it back here." We had stacks of gallery passes that way. We couldn't get those gallery passes by sending anybody over there with Stevenson buttons on, but we could with Kennedy buttons.

Now, this may not have been Paul Butler's fault. It may have been the fault of some pro-Kennedy supporter on the national committee staff or a volunteer that had control of the gallery passes. But Paul Butler didn't like that comment a bit because the implication was that the whole convention was stacked.

STEWART: Were there any other almost technical aspects of the convention before that you got involved in with either Paul Butler or someone on his staff? For example, as far as the choice of officers of the convention or any of this?

MONRONEY: I can remember talking to Leonard Reinsch in Los Angeles about the facilities, and I think Jim Doyle was our principal negotiator with the national committee on the facilities at the convention, at the Sports Arena [Los Angeles

Memorial Sports Arena]. And I'm talking about space for setting up your telephones and systems and communications and network, generally TV sets to monitor the various networks, and so on. I think Jim Doyle was the main negotiator, moderator with the committee for the Stevenson group. But I can remember talking to Leonard Reinsch about it at one point, and here again they did not have space inside the Sports Arena for the Stevenson group, but they did provide us with parking space immediately outside the Sports Arena for trailers which we set up as sort of a mobile communications headquarters with TV sets and telephones and so on.

STEWART: Looking back on it, what do you feel were the major mistakes that the Stevenson people made? Do you feel now that there was anything they might have done differently that would have altered the outcome of the whole thing, or do you think it was inevitable from the start that Kennedy people were going to win?

MONRONEY: Well, looking back on it, in retrospect, I would guess that it was inevitable that Senator Kennedy was going to get the Democratic nomination because he got started very early. It is a credit to Senator Kennedy--that he started running for president right after the '56 election. And we got organized, those of us who were involved in the Stevenson effort, only in the late spring of 1960.

There was a tremendous grass-roots support for Stevenson, and there were people that came from all over the United States, paid their own way to Los Angeles to work for him. Here again, I question the effectiveness of a lot of these people. Some of them annoyed delegates from their own states more than anything else, but they were dedicated to Stevenson. And I think the governor himself was continually surprised at the amount of grass-roots support he had. I think he was amazed when he got off the plane at Los Angeles to that incredible reception he got at the Airport. I think he was amazed. I walked on the floor with Governor Stevenson. John Sharon and I escorted him on the floor when he got that wild ovation. He went over and sat with the Illinois delegation and then walked up to the platform to make the speech.

I can remember an interesting sight. We had been working, as I mentioned earlier, the Alaska delegation. Governor Egan [William A. Egan] of Alaska was a strong Kennedy supporter. And as Governor Stevenson walked up to the rostrum and I was walking in front of him, I saw Governor Egan of Alaska was standing up on top of his chair with his face just transfixed with respect and admiration and an almost devotion to Adlai Stevenson. And, of course, a number of us in the Stevenson camp felt that this might turn the tide. At that time we thought that this wild demonstration would do it. But Egan, who was committed to Kennedy, just looked like he was watching a saint walk by when we came in, this great hubbub.



I don't think there's anything, though, that the Stevenson people could have done that we didn't do. We didn't have a particularly big staff; we weren't able to get out and talk to the delegates. Oh, I think if we'd been financed and had the time, we might have been able to head off the nomination for Senator Kennedy. But we just didn't get started soon enough and, in retrospect, I think it was probably just as well.

STEWART: Did you have any polls showing that he definitely could have beaten Nixon [Richard M. Nixon]?

MONRONEY: Stevenson could have beaten Nixon?

STEWART: Yes.

MONRONEY: I think, as far as the people in the Stevenson effort were concerned, we felt that he'd beat Nixon, but we had no polls to prove it.

STEWART: Well, were there any polls done by you people?

MONRONEY: Not to my knowledge.

STEWART: Commissioned at all?

MONRONEY: Not to my knowledge. We had such a short time and so little money. It was all sort of a campaign put together, figuratively speaking, with paper clips and rubber bands and thumbtacks. It was a pretty haphazard operation at the last minute with some people who, like myself, certainly weren't qualified from a political standpoint to run a national campaign like that. I think there were some people in our camp who had the qualifications. I think, for example, Tom Finney was. I don't know whether you know him, but he's with Clark Clifford's law firm now . . .

