

**Frank Morrison Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 11/23/1968**  
**Administrative Information**

**Creator:** Frank Morrison

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**Biographical Note**

Frank Morrison (1905-2004) was the Governor of Nebraska from 1961 to 1967. This interview focuses on the 1960 presidential campaign, Nebraska Democrats' support for John F. Kennedy, and presidential appointments in Nebraska during the Kennedy administration, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

with

FRANK MORRISON

November 23, 1968

Lincoln, Nebraska

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISON: . . . at the Convention handling Senator [John F.] Kennedy's relations and Senator Kennedy asked him about his contacts with the Nebraska people. [Theodore C.] Sorensen said, "The only friend I have in the Nebraska delegation is Frank Morrison and he's [Estes] Kefauver's Nebraska Manager."

HACKMAN: This was at the '56 Convention?

MORRISON: Right.

HACKMAN: Did Senator Kennedy or Robert Kennedy ever make any appearances in that vice presidential effort? Did they come to the delegation at all?

MORRISON: No. The delegation was all really previously committed to Kefauver. Kefauver, of course, carried the Nebraska primary for the presidential nomination. Then when Kefauver came out for [Adlai E.] Stevenson and threw his delegation to Stevenson, the morally responsible thing to do was to support Kefauver and Senator Kennedy respected that. And there wasn't any effort made that I know of to secure any delegates from Nebraska because of that situation.

HACKMAN: There weren't any people in Nebraska delegation who were trying to turn this around and push for Kennedy at that point?

MORRISON: No. The Nebraska delegation was solid for Stevenson and Kefauver on both ballots.

HACKMAN: Why don't you just take off from '56 then, and talk about the '56 to '59 or '60 period and what you can recall about the Kennedy people's efforts with you and other people in the state.

MORRISON: I was always very much impressed with the Kennedy family. Estes Kefauver was a personal friend of mine. I had a great deal of respect for his courage, his integrity, and the battles that he had made to bring government back to the people. He went out into the highways and byways of America and discussed the issues with people everywhere and I thought that was good. So, as long as he was a serious contender, I supported him.

After the election in 1956, it became obvious that Senator Kefauver would no longer be a serious contender for either the presidency or the vice-presidency. We started looking for new leadership. Adlai Stevenson had made the run twice by that time and it was obvious--at least it was obvious to me--that he would probably never be elected President. So my previous high regard for the Kennedys continued to accelerate, and for John Kennedy particularly, who was the senior member of the younger generation at that time. So, sometime after that I went to Washington and, of course, the Sorensen family in Nebraska had been friends of mine, Ted and his brothers and his father. Ted set up a conference with John Kennedy and myself at that time. That was, I think, in early 1958. I became interested in doing what I could to help promote Senator Kennedy for the presidency and for the Democratic nomination. I decided to, apparently unwisely, become a candidate for the United States Senate in 1958. I decided to work closely with Senator Kennedy. I helped bring him into Nebraska and arrange appearances for him. Then in 1960, I set up various appearances for Senator Kennedy in Nebraska, contacted various people including the governor and his administrative assistant, [James F.] Jim

Green of Omaha, Senator Hans Jensen of Aurora, and other key people throughout the state, who later became the nucleus of the Kennedy organization in Nebraska. Then I decided to become a candidate for delegate to the National Convention and also a candidate for governor. The active management of the Kennedy campaign was vested in the hands of Senator Hans Jensen of Aurora. Ted Sorensen asked me if I'd be willing to contact Jensen and see if he would serve as Senator Kennedy's Nebraska manager. He consented to serve and I think it was after that then, that I decided to become a candidate for governor and I filed for the democratic nomination for the governorship.

So completely did Senator Kennedy control leadership of the Democratic party in Nebraska at that time, the governor's administrative assistant, who was the other major candidate for the governorship, was also active in the Kennedy campaign. So that Mr. [Robert B.] Conrad, the governor's administrative assistant, and myself had a very hard fought campaign for the Democratic nomination. Both of us were Kennedy supporters. I secured the nomination and was also elected as delegate to the National Convention, so that I served in both capacities. I don't know exactly why it was, but Senator Kennedy had this advantage in Nebraska. This is the most Republican of all the fifty states. I don't think the fact that he lost Nebraska in any way reflected any unpopularity on the part of Kennedy because he was very popular in Nebraska. His defeat was a result of strong Republican tradition in the state of Nebraska.

