

**John Jay Hooker Jr. Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 02/23/1966**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** John Jay Hooker Jr.  
**Interviewer:** Ronald J. Grele  
**Date of Interview:** February 23, 1966  
**Place of Interview:** Nashville, Tennessee  
**Length:** 28 pages

**Biographical Note**

John Jay Hooker Jr. was the National Director of Men and Women for the Kennedy Campaign in Washington D.C. in 1960 and special assistant to Robert F. Kennedy from 1961 to 1962. This interview focuses on anti-Catholic sentiment in the 1960 presidential campaign, Hooker's interactions with Eleanor Roosevelt, and Hooker's attempts to seek endorsements in the campaign, among other topics.

**Access**

Open

**Usage Restrictions**

According to the deed of gift signed August 2, 1972, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

**Copyright**

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 The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form.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

**Transcript of Oral History Interview**

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

**Suggested Citation**

John Jay Hooker Jr., recorded interview by Ronald J. Grele, February 23, 1966, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

F-10

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By John Jay Hooker, Jr.

to the

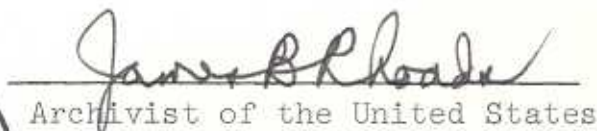
JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

I, John Jay Hooker, Jr. of Nashville, Tennessee, do hereby give to the John F. Kennedy Library, for use and administration therein, all my rights, title and interest, except as hereinafter provided, to the tape recording and transcript of the interviews conducted at Nashville, Tennessee, for the John F. Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. The transcript is to be immediately open to general research.
2. Researchers who have access to the transcript of the interview may listen to the tape; however, this is to be for background use only. Researchers may not cite, paraphrase or quote from the tape.
3. This agreement may be revised or amended by mutual consent of the parties undersigned.



John Jay Hooker, Jr.



Archivist of the United States

7/17/72  
Month, Day, Year

August 2, 1972  
Month, Day, Year

## John Jay Hooker Jr.– JFK #2

### Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
39	Anti-Catholic literature against John F. Kennedy [JFK]
40	Robert F. Kennedy's [RFK] feelings about anti-Catholic literature
41	RFK's speech in Cincinnati
42	RFK's opinions about Protestant leaders, such as Billy Graham
43	Conflicts between Protestants and Catholics
44	The public's fear that the Catholic Church would become a political entity in the United States
45	Discussion of the religious question with JFK
46	JFK's feelings about the religion question
47	Dr. James W. Wine being brought in to handle anti-Catholic sentiment
49	Role in the campaign
50	Seeking endorsements for campaign
51	Carl Sandburg's reservations about endorsing JFK
52	Eleanor Roosevelt's involvement in JFK's campaign
55	Committee to liberate Cuban prisoners
58	Doctors' and lawyers' endorsement of JFK's campaign
59	Jacqueline Kennedy's interview with Dr. Benjamin Spock
61	Seeing JFK at the Georgetown house after the 1960 election
62	Involvement in judiciary appointments in Tennessee
65	Personal relationship with JFK

Name Index

JOHN JAY HOOKER, JR.

Batista, Fulgencio 27  
 Bellino, Carmine 42  
 Castro, Fidel 22, 23, 25, 26, 27  
 Clay, Henry 5, 6  
 De Gaulle, Charles 28, 29, 30  
 De Sapio, Carmine 14  
 Di Salle, Michael V. 14  
 Donahue, Richard K. 16  
 Donovan, James B. 23  
 Dungan, Ralph 17  
 Eastland, James O. 64  
 Eisenhower, Milton 20, 21, 22, 25, 56, 58  
 Evans, Courtney 25  
 Gavin, James M. Goldberg, Arthur J. 3  
 Graham, William Franklin (Billy) 17, 42, 43  
 Gray, Frank 62  
 Henry, E. William 61  
 Hill, Lister 60  
 Jackson, Andrew 2  
 Jackson, Henry M. 15  
 Johnson, Lyndon B. 8, 14, 15  
 Kefauver, Estes 34  
 Kennedy, Edward M. 5, 11, 12  
 Kennedy, Ethel Skakel 2, 10, 28, 33, 37  
 Kennedy, Joseph P., Jr. 4  
 Kennedy, Joseph P., Sr. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 28, 29, 50  
 Kennedy, Robert F. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17,  
 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28, 31, 32, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42,  
 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 56, 61, 62, 64  
 Kennedy, Rose Fitzgerald 9, 10  
 Khrushchev, Nikita S. 8  
 Lawrence, William H. 45  
 Lincoln, Abraham 6, 19  
 McGee, Frank 36  
 Medaris, John B. 49, 50, 51  
 Minow, Newton N. 61  
 Neese, Charles E. 62  
 Nixon, Richard M. 15, 47  
 O'Brien, Lawrence F. 16  
 Onassis, Jacqueline Kennedy 2, 10, 13, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 43, 59  
 Peale, Norman Vincent 42  
 Poitier, Sidney 51  
 Poling, Daniel A. 41  
 Reuther, Walter P. 20, 21, 22, 25  
 Ridgway, Matthew B. 49, 50, 51  
 Roosevelt, Eleanor R. 20, 21, 22, 25, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58

Roosevelt, Franklin D. 7  
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., Jr. 53, 54  
 Salinger, Pierre E. <sup>Smith & Sec. 1, 2, 22</sup> 45  
 Salk, Jonas E. 59, 60  
 Sandburg, Carl 51, 52  
 Schwartz, Abba P. 52, 53  
 Seigenthaler, John 2, 15, 20, 53, 54, 61  
 Shriver, Eunice Kennedy 2, 10  
 Shriver, R. Sargent, Jr. 2, 58  
 Sidey, Hugh 45  
 Smith, Alfred E. 46, 47  
 Smith, Jean Kennedy 2  
 Smith, Stephen E. 2, 3  
 Sorensen, Theodore C. 45  
 Spock, Benjamin 59  
 Stevenson, Adlai E. 34, 52, 61  
 Symington, Stuart 14  
 Taylor, Maxwell D. 38  
 Truman, Harry S. 47  
 White, Byron R. 34, 61  
 Wine, James 41, 47, 48, 49



Second Oral History Interview

with

JOHN JAY HOOKER, JR.

