

**Eugene J. McCarthy Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 06/08/1964**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Eugene J. McCarthy  
**Interviewer:** Seth Tillman  
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**Biographical Note**

Eugene J. McCarthy (1916-2005), was an American politician from Minnesota who served in the United States House of Representatives (1949-1959) and in the United States Senate (1959-1971.) In this interview, McCarthy discusses his relationship with John F. Kennedy (JFK), his role in the 1960 campaign, and his evaluation of the Kennedy Administration among other issues.

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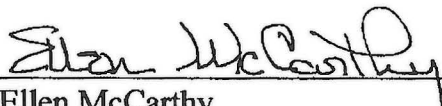
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of **Eugene J. McCarthy**  
Interviewed by: Seth Tillman

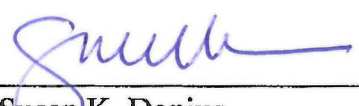
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## Eugene J. McCarthy

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Oral History Interview

with

EUGENE J. McCARTHY

June 8, 1964  
Washington, D.C.

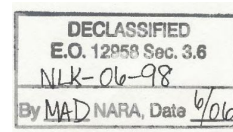
By Seth Tillman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

TILLMAN: Senator, what was the character of your relationship with President Kennedy during the four-year period from 1949 through 1952 when you were both members of the House of Representatives? I've heard it suggested that, although Kennedy came to the House in 1947 and you came in 1949, a kind of intellectual bond developed between you during those years, and I've heard it further suggested that then Representative Kennedy had high regard for your judgment and view of public affairs in those years.

McCARTHY: It was not a close personal relationship in the sense that we spent a great deal of time together. It was my impression that there was a kind of intellectual bond between us, a mutual assumption that our approach to the same problem probably would be essentially the same, both in terms of the ideas we would bring to it and I suppose also in terms of the methods that we might apply. Although we did not spend a great deal of time together, we had many friends in common. Torbert MacDonald, for example, served in the House with me and was considered a relatively close friend of John Kennedy.

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He was also a friend of mine. That was true of some other members of the House whom both Kennedy and I knew and with whom we both associated although the associations usually were separate. It was not so much a matter of our being together or of our being in the same group, but rather that at different times we were with the same people, and I suppose this could be judged to reflect a kind of community of interests or of attraction. At least the same people attracted both of us. We didn't serve on any of the same committees of the House, so that, in terms of the official business of the House, our meetings were usually on the floor itself, and those are at best passing meetings.

TILLMAN: You had referred also to a series of luncheons that had taken place in the old restaurants on Pennsylvania Avenue that involved not so much you and Representative Kennedy as members of your staffs. Does anything come to mind about those?

McCARTHY: I think those were generally rather light-hearted meetings. They were lunch meetings at which people from my office and some of the people from my office and some of the people from Congressman Kennedy's would meet on what was called "Ptomaine Row." Sometimes I might be there with people from my office, and also with some of the people from Congressman Kennedy's office, people like Ted Reardon, for example, and others. Other times Kennedy might be there with some of his own people plus some from my office.

TILLMAN: Did you see each other socially during those years?

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McCARTHY: Not very much. I know that we were at receptions and other meetings together, but they were not frequent and I don't have any very clear recollection of them. I do recall his introducing me one day on the steps of the Capitol to Jacqueline Bouvier, who was then a reporter and photographer. I was invited to attend the wedding. And one time, when I was in the House, we talked about taking a trip to Europe together, but nothing ever came of that. I was married and had several young children, which set some limits upon my traveling both at home and abroad, and the President, of course, was at that time not married.

TILLMAN: What did you have in mind to do in Europe if you did go together?

McCARTHY: Oh, I don't think we ever really got around to deciding that.

TILLMAN: To go just a little bit out of sequence, you mentioned to me in our preliminary discussion that you attended President Kennedy's 40th birthday party, which would have been on May 29, 1957, and that you discussed what happens to a man after 40.

McCARTHY: It was his question to me since I had slightly over a year's lead on him.

TILLMAN: Well, I take it you gave him an answer.

McCARTHY: I may have given him some kind of answer. It was a surprising question. I don't recall that I had any very apt answer at the time.

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TILLMAN: I gather that there was a hiatus in your relationship with Kennedy between 1953 when he went to the Senate and 1959 when you came to the Senate. Is this accurate or did you see him in any important way during these years?

McCARTHY: Not very often. Other than chance meetings, the only occasions I recall were the 40th birthday party and dinner at his house in Georgetown.

TILLMAN: Can you recall this dinner party which you referred to at the Kennedy house in Georgetown?