I was able to be elected governor that year for a variety of reasons that had nothing to do with Senator Kennedy. One thing this proved, that politicians who were apprehensive about supporting a presidential candidate while they themselves are seeking public office are unnecessarily cautious. Because while I was running for the Democratic nomination, I was also running as a candidate for delegate to the National Convention. And I ran high among the many delegates seeking election and then went on to win the governorship, even though the people knew that I was a strong Kennedy backer.

HACKMAN: I'd wondered when your decision to actually cast your vote at the convention for Kennedy

came about. I had heard that Jim Green played an important part at the convention in convincing you to cast your vote for Kennedy because you did feel, as many Nebraska people did, that it would be a great drag on the ticket in '60.

MORRISON: Well, of course, there's nothing to that. In fact, I was the one who originally sold Jim Green on the idea, I think, of supporting Kennedy. He was apprehensive about that religious issue. Jim Green never had any conference with me to convince me. In fact, the opposite was true. But I decided to support Kennedy prior to the time that Green did. So wherever that information came from, it's erroneous.

HACKMAN: Let me ask you. As '60 was developing. . . .

MORRISON: In fact, Jim Green's son is in my law office now. I've had a great deal of respect. . . . Jim Green is one of the finest men I've ever known.

HACKMAN: At the time that they picked Jensen to head their effort in the primary and then later Citizens for Kennedy-Johnson, was there any thought given to selecting you to head the Kennedy effort in the state? Did they talk in those terms at all or were they looking for somebody like Jensen? How did that exactly come about?

MORRISON: I laid the original ground work and put Sorensen in contact with a number of people and then Sorensen had his contacts, too. In a discussion I had with Sorensen one night on the airplane, we discussed this question of a chairman. I'm sure from my conversation with Sorensen at that time, that he thought that a new face who had never been involved in Democratic intramural conflict might be more desirable. And he outlined some qualifications and asked me what I thought of Hans Jensen with reference to those qualifications. I told Ted at that time, that in view of his stipulated criteria of what he was looking for in a state chairman for the Kennedy movement,



that I could think of nobody who came closer to fitting the criteria than Hans Jensen.

HACKMAN: Did Sorensen know at the time that you planned to run for governor?

MORRISON: No. In fact, had I headed the Kennedy movement, I would not have run for governor. But I continued to run as a delegate to the National Convention pledged to Kennedy. But the active front for the organization was Senator Jensen. Because of that fact, my duties with reference to the Kennedy campaign weren't as extensive nor as all inclusive as they would have been, had I been the manager. It was after that that I decided to become a candidate for governor.

HACKMAN: Do the differences between yourself and [Bernard J.] Bernie Boyle go back this far, and was the selection of Jensen a way to avoid enmity between the two sides?

MORRISON: Well, there never was any enmity, as far as I was concerned, with anybody because I think that enmity is a devisive thing and accomplishes nothing. But there had been some rivalry between Boyle and myself and I think this is true that Boyle naturally would control some delegates to the Convention. I am sure that Boyle would have preferred somebody else to head the Kennedy effort because up to that time I had talked to Boyle, tried to convince him to come out for Kennedy, and he refused to commit himself to Kennedy. But he did have a private conference with Ted Sorensen several weeks after my conversation with him, in which Boyle pledged himself to support Kennedy and I assume one of the conditions was that somebody else head the Kennedy effort. However, I'm not certain about that, but I assume that was one of his conditions.

HACKMAN: What kind of job, did you feel, and did Boyle feel from what you know, that Jensen did, both in the primary effort and then later in the campaign, particularly for Kennedy?

MORRISON: I think Hans Jensen did the job that needed to be done. I don't know that anybody else could have done a better job. Hans Jensen is a very sincere, dedicated person.

HACKMAN: I'd wondered if he had adequate contacts around the state, or the prestige in respect to . . .