STEWART: No, I don't know him.

MONRONEY: . . . but Tom, I think, could make a great sort of a Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] for a national political candidate . . .

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

MONRONEY: . . . or a Kenny O'Donnell [P. Kenneth O'Donnell], but we just didn't have the supporting staff or the finances.

STEWART: What did you do during the campaign, or did you work in the campaign at all?

MONRONEY: Well, I worked in the Kennedy-Johnson-Brademas headquarters in South Bend, Indiana. And John Brademas was given--I assume that Paul Butler or someone at the national committee, Scoop Jackson [Henry M. Jackson], turned over to John Brademas, his organization--the job of coordinating the Kennedy-Johnson campaign in his district, and I worked in his headquarters. I can remember personally that I smarted a little bit after Kennedy's victory in Los Angeles, but got very enthusiastic for Senator Kennedy later in the campaign, and particularly after his debates with Nixon. I was a devoted Kennedy supporter from then on. But my function that fall was, in that campaign, as sort of an office manager, and I made some speeches when John Brademas couldn't be two places at the same time. I spoke for him and for the presidential ticket, national ticket.

After the election, I came back to Washington, and I was offered the job of executive assistant to the postmaster general, and was rather surprised that I got that offer in view of the fact that I had not been a strong Kennedy supporter at the convention. I accepted the job, and, when I found out what the job was, I was all the more surprised that I'd been offered this particular job because it turned out it was the most political job in the most political agency in the government, and certainly a job that I would have thought the Kennedy people would have wanted to place someone who was a strong Kennedy supporter, as they said, "Before West Virginia," in those days.

STEWART: Do you know how it came about?

MONRONEY: How I happened to be offered the job?

STEWART: Yes.

MONRONEY: Yes. I don't think it had anything to do with any decision on the part of the president or anybody in his immediate staff--or the president-elect at that point. Bill Brawley [William H. Brawley], who had been staff director of the Senate Post Office Committee, had been offered the job of deputy postmaster general, and apparently they had given Bill the job of filling some of the staff positions at the Post Office Department, and he's the one that offered me this job.

Of course, at that stage of the game they. . . . Bill had been offered the job of deputy postmaster general, and they'd offered the job of postmaster general to J. Edward Day, who was executive vice president of Prudential Life Insurance. No one in Washington had ever heard of Ed Day. I had never heard of him. He had been insurance commissioner during Governor Stevenson's tenure as Governor of Illinois and had been considered a Stevenson supporter, although he was a Kennedy delegate in the California delegation. Bill Brawley, in offering me this job, said,

"I hope you will take the job, because while"--I'm not sure these are his exact words, but darn close to it--"I'm going to be deputy postmaster general, but I'm going to run the Post Office Department." I remember very well him saying it at the time because I was wondering what Ed Day was going to do as postmaster general.

STEWART: This was after Ed Day had been named? I mean, he knew who was going to be the boss?

MONRONEY: Yes, I think so, but I'm not positive. I think it was after Ed Day had been named, but Ed Day had not been to Washington at that stage of the game. And Bill Brawley was, in effect, offering me the job as Ed Day's executive assistant. He told me at the time, "Well, it's subject to Ed Day's approval when he gets to Washington, but I don't think there'll be any problem." And we met Ed Day when he came to Washington--Bill Brawley and I met him--and Ed Day told Bill that he had no objection to my being his executive assistant, after he'd met with me.

STEWART: Sort of unusual, isn't it, that a member of the cabinet wouldn't select his own immediate assistant?

MONRONEY: Well, in view of what transpired from then on, I never really thought too much about it. But, yes, you're right. I think Bill Brawley picked me for that job because my father was on the Senate Post Office Committee. I wasn't sure about it at the time, but Dad was the ranking Democrat on the Senate Post Office Committee. Also I think Bill Brawley was trying to make sure that he had a pro-Brawley man in that slot in Ed Day's office.

