

Hirsh Freed Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 06/05/1964
Administrative Information

Creator: Hirsh Freed
Interviewer: Ed Martin
Date of Interview: June 5, 1964
Place of Interview: Boston, MA
Length: 31 pages

Biographical Note

(1910 - 1993) Boston political figure; friend and associate of John F. Kennedy [JFK], discusses involvement in various political campaigns for JFK, personal relationship with the Kennedys, and involvement in the Jewish community in Boston, among other issues.

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Hirsh Freed, recorded interview by Ed Martin, June 5, 1964, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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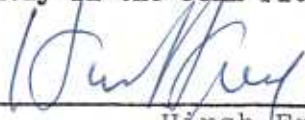
By HIRSH FREED

to the

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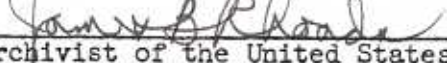
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Hirsh Freed – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

With

Hirsh Freed

June 5, 1964

Boston, Massachusetts

By Ed Martin

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MARTIN: Hirsh, you had a lifetime association with the late President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. Can you tell us when you first met him and what the circumstances of that first meeting were?

FREED: Yes, Ed, I'd be very glad to and incidentally if I refer in this interview to any correspondence or any printed or typewritten material that you want to have copies of, needless to say, I'll be delighted to furnish them. The first time I met Jack Kennedy was when he was planning his first campaign for Congress and the circumstances were these: I had been in politics as a sort of semipro or semiamateur whichever way you want to call it, starting with Maurice Tobin's [Maurice J. Tobin] first campaign for Mayor of Boston. From that time on, partly as a matter of civic zeal and perhaps exaggeration of what I could contribute to things, I'd become very interested in these things. I had worked in a few campaigns, particularly for Tobin and so on. In 1945 I had engaged myself pretty much at Maurice Tobin's request in activities on behalf of William Arthur Reilly who was running for Mayor of Boston against Johnny Kerrigan [John "Johnny" Kerrigan] who was then temporary Mayor of Boston and of course the late James Michael Curley.

MARTIN: This was 1946?

FREED: This was 1945 and Jimmy Colbert [James G. Colbert], who was then the political reporter if not the political editor of the Boston Post, was either professionally or personally interested in Arthur Reilly's campaign, that way got to know me. Of course Arthur Reilly lost in that campaign and the late Jim Curley won. But

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sometime thereafter, I was appointed by Maurice Tobin. You understand Ed, all this time I had been assistant corporation counsel for the city of Boston and I had resigned in order to write the speeches for Arthur Reilly; speeches which I would be ashamed to show you, because they wouldn't match modern technique very much. However after that ill-fated campaign, possibly in recognition of my talents, but more likely as a reward for my political fidelity to his interests, Maurice Tobin appointed me to the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities. Early in 1946 I was in the Ambassador Restaurant here in Boston. It's no longer in existence. It used to be in that alley which backs up to Loew's Orpheum and I used to lunch there quite frequently with my fellow members and the Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission [Thomas A. Flaherty] who incidentally had been congressman from Charlestown from which Kennedy was seeking his first election to the United States Congress. I was going out of the restaurant one day in the spring of '46. Jack Kennedy was seated there with Jimmy Colbert, who introduced me to him and said that he had recommended to Jack that he get me to work for him in his campaign and write his speeches and so on and so forth. I was delighted, of course, to meet young Kennedy of whom I had heard. He was a very agreeable and incisive, pleasant chap, but I told him the truth, that I was so exhausted still, from the efforts of the recent Reilly campaign for mayor, and I was so busy picking up the pieces and doing my supposed duties as a public utilities commissioner that I didn't think I had the time or the energy to manage his campaign, in any sense, or write speeches, but that I would be delighted to meet with him, advise him and help him in any way, shape or manner, that I could. We hit it off together beautifully from the beginning. I would say from that time on, and I can't give you the exact date, but from that time on we used to meet about once a week for lunch at the Ambassador. Sometimes I would go down with him to his office which was a bare room with hardly any furniture in it somewhere on the third or fourth floor of 18 Tremont Street. We used to chew the fat and I learned the kind of fellow he was and I immediately took to him. I immediately recognized that this fellow was and had something special.