McCARTHY: Well this was at a time when he was beginning to run for the Presidency. As I remember, it was rather a serious evening of discussion.

TILLMAN: What was the time?

McCARTHY: I cannot say offhand. It was in 1959 or early in 1960 as I recall it. It was in that period when he was definitely in the running. I remember he was interested principally in southeast Asia. I was somewhat surprised because he proceeded in a rather formal way. He had notes in his pocket with questions, not for me particularly but for some of the other people who were at the dinner.

TILLMAN: Do you recall the theme of what he was saying about southeast Asia?

McCARTHY: No, I don't think there was a theme. It was more a matter of his asking questions.

TILLMAN: Was there any particular point, presumably during the 1950's, when you began to think of Senator Kennedy as a prospective Presidential candidate?

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McCARTHY: I saw him, of course, as a prospective candidate after the Convention

in 1956 because of the run that he made then for the Vice Presidential nomination. 1956 was the year in which he narrated the history of the Democratic Party, you may recall. That, together with the run he made for the Vice-Presidency, I thought indicated quite clearly that he was certainly a strong candidate at least for the Vice Presidency in 1960. This was the area in which I thought of him at that time more than as a Presidential candidate.

TILLMAN: How about earlier than that, in the early Senate years or even in the House years?

McCARTHY: Well in the House years, it was a little hard to pass judgment. He was always competent and effective when he was called upon to be competent and effective. There are not many calls made on you in your early years in the House. I can recall only one or two issues on which he was active. There were others I'm sure. As I remember he was somewhat involved in the attempt to modify the Taft-Hartley Act, although he wasn't a leader of the effort. There were one or two District of Columbia matters which interested him. He successfully led a move to prevent the adoption of a sales tax for the District of Columbia. I recall his taking an active part in a debate on veterans' pension in the 81st Congress. These were cases in which he demonstrated more than passing interest. Certainly the sales tax for the District was an issue on which he could have been quite indifferent. Yet when he took it up, he drove very

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hard. I think there was some question about malaria and his back was giving him some trouble during those years, although he never mentioned these things.

TILLMAN: What about your relationship with Senator Kennedy during the period from 1959 to 1960 when you were both in the Senate?

McCARTHY: Not very close; we were not on the same committees and he was becoming very active in the campaign for the Presidency at that time. I recall, of course, his role in the handling of the Landrum-Griffin bill, which was really quite a masterful effort on his part. It was a good test. The handling of a bill that is not a clear cut one, in which the actual language of the bill is perhaps less important than the purpose and the general substance, constitutes a real test of a member of Congress. And the Landrum-Griffin Bill was a bill of that kind. The handling of it involved not just floor action, not just the language of the bill, but dealing with a great many outside forces not unlike those that affected the civil rights bill -- forces that were playing upon the issue, upon the bill itself. And he did very well, as everyone acknowledged at the time.

TILLMAN: You mentioned in our preliminary conversation some of the events of the 1956 Vice-Presidential nomination race at the Democratic



Convention and particularly Kennedy's bid for Minnesota's votes. All 30 went for Senator Humphrey on the first ballot and then all 30 went for Senator Kefauver on the second ballot.

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McCARTHY: It's a little difficult to assess what happened there because most people had literally time really to make any preliminary judgments on the Vice-Presidency. The nomination at the Convention was quite suddenly thrown open and there was a scurrying for position and for the commitment of delegates. President Kennedy's farm record was a matter of some concern to the Minnesota delegation. We also had a kind of moral commitment to Kefauver, who had come into Minnesota that year and had won the Presidential primary over Adlai Stevenson. Because of this many of the delegates felt very strongly that we had an obligation on the basis of the primary to support Kefauver for Vice President.

TILLMAN: You had mentioned that Ted Sorensen had asked Humphrey if he would come to see Kennedy at the Stockyards Inn or asked that he be asked.

McCARTHY: That's right. It was either between the first and second ballots or after the second ballot had started. This was in the Stockyards Arena. Ted did come. And I told him I didn't think we had any votes for him because of the makeup of the Humphrey support.

TILLMAN: Did it affect matters that Sorensen suggested that Humphrey come to see Kennedy while Kefauver had come himself?

McCARTHY: Oh I don't think so. This didn't really affect Humphrey. Well, Kefauver did come, and I don't know what it meant in terms of President Kennedy and his candidacy.

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I just don't know; this is simply the way it happened. If John Kennedy had come himself, I don't think it would have made any difference. There wasn't much there to give, although there might have been a few Minnesota delegation votes that would have gone for him if Senator Humphrey had said, in effect, this is wide open, vote any way you want. But the delegation, I think, was pretty well made up of people who were for Kefauver at that time. I don't think that Senator Humphrey had control over many delegates outside of Minnesota.