Well, there developed at the Post Office Department a fairly violent feud between Ed Day and Bill Brawley, and I was right in the middle of it, particularly because I felt indebted to Bill Brawley for my job and at the same time I was Ed Day's executive assistant. Now this feud really developed over a series of small things, personal affronts, plus the fact that Bill Brawley issued orders without clearing them with Ed Day. Ed Day was a good administrator and just didn't like that happening and used to be angry about it--and justifiably angry at times.

But I can remember Ed Day finally in the early winter of 1962 got completely fed up. It was in February of 1962, because I flew to Salt Lake City with him, and he told me on the plane that he had just talked to Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] at the White House and told Ralph Dungan to tell President Kennedy that he had enough of Brawley, and the president was going to have to make a decision: either he was going to leave or Brawley would have to go. Well, that was in February.

. As it developed, and not for political reasons or for anything other than the fact that during most of the disputes between Brawley and Day, I felt that Ed Day was right, ethically and technically. So I ended up siding--as I believe, if they'd had to make a choice, most of the top staff of the Post Office Department would have--been on Ed Day's side in the dispute, even though most of the others initially stayed out of it. And I tried to, but obviously after a while I could not. While I was involved in it constantly and was worried about it, most of us tried to pretend like it didn't exist and hope it would go away, kind of like Red China [People's Republic of China]. And I remember thinking that perhaps it was dying out for a while that spring.

And then I can remember in June--I think it was June the 13--I walked into Ed Day's office one morning, and he said. . . . He called me into his office. As I was walking across that long expanse to his desk, he leaned back in his chair, and he said, "Well, I just submitted my resignation to the president. I've had it." Well, as it turned out, he had never gotten any response from Ralph Dungan, and I don't know whether Mr. Day himself will discuss this in his interview, but as I recall he told me that when the president learned of his intention to resign in June of '62, it was the first he'd heard that Ed Day was unhappy.

STEWART: Oh, really?

MONRONEY: Apparently no one had ever told the president that Ed Day was unhappy, that a feud had developed between Brawley and Day. I don't know whether that's so or not, but that's the story that I've heard.

STEWART: Well, Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] says in his book--in fact I copied the quote--that Kennedy, "never fully understood Day's reasons", one, for feuding with Brawley and, two, for leaving eventually.

MONRONEY: Well, his reasons for feuding with Brawley, I think, were understandable. The president may never have been aware of them. There's no way in the world he could possibly could have been aware of them unless he'd been either at the Post Office Department or had talked to the postmaster general or Bill Brawley during that period, and I don't think he ever did. Jack Kennedy was interested in a number of issues and problems as president, and the Post Office Department was not one of them. He had a tremendously able administrator in Ed Day; he had a person that he knew in Bill Brawley. And I think he just hoped these two guys would run the Post Office Department and not bother him with postal problems. I don't think he was aware of the reasons why the feud developed.

I can give you as an example one of the reasons, an incident that occurred that was just one small part of this feud. Bill Brawley called me into his office one day and asked me to make sure that every time we appointed someone to the position of postal inspector (which is sort of the police department of the Post Office Department) we cleared it with the advisor, the Democratic congressman or senator or state chairman who represented the area in which that postal inspector candidate lived or was to be appointed. Well, at that stage there was a tremendous number of jobs--postmaster, rural carrier, regional officials--that were filled on the basis of getting the approval of the advisor, and in my opinion it was a mistake to place the postal inspection service in the area of politics. We had plenty of patronage without worrying about postal inspectors. So I argued with Bill Brawley, and he said, "No, just go do it."

Well, I went back in my office and sat and thought for awhile, talked to Henry Montague [Henry B. Montague], the chief postal inspector, and he was very upset about it. Montague is a very able career public servant, and he felt this was a very bad mistake, so I went in to see Mr. Day about it. Well, it turned out that Bill Brawley never discussed it with Mr. Day and Ed Day, when he heard that I'd been given these instructions, was absolutely furious, called Brawley in and read him the riot act. And Brawley stood there glaring at me for having told Ed Day about the instructions I'd received from Brawley. That was a small example.