Now if you were to ask me what was this thing that was special about him, it was his intellect. It shone. It wasn't that it was brilliant the way some smart guy might be. It was sort of incandescent. It was a sort of a burning, electric mind and I said to myself, "This kid is going to go places." This fellow had something which very few people in the world have. Many times I've thought "What was it?" and described it to other people. I'd say that this fellow, the outstanding char-

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acteristic of Jack Kennedy was not his good looks, it was not his social charm, it was not his sex appeal to males and females, or his political sex appeal; it was the burning intellect that just shone from that fellow. It manifested itself in many ways. He had not only an independence of mind; he confided to me almost from the outset, that although he was a Catholic and a veteran he didn't think that he had to vote or even promise to vote for, or even mammy-palaver on anything that he couldn't vote for; he could vote against something in which the Church was interested, like aid to parochial schools, which even then was a subject of public comment, and that as a veteran he didn't feel that he had to vote for everything that the veterans wanted. He used to tell me that he had many, not bitter, but long and strident arguments with his father; that he disagreed with his father on a lot of things. I came to know that this fellow was, in those years at least, almost like a monastic person; almost like a monk who's not interested in men or women or golf or dancing or anything, but he was interested in things of the mind. That was evident not merely because if you went into his apartment it was full of books, which obviously he had read, but other people merely collected for their library; it was because if you went to his office as congressman or subsequently as senator, you'd see on the window sill piles of books on every subject. The fellow led a monastic life, because, at that time, I think his food consisted of thought and things of the mind. I think he was not so much groping, but finding his direction in all the areas of intellectual, political and social and economic interest to him, and which obviously were of interest to other people throughout the state, the nation and the world. I think that you would understand me better if I say that he never really was interested in local politics in the city of Boston or in the state of Massachusetts. He was always interested in the United States as part of the world, not because he was a believer in a government of a world or a federation of nations, but his mind was away from Boston and Massachusetts.

MARTIN: But, Hirsh, granting that he was an intellectual, don't you think it was a peculiar aspect to take a smart young man, unfamiliar with Boston politics, and project him into a fight in the 11th Congressional District for the first time? When he came there he was more or less a stranger.

FREED: Yes, but remember this, first of all if I haven't already indicated it, he had a lot of purposefulness, a lot of guts and he had made up his mind that he was going to enter public service. He had decided that this was the place where he would start and nothing was going to stop him, not because he was unscrupulous, but he knew—he used his father's money as a resource—he knew he had the money to run the fight. He knew he had the name, the

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looks and all that and while he wasn't contemptuous of the people who were working for him or anything, it was that really he was using them as tools for his political advancement. He had the determination. I think he felt and sensed, not that he was unstoppable, but just as I and people like Johnny Hynes [John B. Hynes] and a few others recognized, maybe he thought of himself as a man of destiny, as we thought of him as a person upon whose shoulder the hand of destiny rested.

MARTIN: What type of people did he gather, did he begin gathering around him at that time?

FREED: Well, he gathered people like me, more as buffers, not so much as second stringers or as rear echelon, but as reserve troops, troops to put him in contact with as liaison with groups that he couldn't meet directly. After all, I was young, a Democrat, a lawyer, a politician, supposed to be a successful politician. I was also a Jew and he probably had never met a Jew in his life except to see one in a movie or a paper. As a matter of fact, for a long time I felt that probably I may have been the first Jew that he ever got to know. I'll give you reasons for that—not because he was anti-Semitic or that the family was; far from it. Joe Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.], his old man, never was. It used to irritate Jack Kennedy that they used to talk about his old man that way, because Joe Kennedy was the only non-Jewish member of the Palm Beach Country Club, and one of the founding members. But, as a matter of fact, Jack used to spend his summers when he was a baby here at Nantasket and so on and so forth, but he had been pretty much immunized from contact even with Catholics and Irishmen. Look! After all, when he was running for Congressman for the first time, where the hell had he been? He'd been in private schools, then in England and then at Harvard and then in the Navy and he'd just got back. He practically didn't know anybody outside his family. He knew more people in London and in Washington and in New York than in Boston; isn't that a fact?

MARTIN: That's right. Hirsh, you mentioned that Jack Kennedy had probably never met a Jewish person nor an Irish Catholic. Can you expand on that a little? What do you mean by that?

FREED: Let's remember that the Kennedys as a family were an unusual family. I've already said that he didn't have many local contacts for physical and geographical reasons, but the milieu in which he had been brought up and his own natural intellectual interests were as foreign to local Boston politics, for example, and Massachusetts politics even, than as, say, your interests or mine in Zulu dancing in Africa. He just didn't think in those terms. He thought of Jim Curley as a source of political corruption of the type

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that he not only couldn't approve, but ought to fight. But it wasn't that he was suspicious of these people. There was no social bridge between him and these local politicians, even though they were Irish and Catholic. Let me expand a little on that, Ed. You know as a non-Catholic and a non-Irishman, sitting sort of on the sidelines, I can make some observations about the reactions of other Democratic Catholic Irish politicians to Kennedy and I mean not only Joe Kennedy and, of course, Jack Kennedy, but to Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] and to Ted [Edward M. Kennedy].