MORRISON: Well, there was no question but what Kennedy was going to carry that Nebraska primary. My analysis of the situation at that time indicated to me that he would have no trouble winning the Nebraska primary. The problem was to adopt those methods and that strategy that would bring the most delegates into the Kennedy camp. Because at that time under Nebraska law, legally, the delegates were not bound to the winner of the primary and candidates for delegate did not disclose on the ballot their preference. So you might elect delegates whose feelings were contrary to those which the voter expressed in his selection of a presidential candidate. So for that reason he had to keep two things in mind, one was the psychological advantage of winning the primary; number two was convincing the delegates who were elected that they should support the winner of the primary.

HACKMAN: What can you recall about your relationship with the other potential presidential candidates, particularly [Hubert H.] Humphrey and [Stuart F.] Symington in this period, and discussing with them or their people whether they might enter the Nebraska primary in '60?

MORRISON: I never had any discussions with any of them except Senator Kennedy. I attended a reception which Mr. Boyle gave for Senator [Lyndon B.] Johnson where he invited all the . . .

HACKMAN: When [John B.] Connally and [Robert] Kerr came in with Johnson?

MORRISON: Right. I attended a reception there. I attended a meeting that the Symington people had in Lincoln and an interesting thing happened there when Senator Symington did something that no Kennedy would ever do. And that is not being adequately briefed on a local situation. We were at this reception where Senator Symington talked and he made reference to the fact that Robert Conrad, my opponent, was to go be the next governor of Nebraska. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: That's hard to believe.

MORRISON: I think those receptions for Johnson and Symington were the only two receptions I attended, but of course people knew that I pledged myself to Senator Kennedy.

HACKMAN: I'd wondered if back in, say, late '59 or early '60, before Senator Kennedy's announcement to enter the primary had been made, if you had had any contact particularly with Humphrey about him possibly coming in--or with any of his people, [Karl] Rolvaag or people like this.

MORRISON: Yes. I did. Karl Rolvaag was down here at, I think, the Hotel Fontenelle and sent word that he'd like to see me and some other people on behalf, I think, of Humphrey. I don't remember the nature of that conversation, but it seems to me that Rolvaag discussed the advisability of his entering the primary. And I probably told him it would be a good thing for him to do because Senator Kennedy would defeat him. It's always better to have a contested primary. So I probably encouraged him at that time, as a Kennedy supporter, because it would have been helpful to the Kennedy movement.

HACKMAN: What can you recall about . . .

MORRISON: I've always been an admirer of Senator Humphrey, I think he's a great man. But I had a feeling that Senator Kennedy would be a greater President.

HACKMAN: Can you recall having conversations with Governor [Ralph G.] Brooks about his opinion of the candidates and what he thought?

MORRISON: Yes. Early in the year, I went to Governor Brooks and Mr. Conrad, and this was the factor that influenced me in my ultimate decision to run for governor. I indicated that if Brooks wanted to run for the Senate and Conrad wanted to run for Governor, that if they would pledge themselves to Senator Kennedy that I wouldn't be interested in running for either office. But I visited with them about that. I said my interest in politics at that time centered more on receiving a possible cabinet post or a position in the national government, and that I felt that if we all worked together cohesively for Senator Kennedy's election that it would be better for us individually, and better for the state of Nebraska and give it more stature on the national picture. But Governor Brooks didn't indicate any interest in that. He, I assume, felt that no Catholic could be elected President of the United States. He was very cool toward the proposal. However, sometime later Mr. Conrad decided, independently, to support Senator Kennedy.

HACKMAN: How did the Kennedys avoid--after the race between yourself and Conrad developed--how did they avoid getting mixed up in this? Were there any problems that ever did come up with . . .

MORRISON: No. After the primary, you see, it was resolved.

HACKMAN: Right.

MORRISON: So that there wasn't any problem.

HACKMAN: Can you recall . . .