February 23, 1966  
Nashville, Tennessee

By Ronald J. Grele

For the John F. Kennedy Library

GRELE: Mr. Hooker, if we can begin by filling in on the previous transcript of the previous interview that you held with Mr. [William A.] Geoghegan, could you explain in more detail what you did in the 1960 campaign in relation to anti-Catholic literature?

HOOKER: I came to Washington shortly after the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles. At that time Senator Kennedy was spending some time in Hyannis Port and was commuting between Hyannis Port and Washington. The so-called rump session of Congress was going on. Immediately upon Senator Kennedy's nomination as the Democratic candidate. . . . Because of the fact that he was a Catholic, there was immediately, almost overnight, a barrage of anti-Catholic feeling and anti-Catholic literature. When I first arrived in Washington, some ten days after the Convention--I don't have the date there, but you could fill that in--there was already available in the Democratic National Committee a good deal of this literature that had been sent to them or that had been picked up by certain people and brought to the Committee. Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] at that time, of course, was already in charge, running the campaign. At that time there was not available anybody who was an expert on the subject of anti-Catholic literature. I'm not sure that there were any experts on the subject of anti-Catholic

literature. So I gathered up all the available literature that we could find, and from that began to prepare an answer in the form of a letter from Bob Kennedy and then, further, in the form of a statement of position that was going to be released under Bob Kennedy's name. I spent considerable time at that. It ultimately appeared in the New York Times. Are you familiar with that?

GRELE: Did you make any attempt to answer individual letters, or was this just in terms of newspaper articles?

HOOKER: Well, at first we made attempts to answer individual letters and to handle it as personally as we could. There was a considerable amount of anti-Catholic feeling. Bob did not want to fall in the trap of displaying hostility to anyone and everyone who happened to be in opposition to the candidacy of his brother due to the fact that his brother was a Catholic. Bob Kennedy was sensitive to the proposition that there might be many people, otherwise very reasonable people, who felt that it was not in the best interests of America to have a Catholic President. So we had an extended conversation about that. I remember I was quite impressed with the preciseness of his feelings about it. Of course, Bob, like everyone else, didn't appreciate the utterly ludicrous, vitriolic attacks on his brother by people who were capricious and were really using this as an excuse to vilify his brother. He was kind and generous to one type of person who felt that his Catholic faith was a problem to his brother's being the President. But if he had the slightest feeling that Catholicism was really a mechanism through which to attack, rather than the real reason for the sentiment, then he displayed that grimness that has so much characterized Bob Kennedy.

GRELE: In your conversation with Robert Kennedy did he talk to you about his speech in Cincinnati on his brother's religion?

HOOKER: Yes. As a matter of fact, this was during the time. . . . What was the date of his speech in Cincinnati?

GRELE: I believe it was in September, shortly after Labor Day.



HOOKER: I had laughingly, jokingly become an expert, as you become an expert on anything in a political campaign that you give time, effort, and energy to, if not many other people are giving time, effort, and energy to the same thing. There are not many actual experts in a political campaign. There are only people who play the role of experts. I talked to Bob about this. He would laugh about having a Southern Protestant as his expert on anti-Catholic literature, and we discussed at length what the most reasonable position was with respect to anti-Catholic literature. I think if you could find the position set forth in The New York Times. . . . This is prior to the speech in Houston. Houston was where the Senator . . .

GRELE: I meant Robert Kennedy's speech in Cincinnati.

HOOKER: What I'm trying to ascertain is was Bob's speech in Cincinnati prior to the President's speech in Houston. And it was. Well, at that time then, I don't believe Dr. [James W.] Wine had come; I think Dr. Wine came later. At that time the information and thoughts that we had at the committee. . . . Bob was both author and listener in the formulation of those thoughts. I had a compilation of everything that the Senator had previously said on the question of religion. I remember that was a very frustrating job because, up until that time, Senator Kennedy had mentioned the religious question on several occasions, but it had never been the main burden of any speech. So that it was a question of looking for it and finding it in a maze of other material. He had been asked, as I recollect, about the religious question maybe on Meet the Press or on some national TV program. And he had speeches in which he'd given a paragraph or two. He had an exchange of letters, I believe, with Dr. [Daniel A.] Poling about his appearance at some meeting in Philadelphia relating to a dedication--a matter which was going to take place in a church. The question was: Could he, as a Catholic, go to this church? Bob was, of course, familiar with that and talked about it. Then we had further analyzed the issue and had written out certain positions with respect to it. Again, returning to the proposition, I think in some form that was published in The New York Times. As I

remember it, Bob basically talked within the four corners of that in the Cincinnati speech.

GRELE: I have been told that at the Cincinnati speech he broke down.

HOOKER: Bob felt very deeply about this. I was not at Cincinnati, and I don't recall having read that.

GRELE: Did he ever mention it to you in conversation?

HOOKER: I can't say positively that he did. At this time I was staying at Bob Kennedy's house, and we were riding back and forth to work every day, which is about thirty or thirty-five minutes. A large part of those trips was consumed with talking about the religious question. This was a matter about which he had an enormous conviction. Bob Kennedy in his heart of hearts felt that the question of his brother's religion was not relevant to his brother's ability to run this nation.

GRELE: Did you ever discuss the position of Protestant leaders like Norman Vincent Peale or Billy Graham?

HOOKER: Yes. And I think Bob Kennedy was quite torn by that in this way; I think Bob Kennedy admired Billy Graham; I think that he felt that Billy Graham was sincere in his position; and I think that as a consequence he was torn because he was also convinced that Reverend Graham was in error about his position. I mentioned a moment ago that Bob Kennedy had two almost separate feelings about this--one for the people who were sincere in their position, and one for the people who were not. As I recollect, ultimately Billy Graham and the President and, perhaps, Bob became friends. At that time I don't think they had ever met. I remember going to a meeting with a man named Carmine Bellino, who was a close friend of Bob's and who ultimately was the accountant at the White House when the President was there--I think that was at the Mayflower Hotel--which meeting was presided over by Billy Graham's father and other distinguished Protestant leaders. The discussion at that meeting was the question of John



Fitzgerald Kennedy's religion. I remember being appalled, as a Protestant, at the apparent sincerity and alarm with which these men viewed the problem.

I had a very positive feeling, personally, that Catholicism was not relevant to the campaign in any way. I remember being deeply interested in the question because I have a grandmother who's still alive, who's 87 years old and at that time was in her early 80's, who has always been quite opposed to the Catholics and at the same time quite a strong Democrat. I remember, during the course of the campaign, I got a letter from her saying that she had never voted for a Republican in her life, but that she found it difficult to vote for a Catholic. About two days before the election she wrote me and said that she was still not sure about the Catholicism thing, but that [Jacqueline Bouvier] Jackie Kennedy would be such a great First Lady that she was going to vote for John Kennedy because of Jackie Kennedy, which I thought was kind of a cute way for an 80-some-odd-year-old lady to resolve differences as between Catholicism and the Democratic Party.