There was a number of other things that happened: that type of thing just happened almost day after day at the Post Office Department. It made it an intolerable situation for Ed Day who had not been told when he was offered the job of postmaster general that Bill Brawley was going to run the Post Office Department, if that was the case. They left the impression with him that he was going to be postmaster general, and he operated the Post Office Department, I thought, very ably as an administrator. He had political shortcomings, but most of his shortcomings were that he had a short fuse. He got very irritated at Bobby Kennedy about something. He got mad at Bill Green [William J. Green, Mr.] from Philadelphia one time, and Bill Green hated Ed Day from that day forward. Right up until Bill Green died, he couldn't stand Ed. He'd start swearing at the mention of Ed Day's name.

STEWART: He makes quite a to-do about Robert Kennedy in his book.

MONRONEY: Well, now I'm devoted to Ed Day, and I was one of Ed Day's loyal supporters during the showdown in the Brawley case, but in his book he makes some mention that Bobby Kennedy handled the Mississippi patronage, and that's grossly overexaggerated because I was in charge of the overall patronage situation at the Post Office Department for five years and throughout Ed Day's administration. And I can remember the Mississippi situation was one to which I probably devoted more time than anybody at the Post Office Department. And it's not

accurate that Bobby Kennedy was that much involved in Mississippi patronage. It was a mess. We just didn't know what to do, because I wasn't an expert on Mississippi politics.

There were two men that had a tremendous amount of influence on the Post Office Department's recommendations on jobs in Mississippi, and they were former Governor J. P. Coleman and former congressman Frank Smith [Frank E. Smith], after he had been defeated, when they gerrymandered him together with another Mississippi congressman--I've forgotten who it was, but the reason Bobby Kennedy became involved in one or two Mississippi postal patronage situations was that Bobby Kennedy was attorney general, Senator Eastland [James O. Eastland] from Mississippi was the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. And whenever the Post Office Department was on the verge of making an appointment of someone in Mississippi to a postmaster's job or a rural carrier's job that Senator Eastland violently disliked or was violently opposed to--when Senator Eastland's overtures to me had no impact--he would call Bobby Kennedy personally. And during the two and a half years that Ed Day was postmaster general I can remember receiving, I think, two phone calls from Bobby Kennedy and maybe one or two others from his aides, but not more than that. "Would you please look into this situation. And is there anything we can do to make Senator Eastland happy?" Bobby Kennedy was always very polite. He was never demanding. On the two occasions that I talked with Bob Kennedy directly that I recall, he never said, "Do it." He asked me if I **could please** do it as a favor to him. In both cases I did do it as a favor to him to get Senator Eastland off his back. It wasn't a great problem.

STEWART: But as far as other patronage assigned to Mississippi, was he regularly involved in it?

MONRONEY: No, very rarely. I can never remember having any contacts with the attorney general at that time on patronage matters other than those two instances in Mississippi. I believe that Ed Day's comments in his book about the attorney general being involved in Mississippi patronage might have been generated by maybe one phone call he might have gotten directly from the attorney general and then asking me. But Bobby Kennedy simply didn't have the time or the interest in Mississippi postal problems to devote the attention to it that Ed Day's book would seem to imply.

STEWART: Well, I think--and I could be wrong on this--in his book he says that it was . . .

MONRONEY: . . . national?

STEWART: National. It wasn't just Mississippi.

MONRONEY: Well, if there were other instances in which the attorney general became involved in postal patronage they were so seldom that I think Ed Day's. . . . What might possibly have generated that comment is that the attorney general may have been rather insistent in a phone conversation with Ed Day, one that I'm not aware of, on one appointment. But it was not. . . . It was the exception, not the rule. And I can't even precisely remember the circumstance of that exception.

STEWART: How early in the game were fairly neat procedures set up for handling all this patronage between you and the White House and people on the Hill [Capitol Hill]? Or were there fairly neat . . .

MONRONEY: Almost immediately. There were very neat guidelines that I drew up initially, I believe, at Bill Brawley's request. I submitted a memorandum to Larry O'Brien in January--well, probably February or March of 1961--right after the inauguration, right after we took over the Post Office Department. I submitted a rather lengthy memorandum to Larry O'Brien setting forth the traditional guidelines for handling Post Office patronage and asking for his advice on how to handle postal patronage in areas where we had neither a Democratic congressman nor a Democratic senator, asking for his advice on how to handle postal patronage, for example, in Mississippi, where neither of the two senators nor any of the congressmen supported Kennedy over Nixon, I think, except Tom Abernethy [Thomas G. Abernethy], who sort of sat on his hands. All the others actively campaigned for Vice President Nixon.