- MORRISON: I mean, they had to stay neutral before the primary, but after the primary was over, of course, that problem was resolved.
- HACKMAN: Can you recall making any attempts to defeat Boyle for re-election as Democratic National Committeeman or as head of the delegation to the Convention in '60? Was there much opposition at the time of the state Convention, I guess, when they select a chairman of the delegation?
- MORRISON: No. There wasn't. See, Boyle at that time was national committeeman and he was the logical choice for chairman of the delegation. There wasn't any opposition to his selection as chairman.
- HACKMAN: Why wouldn't Governor Brooks have headed the delegation? Primarily illness at that time, or what?
- MORRISON: Well, he wasn't a Kennedy man and he wasn't a delegate to the convention. I was the only candidate for public office that ran for delegate to the National Convention pledged to Kennedy. Even Conrad refused to become a candidate for delegate even though he was for Kennedy. I assume that he thought that too much public activity might hurt his chances for the nomination. So I was the only candidate, you see, for major public office who was also running as a delegate pledged. This goes back to what I originally said, I think people are sometimes too apprehensive about that because, obviously, it never cost me any votes in my race for the governorship.
- HACKMAN: What can you recall about some of the other state leaders' opinion of Kennedy? Who's the fellow out in New Castle?
- MORRISON: Rus [Russell V.] Hanson.
- HACKMAN: Rus Hanson, who announced, I believe, on the eve of the primary that he was going to support Kennedy.

MORRISON: I think Boyle was probably a factor in that because Hanson was state chairman and he was very close to Boyle. I think the factor that influenced him there was Bernie's support of Kennedy at that juncture. I think originally, while Boyle never indicated to me that he had a preference, I'd known they were very friendly with Senator Symington. But if you're asking me to guess without knowing the facts for sure, I would say that Boyle influenced him because I was never able to get him to commit himself.

HACKMAN: What about Larry Brock and Don McGinley?

MORRISON: I think sometimes some Catholics were a little apprehensive maybe about coming out originally for Kennedy and Boyle and Hanson were both Catholics.

HACKMAN: Right. What about Larry Brock and McGinley? Can you recall any great efforts that were needed to get their support for Kennedy, or were they reluctant?

MORRISON: Well, there was a fellow by the name of [William] Lamme, a lawyer in Fremont, who was supporting Lyndon Johnson. And Lamme was Brock's campaign manager and any effort to get Brock lined up for Kennedy fell on deaf ears because he said the nomination of a Catholic would defeat him for re-election in the Congress. Brock was opposed to the Kennedy nomination so we weren't able to influence him.

HACKMAN: What about--is it McGennis or McGinley?

MORRISON: [Donald] McGinley.

HACKMAN: That's right. Any problem on that that you can recall?

MORRISON: No.

HACKMAN: Mary Cunningham, who was the National Committee-woman at that point?

MORRISON: There wasn't any particular problem there that I know of. McGinley and Mary Cunningham are both Catholics.

HACKMAN: Can you recall any of the efforts that the Kennedys made at the Convention in Los Angeles in '60 to swing more votes over to Kennedy than were committed at that point? Did you get involved in working for them in the delegation at all?

MORRISON: I don't remember that I was asked. By that time things had pretty well jelled. I don't remember that anybody asked me to contact any specific delegate. I think by the time the Convention had rolled around that everybody was definitely committed.

HACKMAN: I think, that four votes went for Symington out of the delegation . . .

MORRISON: They were committed for Symington before.

HACKMAN: Can you recall discussing at the Convention with any of the Kennedy people about what role Kennedy might take in the '60 campaign in Nebraska, whether he should come in or not, or how much he would help or hurt if he did come in?

MORRISON: You mean after the Convention, during the campaign?

HACKMAN: Whether he should come in during the governor's campaign, your campaign for the governorship?

MORRISON: I don't remember any conversations of that kind. Of course, national strategy demanded that he concentrate in the industrial state appearances.

HACKMAN: Right.

MORRISON: Diluting his effort to campaign in Nebraska in the general election would probably have been an unwise use of the candidate's time. I don't remember the discussions about that. His appearance in Nebraska might have helped me some. But, of course, assessing the budgeting of his own time in a campaign, it would probably have been an unwise expenditure of his own effort.

HACKMAN: Did you have many contacts during the campaign with any of the Kennedy representatives, or was that handled mostly through Jensen in Nebraska, or can you recall any of that?

MORRISON: You mean, immediately prior to the general election?

HACKMAN: Yeah.

MORRISON: I don't remember. I was so wrapped up in a real fight of my own for the governorship that my own recollection of that would be a little hazy. I'd have to go back through my files and see what they disclose, but, you see, it was increasingly obvious that [Richard M.] Nixon was going to carry Nebraska, regardless. There wasn't anything that--Senator Kennedy could have made four or five speeches in Nebraska, he could have never. . . . This was becoming obvious. Nebraska had never elected a governor on the ticket different from the ticket that carried the presidential candidate and the presidential election, so I was decidedly an underdog in the gubernatorial race. I was working day and night on my own campaign and for that reason I had no time to devote to the Kennedy effort, because it would have been abortive anyway.

