

**Jean McGonigle Mannix Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 03/06/1966**  
Administrative Information

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**Biographical Note**

Mannix, Secretary to Senator John F. Kennedy (1952-1955), discusses her contributions to John F. Kennedy's Senate campaign and working on Capitol Hill, among other issues.

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Jean M. Mannix  
Jean M. Mannix

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Jean McGonigle Mannix – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

JEAN MCGONIGLE MANNIX

March 6, 1966  
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

By Joseph E. O'Connor

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'CONNOR: Jean, would you tell us how you came to be involved in the Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] organization?

MANNIX: In June of 1952, I had just finished my second year of teaching business subjects at a junior college in Boston [Boston, Massachusetts] following my graduation from college. In that summer I thought I would try my hand at being a secretary. I thought I'd look for a secretarial position and take the summer to do it. I thought I would look around for something I'd be happy in. In the meantime someone mentioned to me that they were looking for a secretary at the Kennedy campaign headquarters where Congressman Jack Kennedy was running for the Senate against Henry Cabot Lodge. So just on the spur of the moment I thought that would be a fun thing to do for the summer, and I could still look around for a job on lunch hours and so on. So I called and made arrangements for an interview, and a couple of days later went down and was interviewed by Mr. Lawrence O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] who was the director of the organization. The position that was open was secretary to the director of the organization. So I talked to Larry, and I was subsequently hired. It was funny, I always remember it was June 16<sup>th</sup> because the next day, June 17<sup>th</sup>, in Boston is a holiday. It's Bunker Hill Day. We have a lot of little holidays no one else has. I got my first taste of political thinking at that time because Larry said could I come to work tomorrow. I was thinking in terms of a couple of weeks from now. I thought to myself, "Gee, doesn't this guy know that tomorrow's a holiday?" So I mentioned this, and he sort of laughed and said, "Oh, is it?" So

he said I could come to work on June 18<sup>th</sup>, the next day. So that's how I always know exactly when I started in the Kennedy

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campaign. That was how, very accidentally really, and with no thought of this being a permanent thing; it was just going to be a temporary job until the fall. And that's how I began my experience with the Kennedys.

O'CONNOR: What sort of things did you have to do as secretary?

MANNIX: The Kennedy organization was set up—they had secretaries in every city and town and little hamlet in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. They were appointing their Kennedy chairmen who they called secretaries who would run the campaign. It was run separately from the Democratic organization in most cases. Except for very small towns our secretary would not be the same person as the Democratic city or town chairman. It was setting up our own committees of people who were interested in Jack Kennedy. And in many cases these people were new to politics. They may have been interested in politics, but had never really been involved before. There were young lawyers and businessmen and teachers and all kinds of people who were just attracted to Jack Kennedy. He had the ability to attract the type of person who really wasn't expecting to get anything out of it because I think that any of the real "pol" types weren't that interested in him. They knew that there'd be no deals made, that they were working because they were interested in him.

Larry traveled all over the state, and he was in and out of Boston. Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] was the coordinator of organization, and he was at the state headquarters at Kilby Street where we were at that time. They would talk back and forth, and Larry was sort of the outside-inside man. We would set up meetings, urge them to set up organizational meetings and try to enlarge their groups. One of the men, either Larry or Kenny or Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy], or sometimes the candidate himself, would go to speak at their meetings and build up enthusiasm, and to make the groups larger. Then we would correspond with them and send them campaign material. Then, also, when they had the Kennedy teas—they were more on a regional basis, but in, say, the western part of the state, several of the cities and towns around there would work, the Kennedy committees would work, on this regional tea. Within the organization they would set up coffee hours, women to have coffee hours for him and things like that. We would handle anything to do with the state organization—outside of Boston. We did not handle Boston. That was separate.

O'CONNOR: Did you have any direct connections with the teas then? Were you doing anything specifically for them?

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MANNIX: I didn't work particularly on the teas because there was a central committee of women whose function was planning the teas and receptions. I would occasionally do something to help out. I went to a lot of them because, really, the campaign was a way of life for us. In the beginning of the summer.... I was one of the first girls hired down there because they were just setting up headquarters at that time. Forty-four Kilby Street was where our headquarters was. It was a very run-down old office building. It was almost like a warehouse. I don't know, I don't imagine that it had been used for about twenty years, anyway, and somebody must have given or loaned them this old office furniture—scarred tables and old desks and wooden filing cabinets that you couldn't get the drawers shut. And that was our headquarters. I've forgotten what you asked me.

O'CONNOR: Just about the teas.

MANNIX: You were asking me about the teas. Oh, in the beginning, in the summer—oh, I'd say through June and the middle of July—it was mostly just a 9-to-5 thing. But from then on we just worked day and night. We worked so hard, but everybody had such a good time; everybody enjoyed each other so much. There was a tremendous relationship between the men who worked there and all of us. The Senator's cousin Mary Jo Gargan and Joey Gargan [Joseph F. Gargan], both worked at Kilby Street with me. We were all young. I didn't realize it at the time so much because, well, the candidate was thirty-five and Larry O'Brien was thirty-five, and Dave Powers [David F. Powers] was thirty-nine. So, actually, they didn't seem so terribly young to me. But looking back on it, the tremendous ability that those young men had. Kenny was twenty-eight, and Bobby was twenty-six. So it really was a wonderful campaign in that way.

I started to say about the teas that we would go to work in the morning and then just stay in for dinner and either go back to headquarters, or if there was a tea or a youth rally or anything in the area directly connected with the campaign, we would go. Or if one of the men had a meeting, occasionally they'd take several of us along just for the ride. And we'd go. But it had to be the campaign. We were always campaigning and loving every minute of it.

O'CONNOR: Well, can you describe one of those teas, or what impressed you about the teas?