So I asked for guidelines in all these different areas and said, "Here is how it's normally handled."

I got those guidelines--I believe Larry O'Brien referred me to John Bailey, and I talked to John Bailey about it, and I got the names of people to go to as advisors in these various states. For example, in Vermont where there was no Democratic senator or Democratic congressmen and initially, before Phil Hoff's [Philip H. Hoff] election, no Democratic governor, We went to Jack Spencer [John Spencer], who was the Democratic state chairman. For a short period of time there was another man, but then Jack Spencer. That was the type of information I got from John Bailey. Then we simply fed this information into the machine in the Post Office Department advisory system and worked from there. But it was set up fairly quickly, and there was not very many problems.

STEWART: Then there were no real changes from the traditional way of doing it?

MONRONEY: No. No, there was one interesting--and I can't remember all the details--but there was one interesting Post Office appointment that I think is worth mentioning because, as I recall, it was the only postmaster recommended and appointed personally by the president while he was president.

STEWART: I bet I know who that was.

MONRONEY: Tom Costin [Thomas P. Costin, Jr.] in Lynn, Massachusetts.

STEWART: I was going to say that fellow in Fall River. Do you remember that?

MONRONEY: Fall River, Mass.?

STEWART: Yes, who was an old friend of. . . . His name is Berube [Edward C. Berube], I think, or something like that. Or Berube?

MONRONEY: Well, Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith II], you see, was the senator during that period. Ben Smith may have relayed to us, he could have conceivably relayed to the postal service some personal recommendations that he had gotten from Jack Kennedy or knew that this was the man that Jack Kennedy wanted personally. But Tom Costin's appointment in Lynn developed as a result of a feud, a jurisdictional dispute between the Democratic congressman whose district covered part of Lynn and Ben Smith, who was the advisor for the other part of Lynn because there was a Republican congressman. And I don't know whether Ben Smith told me this or whether--it's been so long ago I've forgotten where I learned this or got this impression, but my recollection is that Jack Kennedy told someone and they relayed it to me. President Kennedy told someone, "I want Tom Costin to be the postmaster of Lynn, Massachusetts." And I'm so sure that my information is right that I've repeated it to several people, that Tom Costin is the only postmaster who was recommended by President Kennedy to have his job.

STEWART: He was just recently elected. . . .

MONRONEY: . . . president of the National Association of Postmasters. He's a very, very fine guy, a good friend of mine.

STEWART: Who in the White House did you have most of your dealings with?

MONRONEY: Well, there was a number of people. I dealt with various people various times. It depended upon what the problem was. I had telephone conversations with Ralph Dungan,



Kenny O'Donnell, Larry O'Brien, Claude Desautels, Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln], but . . .

STEWART: Well, as far as patronage is concerned.

MONRONEY: As far as patronage is concerned, it was mostly John Bailey and Larry O'Brien. I had a great deal of discussion with Evelyn Lincoln over a postmastership out in Nebraska where Harold Lincoln, her husband's father had been postmaster, and he retired. She had a candidate for postmastership of--I can't even remember the name of the town in Nebraska now--Plymouth, Nebraska, or something like that. But there was another postmastership that Kenny O'Donnell--well, I think Kenny O'Donnell was interested in the one in Worcester. Isn't he from Worcester?

STEWART: Yes. There was a squabble, I believe, over that. I don't know. I can't . . .

MONRONEY: He was involved in that, in that he was contacted by the Post Office Department. And I can't remember whether I did it or whether. . . . I think I may have talked to him, but Ed Day may have talked to him, and Bill Brawley may have talked to him, if it was before Bill left. But he was--we sought his advice in a rather delicate situation in Worcester. I think we ended up going with Harold Donohue's [Harold D. Donohue] man.

STEWART: In May of '61 there was a big flap about a memo that you apparently sent to people in the post office that somehow fell into the hands of the Republican National Committee. Do you recall that?

MONRONEY: Yes.