Now it isn't as true today now that the world has recognized, both before his death, and especially since his death, the special characteristics and nature, the almost unique thing

and person and phenomenon that was Jack Kennedy. But even while he was president and certainly while he was running for president, and while he was senator, and while he was congressman, of course, there were dozens of Massachusetts pols such as you and I know and I don't have to name them. There's a certain type; they're nice people. They have their limitations. Some of them have more talent than others. But every last son of a bitch among these guys thought that if he had Kennedy's looks and Kennedy's dough and Kennedy's family he, too, could be congressman and senator and run for president.

Of course what they didn't realize was that Jack Kennedy wasn't his money or his social grace or his good looks or his sex appeal, but he had something which they not only didn't have, but didn't recognize when they saw it in somebody else. He was unique. He was an intellect. I don't mean intellect in the sense of intellectuals. He was a burning mind. Look, he was unique; he was a jewel, a gem, something rare, and they were not rare. To listen to these guys you'd think, give me the name Kennedy and give me his good looks and his dough and I could do the same thing. It was foolish; it was ridiculous. Well, he was more like the fellow who appears to try out for a part in a play and instantly it is recognized that this fellow or this girl or this singer or this musician had something; genius, an element of it; not just the ability to draw illustrations which are the same as someone else's, something special; a genius.

These guys just didn't realize that Kennedy could not only give them cards and spades, but they were not only in a different league, they were in a different world, and that the public just couldn't respond to them, even if they had his dough, his looks, his education, all that, the way they could to him, because this was a man who had a universal appeal, because he had something special and it was obvious he had something special. These guys were like, say me; just run of the mill people, some of better quality or lesser quality, but essen-

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tially not second-raters, but not geniuses, not world leaders and so on. Jack Kennedy was unusual.

Of course these people have the same attitude about Teddy Kennedy. They say, "Give me his good looks and give me his dough and give me his wife and give me his brother as the president and so on and I could be in the same place." Of course the damn fools don't realize they wouldn't just be there, because even Teddy Kennedy has something of what Jack Kennedy had. Even Bobby Kennedy is much underrated for his talents and abilities. Look, let's recognize it; the entire Kennedy family from father Joe and mother, Rose [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy], including the deceased Kennedys, are an unusual lot. They all have a lot of abilities and Jack Kennedy had possibly more in greater totality and uniqueness than any one of them.

But that doesn't mean that Bobby Kennedy and Teddy Kennedy if they started somewhere in the sticks or in another state wouldn't eventually, perhaps not as quickly, but eventually get to where they are now on the basis of their own talents and abilities. You can't punish a fellow because he has good looks, or resources of an economic sort or a social sort behind him, because the fact of the matter is that if I had Teddy Kennedy's looks and his

money and so on, I wouldn't make it and he would because I'm not Teddy Kennedy and I wasn't Jack Kennedy but we are talking about Jack Kennedy.

I want to tell you, I have felt his loss in a personal sense as I'm sure thousands of others have, but I literally wake up nights dreaming about him and even about members of his family whom I don't know. It has had a tremendous emotional impact on me. For a long time after his assassination I felt not only the shock which every American felt, but I used to lie sleepless or wake up with not so much nightmares, as dreams solely and exclusively concerned with the Kennedys and matters of which I couldn't possibly have any relation with him. That's how I felt his loss in a personal sense and also as a citizen, just of this country.

But to continue with Jack Kennedy, his talents were such that while people like you and I would recognize him instantly and never say to ourselves, "Oh, if I had his money or if I had this I could be there," there were a hell of a lot of Democratic pols in this state who literally felt envious of him, jealous of him, because he had assets which if they had, they'd be there too, they thought. But they couldn't recognize that if they had those, say, physical and economic assets, they just wouldn't be up with Kennedy because he was entirely different from them. There was a lot of backbiting

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about Kennedy from the time he was first elected through the time he was elected president of the United States, which was merely the evidence or rather the result of sour grapes attitudes. He was not popular; he was feared, he was respected. He was never underrated, but he was never popular with the Democratic pols here in Massachusetts, and in this city. That is probably why, or one of the reasons why he never really was too concerned about what was going on in Massachusetts except as it affected him, because he knew that he didn't like them. He knew that they didn't like him and he knew he didn't need them except temporarily from time to time. If you want to call him unscrupulous or practical or pragmatic in the use of their efforts on his behalf, he knew he could always rely on them because all of them were coattail hangers-on. He could always have them, but he never really liked them and he never really approved of them. On the other hand, there were quite a few among them who recognized his abilities and his talents. One of those was Johnny Hynes and I really feel that the rest of the Kennedy family possibly doesn't realize how much Johnny Hynes tried to do for Jack Kennedy from the time he became congressman.