MANNIX: Well, the first tea I think I went to was out in the Berkshires at one of the hotels there. I can't remember the name of it. But at the teas Mrs. Kennedy [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy], the Congressman's mother, was

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generally there. She had just come back from Paris [Paris, France] at this one tea, I remember, and she was describing all the fashions and so on. And usually one or more of the girls, but always one of the Kennedy girls would be there. And then the Congressman, the candidate himself, would be there. And it would attract women—oh, they'd have anywhere from a smaller tea, probably four hundred, to two thousand. They were just tremendous

affairs, and they all got an opportunity to shake his hand and talk to him and speak to Mrs. Kennedy. Of course, the Kennedy and the Fitzgerald name—years ago, the Fitzgerald girls were really something. And it was just an association. I think these women were not only interested in him but in sort of an identification with the Kennedy family and with the Fitzgeralds; just to be close enough and to meet him was a great thrill for them. And they were wonderful. Mrs. Kennedy would generally make a little speech and talk about her family and her son. Then he would talk briefly, and then everybody would have tea and sandwiches, or whatever they had, and then just walk around and talk to all your friends who were there too about how wonderful the Kennedys were, I guess. Of course, they were a tremendous asset to the campaign. I mean, that was the beginning of political teas and coffees, and I don't know how many campaigns have copied this type of thing since that time.

O'CONNOR: It's a strange way to run a campaign—to have tea parties. But, apparently, it was very successful.

MANNIX: Yes, it was most effective. Then they had coffee hours, too, on a smaller scale. At many of the coffee hours one of the Kennedy girls would try to come. If it was more than fifteen or twenty people, they would come and talk. Again it was the identification with the Kennedys. And the people he attracted, he was so fortunate in that because they really were just dedicated to him. Everybody around him, closely associated with him, just thought how wonderful he was, and what they could do for him. They just were anxious to be associated with him. As far as volunteers in our headquarters, during the day we would have, oh, fifteen or twenty middle-aged and older women who would come in almost every day, you know, and just do anything. Sometimes there really wasn't that much that they could do. But they would come in and work. And then after work, girls who were working in Boston would come, and sometimes we'd have as many as a hundred and fifty to two hundred girls working: stuffing envelopes, folding, writing addresses. Then some of them helped out on some of the teas on a volunteer basis if they needed extra help. But they would just come because they enjoyed being there.

It was such an informal campaign. Everybody was friendly.

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Bobby would come in in his shirt sleeves and talk to everybody. It was just that type of campaign. Of course, every once and so often the candidate, the Congressman, if he were speaking in the area would drop down to headquarters in the evening to say hello to the volunteers. Of course, they always say that all the old women wanted to mother him and that the young girls wanted to marry him. I don't know how true it was—I'm sure it was true that every girl was hoping he'd notice her. But I'm sure that many of them who would come in town or three nights a week would be afraid to miss because this might be the night that he would come. And it really lit up the place when he'd come in. He just had such a nice way with everybody, and he always made every girl feel that he was really interested in talking to them, and he just had that indefinable quality that was Jack Kennedy.



O'CONNOR: Well, the teas were really apolitical, weren't they? They didn't really talk about politics.

MANNIX: No, no. Mrs. Kennedy, as I said, would talk about her family and, oh, she might talk about his war record or something like that, but not actually political. He would talk about how his grandfather [John Francis Fitzgerald] was defeated but Henry Cabot Lodge's father—or grandfather?—I don't know which it was—and that this wasn't going to happen again. It would be political insofar as that, but not really political. He wouldn't make a political statement. It was really just to meet the people; every person he met, I'm sure, voted for him. I'm sure of that. You know, there might have been some spies but.... [Laughter]

That's one thing about that campaign. Of course, I think it was very much like 1960, but on a smaller scale, because we all felt that this was just the greatest campaign that there ever was and everybody in it would do anything for each other. We were all just so devoted to one another. And I think the one reason that I became so personally involved more than the majority of the girls who did work on a full-time basis—there were other secretaries in the campaign—was because Larry and Kenny and Bobby, too, because they worked very closely together, always made me feel so much a part of things. Right from the beginning it was never a case of take this dictation and send these letters to so-and-so. If there were a secretary to be appointed in some area and there were somebody else who might have their feelings hurt or if there was a little battling between some politicians in the area, Larry and Kenny would tell me. They gave me all the background so, you know, it wasn't a routine thing for me; I knew just what was going on. And it made me more useful, I'm sure, because if this particular person called up, I would know how to handle him because I would know the background of the situation. They

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were such wonderful men to work for. All they had to do was tell me to work twenty-four hours a day, and I would do it.

O'CONNOR: Did they talk much about the rivalries that did exist between, for instance, the normal, the regular Democratic machine in Massachusetts and their own organization?

MANNIX: I'm sure the men in talking to each other did more than they ever said to me. After a few weeks, I realized that the Dever [Paul A. Dever] forces were kind of upset that we were having our own organization and campaign secretaries in each city and town. I had never been involved in politics before, and, for all I knew, everybody did this. But then I realized that this was completely separate and that there was a little feeling from the Dever and the Furcolo [John Foster Furcolo] forces that we were running independently. But he wouldn't have won, probably—he may not have won—if it hadn't been run that way. And I think that this was his way of wanting to do it and it may have created some problems with some of the politicians at that time, I don't

know. I think it was more of an undercurrent thing—as far as I know. Of course, I know a lot of the politicians at that time were criticizing Bobby. I have read since then, you know, about this brash young kid and so on. I never heard too much about it, but we did know that they weren't too happy that we had our own committees all the time.

O'CONNOR: Well, talking about this brash young kid business, this was really the first year, the first campaign, that Bobby Kennedy had run. He had not been the campaign manager before this. And I wondered just how he treated the people in the office. You said he treated them very nicely, but I wondered did any of this brash young kid business....