STEWART: According to the story--at least what the Republican National Committee was charging--that you were specifically telling post office people in this memo that all decisions were to be made with political favors in mind, in quotes, and that you kept a file on these favors. It was quite a . . .

MONRONEY: No, I can remember--now, I recall. I remember vaguely the incident, and I can remember being amused by it. The memorandum . . .

STEWART: I thought maybe it was this one you mentioned to Larry O'Brien.

MONRONEY: No, that was a confidential memorandum. There was only two or three copies of that made and that went to Larry and I think I still have the original of the other or the copy.

No, the memorandum they were referring to was a memorandum that I sent to everybody in the top staff of the Post Office Department telling them that when they had any discussions with people on Capitol Hill, members of Congress or a congressman's staff, that they were to let me know what was said so we could keep a file on each individual congressman and we would have a centralized file of all contacts with congressional offices and members of Congress. The Republican National Committee read into it that we were going beyond that and were going to punish, going to make sure that we did no favors for Republicans and we were going to do favors only for Democrats. The memo didn't say that. In all candor, however, there's no question that Democrats did receive preferential treatment, as the Republicans received preferential treatment during the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] administration. And this will always, I think, occur, and I don't think there's anything improper about it as long as the public interest is not harmed.

We had a policy at the Post Office Department that was Ed Day's enunciated policy, which I think was good and I think it was in the best interest, in the public interest, to have a policy like that at all times in any government agency, and that was that he was not going to make a political cesspool out of the Post Office Department, that we would not simply grant every request made by a Democratic congressman simply because he was a Democrat, because the yeses don't mean anything unless you say no once in a while. So we evaluated all of the political requests or requests from members of Congress, Democratic members of Congress, on the basis of whether it was in the best interest of the postal service, and if it didn't hurt to give them what they wanted, we made sure they got it. If there was any reason why it should not be granted, their request, we told them so, explained why we couldn't do it, and 999 times out of a thousand they understood and that was the last we heard of it.

We did favors for Republican congressmen, too, from time to time, and based pretty much on the same philosophy. We didn't receive very many requests for favors from Republican congressmen, and we didn't go out and ask them to let us know whenever we could help them. We did make sure that the Democrats in Congress knew where we were if they wanted to call us and what we could do for them in case they had any need for assistance. Not having advertised that service to the Republicans, we didn't get as many requests from them.

STEWART: Look. I don't know how much time you have. Is it . . .

MONRONEY: No problems.

STEWART: Did you have any contacts at all with the outgoing Republican people in the post office during the transition period?

MONRONEY: Yes, we did. We had some very amusing contacts. I can remember going with Bill Brawley and Ed Day to see Arthur Summerfield, Eisenhower's postmaster general, during the period between the time that Ed Day arrived in Washington, roughly the sixth of January, 1961, and the twentieth of January. There was a two-week period that Ed Day was in town. Shortly after he arrived in Washington, Bill Brawley and Ed Day and I went to see Arthur Summerfield who sat in that huge office, that oak-paneled basketball court. And Arthur Summerfield offered the use of offices and secretarial help to Ed Day during the period before the inauguration. Ed Day declined the offer, telling Mr. Summerfield that he preferred to stay where he was, and that was at the Senate Post Office Committee offices where Bill Brawley had been located.

Arthur Summerfield amused Ed Day greatly because he had three obsessions as postmaster general that were very apparent during the time that we spent with him. And we had several meetings with him, two or three, about three or four. Arthur Summerfield was interested in fighting pornography; he was interested in the philatelic aspects of his job, in other words, issuing commemorative stamps; and he was interested in the public relations program generally of the postal service. I can remember that Ed Day was absolutely amazed at Summerfield's lack of information about the operating problems of the postal service. Whenever Ed Day asked Mr. Summerfield about some of the problems of mail delivery, Summerfield would call on his Deputy, McKibbin [John M. McKibbin] to answer those questions.

And Summerfield was extremely upset because Ed Day refused to go through a room that he had set aside as an exhibit of pornographic material that was sent through the mails. He had a key in his desk, and on several occasions Arthur Summerfield asked Mr. Day and Bill Brawley and myself to go through this room where he had this collection of pornographic exhibits. And Ed Day refused, and as a matter of fact, the day that he took over as postmaster general he had the Postal Inspection Service dismantle that room and put all that material in the files. And I never saw it.