HACKMAN: I think Robert Kennedy made one swing through on behalf of McGinley and Brock. I wondered if you could recall any contacts with him at that time, or did they feel that they would hurt you if they identified closely with you, and thus avoid it?



MORRISON: I remember a swing that Robert Kennedy made through here and I think I was present at two of those appearances. Now, I'm not sure whether that was before or after the convention.

HACKMAN: How did you go about in the campaign meeting the issue of the religious opposition to Kennedy? How much organized opposition did you face? Any way you could answer at all or just simply have to ignore it?

MORRISON: Well, to my Catholic friends who objected to it on the theory that it would stir up religious prejudice, I said, "You're a coward. If you place your own desire for harmony above the Constitution of the United States, which should give to any American regardless of creed or national origin the right to the presidency, I think you're evading your responsibility as a citizen." And to those people--and there were many--who had honest reservations about a Catholic serving as President because of divided loyalty between the Vatican and the Constitution of the United States, my answer was very simple, "Obviously, there have been times in history when the Vatican engaged in political practices that we today would regard as very reprehensible. But the Vatican as it existed during the Middle Ages and the Vatican as it exists today are two different things. And all I have to point out to you is that half of the Prime Ministers of Canada have been Catholics. The heads of state of many nations throughout the world have been Catholics. In modern history it has never posed any kind of problem, and there is no reason to think, in light of modern history and modern political practices, that it's going to constitute any problem in America." I thought that answered the problem as far as people who had honest reservations about divided loyalty were concerned.

HACKMAN: What can you recall during the '60 campaign, about the relationships between Hans Jensen's operation for Kennedy and your own campaign for governor and whatever Boyle was involved in at that time? Were there frictions back and forth on organizational problems, money and things like that?

MORRISON: No. None.

HACKMAN: I just wondered if Boyle showed any jealousy toward a Jensen-type operation strictly working for a presidential candidate?

MORRISON: If there was any, I don't know about that. I never encountered any in my race for the governorship.

HACKMAN: Do you have any recollections at all of the voter registration? I don't know how much that got off the ground out here in '60.

MORRISON: No. This was the tragedy because there wasn't any great effort made on voter registration. That takes a real organized effort, and the Democratic Party at that time wasn't sufficiently organized nor adequately financed to do the job on voter registration that should have been done.

HACKMAN: Maybe we could talk about a couple of things in the Administration very quickly. Some of the appointments, particularly the one for U.S. Attorney, when I believe [Theodore L.] Richling got that job and Conrad wanted it, didn't he? Can you recall how this was worked out?

MORRISON: Well, I probably made a mistake there, but Conrad and Richling were both Kennedy supporters and Conrad had been very active. But I knew that Conrad was heavily obligated to Bernie Boyle. Bernie had brought him along and he was Bernie's protege. And, while I had a tremendous respect and admiration for Bob Conrad, I had some reservations about Conrad knowing he'd have obligations to Bernie and knowing that Bernie was regarded as the state's number one attorney in representing those charged with crime. I didn't think that was a very wholesome situation. I thought it hurt the Democratic Party and I told Bobby Kennedy so. I said, "I would support Bob Conrad for any kind of a post you want to give him, but I've got to register an objection to his appointment in that particular spot." I may have been wrong, but that was the objection. I later on

recommended him for the post that he now has.

HACKMAN: Right.

MORRISON: I didn't think it was wise to appoint him United States District Attorney and I assume resulted in Richling's . . .

HACKMAN: What kind of reaction did you get from Robert Kennedy on that?