MANNIX: No, no. When I read all these things now about his being arrogant.... Of course, as I say, I think some of the Boston pols felt this way about him. But the people who worked with Bobby and saw him every day and who were in the headquarters were devoted to him. To me, you couldn't have a better friend. If Bobby Kennedy is your friend, you couldn't have a better friend. He was always sincere, and he was always joking—they were all joking, Dave and Kenny and Bobby. It was a very happy group. Bobby was much more excitable than his brother—he didn't have the control that the President had. He had an entirely different personality. And many times Bobby would pop off and get really mad, but an hour later he'd be coming back trying to make it up to you. There's a warmth in that sort of personality. In

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fact, the first time I met Bobby, the first day I started to work, I came into headquarters—of course I was early the first day—and the only one in there was this young guy with, shirt sleeves, no tie, or tie askew if he had one on. I was twenty-two at the time and he didn't look any older than I did. And I thought, oh, this must be Teddy Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy]. I didn't realize that Teddy was in the service. So I was very friendly to him and almost talking as though he were a younger brother. [Laughter] And it was about a half an hour before I introduced myself, and then he said, "Well, I'm Bobby Kennedy." And I thought, "Oh, the campaign manager." [Laughter] But he was just that, and he was just as informal right from the beginning. I have a very warm feeling for Bobby. We would often go out to dinner in a group, and Bobby would come along. And one thing about Bobby in his relationships with the men—Bobby was not the type to even try to impress anybody with his money or anything. We would go out to dinner and Bobby would always pick up the check for the girls, but the men always paid their own way. And that established the relationship that, you know, they were never beholden to him. It was very much on a man-to-man basis. Bobby was a terrific guy.

O'CONNOR: He's been criticized, or the Kennedy family in a sense has been criticized for lack of organization. This criticism was often leveled at them in the offices they had in Washington, for example, or the presidency as a matter of fact. I wondered if you cared to comment on that. Were you impressed with the confusion or lack of organization in 1952?

MANNIX: Well, I would say it was probably organized confusion. I mean, we knew—I should say they knew exactly what was going to be done each day. It was not a very, a very efficient, everything was just pat, pat, pat, and you-do-this-and-you-do-that type of organization. But the overall picture was organized. As I said, we were in this old headquarters, and it probably appeared to be disorganized, but everybody knew what they were doing and where they were going. They had their schedule, and I wouldn't say that Bobby was really disorganized.

O'CONNOR: How about when you got to Washington? Did you feel that the Senator's office was organized or pretty disorganized?

MANNIX: Well, [Laughter] we were a very good office. We may have seemed confused because we were informal. And I think that's true of the campaign, too, that it was such an informal type of operation. But I don't feel that our Washington office was disorganized. I didn't realize

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that people were saying that about us. [Laughter] Maybe it was me.

O'CONNOR: Well, Lasky [Victor Lasky] has written a very, very critical book on John F. Kennedy complaining that the office in Washington was badly organized and he, as a matter of fact, said badly paid, or underpaid, or something like that. Did you feel that, or do you know any of the other people who worked in the office either in Boston or in Washington who felt that way?

MANNIX: No, we never really discussed it. None of us made a lot of money when we went down there. In some other offices I knew the secretaries were paid higher salaries than we were, but they were generally a smaller office staff and the money allotted afforded bigger salaries. We never had big salaries—I would say that they were average—but I think it was mainly because we had an awfully big office for a small state. When we started out in the beginning, there were only four girls, and within a year we had eleven, and three men. So it was spread pretty thin. Of course, I didn't know exactly how much allowance he got to pay the staff or how it worked. With me, I just loved my job so much I wasn't concerned. You know, I wasn't thinking about getting rich on working in Washington.

O'CONNOR: Yes. I guess a lot of people felt that way. Were you ever aware at all of the influence of Joseph P. Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] in Boston in the '52 campaign, for example?

MANNIX: Not really. Now I knew Mr. Kennedy was occasionally in Boston, and I think he was up at the Ritz [Ritz Carlton Hotel]. I know that some of the men, particularly the publicity and TV and speechmakers, would

go up and confer with him. So he had his finger in it, I'm sure. But I don't think, as far as the organization was concerned, he ever touched that at all. Now I'm sure with Bobby and so on, they would discuss things, and he had his say. I think many times they would listen to Mr. Kennedy and then do what they wanted to do anyway. But Mr. Kennedy was in the headquarters only once, and I can remember when he came in, I don't think I had ever seen him before at that time. But I had just come back from lunch, and they said, "Mr. Kennedy's here." And boy! You know, everybody was jumping to attention, and I was trying to look inconspicuous because I was really a little frightened at meeting him because he had such a formidable reputation. But he came over to me, and he said, "Now, you're Jean McGonigle." And he said, "I've heard a lot about you." He was very nice to me. In fact, Mr. Kennedy was

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always....I mean, as with Bobby, you always hear and read so many things about Mr. Kennedy, but as far as I was concerned he was always very friendly and kind. I remember when I became engaged, he said, "I don't know what the Kennedys are going to do without you." He was always very nice to me. But I do know that we were all scared to death when he came. Everybody wanted to have their desk cleared. He had that way about him that when you knew he was coming, you wanted to be shipshape.

O'CONNOR: He's said to have been the one who let Mr. Dalton [Mark J. Dalton] go. Dalton, I guess, had been campaign manager before Bobby Kennedy was made campaign manager. But I guess that really was before you began to work there.

MANNIX: It was just before I worked. I think that probably happened in May or so.

O'CONNOR: You never heard any comments about that, did you?

MANNIX: No, other than that I never knew whether it was Bobby or Mr. Kennedy....No, that's right. I guess I did know, probably that it was Mr. Kennedy, but I had just got the impression that Mark just was a little bit floored by the whole thing and just couldn't handle it, and that they had to do something about it. I don't think I really knew who said Mark had to go. He's a lovely man, Mark Dalton. I haven't seen him for years, but he was a very nice man. But I don't know whether....He probably was not temperamentally suited to run a campaign statewide and tread on the toes as far as the pols and so on.

O'CONNOR: One other thing before we move a little father into that campaign. You mentioned that you had heard stories about conflicts between the Kennedy organization and the regular Democratic political organization in Massachusetts. One thing is pointed up in particular—Bobby's conflict with Governor Paul Dever. Bobby is said to have walked into Governor Dever's office one day

and raised a row and Governor Dever, in effect, threw him out. And I wondered if you had ever heard any talk about that.

MANNIX: I never knew anything about that. No.

O'CONNOR: Well, that may be a myth. There may not be something to talk about there.

MANNIX: It was never discussed when I was....It probably would have happened when I was there, if

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it happened, because I was there pretty early in the campaign. But I never heard any discussion about it.

O'CONNOR: Aside from that, you never heard of any real working together of Governor Dever's organization and the Kennedy organization?