TILLMAN: Well is it correct to infer that the Minnesota delegation finally went for Kefauver first because of farm policy and second because of his victory in the Minnesota primary?

McCARTHY: I think the second consideration probably was more important.

TILLMAN: Senator, what was your role in the 1960 primary campaign? You campaigned for Humphrey in Wisconsin, didn't you?

McCARTHY: I was listed, I think, as the co-chairman of the Humphrey campaign with Governor Orville Freeman. It was more or less an honorary title. I didn't have very much to say about the management of the campaign or the direction of it. I did campaign some in Wisconsin, for the most part in the Fox River Valley area. That's the old Joe McCarthy country. It was thought I might be helpful there. I don't think I was. The vote was rather strong there for John Kennedy. I spent some

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time in Milwaukee and in one or two other parts of the state. The argument I made pretty much was that it was too early in the year to be making a final choice, that Wisconsin didn't necessarily have to anticipate who the presidential candidate would be and that I thought Wisconsin should come to the Convention supporting Senator Humphrey, who represented the progressive tradition of the Populists and of Midwest liberalism. I went into West Virginia one day during the campaign. It was a Sunday afternoon. There wasn't much action.

TILLMAN: I think you mentioned a conversation that you had with Kennedy between the Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries, in which he apparently sought to convey some kind of information to Humphrey through you.

McCARTHY: Yes, that's right. In the Wisconsin primary I think there was only one meeting with Senator Kennedy. On the same platform in Milwaukee, he spoke first and moved on and I followed. That was the closest thing to any kind of joint appearance. Then between that time and the Primary election in West Virginia, he did call me here in my Senate office and say he wanted to come to see me. I said, "I'll come down to your office," which was just below mine. I did. He indicated that he was unhappy over some of the tactics Senator Humphrey was using in West Virginia and suggested that I advise Senator Humphrey of his feelings and also that he was prepared to strike back. I replied that I wasn't really managing the campaign, that I thought that if he wanted this message to get to Senator

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Humphrey it would be better if he did it through someone other than me. That was the end of the conversation.

TILLMAN: Is there any more about that?

McCARTHY: No, this is where he ended it. At least as far as I know. I don't know whether he talked to Senator Humphrey himself or what followed. This was the only conversation I had as to the West Virginia primary.

TILLMAN: Did Senator Kennedy elaborate on the kind of tactics he objected to on Senator Humphrey's part in West Virginia?

McCARTHY: No, it was left vague. I suppose he assumed that I knew what he had reference to and perhaps that I knew what he would probably do if he felt he was justified in doing so.

TILLMAN: What is your judgment of the justice of this?

McCARTHY: The primaries are always dangerous, you know. They are like civil war; when you get to a point where you can't have a disagreement on real issues, you begin reaching out for --

TILLMAN: Other things.

McCARTHY: Other things, yes. Well, you know the things that were involved in West Virginia: on the one hand the wealth of his father and the suggestion that the Kennedys were buying votes and so on; on the other hand the Franklin Roosevelt Jr. activities which publicized charges about a lot of old things that the Republicans had directed at Senator Humphrey's

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draft record back when he was Mayor of Minneapolis, and so on. Whether this was the reprisal or retaliation that the President hinted at when he talked to me, whether the Humphrey charges about money and so on were what he had in mind, were never specified. I just assume that one would be the counter action to the other.

TILLMAN: Senator, I think it would be very worthwhile recording your role in the 1960 convention and the events around your very well remembered nominating speech for Adlai Stevenson and your contacts with President Kennedy in the course of this, and the effect of your support of Stevenson on your relations with Kennedy.

McCARTHY: Well, as you know, President Kennedy's people made a strong bid for the votes of the Minnesota delegation. Governor Orville Freeman was considered as a possible Vice-Presidential candidate and he was chosen to give the nominating speech for President Kennedy at the Convention. There had been no direct approach to me. And at the opening of the Convention I had no clear

knowledge as to what Adlai Stevenson would do. I had gone to one or two preliminary rallies for him. There was one here in Washington sometime before the Convention and there was one in Los Angeles early in the Convention. I think it was the night before the day of the nominations. But even that evening when the rally ended, there was no certainty that he would be a candidate. He had also visited the Minnesota delegation. The night before the day of the