MORRISON: Well, you know Bobby better than I did. He was rather explosive. He wasn't very kind in the reaction, but the conference I had with him, was with him and Byron White. The man who should have been appointed, in my opinion, the one who would have been the best District Attorney, or probably may be no better than Conrad, but then they had this other objection, was [William H.] Bill Norton. I tried to get Bobby to appoint Bill Norton and I don't know why he didn't, but the reason he gave me was he was too inexperienced. Bill Norton happened to be Evelyn Lincoln's nephew. I don't know whether he thought I was trying to angle at it, but Bill Norton is probably going to be governor of Nebraska someday. He is one of the most able young men in the Democratic Party in Nebraska. It was only by coincidence that he happened to be Evelyn Lincoln's nephew. But it may be that it wouldn't have been wise politically from a Kennedy point of view because the Republicans might have used that for political criticism. But anyway, the compromise was Richling because I did recommend Richling if he wasn't going to appoint Norton.

HACKMAN: How did they handle the other appointments out here? Postmasters? Do they work primarily through you since there weren't any Democratic senators or did they ever go through Boyle? Any problems in this relationship on jobs?

MORRISON: Well, of course, after I became governor, my relationships with the White House were extremely cordial and cooperative. The end of my first term was drawing to a close, and the Republicans were determined they were going to beat me because this is solid Republican territory and the most Republican state in the union by far. It's the only state that has no Democrats, as far as I know, on their congressional delegation. Not even a state officer elected in the state at large was a Democrat. I'm a lawyer by profession and the Chief Justiceship of the Nebraska Supreme Court was up. I went down and talked to the President and told him this was a real temptation because all of the Republicans and all the Democrats were for me. Boyle was for me taking the Chief Justiceship. The Democrats were united on my taking the Chief Justiceship and all the Republicans were for me taking the Chief Justiceship, so I'd get it by acclamation. So this was a real temptation.

Well, Kennedy wanted no part of that. He said, "Do you want to run for governor again?" Well, I said, "I know that Boyle's national committeeman and he's not going to turn a hand to help me get elected." Well, he said, "Why don't you put your own people in office out there?" Well, I said, "How can I do that when Boyle will run all the national patronage? Why, I don't run the national patronage-- I got enough headaches as governor without fooling with that."

"Well," he said, "I'm going to call John Bailey on the phone." Now, this is something very few people know about. He called John Bailey on the phone and he said, "I'm sending Frank Morrison over to see you and you do whatever he wants you to do." So I went over and talked to John. He said, "Why don't you put your own people in office out there?" Well, I'd discovered that somebody may be your man today, but he may not be tomorrow. Well, anyway John said, "Why don't you take over the patronage?" Well, I said, "I've got enough headaches without that." I said, "Why don't you give the patronage to the National Committeewoman? She won't abuse it. She doesn't have any axes to grind. She doesn't belong to any faction. She's not building up any empires. And she's loyal to the President. She's not going to do anything she thinks is going to hurt the President. She was one of the early Kennedy people, from the very beginning. So that's what they did."

HACKMAN: I hadn't heard that.

MORRISON: Well, I mean, when it came to. . . . Obviously, when he came to the appointment of major postmasters or something like that, why, they'd either contact me directly or have Maurine [Biegert] contact me.

HACKMAN: I'd wondered about that Lincoln postmastership. When somebody was opposed to--what the state, the county committee made a recommendation that you didn't feel you wanted to go along with? How did that work out?

MORRISON: Well, this is what happened. The County chairman decided he wanted to be the Postmaster. He wasn't the best qualified candidate. A fellow who supported me for years and who was very active in my campaign and who was by far the best qualified from the standpoint of education and ability, was a candidate. But he had the disadvantage--one time he registered as a Republican because he was in a labor union and decided they wanted to support some Republican for governor because they thought he was more liberal than the Democrat or something. He had that flaw on his record from a political stand point. But anyway there was a fight over that. Mrs. Biegert recommended my candidate and he got the nomination; I think history has vindicated the selection because he's probably been the best Postmaster Lincoln's ever had.

HACKMAN: Did this all get worked out within the state, or did Boyle or anyone take their objections to this to Bailey or anyone at the Washington end?

MORRISON: Oh, yeah. I don't know but I assume Boyle fought it in Washington, but of course, there wasn't anything. . . . The papers were full about a squabble between Boyle and Morrison over patronage. There never was any squabble between Boyle and me over patronage because that decision was made by the President.

HACKMAN: Did you ever . . .

MORRISON: In fact, they offered me, as I just said, Bailey offered me the patronage and I told him I didn't want it. One of my weaknesses as a politician is an aversion to political machines. I'd probably be more successful if I wasn't that way.