MANNIX: Well, I don't say that they didn't work together. I mean, some of the campaign billboards would include the whole slate. And I think they did. Now when Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] was coming to Boston, they worked together. I had helped working on getting ready for that with the Democratic organization. But I'm really not in a position to know. I didn't have the feeling we were working against them, but I just always had the feeling we were working independently, and if they wanted to join us on something else, we still were going to keep our special Kennedy committees.

O'CONNOR: Well, this was a pretty hard campaign. John Kennedy was running against, in effect, the favorite. Henry Cabot Lodge was thought to be the favorite at that time, certainly. I wondered if there was much enthusiasm, or optimism is really what I mean. Was there pessimism or optimism?

MANNIX: Well, I'll tell you. I was thinking of it the other day, and I thought I never doubted for a minute that he would win. As I say, maybe the men who really knew more about it were concerned at the times, although we were always optimistic. Of course, as I read somewhere that not long ago, that Larry O'Brien said that he was the ideal candidate. You put your tiger in the ring and he was all set. You never had to worry about him. We were so proud of him, and we just felt that everybody who met him was going to vote for him. And in my mind, until 3 o'clock in the morning election night, there never was a doubt in the whole campaign but that he would win. I never realized until afterwards that he was supposed to be such an underdog because he was conducting such a vigorous campaign. I really don't think even the men probably had the time to be dwelling on these things because we were so busy. There was always so much going on. I don't think until they got into bed at night that they would have much time to

really be worrying. I don't know how the men have answered a question like this, but we were always extremely optimistic and enthusiastic about his chances. We were sure that he was going to win.

O'CONNOR: Do you have anything more to say about that '52 campaign, or shall we move on to later matters?

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MANNIX: Well, let me see. I'll probably think of some things later. Well, the way I got to go to Washington was, several weeks before the campaign was over, Bobby approached me and said that he'd been talking to Jack, as we all called him then, although I find it hard to do now. And that they wondered if I would stay after the campaign was over to supervise and make arrangements to have all the thousands of thank you notes written to the campaign workers and, also, to compile all the lists of our organization—the racial groups, women who worked on the teas, the state organization, city of Boston—and also if he were successful, if I would go to Washington with him. Well, I was really very taken aback because I never did get around to looking for my permanent job. I was never really thinking beyond November. I was very flattered, but I didn't know how my parents would feel about my leaving and going to Washington either. I said I was thrilled that he had asked me and that I would see. Of course, this was all assuming he was going to be elected, of course I had no doubt. Nothing else was said in the interim, and then after the election, that next weekend, Bobby had six or seven of us down to Hyannis Port [Hyannis Port, Massachusetts] for the weekend. And on Sunday evening he wanted him, the Senator-elect, on "Meet the Press." I think it was very significant that, even with the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] sweep and everything, they must have felt that he was really a comer even then because he was the one who was on "Meet the Press" that Sunday evening. And of course we were all tremendously proud of him. Then he flew back to Hyannis Port that evening, and we all greeted him and were very happy. He said to me then very casually, "So you're coming to Washington with me." And that was the only thing that was said. I mean, that was it. So then I stayed in Hyannis Port for a couple of days to take care of some personal wires and letters that he had received about the election, and then in the next month I was back and forth a couple of times to take care of matters before he went to Palm Beach [Palm Beach, Florida]. Other than that we had a small office in one of the buildings, at 10 Post Office Square, just a small office to handle taking care of these and getting out the campaign lists and making arrangements for the letters to be written. I was there until the end of December.

O'CONNOR: That's when you went to Washington?

MANNIX: Yes. On New Year's Day—he was to be sworn in January 3<sup>rd</sup>, I think it was—and so I went to Washington at that time. When we first got down to Washington, his senatorial office had not been vacated

because, I think it was the late Senator Kerr [Robert S. Kerr] had not moved out so we could move in. And so we were still on the House side. Then the poor Congressman who was to have

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Kennedy's office was trying to get in. So that was the state. Maybe that's when Lasky came to see us. [Laughter] Then there was a state of confusion because there were two of us in one office. And at that time there was myself and Mary Barelli [Mary Barelli Gallagher] and Lois Goldberg, who had been hired before we left Boston, and Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln], who had been hired right around Christmas time in Washington. She had been working on the House side and had done some work for Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] during the summer for the campaign. And of course, Ted Reardon was the administrative assistant, and Ted is a wonderful guy. He was wonderful to work with, and he was so warm to everyone who came into that office because, of course, he would be representing the Senator much of the time when people from Boston or Massachusetts would come down to see him. And I remember at that time, before we moved over to the Senate side, the Senator had asked us almost apologetically if we would mind calling him Senator when we were in the office because he thought it sounded more dignified to people who were in the office. Up until that time he was always Jack. He didn't care outside, but in the office, to call him Senator. So from then on we called him Senator. And we called him Senator as if it were Jack. We didn't say the Senator or Senator Kennedy. We would say, "Senator says," or "Senator's going to do this." And after that, even if I a few times were at his house for dinner or anything, I had a tough time calling him Jack. I was so used to calling him Senator. Then we moved over to the Senate side, and a few weeks later Dorothy McCann [Dorothy R. McCann] came to the office. She had been with the former Majority Leader—or Minority Leader, one or the other—and had quite a few years of Senate experience. So we had one girl with House experience and one with Senate and I, who had worked in the campaign, and two girls who had had nothing to do with politics. So we were really a pretty green group. We didn't have, in the beginning, anything but willingness and wanting to do a good job. But really within a year we had ten or eleven girls—I haven't figured it out lately—and three men. Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] came, oh, I'd say a month or two after we were down. And then Lee White [Lee C. White] came the next year, probably, to work in our office.

O'CONNOR:           You were practically the only secretary then that he brought down from Boston.