STEWART: Really? There was a separate room?

MONRONEY: It was in a paneled room that was right adjacent to the postmaster general's office, right across the hall that we used as a conference room. And a number of the people in the postal service during the Summerfield regime referred to this pornographic museum as the "chamber of horrors," as I recall. But Arthur Summerfield talked a great deal about his fight to eliminate pornography, and Mr. Day felt that the job was not to talk about it, but simply to enforce the laws pertaining to the subject.

Now, there's two other points that might be worth mentioning. When Ed Day called me into his office on that June morning to tell me that he'd sent his resignation to the president, I mentioned that to my knowledge, at least according to the stories I've heard, President Kennedy didn't know anything about the feud. Well, Ed Day told me that morning as I walked into his office that he had talked to the president. The president had been very surprised to get this resignation so abruptly and that he was sending the attorney general, his brother, Bob Kennedy, over at noon that day to talk to Mr. Day. Ed Day told me as I stood there that he had absolutely no intention of changing his mind. He was going to resign. There was no question about it. He just had enough. He was fed up. He was disgusted with the situation that existed, and they hadn't paid any attention to his complaints. He was leaving, and no one could change his mind.

So I left his office and was very upset. And one by one, Mr. Day called the other people in the top staff in to tell them the same thing he told me. Well, my office was right adjacent, immediately contiguous to the postmaster general's, so as these other people on the top staff got the word and left his office, they sort of congregated in my office. And we decided that we wanted to do something to prevent Ed Day's leaving if we possibly could, and the only thing we could do would be to talk to the attorney general before he came over to see Mr. Day.

Well, I'd met Bobby Kennedy for the first time up in Massachusetts in 1956, and I'd met him a number of times since then, and he knew me when he saw me and we decided that I was the one at the Post Office Department whom Bobby Kennedy knew the best, so I was the one who was sort of picked to call him on the telephone. So I called him, and I got him immediately, and I said that I knew he was coming over to see Mr. Day and I knew why he was coming over to see Mr. Day and that there was a number of people in the top staff at the Post Office Department that were aware of what was going on and we would like to see him briefly before he went in to talk to the postmaster general. So he said all right. He said, "I will come over fifteen minutes early." I think he was supposed to see the postmaster general at 12:30. He said, "I'll come over at noon. Meet me downstairs, and I'll be glad to talk to you."

So we congregated in my office at twelve, and I went down and met the attorney general as he got out of his limousine. We walked through the crowded lobby of the Post Office Department and into the postmaster general's private elevator. And I was always amazed that no one recognized him as we walked through. And we went up in the elevator.

He asked me two questions on the way in. The first question he said was, "How many people know what's going on?" I said, "Well, the presidential appointees and about four or five others." And he expressed concern that this might get out to the public that the postmaster general resigned. I said, "I don't believe you have anything to worry about as far as these men are concerned." And then

he asked me, he said, "Is Bill Brawley popular with the top staff?" And my answer was, "No, he is not." I don't know whether that was a fair answer. What I was really saying was the top staff, if they had to pick or choose, would side with Ed Day. I didn't mean to imply that the other people in the top staff didn't like Bill Brawley, because none of us disliked him.

We went up in the elevator, went into my office, and the assistant postmaster general for the Bureau of Personnel, Dick Murphy [Richard J. Murphy], was sort of picked to do most of the talking. There were two men there who had no business being there because they were career employees, Henry Montague, the chief postal inspector, and Lou Doyle [Kiyus H. Doyle], the general counsel, but both insisted on being there because they were that devoted to Ed Day. And Dick Murphy, I thought, presented a very weak case. I would have been more positive with the attorney general. I would have said, "Damn it. You've got an extremely loyal guy in Ed Day who is a superb administrator. He may make a political mistake once in a while, but he's a damn good postmaster general. Don't lose him." I also--because I knew a number of other people in the room felt this way--was sorry that Dick Murphy didn't give Bobby Kennedy the impression that if Ed Day leaves and you make Bill Brawley postmaster general a lot of us are going to leave because we won't stay here if Bill Brawley's postmaster general. In retrospect, however, I think Dick Murphy was very wise not to, in effect, threaten our resignation if Ed Day was allowed to leave. But the impression we all got from Bobby Kennedy was he was just as cold as ice water and he didn't give a damn what we said, he was going to go into Ed Day's office and say, "Okay, sorehead, if you want to quit, quit."