I was acquainted, as a Southern Protestant, with the fact that people of other generations resented Catholics. In fact, I know of a small little Tennessee town in which there had been historically a fight between the Protestants and the Catholics. I believe it started over a school. There was considerable feeling there. So I had been acquainted all my life with the proposition that there were certain people who felt very hard towards Catholics. But for some reason I had never entertained that view for a moment, it being so inconsistent with my understanding of religion and life and government. This barrage of literature apparently evoked enormous anxiety in a great many people. If it's outside of your emotional understanding and outside your intellectual understanding, it's very perplexing to ascertain and to make a judgment yourself about why these people feel this way. I don't think I ever really resolved that. I never really understood why Billy Graham's father was against John Fitzgerald Kennedy being the President on the basis of him being a Catholic.

At that meeting I heard these people assign a lot of esoteric theological reasons. But to me, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was not just a Catholic. He was a human being; he was a Democrat; he was a bright new face. It seemed to me that the



people, no matter how sincere they were--or thought they were--who focused on the question alone of his Catholicism were using it as sort of an exercise through which they somehow became more important because they were against this man on this subject. I think there was a certain intellectual snobbery that attached to the idea, among certain ministers: that there was something erudite about being anti-Catholic; that it indicated some super understanding of the relationship between a certain church and state; that if this country were permitted to have a Catholic President, the very structure of government would be altered.

Of course, the parts of the anti-Catholic literature that related to the idea that the Pope would run America were the easiest ideas to dispel. In other words, I don't think that was a very competitive idea. I don't think many people were convinced not to vote for John Kennedy on the basis that the Pope would run America. The subtler and more difficult problem to combat was the idea that there would be control by the American political Catholic group; that the Cabinet would be full of Catholics; that the Supreme Court would be full of Catholics; that the Catholic Church in this country would become a political entity--not necessarily a political entity that was controlled by the Vatican, but a political entity that would have a political head in this country. Since there are an awful lot of Catholics in this country, since the population is exploding in general, and because of the number of Catholics now alive--and the ratios of the exploding population are such that there are more and more Catholics--there was some authenticity to the argument that the people of the Catholic faith were going to have the votes, particularly in certain geographic areas. And these areas were the areas that had the balance of power in the electoral college. This was, I think, a very maturing experience for the country. John Fitzgerald Kennedy was a religious man, but I don't think any more religious, or less religious, than people of other faiths. I think he was a good Catholic, but I don't think he was any more religious than a good Protestant, a good Methodist, a good Presbyterian, a good Jew. Religion involves life and in the President's life played an integral part, but not a controlling part in the sense that he also had other interests and other feelings



GRELE: Did you ever discuss with John Kennedy your activities in this sector of the campaign?

HOOKER: Yes. I didn't see much of the Senator during the campaign. He was on the road, and I was back in Washington at the Democratic Headquarters. I traveled some with Bob. But on one or two days, I went out on the campaign trail. We in Washington, who were working pretty nearly sixteen hours a day, often laughed about the troupes on the road, saying that nobody on the road was really working much except [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen and Pierre Salinger and the candidate, everybody else was kind of just baggage and going along to see the balloons and hear the noise. So we sort of had a kind of reverse snobbery--that we were the ones who were doing the work, and all the rest on the plane and talking to the candidate were really just court jesters as opposed to being hard workers. I'm sure that that was in large measure untrue, but it was our way of characterizing the ones who were fortunate enough to be traveling with the candidate. But on a couple of days I did travel with the candidate, really for the purpose of observing what they did.

GRELE: When you traveled, did you discuss your work with John Kennedy?

HOOKER: Yes. One one of these days I flew back from Philadelphia with him late on a Saturday night. I remember it well because the next Sunday morning he was to meet the Japanese officer with whom he had had some relationship emanating from the PT boat experience. On that plane trip there were just two or three of us; there was the Senator himself and Hugh Sidey from Time magazine and [William H.] Bill Lawrence from ABC. We had sort of a chatty, pleasant thirty-five minutes. He always called me "Long John," and I remember during the discussion, just out of the blue, he said, "Long John, how is the religious question going? How is the anti-Catholic literature?" I told him that I was astounded that there were so many people apparently sincerely interested in this thing; that that was much more surprising to me than the number of people who were not sincere, who were using this as a gimmick against him.



HOOKER: By that do you mean did he think the question of his religion was relevant to his campaign?

GRELE: On a particular level.

HOOKER: Yes. I think that what he said at Houston and the care with which he approached the question indicated that he could see how some sincere and honest people had doubts about this. I think that was largely predicated upon his perception that he was only the second man who was Catholic to run for President, and probably had the best chance to be elected of any man who'd ever ran, including [Alfred E.] Al Smith, who had a good chance to be elected. I think he wanted to be very careful about that. I think in that way he regarded the question of his Catholicism as a political question. And I think he was just as careful--and maybe more careful--to explain his position on that question as he was on other questions. In other words, I don't think it ever occurred to him that the fact that he was a Catholic would in any way affect his capacity as president. As a personality, as a human being, I'm convinced that he felt that the question of his Catholicism was totally irrelevant--and was personally irrelevant. I don't think he had any visceral feeling about it, any emotional conflict about it. I do feel that he perceived that there were many people in this country who had been taught by their parents or by their ministers to treat Catholics as suspect. He wanted to dispel as best he could the idea that his Catholicism was going to affect his ability to run the country.

I think everything he said about it publicly--and I really think everything he felt about it privately--was pointed towards the few, the small percentage of people that he thought were reasonable on the subject, that he thought were subject to being convinced if his explanations rang true and were authentic. So I don't feel that he ever tried to dispel it in the sense of going too far in an effort to pick up the people on the periphery who were just going to use that as a weapon with which to attack him. I think he constantly, with rifle-like precision, aimed his words towards the people he thought were subject to being convinced. And I think that's true of Bob Kennedy. I think the Houston speech and the Cincinnati speech--one made by the Senator and one made by his brother--indicate that that is the case.



GRELE: Did they ever comment to you on the election of 1928 with any indication that they had studied that election--had studied Al Smith's tactics in that election?