MANNIX:            I was the only one he knew, and then the other girls—Mary Barelli had worked for Kenny O'Donnell, before he got into the campaign, in a paper company, and then Lois Goldberg had been referred by someone else as a good secretary. But he didn't know them. They worked out beautifully, but I was the only one who had worked in the campaign. It was a little bit difficult because I was the

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only one who knew the people the Senator knew. I had to go over all the mail that came into the office to scan who he knew. And people who would come in the office....Other than Ted Reardon, of course. Ted knew, but I was at the door; I had the reception desk because I did know the politicians and the people who knew him. Of course, our door was always open. You've probably heard about this, but when we moved over, he wanted to continue the way they did it on the House side—having the door open all the time. I don't even know if they do it there now, but in the Senate office building it was always sort of frightening; you'd come up to these big doors with just "Mr. Ives" [Irving McNeil Ives] or "Mr. Kennedy." But our door was always open. So, consequently, we would get people from other states, too, who were afraid to go into their own Senator's office. We were considered a very friendly office. I know all the people who worked in the post office and the document room—you know, the people who worked on the Hill [Capitol Hill] who had occasion to be in and out of our office—said that it was such a pleasure to come into our office because everybody always had a smile for them, and in many of the offices they wouldn't even raise their heads to even acknowledge them. And we did. We had a very warm office, a very friendly office. We were very anxious to be liked and to be nice to everybody. And we had a very busy office. We did, which was sort of surprising, in that he was a very junior Senator, and yet we were one of the busiest offices that I knew of. The only envy I used to have occasionally would be of this one friend of mine who worked for Senator Flanders [Ralph E. Flanders] from Vermont. She'd have about two or three letters on her desk to answer. And we were so busy; we had so much piled up all the time. And to me the Hill was really an extension of the campaign. I couldn't get out of the habit of working—and working nights. For the first three or four months I was there, I'd work three or four nights a week, all by myself, most of it. Nobody would tell me to, but, of course, I still had a lot of this campaign business to do. So I was trying to get that done. And then finally after a while I did get sort of into a routine where I realized I didn't really have to work every night in the week, too. But I loved that job. I loved the Hill. It was a wonderful life because everybody was so interested and knew what was going on. While I was down there, was the time of the McCarthy-Army [Joseph R. McCarthy] hearing. It was really an exciting time to have worked on the Hill. It really was. We thought that we worked for the greatest Senator, the most important, I mean, to us. We never felt he was the junior Senator from Massachusetts. You just didn't have that feeling. He was Jack Kennedy. He was Senator Kennedy. And I can remember meeting girls who worked at the White House or worked for the Majority Leader, or some personage like that, and I never for a moment envied them their job. I had the job as far as I

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was concerned. I have heard, or read, that he was demanding and so on, a demanding boss, but I never really felt this way. Maybe it was because I just loved what I was doing so much. I just loved working for him.

O'CONNOR:           How long were you there?

MANNIX:             For two and a half years.



O'CONNOR: And then you got married?

MANNIX: And then I got married.

O'CONNOR: So you were there until the middle of '56 or something like that?

MANNIX: No, the middle of '55. I was there '53 and '54. Then I left the end of July of '55 and went up to the Boston office with Grace Burke [Grace M. Burke] for a month before I got married. But that's how he was. I asked him if it would be all right if I went up to work in the Boston office for a month to get ready for my wedding. He needed me in Washington at that time because Evelyn Lincoln was still sick, and I had been doing all of Evelyn's work and all my own work at that time. But he said, no, he thought this was right that I should go up.

O'CONNOR: Since you were getting married. [Laughter]

MANNIX: Yes, since I was getting married, he was going to let me do it. But he was very considerate. I think he always felt sort of a responsibility for the girls that he did bring down from Boston. He always made sure that we got home for the holidays—we always had about a week off at Christmas and several days at Easter, too. And once the session was over, we would each have a month's vacation—staggering them, of course, so there would be several of us in the office at all times. We did work very long hours, though—9-6 every day, including Saturdays when we first were down there. And then that was changed to 1 on Saturdays when we were in session.

O'CONNOR: Nine to one, you mean, on Saturdays, not five to one.

MANNIX: Nine to one.

O'CONNOR: I didn't think he had....

MANNIX: No, not that bad. When we weren't in session, we

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would alternate on Saturdays and only work till 5:30 or something, and, you know, that was a real concession. But we did, we worked long hours. It was a busy office, and he worked hard, and I think he just expected that we would. But I never felt that we were imposed upon. He was so great; he was so informal with us. I knew girls who had never met the Senator they worked for. And if they did, the Senator wouldn't know their name or ever talked to them. But Senator Kennedy never used his door. He could go right into his own office, but he never used that door, unless he either wasn't feeling well or he was in a real hurry to get over to the floor. Ordinarily, he would come in

our office, and “Hi, Jean. Hi, Lois. Hi, Mrs. McCann. Hi, Mrs. Lincoln. Hi, Mary.” The two married girls, Evelyn and Dorothy McCann, he always called Mrs. And even his buzzer—we did have a buzzer system installed, but he rarely used it. I mean, it was, “Mrs. Lincoln, come in here!”

Of course, being fairly close to Massachusetts, we did have a lot of company from the state. There was always somebody coming down that you were happy to see, and there was something going on. I can remember one day, we hadn’t been there too long, when this fellow came down—I don’t remember who he was; I hadn’t known him previously—who was an Irish tenor. He sang, anyway, and the Senator happened to be in the office and he said, “Well, let’s shut the doors, and Bill”—or whatever his name was—“is going to sing.” So he sang Irish songs for about a half an hour, and we all sang. It was that type of an office. We worked, but he enjoyed what we were doing. There was a good relationship in the office, and I think that makes all the difference.

O’CONNOR: One of the major problems that must have affected the office very strongly was the Senator’s health, particularly during the period that you were there. Would you care to comment on that at all? How it affected the office, how it affected the office routine or how it affected his work, for example.

MANNIX: Well, I think as long as he was able to....Was it October? I can’t really remember just when he was off. I guess it was October ’54. You probably have that. Up until the time....

O’CONNOR: Yes, it was about October ’54 that he left.

MANNIX: Yes, sometime around there. But I knew he never complained about his back. Although I guess he always had that. Occasionally, you could tell by his face. I think once or twice he may have had to use crutches in the Senate, although I’m not even sure whether he did then.

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But his back apparently was getting worse all the time. After his marriage, it seemed to be in that next year that they found that something had to be done. And when he was operated on, I can remember the first operation, there were all these rumors on Capitol Hill that he had died. And we knew nothing because, you know, this was going on in New York. Bobby, apparently—maybe he was in New York, took, because we didn’t know, and we were just on pins and needles for days on the state of his health. Of course, then he went back down to Florida, and the office continued to be very busy, surprisingly.