Well, I don't know what transpired in there, but Dick Murphy and Jim Kelleher [James F. Kelleher] and I went out to lunch right after Bobby Kennedy went into Ed Day's office. And we stayed out to lunch for a long time, about two and a half hours. We were all deciding what we were going to do when Ed Day left, what jobs we were going to get. We all figured we would--Brawley would probably throw us out if we didn't leave, anyway. We came back, and it turned out that Ed Day had been looking for us all over town. They sent couriers out all over Pennsylvania Avenue trying to find us. And we all three walked into his office, and he said, "Well, I've finished talking, just finished talking, to the most persuasive attorney general in the history of the United States. I'm going to stay, and Brawley is leaving." I don't know what was said between Ed Day and the attorney general, but that covers that point.

The other thing that might be of interest is the last cabinet appointment that Jack Kennedy made before the assassination was the new postmaster general, John Gronouski. And John Gronouski did not know President Kennedy well and was overwhelmed at the honor of being

picked as a member of the president's cabinet. I offered him my resignation when he was appointed postmaster general because I thought he had the right to pick his own executive assistant, but he asked me to stay on. His appointment, I think, was in September, late September, of 1963, and I flew out to Hawaii with him when he addressed the National Association of Postmasters annual convention in early October, the first speech he made as postmaster general. And he asked me to stay on that trip. When we got back from Hawaii, he came into my office one day, and he was rather embarrassed--obviously embarrassed to ask me this question. He said, "You know, I'm a member of President Kennedy's cabinet, and I think it'd be nice if I had an autographed picture of the president. How do I get one?" So, obviously I wanted to impress my new boss that I was a pretty effective guy, so I said, "Well, I'll get you one." He could have gotten one if he had just called the White House. I called Evelyn Lincoln and told her. I said, "The postmaster general would like an autographed picture of the president." And during the conversation Evelyn, who had been very grateful to me for helping on this Nebraska postmaster appointment, asked me if I would like another autographed picture of President Kennedy. And I said, "I don't have the first one yet." So she said she thought that was horrible and she would send me one. Well, about a week later he got a beautiful colored photograph of the president, autographed, and I got an autographed picture as well.

The last time I saw President Kennedy or the last time I shook hands with him was at the White House ceremony in the Rose Garden where they dedicated the Eleanor Roosevelt stamp. And I was standing outside his office on the balcony talking to John Bailey when he made his speech to the people in the Rose Garden. And when he came back into his office, he looked over, and he saw John Bailey standing there. And he came over just to shake hands with John Bailey and to ask him a question. And he looked around at me, and I don't think he recognized me immediately, so I stuck my hand out, and said, "Mike Monroney, Mr. President." His face lit up in a wonderfully warm smile, and he said, "Oh, yes. How do you like your new boss?" And that was the last time I saw him.

Then I was invited by Governor Morrison [Frank B. Morrison] of Nebraska, who was our major advisor in Nebraska, to come out and watch the Oklahoma-Nebraska football game, which was the twenty-third of November that year. And I flew out to Nebraska that Friday morning to make a speech. They were having a governor's conference in Omaha and I was going through the new Omaha post office facility, which had not yet been occupied, and was commenting that it would be great for the president to come out and dedicate this new post office. They could seat five thousand people in that huge, big workroom floor. And that was about 12:30 central Standard Time when I made that comment. And

we went across the street to Trentino's restaurant, and I got the word there. Maurine Biegert, the Democratic national committeewoman went out to powder her nose and came back and said, "The president's been shot."

So I came back to Washington, and I remember walking onto John Gronouski's office. I talked to him on the phone from Omaha after the assassination, but, when I walked into his office after getting back, he said, "Well, I guess I have the shortest tenure of any postmaster general in history."

Actually, John stayed on as postmaster general for almost two years before President Johnson made him our ambassador to Poland. That's about it.

End of Interview