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nominations the Minnesota delegation had a long caucus. It lasted until six in the morning. Governor Freeman argued very strongly that we commit our vote to President Kennedy on the first ballot. I, together with Senator Humphrey, had taken the position that we should vote for Humphrey on the first ballot and see what happened -- at least hold off for the second. This was before I even knew whether Stevenson would be a candidate or not, and before I'd been asked to give the nominating speech. Well, I don't know whether that's quite right. I think that at that point it was indicated that Stevenson's name was probably going to be placed in nomination. But in any case the next morning Senator Humphrey said that he was for Stevenson. That would have been the morning of the day of the nomination. I was not at any of the Stevenson planning caucuses. There were people like Senator Carroll of Colorado and Senator Monroney of Oklahoma and others who were much more active, and I think that on that morning Senator Humphrey was included. In any case, however, along about 11:30 or 12:00 I got a call asking me if I would make the nominating speech for Stevenson and I said, "Well, let me call you back. I'd like to think it over."

TILLMAN: Was this from someone on Stevenson's staff?

McCARTHY: The first call came from Senator Mike Monroney, and then some time later, maybe 30 minutes, I got a call from Stevenson himself, and I said even then that I would

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have to let him know. I was for Governor Stevenson but was concerned over two things: (1) that I had not been chosen simply as a Catholic, and (2) it was not simply to offset Governor Freeman, who had been chosen to nominate President Kennedy. In any case, about an hour after I got the first call I called back and said I would do it.

TILLMAN: Did you have any dealings with Kennedy, any conversations with Kennedy or Kennedy's staff?

McCARTHY: I don't think I did other than just in passing. You know the by-play around the Convention. And the Kennedy people of course were working through Governor Freeman, who was more or less their spokesman and their man in the Minnesota delegation since Senator Humphrey was

uncommitted and I had taken a stand for Johnson and then Stevenson when it became clear that he was going to be in the race. There was no reason why they should have been consulting with me.

TILLMAN: What was your role in the 1960 campaign, Senator?

McCARTHY: Well it wasn't any clearly defined role. I did make a lot of speeches, and, of course, I went into areas in which the identification with Stevenson was thought to be most helpful -- New York, Connecticut, California, Illinois -- areas of Stevenson strength. I was also in states like Texas and Oklahoma which were not considered Stevenson territory.

TILLMAN: What is your assessment of President Kennedy's handling of the religious issue in the 1960 campaign?

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McCARTHY: I was on The Big Issue program on religion on June 1, 1958. Lawrence Spivak, who was in charge, told me I was really a second choice, that he had asked John Kennedy to do it. He did tell me at the time that I was second choice.

TILLMAN: It was during the campaign period?

McCARTHY: No, it was in June of 1958 when the religious issue was being talked about. According to Lawrence Spivak, the President expressed some unhappiness over my going on the program. Spivak also told me that after the program was over the President called him up to tell him that he thought it had been a good program, that it had been a helpful one. Spivak indicated to me that he thought perhaps this influenced the way in which the President handled the religious issue in the campaign, but this is Spivak's judgment not mine. The President never discussed the program -- before or after -- with me.

TILLMAN: Do you recall approximately what you said and why it was that President Kennedy took the attitude which you describe?

McCARTHY: Well, the panel was made up of Spivak, Dean Sayre, Glen Archer, Jimmy Reston, Glenn Everett and Charlie Bartlett. The issue was the general one of the bearing of religious beliefs -- more particularly of Catholic beliefs -- on political decisions. In general, I held that there was no conflict between such beliefs and the political decisions facing America, but that religious beliefs -- not just of Catholics -- did have a bearing on many political decisions.

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TILLMAN: What indication did you have that Senator Kennedy was unhappy about this program taking place?

McCARTHY: All I know is what Spivak told me. Kennedy may at that time have been undecided as to just how to deal with the religious question, or he might have had in mind to play it down altogether. I don't know. I think it was probably the former, but this may have come at a point when he was still trying to decide what to do. He may have felt that to have someone else go ahead might force him into a position which he would rather not be forced into. But this is purely speculative.

TILLMAN: What is your evaluation of the way in which Senator Kennedy did handle the religious issue?

McCARTHY: I think he did pretty well. I was never quite satisfied that the confrontation of the ministers was a good idea. I thought it reflected a kind of defensiveness -- that he should have presented his views to a ministerial association rather than to the American people at large. As to whether this was helpful in the campaign or not, I don't know. Evidently his campaign people thought it was helpful. They replayed the program in other parts of the country as you know. I have no way of knowing whether this was good or bad. But at the time that it took place, I was somewhat critical of it.