O’CONNOR: Even while he was gone.

MANNIX: Even while he was gone. Except for legislation. Naturally, the legislation. A few things he would cosponsor with somebody, and they would work on that. But I know during that time Lee White went over....Bobby had been at the Hoover Commission working for his dad, but he never was happy over there. And it was during the time while the Senator was away that Lee White took Bobby's job, and there was just Ted Sorensen on legislation. Then, of course, he was doing research for the book at that time, and the girls who worked for Ted were working on the book most of the time. But as far as the actual business of the office, in a way it was almost harder because so much responsibility was on us because he was not there—and on Ted Reardon. I mean, all the decisions had to be made. It was months before we would ever bother him with anything because he was so seriously ill. When he had to go back to New York for a second operation, we didn't realize that he was really in bad shape again because he would call from Palm Beach and send up tapes. That may not have been until a little bit later, after the second operation. I'm not really sure about that. But there was a tremendous amount of responsibility on us because he was away. And people still wrote. We always wrote "In the absence of the Senator, who is recuperating..." etcetera. But still we'd get a tremendous volume of mail, and still we had an awful lot of people coming in the office. It may have been a little bit less, but not noticeably as far as the office routine went.

O'CONNOR: You mentioned Ted Sorensen's coming to the office. Do you recall anything specific about that? Was there created when he came any bad feelings between him, Larry O'Brien or Kenny O'Donnell? Were you ever aware of anything like that?

MANNIX: Well, they weren't in Washington. Ted Reardon was.

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O'CONNOR: Oh, that's right. That's right. Oh, Ted Reardon or Lee White, let me put it that way.

MANNIX: No, not at that time. When Ted came in, of course, this was going to be a much bigger operation. I think on the House side Ted Reardon had probably worked on the legislation with the Congressman, too. But now his job was mainly as administrative assistant. I remember when Ted Sorensen came in because he was so young. I was twenty-three by that time, and I think he was either twenty-four or twenty-five. He was a brilliant boy, and he was so young. I remember when he came in for an interview; I knew he had worked something to do railroad retirement; and then he just came in the office.

O'CONNOR: Were you ever aware of any hard feelings later on regarding Ted Sorensen?

MANNIX: Well, I do feel that as time wore on, probably not that first year, but over the second year it seemed to me that Ted Sorensen was trying to undermine Ted Reardon. I don't think it was ever on Ted Reardon's part. And I don't think, for a long time anyway, Ted Reardon was aware of it. It seemed to come to a head while the Senator was away because his contact with the office was by telephone. You never knew when he was going to call. I know several times he would call, and Ted Reardon happened to be out of the office, and Ted Sorensen would take the call, and he would start relaying messages to Ted Reardon. And I can remember a few times after this happened when the Senator called, and Ted Reardon would be in the office. Ted Sorensen would take the entire call and then tell Ted Reardon what he had to say. And it seemed to me that there was an effort on Ted Sorensen's part to be closer to the Senator than Ted Reardon and to sort of push Ted Reardon aside. I know I felt it very keenly, and I talked to Ted Reardon about it. I said, "This is going on and you don't see it." And he sort of pushed it aside as though it weren't going on. Whether he was aware of it, I don't know. But it seemed to be more that way, and by the time I left I felt Ted Sorensen had edged his way closer to the Senator than Ted Reardon. Whereas Ted Reardon had been with the Senator from the very beginning, all through the House and in the campaign running for the House, and was his administrative assistant. It seemed to be that the situation by the time I left, which was shortly after the President had come back to the Senate, had changed. This really bothered me because I felt Ted Reardon was vulnerable and wasn't the type of person to fight back in the same way. I had never seen any undercutting like this between the men in the campaign, and I resented it.

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O'CONNOR: You don't think that Ted Reardon did feel badly about this or was very jealous?

MANNIX: He never seemed to, but I think he must have felt it and just tried not to show it. You see, I left at a peculiar time because this was going on long distance. Then shortly after the Senator came back, he wasn't back more than a month and a half when I went up to the Boston office. So I am sure that in the next couple of years Ted Reardon must have grown to resent it somewhat although I have seen him many times since then and I have never asked him, of course, and he has never mentioned it. But I can't help but feel that he did.

O'CONNOR: Did you think that anybody else in the office was aware of it, or anybody else in the organization was much aware of it?

MANNIX: Well, I used to tell Kenny and Larry. I was very concerned about Ted Reardon, and I remember telling Kenny about this. And Kenny said, well, as long as he had the ear of the Senator that nothing would ever happen to hurt Ted Reardon. The funny thing is that when I went down to Washington. I didn't know Ted Reardon very well because Ted worked in the campaign, but he was working with Sargent [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] and Bill Lyons [William Lyons] on speeches

and TV. But the more I got to know Ted Reardon, working for him and with him.... I did work pretty closely with Ted on a lot of things because I did a lot of press releases. And being at the desk, I would be continually in and out talking about who was there. We became very close friends, Ted and I. And by the time nine months were over, I was very devoted to Ted, too. I forget what I started out to say.

O'CONNOR: I asked you if anybody else was aware of this thing.

MANNIX: Oh. Well, I think Evelyn was because I often felt that Evelyn was inclined to be working with Ted Sorensen on this a little bit. I don't know how intentional this was, but Ted Sorensen would come up to Evelyn with something that, you know, he wanted to tell the Senator, and it just seemed as though for a period there, particularly when the Senator was away, Evelyn and Ted seemed to be quite friendly. I don't know. I really can't remember whether I ever said anything to any of the other girls. It was Ted Reardon himself that I talked to mostly about it. I guess it sounds as though Ted Sorensen and I did not get along, but this is not so. Actually, we did get along well enough, though I very seldom did any actually work for him. We were

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friendly, but I was always glad I worked more closely with Ted Reardon. Ted Sorensen had the respect of the office staff because he certainly was brilliant, but not the affection. He really didn't know how to get along with people—maybe he was too smart. I'm sure it's true that Ted Reardon couldn't have done his job, but Ted Sorensen couldn't have done Ted Reardon's, either.