HOOKE: No. I would be surprised if there were any evidence that they had. They were very studious people, and I'm sure that somebody along the line had made some compilations relative to the Al Smith campaign, but I doubt that either John F. Kennedy or Robert Kennedy ever attached any real significance to that.

John F. Kennedy was a different kind of Catholic than Al Smith was. John F. Kennedy was not a professional Catholic. As I recollect, Al Smith was a professional Catholic. By professional I mean that John F. Kennedy was a man who went to church in the ordinary way. I am convinced he believed in God, and I am convinced that he believed in many of the tenets of the church. I don't know that I had any conviction that he believed in all of the tenets of the church. I think that his religion was incorporated in his personality in a natural, mature way and was not for exploitation. I think Al Smith tried to appeal to certain people on the basis that he was a Catholic; I don't think John Fitzgerald Kennedy ever tried to appeal to anybody on the basis that he was a Catholic. In other words, I don't think, as far as John F. Kennedy was concerned, there was another side to the political issue. You remember when President [Harry S.] Truman sent the message to somebody--maybe it was to [Richard M.] Nixon--that they could go to hell, and Sen. Kennedy sent him a wire that said, "Mr. President, I agree with your sentiments, but I don't think we should raise the religious issue." I think Senator Kennedy had a sense of humor about the religious issue, as he did about other things, and I further think that it was probably repugnant to him and to Bob, to try to get offsetting votes on the question of his being a Catholic.

GRELE: Moving on now, why was Dr. Wine brought in to handle this part of the campaign?

HOOKE: Well, I think, first of all, Dr. Wine probably wanted to work in the campaign, and he was in a position with the church groups where he had an



enormous number of contacts and was in a position to contact people on a personal basis. I remember the afternoon Dr. Wine came. I saw him; I had a brief chat with him. Then he had an interview with Bob. In the period of a very few minutes Bob made the decision to utilize Dr. Wine's talent on this. I then spent some time briefing the Doctor on what had transpired prior to his coming in. Dr. Wine was a natural choice. I've forgotten the exact date of the time that Dr. Wine came in. I think Dr. Wine did a good job at this assignment.

I have a very strong impression that John Fitzgerald Kennedy would have been elected President if neither myself nor Dr. Wine--or anybody else--had worked on the religious question. I feel that John F. Kennedy had satisfied himself emotionally about this question, that he had done a magnificent job intellectually in the exposure of his point of view to the American people, and that basically the speech he made in Houston was the whole show on the religious question. I think the speech that Bob made at Cincinnati was important, but not nearly so important as the Houston speech because, after all, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the candidate. I do feel that the compilation that we put in The New York Times on a very rush basis very early in the campaign was helpful because it was a clear enunciation of the Senator's position in the Senator's own words predominantly.

I feel that those three things were about the whole show with respect to Catholicism. I think that he got 95 per cent of the people who were reasonable on the subject, whose doubts were genuine. I think that he overwhelmingly sold himself on that question. For people whose doubts were not genuine, you could have had Dr. Wine and a hundred others and not changed their votes.

I remember I had a feeling of satisfaction at the time that Dr. Wine came in because I had a feeling that there was literally nothing that I could do, or anybody else could do, about this; that this was a matter entirely within the ability of John Fitzgerald Kennedy--and to a lesser degree Robert Kennedy--to sell to the American people their point of view about this. That being so, all the work connected with this was really the mundane task of assembling what had been said by the Senator and disseminating that. I say that mindful of the proposition that Dr. Wine did have a great many friends in

the Catholic faith and in the Protestant faith, and that I'm sure he worked diligently and hard, and I'm sure that he had the satisfaction of feeling that there were many of these people that he converted or neutralized who otherwise would have been against Senator Kennedy. With all due respect to Dr. Wine, I really think that Dr. Wine's success emanated from John Kennedy's success. Those people who were sincere became convinced by the statement at Houston. They indicated that to Dr. Wine. The campaign began to take on another glow with respect to the religious issue. As I remember, there was very little activity between Bob Kennedy and that department of the campaign after the first week or so of Dr. Wine's presence. It was the kind of issue and the kind of problem that there was no handle for. Therefore, the decision was made that we would either handle this or not handle it through the mouth of the candidate. From that point on the emphasis on the religious issue became a matter of how the candidate was going to handle it.

GRELE: Am I correct in assuming that after you left dealing with the anti-Catholic question you went on a series of special assignments during the campaign?

HOOKER: I had a very peculiar role in the campaign. First of all, I was not a political expert. Secondly, I was young. Let's see, in 1960 I was 30. Thirdly, I was an intimate personal friend of the Kennedy family. I did a wide variety of things, from talking to General [Matthew B.] Ridgway and General [John B.] Medaris . . .

GRELE: What did you talk to them about?

HOOKER: I talked to them about trying to get them to endorse Senator Kennedy.

GRELE: Did they?

HOOKER: General Medaris did. As I recollect, General [James M.] Gavin did. I think I have a piece of paper, a note, that Bob Kennedy sent me that said,



"John Jay, Call Matt Ridgway and General Medaris." That was typed, and in that scrawly hand that Bob writes in he wrote a little note that said, "Tell them my father [Joseph P. Kennedy] said to call." I did call them, and I remember how ludicrous I felt because I had been a private, first class, in the Army, and Matthew Ridgway was a four-star general. I remember feeling that politics is a strange game; that here a private, first class, is calling Matthew Ridgway to ask him to participate in the campaign of John F. Kennedy. But I had a very pleasant conversation with him, and very lengthy, and a series of conversations with General Medaris, whom I greatly admire because of the missile program in which he had such an active part.

During the course of that campaign, I was constantly finding myself calling someone, on behalf of the Senator or on behalf of Bob, whose position in life was totally discommensurate with my own. If I jog my memory, I could probably think of a lot of those people.

GRELE: Let's go back to General Ridgway and General Medaris for a moment. On what basis did you ask for their endorsement? What was the appeal?

HOOKER: Well, that I was representing Senator Kennedy and that he felt that his position was in keeping with their position.

GRELE: Did they feel that way?

HOOKER: I think they did. I think they did. Memory fails me, but I believe they both endorsed him. I think General Medaris gave me some names of some other people. General Medaris, I think, told me that he thought we could get General Gavin. I think the Senator himself called General Gavin.

GRELE: Moving on now, at one time you were asked to arrange Mrs. [Franklin D.] Roosevelt's speaking schedule.