TILLMAN: You mentioned in our preliminary conversation that you had met then President-elect Kennedy in a hospital in November, 1960. I guess this was at the time of the birth of John, Jr., and you were in the hospital too.

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McCARTHY: Yes, I had virus pneumonia and I was in the same hospital. He came in and was rather light-hearted, as I remember. You know: how are you? and how's your wife? and so on. It was in that general vein.

TILLMAN: You recalled also that you had had a conversation with him in December of 1960 regarding the prospect of Governor Freeman becoming Secretary of Agriculture.

McCARTHY: Yes, that was later. I went to Florida after I was released from the hospital. While there I received a call from Governor Freeman, who, as you know, had previously indicated that he was not interested in the office of Secretary of Agriculture. It was rather common knowledge that he preferred some other post. In this period some people, including Senator Humphrey, had more or less committed themselves to the candidacy of others. I had not done so, and he called me and

said in effect: "I don't know just how to proceed. I don't think it's proper for me to call the President-elect to tell him I'm interested. Would you call him?" I said I would and I did. The President-elect was at Palm Beach at the time and I was in Miami.

TILLMAN: Did you call on him or speak to him on the telephone?

McCARTHY: I spoke to him by telephone.

TILLMAN: I see, and what transpired in the conversation?

McCARTHY: Well, I told him of Governor Freeman's

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interest and recommended Governor Freeman to him. I said he was a good Governor and a good administrator and one who understood farm problems. And that was about the extent of it. He didn't say he had anybody else in mind. It was a relatively short conversation.

TILLMAN: Senator, what was the extent and the nature of your personal contacts with President Kennedy during his Presidency?

McCARTHY: They were quite limited -- three or four times we were in the White House for various luncheons and dinners and receptions. Usually a passing conversation, or conversation on a current problem. That's all. When he went to Minnesota shortly before the Cuban Missile Crisis -- really before it became identified as a crisis -- I flew back with him and had some conversation, but there was not much other than that. Nothing that I could say was of any really great significance.

TILLMAN: How about on state matters?

McCARTHY: The fact is Senator Humphrey as Whip was in the White House every Tuesday morning for breakfast. Unless I wanted to make a show of going to the White House on an issue, there was really not much need for my going since most of our state problems could be easily represented through Senator Humphrey when he was there, and without the problem of setting up appointments. When he was there, he did see the President or other people in the Executive Branch of the Government on State matters. I did have some conversation with the President and

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with White House people after my trip to Europe on which I had been asked to make one or two inquiries. This was probably the closest to any kind of assignment that I received from the executive branch of the government. On another occasion, I went to Santiago, Chile, to

speaking at an international meeting of the Christian Democrats. Other than those occasions I never had any very special mission for the Administration.

TILLMAN: Did you report to the President personally after the meeting in Santiago?

McCARTHY: I don't think I did after the Santiago one. I think I talked to him about it informally sometime later on. It could not be called a formal report to him. I spoke to some other people in the executive branch of the government after that.

In the case of the European trip, principally the Italian phase of it, I did talk to the President. There was some concern over reports that our support for the opening to the left was a matter of great concern in the Vatican, and I had been asked to make some inquiries about whether this was really true. And I did. This was the time when there was some trouble in the American Embassy in Rome also -- disagreement on the opening to the left and on American policy, not just in Italy but in some other parts of Europe. The question was whether there really was a Vatican concern. The answer, as far as I could discover, was that the Vatican -- this was the time of Pope John -- was really not very interested

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in these political questions; it was concerned with other "openings." The opening to the left and the opening to the right in politics were a secondary consideration in the Vatican and they were not disturbed over the attitude of the American Government on this particular issue.

TILLMAN: In our preliminary conversation, you referred to the fact that you had given the Gridiron speech in 1961 and since then I have talked to Bob Riggs of the Louisville Courier-Journal about that. As he recalled it, what had happened was that he had seen President Kennedy and had asked President Kennedy to give the speech. He was surprised that President Kennedy didn't want to do it and declined to do it. The name of his brother, the Attorney General, then came up -- whether at the suggestion of the President or not I don't know. The President phoned the Attorney General, who declined to do it, and then Riggs suggested you. It was not the President but Riggs who suggested you and the President then responded very warmly and enthusiastically to you as the prospective speaker. Riggs also recalled that after you had given the Gridiron speech President Kennedy, who was sitting next to him, leaned over and commented something to the effect: "That was the most sophisticated piece of political humor I've ever heard in a political speech." Do you have any other recollections about that evening and the events surrounding it?

McCARTHY: Well, what you have is pretty much what Riggs told me, both the before and the after. I don't know whether you've read the speech or not.