O'CONNOR: But you never heard Larry O'Brien or Kenny O'Donnell comment on this aspect of it, did you?

MANNIX: No, because they weren't close enough to know. I mean, their contact with it was either through me—they used to call frequently because people would contact them to contact the Senator, and I was in contact with them, oh, two or three times a week—and then, you know, through Bobby. They would be in contact with the Senator, but I don't think they personally, at that time.... You see, after I left, of course, Kenny came to Washington with Bobby. But up until I left, what they knew they learned from me.

O'CONNOR: Bobby Kennedy then also wasn't really involved in this, or do you know?

MANNIX: No, I don't think Bobby ever was. I'm sure he must have been aware through his brother, through the Senator, of a little bit of this. He couldn't have helped it because Bobby was in and out of our office all the time. I mean, Bobby was just downstairs. He was in, and particularly when the Senator was away, Bobby would come in to sort of check on things.

[BEGIN TAPE I, SIDE II]

O'CONNOR: There's some controversy, of course, as to whether or not the President actually wrote his book. Some people say Ted Sorensen really wrote it, or Ted Sorensen did all the work. Do you have any comments to make on that?

MANNIX: Well, I'm sure the President....Now Ted Sorensen was up in the office, and he was constantly doing research for the book. I'm sure that he did a great deal of the research for the book because he was in the position to do this with the Library of Congress across the street. But he went down in that time, that winter and spring to Florida four or five times to confer with the Senator. I have seen myself many handwritten drafts of the President's after he did come back. I never actually

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worked on the book because there were two or three girls who did work for Ted Sorensen and worked on this. But I did do some when the President came back to Washington. And there's no doubt in my mind that Ted did a great deal of research, but the book was written by the President.

O'CONNOR: Okay, we might talk a little bit about some of the issues that were very important during the years that you were in Washington. And one of them that you've already mentioned very briefly was the McCarthy issue. That was an issue before you got to Washington and continued to be an issue for some of the time that you were in Washington. I wondered if you had any comments to make on the then Senator's attitude toward Joe McCarthy. Or if you heard him talk about it much in the office.

MANNIX: Well, I know he liked Joe McCarthy personally. He was sick and away at the time of the censure, and we always used that when the actual censure came. I think if he were there and were put on the spot, he probably would have voted for the censure. But I think he liked McCarthy personally, and he sort of hated to say too much against him. And Bobby had worked for him, and Bobby, even though he severed his relationship because of Cohn [Roy M. Cohn] and Shine [G. David Schine], still had a good relationship with Senator McCarthy. I know that that President didn't approve of the majority of things that McCarthy did, but I think there was a friendship there and I think that was the problem. But I can remember one time there was some nomination coming up—somebody named Bobby Lee [Robert Lee]; I don't even remember what it was for. Of course, John Fox from the *Boston Post* was very pro-McCarthy. And I remember at the end of the day, or it might have been even after dinner, I was in the office alone with the Senator, and he was sort of thinking out loud, and he said, "You know, John Fox and McCarthy are going to be wild about this, but I can't vote for this confirmation."

Something like that because of his friendship for McCarthy. He said John Fox was probably going to crucify him in the paper. And I remember his saying, "This Bobby Lee's a good Catholic, but I just can't (for some reason, I don't even remember what it was) vote for his confirmation." But, you know, I think on a personal basis he did like McCarthy.

O'CONNOR: Well, the issue of his attitude toward McCarthy came up particularly when the Senator was recuperating from his operations. He didn't vote for the censure.

MANNIX: For the censure. In fact, I think he was in New York being operated on the day that came up. And,

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of course, we would say, you know, here he was getting last rites of the church, and how could he be thinking about this. I do think if it had come right down to it, I'm sure that he would have felt that he to vote for the censure.

O'CONNOR: You didn't hear anybody in the office—Ted Reardon, for example, or Ted Sorensen—talking about whether he should vote for the censure? Even though he was sick he could have, let's say.

MANNIX: Yes. No, I'm sure Ted Sorensen would feel that he should have come out strongly against McCarthy because Ted is quite liberal anyway. But they never said anything to the girls, you know—what they felt. They kept their own counsel. I never heard anything, any discussion in the office about it because frankly, at that time we were so concerned about his operation and whether he would live, as I said before. When he was operated on Bobby must have been in New York, and we had no—we were so concerned about him we weren't really aware of worrying about what they were doing in the Senate. Although I'm sure that the men had their opinions on it.

O'CONNOR: Okay, another issue...

MANNIX: I may not be too good on issues. [Laughter]

O'CONNOR: This is another thing you might know something about. The issue I was thinking about in particular was the courtship of Jacqueline Bouvier [Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis].

MANNIX: Oh, that. Well, actually, I had never met Jackie until, oh, I think the early spring of 1953. When Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] was married in May, I think, Jackie was in England and was coming back the next week, and we were all up in New York for Eunice's wedding. And that was the first indication. Something was said there—I can't even remember what it was—the night after the wedding that there may possibly be something in the wind, that the Senator may be

becoming engaged to Jackie. But nothing definite was really said. Then Jackie came back a week or so later. And then there were rumors; it came to our office that he was going to announce his engagement. We didn't quite believe it because actually his courtship of Jackie was just completely apolitical. I mean, you know, it was mostly through Charlie Bartlett [Charles Bartlett], and he was dating other girls. So, you know, we weren't really aware too much. We knew he saw Jackie Bouvier, and we knew that there was an interest there. In fact, I think during the campaign that she had come up once.

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That summer, before they were married, the campaign organization had a big party for him in Boston about a week before the wedding. I was invited to go up for this affair. After the party was over—it was held at the Parker House—he said that I could take the rest of the week off. So I went down to our beach in Mattapoisett [Mattapoisett, Massachusetts], and I think the very next day the State Police came down. We didn't have a telephone at the cottage. The State Police came down, and I was at the beach and they said, "You have to call Hyannis Port right away." And I had to go to Hyannis and work for a couple of days and do some things in preparation for the wedding. Jackie was down there then for a couple of days, and then she went back to Newport [Newport, Rhode Island]. I think it was three days later that they were married. She was a lovely girl, and we all liked her very much. She was shy at first, but she was always a very warm person. She seemed much older in many ways because actually Jackie was the same age as I was. I think she was twenty-four, and I was twenty-four. But because of her upbringing and the cosmopolitan life that she lived, she seemed much more sophisticated, I suppose. But Jackie is a lovely girl.