HACKMAN: Well, I don't know, in Nebraska, a Democratic political machine wasn't that much a grab hold of, was it? [Laughter]

MORRISON: No, it was pretty much of a skeleton.

HACKMAN: I had a list of your White House meetings. Some of them were just ceremonial, I guess. Maybe a couple of them got into something substantive. Can you recall that early one in March of '61?

MORRISON: [Pause] Oh, I don't know. Sometimes I'd be down there and Mrs. Lincoln would send me in the back door and there wasn't probably any record of it. But I think I remember all these occasions. In fact, I. . . . [Pause] This December meeting in '61 was probably the one where I discussed that Chief Justice-ship.

HACKMAN: What about the first one in March? Do you remember that one at all?

MORRISON: I don't remember.

HACKMAN: In the '62 race then, when the Republicans ran [Fred A.] Seaton and brought [Dwight D.] Eisenhower in for Seaton, how did the White House get involved, if at all, in the '62 race. Did you ask the President to come in at all in '62? Would he have been more a problem in '62 than he would have in '60 because of the religious issue or the Administration?

MORRISON: Well, that religious issue as an effective campaign device, I think, melted away rather rapidly after John Kennedy became President and people saw that the Pope didn't move to Washington. I don't think religion in Nebraska today is near the issue it was prior to the time John Kennedy became President. I think people feel what most rational people would feel, a little silly even bringing it up. That Seaton campaign was a very, very interesting one in fact. Seaton's chief campaign gimmick was to say that I was a fief of the Kennedy empire, that Nebraska state government decisions were being made in Washington, and we had to bring government back to Lincoln and not have our decisions made on the banks of the Potomac. So they were really going after this. Fred Seaton and I had known and we'd been friends all of our lives. We grew up in the same town in Kansas. So I called him up on the phone one day, and I said, "Fred, what're you telling that for? You know that isn't true?" Well, he said, "I'm going to keep on saying that from now until election." I was trying to think of some way that I could stop him. You know, it doesn't do any good to deny, even things that are obviously false like that. So one night I was giving a talk and this just hit me. I said, "You know, we've vested the President of the United States with the most awesome responsibility in human history. He has the power to decide whether we live or die. His decisions may determine whether we live in a free society or become communistic. He lives with the atomic bomb at his finger tips. Twenty-four hours a day he's concerned with the problems in Cuba and the Congo, all over the world. And every morning before he goes into a session with Dean Rusk or with his cabinet, he calls me on the phone and he says, 'Frank, this is Jack. How are we getting along with that road out there south of Stanton, Nebraska?'" You know, people started laughing. And within a week, I don't think I ever heard that. In fact, Time magazine picked that up and printed an item and the national news media used it.

HACKMAN: That's good.

MORRISON: The last time I ever talked to President Kennedy on the phone, he asked me how I was getting along with that road up south . . .

[Laughter]

HACKMAN: Let me skip back to one thing I skipped over. In '60 when Governor Brooks died and couldn't be the candidate for the Senate, how did you get involved in who would run?

MORRISON: Well, it was obvious that Conrad should be the man. I think we all agreed that Conrad should be the man.

HACKMAN: The only other name I had ever heard was a guy I'm not familiar with [Clair A.] Callan, Clark, is it Clark Callan?

MORRISON: Well, let me see. Brooks had defeated Callan in the primary and I guess there was some effort made on Callan who was a very able fellow too, and was unfortunately defeated for re-election in the Congress two years ago. I guess there was some question about that. It seemed to me that some people didn't want Callan. But, see that was up to the Democratic Central Committee and, of course, the overwhelming majority of them were pro-Conrad, so I don't think there was any serious objection to Conrad.

HACKMAN: You talked earlier in the little story about the road in Nebraska--with a complete Republican congressional delegation, how did you go about trying to get funds for programs in Nebraska?

MORRISON: I had to go directly to the government agency.

HACKMAN: Anybody who was particularly good?

MORRISON: I don't have problems, normally, in working with the Republicans. Goodness knows, 70 per cent or so of my legislature were always Republican and on the whole I got along with them very well. But the problem you had with this congressional delegation of ours isn't entirely that they're Republicans, but most of them are so reactionary that they fight legislation that has to do with progress.