HOOKER: Yes, along with General Gavin, General Ridgway, and General Medaris. Periodically, Bob would ask me to get somebody on the phone and try to encourage him to support Senator Kennedy. I remember having an extended conversation with Carl Sandburg about his support of Senator Kennedy. I remember that Mr. Sandburg was always disappointed, when I talked to him, that Senator Kennedy or Bob Kennedy personally did not call him. Of course, the enormity of the task of running for President utterly precludes, as a matter of time, people who had the burden and enormity of roles that they had in the campaign from doing that kind of thing. So I had several conversations with Carl Sandburg, and I don't think that I ever got him to agree to publicly endorse Senator Kennedy.

GRELE: What were his reservations?

HOOKER: That he wasn't a political man and that he thought it was a perversion of his profession. Maybe perversion is too strong a word; he thought it was not in keeping with his profession. As you know, the Kennedys were all great admirers of Carl Sandburg.

The Kennedys were wonderful people. I don't think for a minute that the fact that Carl Sandburg wasn't willing to participate in the campaign diminished to them the majesty of his poetry. Most people look at life, I think, through glasses, and if the other fellow doesn't share your enthusiasm for yourself, you somehow feel hostile towards them. I don't think John Fitzgerald Kennedy or Bob Kennedy ever felt that way about anybody who they thought was sincere.

I talked to a wide variety of people in the movie business. I remember talking to Sidney Poitier, the Negro actor, at great length. I was never sure that the endorsement of a candidate by a personality of that sort was very important. While I enjoyed that feature of the campaign, and remember it because of my admiration for the people that I have mentioned, I never felt that it made much difference in the campaign, if any difference, that a public figure like that endorsed a candidate. The office of the presidency of the United States and the awesome responsibility of it is such that I think most people

make a judgment about who they feel should sit in that chair predicated upon their own understanding of the job and the man and predicated upon their own chemistry--their likes and dislikes--as opposed to choosing on the basis that some father image smiles benevolently on the campaign. Certainly, I think Carl Sandburg is a father image to us all, a man of enormous insight. Certainly, I made a diligent effort to get him to support Senator Kennedy. But I would doubt, as a matter of sociology, if it really would have helped any. But it was fun trying.

GRELE: Can we move on now to Mrs. Roosevelt's scheduling? What were the events surrounding that event?

HOOKER: Well, that was another one of those peculiar things. All of a sudden I found myself being placed in a position of virtual equality with Mrs. Roosevelt in the sense that I was representing the man who was the nominee for President of the United States. And the fact that she had lived in the White House for sixteen years and had been married to the man who was the most famous President of the United States was a bit appalling to me--a bit ludicrous to me, that I would be seriously negotiating with her about her participation in the campaign of John F. Kennedy. As you know, Mrs. Roosevelt had had some serious reservations about the campaign of Senator Kennedy.

GRELE: Mrs. Roosevelt had reservations about the campaign?

HOOKER: Yes. Mrs. Roosevelt was, as you know, a great friend and admirer of Adlai Stevenson, had wanted Adlai Stevenson to be the nominee, and was disappointed when he was not the nominee. She really, I think, at the outset was lending her support to John F. Kennedy only because she believed that Democrats should support the Democratic nominee. I think, ultimately, Mrs. Roosevelt became a great admirer of John F. Kennedy, and the President was a great admirer of her. But at the time which I was talking with her, it was more on the basis that she was doing us a favor. She had a very close friend named Abba Schwartz.



Abba Schwartz is now in the government in the State Department and can give you a good deal of information about Mrs. Roosevelt's participation in the campaign. He greatly admired Mrs. Roosevelt, and she liked him. [TAPE I, SIDE II]

It appeared to me that the people around Mrs. Roosevelt were extremely protective of her. They didn't want her inconvenienced about anything, even including who was going to be the President of the United States. Abba Schwartz and her secretary for fifteen years, a very nice lady whose name has escaped me, felt that their main function in life was to protect Mrs. Roosevelt from an onslaught of people who wanted to use her name and position to attain a certain goal. As a consequence, she was difficult to see, and a considerable amount of red tape was required to see her. But finally I broke through that and told her that my purpose was to utilize her talents, her name, and her abilities on behalf of the candidate. She, unlike her protectors, was enormously gracious, friendly, unpretentious. She was interested, of course, in the Democratic Party, and I thought, by the time I saw her, that she had developed a considerable interest in seeing John F. Kennedy become the President of the United States.

The problem at that time was that Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jr., was handling the relations between the Democratic National Committee--that is, the Committee and the Kennedys--with Mrs. Roosevelt. She had given Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jr., a list of dates upon which she would speak. He had taken the list and allegedly had delivered them to the Democratic National Committee. The Democratic National Committee never got them. She was contacted, and she said that she had given the dates that she would be available to Franklin, and Franklin was going to deliver them to the Committee. We then contacted Franklin, and Franklin said that he had given them to John Seigenthaler, who was Bobby Kennedy's Administrative Assistant. John Seigenthaler said that he had no recollection of the dates. Bob Kennedy called me in one afternoon and said, "Look, we're having a problem with Mrs. Roosevelt. She's given these things to her son, and he's says he's given them to Seig. And Seig doesn't remember getting them. It's a little difficult for us to have a confrontation about the memory of Franklin and the



memory of Seig. There's a conflict, and one of them is in error. But how do you explain that to Franklin's mother? Well, you go up and work it out."

So I went to New York to see Mrs. Roosevelt and asked her if she would give me a list of the dates on which she would speak during the months of September, October, and November, whereupon she told me that she had given the list of great length to Franklin on a piece of white paper in her own handwriting, and that all I had to do was to go see Franklin. I explained to her that Franklin had given the list to the Committee, so Franklin thought. And she said, "Well, then, young man, go to the Committee to get the list." So I said, "Mrs. Roosevelt, unfortunately, it's been misplaced." She, realizing by this time that I was in a considerable dilemma, smiled and said, "One of you boys has lost this list. It's a great deal of trouble for me to go back and fix it up again, but I'm for John Kennedy, and I'll do that." So I sat in the living room, and she went back and thumbed through her calendar at great length.

I remember being impressed by the amount of work that Mrs. Roosevelt did. At that time she was still writing a column for the newspapers, still making speeches on a regular basis at various functions and institutions, and still receiving an enormous amount of mail. Mrs. Roosevelt took all of these assignments seriously. The mail that she got she answered herself as best time would permit. I really felt that she was an enormously busy human being. I believe she was the best organized person I ever saw in the sense that she had every moment of the day well calculated and well laid out. When she said that it was difficult for her to take the time to go figure out the list, I realized that the fifteen minutes or twenty minutes she was going to have to give to going back through the calendar was really at the penalty of something else she wanted to do.