O'CONNOR: Did you ever hear him comment or anybody else comment on any of the other girls he was dating before he became engaged?

MANNIX: Oh, there were several, I guess. No one specifically. Now, Ann McDermott he dated. That was during the campaign. She came down to Washington with the idea of getting a job in government. Nothing really seemed to appeal to her, and she went home in May. He did see her, but he was dating Jackie at the same time. Ann and he had a wonderful relationship. If you were really depressed, there'd be nobody you'd rather be with because he just always says something that makes you laugh. I think she was wonderful company for him. When he wasn't feeling too well or was kind of depressed, she could always kind of buoy his spirits. I think he knew a year before that he wanted to marry Jackie Bouvier. In fact, when we got to Washington, Ann McDermott had been seeing him in Boston, as I said, but it was Jackie whom he took to the Inaugural Ball in January, 1953. I think it was pretty well set. I can remember Kenny O'Donnell saying that fall that within a year that he'd be married. And nobody believed it.

O'CONNOR: I guess he did.



MANNIX: Yes. At the same time this article was coming out in the *Saturday Evening Post* about the Senate's gay young bachelor. And I think it came out

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about—in fact, I think they held up the announcement of the engagement a couple of days so they could have the article in the *Saturday Evening Post*. And then they announced the engagement.

O'CONNOR: One other thing that was prominent at that time, I believe, was the question of the New England bloc, and New England politics in general, and organizing a bloc of senators or congressmen from New England. I wondered if you had anything to do with that or had any comments to add on that.

MANNIX: Well, I didn't have too much to do with it because that was in the legislative sphere. That was in Ted Sorensen's side. This was the Senator's idea. I think they called the conference New England Senators or something. But it was the Senator's idea; it was he who got this started and then talked to Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall] and the other New England senators. This was his baby. And then he published—I have a copy somewhere—"The Economic Problems of New England." Of course, I don't know whether it was all his doing, but in *U.S. News [U.S. News and World Report]* I read a couple of weeks ago that New England is in the best shape it has been for years and years. So whether that all stems from what they initiated? But they really did get together—I don't know whether it was once a week or once every couple of weeks—and they worked very faithfully to set up legislation to help New England as a whole.

O'CONNOR: Well, in connection with this, again this is legislative, I suppose, but there was one vote that more or less went the contrary to his work before the Massachusetts and for the New England interest.

MANNIX: And that was the tideland.

O'CONNOR: Tidelands, not so much, I was thinking, as the St. Lawrence Seaway.

MANNIX: Oh, yes, I'm sorry. When I was saying tidelands I mean St. Lawrence Seaway, yes. Well, I kind of forget, but it seems to me that he felt at the time that sometimes you have to look at the whole, and it would be best in the overall picture.

O'CONNOR: Yes, I wondered if you had heard some of the people in the office talking about it.

MANNIX: There was a lot of discussion at that time, but, frankly, I have sort of forgotten. I remember the

feeling was that he knew that they were going to be upset in Massachusetts and that they would feel that it would be against their best interest, but he felt in the overall picture and for the good that it would do that he had to vote for it.

O'CONNOR: Sure. Well, is there anything else you'd like to mention at all having to do with the time you were in Washington working for him? Perhaps you might tell us about what it was like when he finally came back after having been away for so long, with two operations and so forth. I've heard that the secretaries stood up and cheered. Is that so?

MANNIX: Yes, yes. We did. We were so thrilled to see him. I remember that next day when he went over to the Senate floor, and the whole Senate stood up and cheered. In fact, we all went over to the Senate for his return. Of course, we were very happy. I think we all cried when he came back because we had worried so much about him. Naturally, it was a great worry to everybody who cared about him. When he came back, it was so funny because they made all these preparations. He was supposed to stay at the Congressional, the....What's that other hotel?

O'CONNOR: The Congressional Hotel, right there near the...

MANNIX: The House office.

O'CONNOR: Yes, that's the Congressional.

MANNIX: And we made all these arrangements for the special bed and so on, and this is where he wanted to be so he'd be close. He came in that day, and a half hour after he got in, he decided he wasn't going to stay there after all, and they had had all this special equipment brought in and everything for him. But we were just very happy when he came back. Of course, when he first came back, he had to pace himself. He still wasn't too strong, I don't think. But he came back—it was right around his birthday. I don't know whether it was on his birthday. It was the end of May. And then I left the end of July.

O'CONNOR: Okay. We can wind this thing up now unless you have any other comments you'd like to make about your time down there or if you can think of anything else you'd like to add.

MANNIX: I can say that—I don't know whether I said this before—at the beginning....Well, this whole

experience was something that I'm so thankful for because it's something that no one can take away from me. The campaign of 1952, I think, for all of us who were in it—excepting the presidential, I guess....But all of us who were in it—it was the happiest summer of our lives. We just were so devoted, and we just enjoyed ourselves so thoroughly. And then Washington was an extension of the same for me. I really loved Washington, and I loved working for him. He was a tremendous person to work for. I've heard that he did have a temper. But rarely....Now with the men maybe occasionally. The closest that I ever heard him be to me was, one day I sent in some pictures to be autographed, and he called, "Jean, come in here." So I went in, and he said, "I can't read your writing." And I laughed because nobody can, and I said, "I can't read yours either." But he thought he was bawling me out, and I didn't really take it that way. But that night he said to a friend of mine, "I really told Jean off today. I couldn't read her writing." But he didn't. There was a certain reticence as far as losing his patience with the girls. He may, you know, come in or call you and say something about something not being right, but I never saw those displays of temper. It was an experience that I thoroughly enjoyed and all the people who were in it. Now Larry is Postmaster General of the United States, and Bobby was Attorney General and now Senator, and Kenny, I hope, may be the Governor someday. No matter how far and how high they go, there's a certain feeling I have for them, a warmth that will always be because of what we went through together, you know. And for everybody that we were really associated with. It was an experience that I was very fortunate to have, to know the President.

O'CONNOR:           Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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