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TILLMAN: I have read it.

McCARTHY: It's always hard to make that kind of humorous political speech. I don't like to make one that's just pure clowning. When you take on a Gridiron speech you have to cut pretty close to the bone sometimes. I was a little apprehensive about some things. I think the President had a good word to say about it as he went out. I didn't know about the second choice of Bobby Kennedy until just now. I do recall that he was sitting beside me and he seemed relieved, at least, after the speech was over. He said, "That was a fine speech," or something of that kind. Your telling me of his having turned down the opportunity to make the speech makes the attitude he showed a little more understandable than it was at the time.

TILLMAN: I checked through some of President Kennedy's appointment calendar notes that show certain meetings that you had with him at the White House. They may be a little bit difficult to recall. Let me recite through some of them and see if they do bring forth some memories.

There was a luncheon in honor of Archbishop Makarios which was attended by you along with Senators Carlson, Symington, Randolph, and Long and certain Congressmen and members of the executive branch on June 5, 1962. The President's appointment book showed that this was a three-hour luncheon. Do you have any recollections of it?

McCARTHY: It was a very formal luncheon. I don't think there was any special significance in my having been

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invited to that one. I think I was simply reached on the list.

TILLMAN: Anything about the luncheon? Anything that took place that would be memorable?

McCARTHY: I'm trying to recall it. As I recall, the President had one or two good lines. You may have some notes on that from some other source regarding the Archbishop and his political power and the power of the Church in his country and on the relationship of Church and State in America. I don't remember what they were.

TILLMAN: There was an "off the record" meeting at the White House on June 22, 1962, a meeting with the President which was attended by you and by Senators Monroney and Humphrey and Congressman Carl Albert.

McCARTHY: Well, that was a meeting that didn't come to very much. I think Senator Kerr was also there. The issue there had something to do with military procurement. It was a complicated matter as I recall, having to do with the production of missiles. The unemployment level was very high in Minnesota, particularly in the mining area in Northern Minnesota, in which we were suffering from the closing down of the traditional direct shipping ore mines. This was a meeting to try to deal with this problem and with the Oklahoma problem. It was an attempt to work out a partial solution of the economic problems in these two areas. We discussed missile production and procurement. Nothing came of it anyway. But that was the purpose of it.

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TILLMAN: There was another "off the record" meeting on July 11, 1962. The President's appointment book shows this was between 9:30 and 9:50 in the morning. Afterwards, the President received the American Field Service students, with you accompanying him.

McCARTHY: Yes, I don't remember what the early morning meeting was about. I do recall his asking me to go out with him to meet the Field Service people and -- but he did this to other visitors -- as you know. I remember that as he was going out to address them, he asked me, "Which speeches are you reusing now? I'm back on 1956-1958." He addressed them and without any warning he turned and said, "I have Senator McCarthy here who'd like to say a few words to you." And so I spoke. I used a quotation from Charles Peguy. It runs something like this: Once you have declared for freedom and for justice, you've declared an unending revolution. I said that we in America have declared for freedom and justice more affirmatively than have any other people and that consequently we're involved in the revolutions of other countries all over the world. When we came away, President Kennedy said he thought that was a pretty good quotation. "Who did you say said that?" he asked. That was the day on which, after he had spoken, he moved away from the Secret Service people and was practically mobbed by the students who broke through. They had just a rope between him and the crowd. They broke through and the Secret Service had a hard time clearing the way. They finally backed

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him into the White House and out of the way.

TILLMAN: There were some meetings between you and President Kennedy during the 1962 congressional campaign. The record shows that on October 6, 1962, the President and his party arrived at Minneapolis on part of a four-state trip and that you and Mrs. McCarthy and Senator and Mrs. Humphrey were in the official welcoming party. It also shows that the President and Senator Humphrey and you drove later that evening to St. Paul State Fair grounds and that the President spoke at a "Bean Feed."

McCARTHY: That's right.

TILLMAN: And it also shows that on the next day, October 7th, you and Mrs. McCarthy accompanied the President to church at St. Paul Cathedral.

McCARTHY: Yes, that's right, we did. It was a rainy day, I remember, and the President said, "I suppose you carry a large Missal. That seems to be the thing now. Teddy carries a very large Missal." The Auxiliary Bishop was giving the sermon and he evidently had been advised to be careful as to what he said with the President was there. In any case he was leaving the next day for the Ecumenical Council -- he said he was leaving -- and the message in the sermon was that the Church was in pretty good shape. And after we came out, the President said, "You know, if things are that good, I don't think they ought to have a meeting."