Because of their attitude toward those things, they're a very difficult group to work with as far as getting federal funds to implement progress. So, while I did consult with them a few times, and on one project [Roman Lee] Hruska was helpful because he was on the Agricultural Subcommittee, by and large, I had to go directly to the federal agencies involved.

HACKMAN: Can you recall any of them that you had problems working with, or who were particularly cooperative on the other hand?

MORRISON: Well, I never had any of them refuse to do something that I invited, but the problem was for the most part they were ineffective. Hruska was helpful on one major project because he was on the Agricultural Subcommittee in the Senate.

HACKMAN: I mean when you had to go directly to the agencies. Did you find Kennedy's cabinet people, or whoever you had to deal with in Washington helpful?

MORRISON: Yes.

HACKMAN: There were no particular problems? None of them flatly turned you down?

MORRISON: Oh, no. Our relationships were very cordial, very cordial.

HACKMAN: In the '62 campaign, when you were running again for governor, did you make any effort to get support from the White House, to give some help to some of the congressmen who were working out here in an attempt to get some Democrats in Washington? Can you remember any contacts with Bailey or any of the White House aides, who had-- [Lawrence F.] O'Brien--any people who controlled the money on that end?

MORRISON: In '62?

HACKMAN: '62.

MORRISON: I don't remember. It seemed to me that '62 was sort of a hopeless year. You see, Brock and McGinley were two strong Congressmen and they had both been defeated. And it seemed to me that in '62 our congressional situation was sort of hopeless because Brock had taken a federal appointment, McGinley refused to run, and we were in a real bind as far as congressional candidates were concerned. It seemed to me that with the Republicans going all out to elect Seaton that year, that we confined our major effort on the governorship and particularly in view of the fact that we were short on congressional material. I think the man who got the Senatorial nomination that year was obviously ineffectual, so it was a real bad situation from our standpoint in trying to elect any congressmen that year.

HACKMAN: That's about all I have, I think. Can you think of anything?

MORRISON: '64, of course, was a different story. We had a chance to do something that year and we did elect Clair Callan to Congress that year.

HACKMAN: Okay. Unless you can think of something else, any other recollections that you have.

MORRISON: You were asking me about Boyle's original connection with the Kennedy effort in Nebraska. One of the meetings that we had set up prior to the Nebraska primary was a meeting of Democratic leaders in Omaha, and we had selected Jim Green as chairman of that meeting. At that meeting Ted Sorensen gave his pitch as to why he thought Nebraskans should support Senator Kennedy for President. The next day, on a trip back from upstate Nebraska, I was flying with Ted and he told me that Boyle, who up to that time had refused to commit himself, had made a late night visit to his hotel room and was very friendly and he indicated that he might be interested in supporting Kennedy.

It was at that time that Ted asked me what I thought about Hans Jensen as state chairman of the Kennedy campaign, and asked me if I'd be willing to contact Jensen and ask him to serve--which I did. Sometime after this, Jim Green told me that in this conference that night that Boyle had with Sorensen, that Boyle had suggested that Jensen is the man that ought to head the Kennedy effort. I didn't take issue with that because I was anxious not to have any rift in the Democratic Party because I knew that Boyle could influence some of the potential delegates. Had the Nebraska law been then what it now is, where you could enter a slate of delegates pledged to a presidential candidate, I wouldn't have consented to that because I could have picked a slate of delegates and run them pledged to President Kennedy and they would all have been elected. But you couldn't do that then. You had a popularity contest among delegates and I knew that some of those delegates who'd be elected would be amenable to Boyle's persuasion. The thing we were primarily interested in were getting delegates pledged to President Kennedy.

HACKMAN: Remember anything about a girl named Helen Abdouch?

MORRISON: Oh, surely. She was very, very active in the Kennedy effort and this is another factor, you see, because her husband, George Abdouch, was very close to Bernie Boyle and worked with him in Democratic politics in Omaha.

HACKMAN: I'd wondered how that fit together.

MORRISON: This was another factor because Helen Abdouch was a very effective person.

HACKMAN: Some people have said that she did more than Jensen, actually, to build support.

MORRISON: Oh, much more. She did more than anybody. There's nobody in Nebraska, probably, that put in the time and the hours and the effort that Helen Abdouch did.