She lived on the second or third floor of this apartment building. She had an old rickety elevator. I had walked up the steps to the apartment. The apartment was very comfortable, pleasant, certainly not elaborate, and there was virtually no memorabilia. In the living room there was one picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. There were none of the souvenirs, no evidence of endeavoring on her part to linger with the grandeur of the White House. I remember feeling that,



despite the fact she was then well into her 70's, she was still a person who was living for the future and not upon the memories of the past. I waited for her for fifteen or twenty minutes, and she brought the list out, again written in longhand, and said, "Young man, do not lose this. I will be available to go anyplace on these dates."

The people who surrounded Mrs. Roosevelt felt that she only should have one contact with the Committee. They didn't want a lot of people whose names were unfamiliar to them, but who had some position in the hierarchy of the Kennedy campaign, promiscuously calling Mrs. Roosevelt to verify. So the word was passed, "If you want to communicate with Mrs. Roosevelt, you have to do so through John Hooker." Due to the fact that she was tremendously in demand--particularly the Negroes all over America named Mrs. Roosevelt as their first request for a speaker from the Committee--I contacted her periodically. I would say I was in touch with her once every two or three days--arranging and firming up arrangements in connection with speeches that she was already committed to do and was trying to prevail upon her to make other speeches.

I remember that I had some feelings of misgivings at her age asking her to go to Denver, Colorado, the day after she had spoken in Los Angeles. I remember mentioning it to her. To my utter astonishment, she agreed to do it. Never once during the course of our conversations did she complain for lack of energy or lack of good health. She seemed absolutely tireless and was on all occasions enormously cordial. She was precise. She wanted information. She wanted the arrangements handled with care and effectiveness. But she was uncomplaining and very easy to work for because you really knew where you stood with her. And she knew where she stood with you. It was subsequent to these meetings and telephone conversations that, two years later, I got to know her better as a result of the fact that she was a member of the committee selected by the President to liberate the Cuban prisoners.



GRELE: Were you selected to be a member of that committee because of your previous relationship with Mrs. Roosevelt?

HOOKER: No. I think that the reason I was asked to do the tractors for the Cuban prisoners was because of my peculiar relationship to Bob Kennedy.

GRELE: There's nothing in the earlier transcript about the press conference that you arranged for Mrs. Roosevelt on the Cuban tractors for prisoners.

HOOKER: After the campaign I had decided to go back to Tennessee and practice law. On the occasion of the birth of the committee on tractors for Cubans prisoners, Bob Kennedy called me and asked me if I would see that the committee was well run and that, if possible, we attain the goal. That was about the way he put it. He didn't ask me to be a member of the committee; he didn't ask me to be the executive secretary of the committee; he just asked me to see that it was successful. So I was in a peculiar situation again. I was a young man dealing with three national, indeed international, personalities, all of whom were highly opinionated. It developed that there was a substantial difference of opinion between them as to the function of the committee of the tractors for the Cuban prisoners. I think I mentioned in the earlier interview that Dr. [Milton] Eisenhower took me to great task about that.

But, as fate would have it, again I found myself in intimate contact with Mrs. Roosevelt. I called her up and said, "Mrs. Roosevelt, I want to have a talk with you about the tractors for Cuban prisoners." She remembered our pleasant relationship in the campaign and said, "Oh, John, I'd be delighted for you to come. Come up and have tea with me." So I said I would, and I left Washington and went up to her house to have tea. I got there. We were having a pleasant visit remembering the campaign and her vigorous speaking schedule. She looked at me, and she said, "John, there's one thing I would like for you to do. I would like for you to promise me that you will not have any press conferences in this apartment; that any press conferences that I have with respect to

the tractors for the Cuban prisoners will be had at some other place." So I immediately, of course, assured her that we would do that, and that she obviously had nothing to fear about that. She said, "John, I really will appreciate it if you will do that for me."

We set up a press conference for her at the Roosevelt Hotel three days hence, and I asked her if I couldn't come by and pick her up prior to the conference. She said that I could. When I got to her house to pick her up to take her to the Roosevelt Hotel for the press conference, to my utter amazement, standing out in front of her apartment were ten or twelve newsmen--NBC, CBS as well as AP and UPI. So I got out of the car and immediately told them that the press conference was set for the Roosevelt Hotel and that I had promised Mrs. Roosevelt that we would not have any press conference in her living room. They were less than enthusiastic about that, and they said, "Well, we always come to Mrs. Roosevelt's house when she wants to talk to the press. Let us go up with you." I discouraged them and got on the rickety elevator by myself, only to find that, when I landed on the third floor, all twelve of the news media were standing outside of her door. I spoke to them rather harshly and suggested that I was going to be embarrassed if they lingered, which didn't seem to bother them. Mrs. Roosevelt ultimately came to the door. She saw all the newsmen there and said, "Come on in, boys." Fifteen minutes later they were climbing all over her living room setting up the lights. She had a full-fledged press conference about the tractors for the Cuban prisoners. They took down their lights and quietly retired.

I was then left alone with Mrs. Roosevelt. With a wisp of a smile she said to me, "John, could we not have any more press conferences in my living room?" I said, "Mrs. Roosevelt, I could never explain to you how embarrassed I am about this. You cautioned me about this. It seemed to be a very small thing for me to be able to do to have the press conference at some place other than your living room. But there apparently is some magnet here--either to your living room or to you--because they were not to be denied. They were informed the Roosevelt Hotel, and they met downstairs. I discouraged them from coming up, and they came anyway." She again smiled and said, "Will you please just not have any more press conferences here?"



I've often thought that her relationship with them was so easy and casual--she seemed to know most of them by names--that they all regarded her as a sort of a special human being. I don't believe you could have kept a press conference that she was going to have, if they knew she was at home, from being in her living room--if you'd had tanks. I have often thought that she knew that. Her admonition, while genuine, was one that she recognized was not attainable. She knew she would ultimately end up with those TV lights in her living room.

Thereafter I saw Mrs. Roosevelt on several occasions during the tractors for the Cuban prisoners, which was a very difficult experience in the sense that the American people were basically opposed to the idea of an exchange of tractors for prisoners. There was considerable distinct dissension on the committee, and then Milton Eisenhower had become quite frustrated and fearful of his role in this transaction.

GRELE: I believe most of that is covered on the other interview. Moving backwards now, you were also in charge of doctors and lawyers during the campaign?