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TILLMAN: The President's appointment book shows another "off the record" meeting on July 31, 1963, attended by you and by Congressman Donald Fraser. Do you have any recollections of this meeting?

McCARTHY: I do have some pictures taken at the White House with Don Fraser and the President and me, but it might have been incidental. I don't remember what the matter on that occasion was. I think it was merely a picture taking visit.

TILLMAN: There are just a few general questions now that might be worth recording. Senator, it has been reported, as you know, one way or another, on one occasion or another, that there was a falling out or feud or kind of diffidence between yourself and President Kennedy. Could you elaborate on this?

McCARTHY: Well, I don't know. I have never quite accepted that there was any feud between us. Of course I supported Senator Humphrey for the Vice-Presidential nomination in Chicago in 1956, although, as I indicated earlier, this was the kind of case in which you found yourself really committed before the issue was even raised because it came on so suddenly. In 1960, my position in the Wisconsin primary was that I didn't think that the midwestern area should be without a candidate at the Democratic Convention. We had repealed the primary law in our own state. I've tended to be against presidential primaries, so there were really two things involved. One was a question of procedure in that I have reservations about primaries, and

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second, I did not think that an absolute commitment should be made in April. But in addition to that, my feeling was that Senator Kennedy was too young, or better -- not ready for the Presidency. I was not for him as Democratic Presidential candidate in 1960. I think there would have been no question about his being the choice as Vice-Presidential candidate in that year. It was not personal. It was not in any way carrying on what might be called a political feud. I do not know what the President's feelings toward me were at the time and had no indication of any retaliation.

TILLMAN:               How about this during the Presidential years? Was there a strain in your relationship with President Kenendy?

McCARTHY:             I never felt that he denied me anything that I might reasonably have asked for or excluded me from any social or political event to which I might have expected to have been invited. I was not, you know, in the inner circle, and I had no reason to believe that I should be. I hadn't been in it before the election, and there was no reason why I should have been included afterwards. As to political exclusion, there were some things I expect under ordinary circumstances I might have been consulted on somewhat more. But Senator Humphrey as Whip was a regular visitor at the White House and available for consultation on State matters. One reads that Humphrey has made his peace with the Kennedys and so on, and that I have not. I don't know whether it's true or not. I expect that some of

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the disagreements and the opposition they had from Senator Humphrey might have left deeper scars than anything that I did in the way of political opposition. I never heard how they felt about the Stevenson nominating speech. It didn't change the delegates. I was told that the President said he didn't think it had done them any good. I don't know. It didn't hurt very much at the Convention. Whether it left some residual image or something that had some hearing on our relationship or not, I don't know.

TILLMAN:               I'd like to ask you a couple of very general questions of evaluation. What would you consider in perspective to be the major achievements and major shortcomings of the Kennedy Administration? This could possibly be divided into domestic and foreign affairs.

McCARTHY:             The major achievement, I think, is the civil rights bill. It's my opinion that in this not just major but practically full credit must go to President Kenendy personally for having made the decision to make the total effort and then, to his Administration, for developing the bill and creating the whole moral and political climate for what happened. I don't think that the leadership in the Senate -- including that of Senator Dirksen -- had much bearing on it. It eased the way, but I think the momentum and the drive were there for the passage of the civil rights bill as a result of

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President Kennedy's efforts. And of course the death of the President added strength to what he had already started in this field. Taken all together, this would be the one action which could be credited to him most completely.

Another important achievement was the tax cut. I think that although certainly President Johnson and the Congress itself and Wilbur Mills of the Ways and Means Committee had played important parts in carrying the tax cut through to final action, the presentation, the making of the first argument that in the face of existing deficits additional deficits might be good for the economy of the nation, the theoretical or the intellectual case for a tax cut, all would have to be credited to the Kennedy Administration, to Walter Heller and all the people who had conceived it and made the first effort with regard to it.

These, I think, probably are the two major things. The comprehensive educational program, I suppose, would in part be credited to the Kennedy Administration because its whole tone had been intellectual and had been an argument for education. But the program is not altogether new. It's been around and pieces have been approved before, but education would still be a third area.

And then of course there was the Test Ban Treaty. You have to give a large measure of credit to the Administration for moving in this area, although again there had been some climate

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created for it under the Eisenhower Administration and climate made for it by the various disarmament committees and organizations, particularly in the Senate. In part, of course this involved the response of the Russians.

TILLMAN:                Would you judge President Kennedy's American University speech to have been a major factor in leading to the Test Ban Treaty?