HOOKER: Yes.

GRELE: What did this involve?

HOOKER: Sargent Shriver, the brother-in-law of the President, was, in effect, responsible for the effort to attract various groups and personalities into the campaign. He had a wide acquaintanceship among people in various groups. Sargent Shriver worked on everything from farmers to show business people to neurosurgeons. He asked me one day if I would take over the lawyers and doctors for Senator Kennedy. I agreed to do so. Then he got three or four people to help me, and we began to contact the leading lawyers in America, who had positions of leadership in the American Bar Association, who were recognized national, state, or city leaders. I spent an enormous amount of time getting these lawyers to endorse Senator Kennedy.

I also worked on the doctors to get them to endorse Senator Kennedy. That was really more interesting than working on the lawyers. After all, the lawyers who were Democrats were happy to help. We got a very representative list of hundreds of lawyers who were willing to participate in the Democratic campaign. Because of Senator Kennedy's position about Medicare, it was very difficult to get doctors to participate. On the other hand, the Kennedy Foundation and the Kennedy family's interest in retarded children had afforded them an enormous acquaintanceship among the professors, the research intelligentsia of the medical profession. I started with that group in an effort to get a substantial number of doctors to support Senator Kennedy. We did get a substantial number of doctors most of whom, however, were in the teaching-research area of medicine as opposed to the general practitioner.

At that time I got to know Dr. Benjamin Spock, who agreed to help in the campaign. In the other interview I tell about Dr. Spock and Jackie Kennedy. Dr. Spock agreed to come to Washington to visit with Jackie Kennedy. He, of course, was enormously well known. I expect Benjamin Spock is the best known of all American doctors. I would say an enormous percentage of the mothers know who Dr. Spock is on account of his book. So I took Dr. Spock to Jackie's house in Washington, where he did a series of television interviews with her. I remember during that time how much she seemed to like him and he seemed to like her. She is a very intelligent human being and had apparently read everything Dr. Spock had written that she could get her hands on. She talked to him about his books very meaningfully and suggested to him that, if they got in the White House, she would like for him to be Caroline's doctor. He laughingly said, "Well, it's a long way from Cleveland over here. I'm sure Caroline is a healthy little girl. Maybe you'd better have a pediatrician in Washington." He was a very dapper fellow. He wore a vest and a watch chain: he was a tall, erect man and very playful. She liked him, and they had a very friendly visit. I think we were together, the three of us, on two separate occasions.

Also during that period I had extensive conversations with Dr. Jonas Salk, who had developed the Salk vaccine, who, because of his name, was one of the ones that I hoped would endorse Senator Kennedy. He declined to do so on the basis



that he was raising money for a new experiment. I think he now has a new hospital in California. But he was unequivocally for Senator Kennedy.

I found that most of the doctors who were practitioners were opposed to Senator Kennedy on the basis of Medicare. Most of the doctors who were teachers and research people, who felt that tax dollars had a meaningful place in the health and welfare of the nation, were for him. Most of these people were highly articulate and willing to help in any way that they could. So we ultimately had a very formidable list of doctors who supported Senator Kennedy.

GRELE: Did anyone ever contact Senator [Lister] Hill on looking for doctors?

HOOKER: Yes. Senator Hill was contacted not by me, but Senator Hill was contacted by the Senior Citizens people who also had lists of doctors that were being utilized.

I remember John Kennedy always used to tease me about having worked on the doctors. One night during the campaign I was with him, and he asked me how we were doing with doctors. I sort of paused for a moment, and he smiled and said, "I guess if you're spending your time talking to doctors, you're beginning to get the feeling we might not win."

Again, he was quite light about the situation and didn't seem to take the slightest personal affront that the doctors would not be for him. He seemed to understand that they were in disagreement with him, and he didn't expect them to be for him. I'd like to emphasize that that was to me a remarkable quality. He didn't take things personally unless they were personal. He recognized that the doctors were not for him, but he also recognized that that wasn't a personal matter, and therefore he wasn't threatened by it. Nor did he have any animosity towards the doctors. If he said anything critical of the doctors--and on occasion he did--it was always on the basis of some issue not on the basis that he disliked the medical profession. John F. Kennedy liked people who were doers, people who were responsible, people who were living an active life. I think he felt that way about doctors. He thought they were guilty of bad politics; that they didn't understand a lot about politics or a lot about what was in the best interest of the



country. But I think he had a certain feeling of their worth-  
whileness that stayed with him always.

GRELE: Moving on now, in the last interview with Mr. Geoghegan you talked about meeting at the Georgetown house shortly after the election. Was this just a social call, or were you there for a political purpose?

HOOKER: I was there in December shortly after the election. Bob Kennedy had asked me to come take a place in the government. He had suggested that I might be interested in taking a look at the broadcasting industry, a job that was ultimately taken by Newton Minow and is now held by a very close friend of mine, E. William Henry, a man who got to know the Kennedys through John Seigenthaler and myself.

At the time in December when I saw the President-elect, Bob had suggested to me that he thought that I ought to come up and give some of my time to the service of our country. I had told him that I thought it was important that I go back to Nashville and practice law. I had a going law firm and responsibilities at home. I went in to see the President the same day that Adlai Stevenson and [Byron R.] "Whizzer" White had come to visit at Georgetown. When I got there, the President was in conference, and I went back to the kitchen and was having a cup of coffee. While I was sitting there, the door swung open. It was the new President. This was the first time I had seen him since he had been elected President some month before. I remember the difference of feeling that I had. In earlier days, when he was a Senator, we'd had a very pleasant, relaxed relationship. I'd called him Jack; he'd called me Long John. But when he opened that door and I realized that I was in the presence of the President of the United States, I felt very ill at ease. However, customarily with him, he said, "Sit down, Long John." I said, "Hello, Mr. President. How are you?" He sat down opposite me and leaned over and put his hand on my knee. He said, "Long John, I really appreciate your efforts in the campaign. You did a fine job. I know you did a lot of different kinds of things, and I appreciate it." Then, almost as if on another subject, almost in a compartmentalized way, he said, "Now I've got a big job ahead, and I need people like you to help me do it. Why don't you come work with us a while?"

guilty of bad politics that the fact a president

I said, "Mr. President, I've talked to Bob about this. I feel that I need to go back home and continue practicing law. I've got a lot of commitments there and a lot of responsibility." He put his hand on my knee again and said, "Long John, I just want you to know that I would like to have you, and there will always be a place for you if you decide you will come back and help us." As we were walking out, I asked him how Jackie was. He said, "Great."

GRELE: That's in the other transcript.

HOOKE: Is it? Okay.

GRELE: The last question I have concerns your involvement in the appointment of judges in Tennessee. What were the issues involved, what were the events, and what was your involvement?

HOOKE: Well, naturally, since Bob Kennedy and I were intimate friends and Bob Kennedy was the Attorney General of the United States, and since the appointment of Federal District judges has historically been in the province of the United States Senator, it was natural that when I came home from Washington, various people who were interested in the appointment of particular judges should contact me in an effort to get me to be a spokesman for that judge with Bob Kennedy. In the main, I stayed as far away from that as I could, but during the course of the appointment of the federal judges here in Tennessee--particularly the appointments of Judge Frank Gray, who's now a Federal District judge, and Judge [Charles E.] Charley Neese, who's now a Federal District judge--there was some difficulty. The difficulty with respect to Judge Gray was quite superficial and born of petty jealousy in his own home town. My relationship with his appointment was really just the knowledge that it was this petty jealousy, and there was some slight hold up. But, in fact, the appointment of Judge Frank Gray went through without too much difficulty.



Now on the appointment of Judge Charles Neese. The American Bar Association had had the practice, under Attorney General [Herbert, Jr.] Brownell, of recommending to the Department of Justice their judgment as to the competency of the various potential appointees. Charles Neese was formerly the administrative assistant to Senator Kefauver, and Estes Kefauver, Senator from Tennessee, was the number two man on the Judiciary Committee, immediately under Senator James Eastland of Mississippi. Senator Kefauver very much wanted Charles Neese to be a federal judge. Charles Neese had for some time been back in Tennessee practicing law. Like most people who had spent a substantial part of their lives in politics, he was regarded by some as being more of a politician than a lawyer. The American Bar Association found that he was not qualified for the job. Senator Kefauver had an entirely different view of his qualification and insisted upon him being appointed, to the point that Senator Kefauver made a daily trek from the Senate Office Building to the Department of Justice to urge Bob Kennedy to appoint him.

On one occasion, Senator Kefauver asked me if I would go talk to Bob on behalf of Charles Neese. I went over to the Department to see Bob. It was late in the afternoon, and John Seigenthaler and Whizzer White, who had been the Deputy Attorney General under Bob Kennedy, were in Bob's office. I suggested that, in my judgment as a Tennessee lawyer, Charles Neese was qualified to be a federal judge. Whizzer White suggested that he thought he was not qualified to be a federal judge. I told Whizzer that I thought that if he would agree to the appointment of Charles Neese, in ten years when he looked back to see all the appointments to all the Federal District judgeships that had been made under this Administration, he would find that Charles Neese would be in the top third in terms of performance and ability as a federal judge. Bob could see that his two friends, Whizzer White and John Hooker, Jr., were at loggerheads about this. He finally listened to us both and said he would think it over. He ultimately appointed Charles Neese as a federal judge. Of course, it was a presidential appointment.

There was a very substantial difference of opinion. I am convinced that Bob Kennedy felt, first of all, a great deal of confidence in the judgment of Estes Kefauver. Estes Kefauver genuinely believed that Charles Neese was a competent judge,

and with all the tenacity and ability at his command Estes Kefauver urged the appointment of Charles Neese. Ultimately, I think really what Bob did about it was to take Estes Kefauver's judgment. I remember that, of course, very vividly because it was a very close thing. I think the Attorney General of the United States had serious reservations.

GRELE: You said a little earlier that you were friendly with Senator Eastland. Were you ever called upon to mediate for the President or the Attorney General with Senator Eastland concerning civil rights in Mississippi?

HOOKER: No.

GRELE: Were you ever called upon to mediate at all?

HOOKER: I'm not even sure that Bob Kennedy knows about my relationship with Senator Eastland. It just so happens that a cousin of mine managed Senator Eastland's campaign. I had no relationship with Senator Eastland that related to Bob Kennedy. I saw Senator Eastland about a year ago at his home in Mississippi. We were talking about Bob Kennedy, and I asked him what he thought about Bob Kennedy. He said, "Well, I don't want to have my picture taken with him, but I like him. He and I don't agree about the qualifications for being a federal judge, but I like him." And I'm sure he did. I mention that now, since you asked, because at the time I felt that that was a real testimonial to Bob Kennedy, because I am sure that he had given Senator Eastland a hard way to go in the appointment of judges that Senator Eastland desired.

GRELE: You mentioned a minute ago the rising tide. What was this in relation to?

HOOKER: You've asked me what he (the President) meant to my political future. As you know, as of this day I am in the process of running for Governor of Tennessee.



John Fitzgerald Kennedy meant a great deal to me in the sense that I had great admiration for him. I was conscious that he had had a good deal of physical pain in his life and that he could have chosen a much more comfortable and physically easy way of living than he had done. I was also tremendously impressed by the agility and quickness of his mind, by his ability for objectivity, by his ability to take his assignment, his job, his ambition, with the deepest seriousness, but at the same time not taking himself too seriously. He had the faculty to laugh at himself; he had the faculty to understand that we all--all human beings--are engaged in a complicated series of roles and that we play these roles.

I think I felt that he felt the only thing that made the office of the presidency bearable was the knowledge of the occupant that, really, in the final analysis all he could do was to do his best. The enormity and the breadth of the job was such that in the final analysis you had to reply upon your instinct and upon the idea that you would make the best decisions you could. I felt he regretted the Bay of Pigs incident. I saw some of that regret when I talked to him about the tractors for the Cuban prisoners. I also felt that he understood that, in managing the problems of the world he was leading--and as the leader of the Free World--he had to make the decisions based on the best information that he could get. I don't think John Fitzgerald Kennedy was a man who looked back. I think he did the best he could and took the results with a great feeling of inevitability.

On one occasion when I was with him in Hyannis Port, we walked out on the beach and looked at the bay. Out in the bay were a lot of boats--big boats, yachts, little bay boats--bobbing up and down in the water. As he stood there with his great shock of hair blowing in the wind looking out at the water, he said, "Long John, you see those boats? You know, when the tide comes in, the rising tide lifts all the boats." I never think of him that I don't think of him standing on the beach, looking out at that water, because I think that's what he thought the Presidency of the United States was all about; I think that's what he thought the Democratic Party was all about; I think he thought that's what self respect was all about--to see that the rising tide lifts all the boats.

GRELE: Thank you very much.