McCARTHY:              I wouldn't go that far. Certainly it helped. So far as failure is concerned, the handling of the Cuban invasion at the Bay of Pigs. I think you'd have to say this was a serious failure.

I have not felt that they had quite read De Gaulle right and I had doubts about their approach to Europe, particularly their concern over some of the opposition from the French. With reference to the whole complex of problems in Western Europe, I felt that they moved in with too fixed a view of what had to be.

TILLMAN:                The fixation being the Kennedy idea of Atlantic partnership?

McCARTHY:              Yes, the Atlantic partnership and what has been called the "grand design." Well that wasn't their terminology. This has not had any

serious consequences, but I think that it meant that our approach to such movements as the Common Market has been a little bit unrealistic. The idea was

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that the European Economic Community would inevitably lead to a new political unity, whereas in fact, with the economic tension removed in some cases, the pressure for political unity is also reduced. In this sense, I think, there was a kind of misreading of Europe and De Gaulle on the part of the Kennedy Administration.

This criticism might be generally true of the Kennedy Administration in foreign policy -- a kind of conceptual approach. There's a little bit of the same thing in the Alliance for Progress. I think there was a tendency on their part to have it too complete, too perfect and perhaps ideologically too far ahead of what you might anticipate from the movement of history itself, and that this consequently has had a feedback on the program itself.

TILLMAN: How about the Kennedy Administration's overall Cold War policy in relation to the Russians, not just the Test Ban Treaty, but the overall tendency toward more relaxed relations with the Russians, including the wheat sale?

McCARTHY: Well I, of course, was sympathetic to that approach and I think it has worked well. Up to now, it has worked out reasonably well. But this is pretty much in the same general field as the Test Ban Treaty. Their disposition was to take some chances, to run some risks on the side of optimism and hope for peace. I think this was a proper disposition.

TILLMAN: How about the Administration's Far Eastern policy, particularly China and Vietnam?

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McCARTHY: Well this is an area in which policy seems to have the least bearing upon the action that you take. I'm not prepared to criticize it anymore than I was to criticize Eisenhower and his people in that area, because I think the measure of real power that you have is so limited and so restricted that it's hard to develop any kind of policy other than just day-to-day policy. You can't see that far ahead.

TILLMAN: In short, that they had done just about all that possibility allowed?

McCARTHY: Yes, I don't think they could have done much more in the Far East, unless they were particularly lucky on something. Of course, they might have gotten credit for suggesting something which happened by chance, but you couldn't expect them to have done much better.

TILLMAN: Senator, could you spell out just a little bit more in what you felt that the Kennedy Administration misread General de Gaulle?

McCarthy: Perhaps misreading him is not quite right. I think, first of all, there was perhaps some failure to understand him, to inquire as to just what De Gaulle represented and what he spoke for. I think there was a disposition to charge that somehow De Gaulle was anti-American because he didn't quite accept our policies for Europe, when he might very well have been persuaded that the policy he was advocating was not only

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best for France but also best for us. I think there was a tendency to say he was against us somehow because he was not for the "grand design," or that he was anti-NATO presumably because he had his own view of NATO and felt that its objectives were in now way to be thwarted or frustrated if France had its own nuclear deterrent. So to say that because he wanted his own nuclear deterrent he was therefore ready to reject NATO and the concept of NATO or the objectives of NATO, was again to read motives into his actions which are not necessarily there. I don't know that the Administration's attitude made much difference in terms of our policy, but I think, by way of explaining and presenting our position in international conferences or in the exchange and mutual criticisms that went on with the French, that it reflected a misreading of Europe and De Gualle and France. This, however, has not had any serious consequences in terms of our position in the world, at least not in the short run.

TILLMAN: Is there anything that you might add on the Alliance for Progress and the Latin American policy of the Kennedy Administration?

McCARTHY: No, I don't think so. The only question is -- and this I can't answer -- whether or not it was best to make a broad and clear and great ideological declaration in the hope that this would move the Latin Americans to do a little bit, or whether it would have been better to have proclaimed a little

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less, by proclaiming less, we might have created a situation in which more modest standards of achievement would have been accepted, with the result that the progress which has been made would look more impressive than it does and carry a greater impact for the future. If there is some disillusionment among the Latin American countries -- and again I don't know whether anyone can really assess it or weight it -- it might have been prevented or at least it might have been reduced if the projection of the Alliance had been somewhat more restrained.

TILLMAN: Is there anything else, Senator? I think we've covered a pretty wide

range. Is there anything that we've left out?

McCARTHY:

I don't think of anything that would be particularly pertinent in terms of exchanges between President Kennedy and myself or of any other observations that I could make on his presidency.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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