MARTIN: Hirsh, when he was first running for Congress it was quite evident he did disassociate himself from the so-called professional politician. Don't you think at that time he could have used the help of some of them?

FREED: As a matter of fact, it's a curious thing. I was going through my correspondence once, as I told you. I know that my first letter to Jack Kennedy was dated May 13, 1946 and I enclosed with it the proofs of a book that somebody was writing and a friend of mine was publishing entitled How to Win in Politics, and I also sent him along a dummy I had made up of a proposed circular for his use during that campaign. On June 5, 1946 I wrote to him about Rabbi Joe Shubow [Joseph Shubow] of Temple B'nai Moshe, calling his attention to the fact that Shubow voted in his

district and also had a congregation in his district. I suggested that he get in touch with him for some purpose or other, which he did. I can refer to the correspondence. At any rate, on June 11 I noted I sent him my first cash contribution to his campaign.

Apparently, primaries in those days were in June. Now they're in September. He had been elected and on June 21, 1946, I had occasion to write him about an article my late friend and his late friend, Billy Mullins [William Mullins] of the Herald had written, trying to show that he hadn't received even lip service from the various pols and all that. I was looking over that letter telling him not to pay too much attention to Mullins' article because Mullins was the greatest ribber and knife

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digger and all that, even with his best friends. I pointed out to him that Mullins had said in that article that Tobin wasn't too eager about his election. But the fact of the matter was two weeks before his election Jimmy Tobin [James Tobin] had come to me asking me to do some work for Kennedy not knowing that I'd been with Kennedy all the time. And Maurice Tobin by nature wasn't the kind of guy to be a backbiter and a back sniper and all that. I think if he decided it was good for the party to have Kennedy in, that he'd help Kennedy even if he personally didn't go for him and I have no reason to believe that he didn't. I had my differences with Maurice Tobin over political personalities, but they certainly weren't over Kennedy.

All the times in my association with Kennedy no one, whether it was Dever [Paul A. Dever] or Hynes or anybody, ever asked me to go slow or anything of the sort, nothing of the sort. My references to politicians as being jealous of him and so on was more the lower echelon politicians; the guys who thought that they could get there, but the guys who were on top were too big to try to waste time trying to knock the guy. I do know this, that Dever, Tobin, Hynes and all the rest of them were smart enough to recognize that this guy had it and he was going to go places and possibly places that they couldn't go as rapidly.

Maybe he didn't earn his way by running for city councilor and state rep and so on, but that's a fact that they accepted and they didn't do very much as far as I'm concerned to knock the fellow. But let me go back to Johnny Hynes. I arranged the first meeting between Johnny Hynes, when he became mayor of Boston, and Jack Kennedy and that meeting consisted of a little dinner which Kennedy ran at his apartment—what is it? 122 Bowdoin Street—and the four of us attending were the late president, myself, Johnny Hynes, and Andy Dazzi [Andrew J. Dazzi]. My purpose, at that time, was to get Hynes to know and understand the kind of fellow Kennedy was, and I wanted Kennedy, of course, to know what a fine person Johnny Hynes is. They hit it off pretty well. I think there were some misunderstandings between them over the years, not because of anything that Kennedy did to Hynes or Hynes did to Kennedy, but there were a few fellows around Kennedy who from time to time would deprecate Hynes' efforts on behalf of him.

I think that a lot of them thought that Hynes was helping Henry Cabot Lodge when Jack ran against Lodge for the Senate, which was not so. They had taken some expression favorable to Lodge, which had no connection with that campaign and tried to build something out of it, there being a lot of trouble makers in this world. But I know that when

Hynes was mayor while Jack was hoping to run for president, and in fact running for president, I know that Johnny Hynes, who was then

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president of what we'll call the National Mayors' Association [United States Conference of Mayors], or whatever it was, was really working his behind off trying to get all the mayors of America to support Kennedy. I know that he had made special efforts with Dave Lawrence [David Leo Lawrence] of Pennsylvania who I think became governor, but at that time I think may have been mayor of Pittsburgh, who didn't cotton immediately to John Kennedy and I know that on several occasions because of his prominence and influence not only in Pennsylvania, but elsewhere though-out the party, that Johnny Hynes worked very hard to get Lawrence to support and take a more generous view of Jack Kennedy, which he ultimately did. Of course Kennedy, either as senator or president—well, obviously as senator, arranged for Johnny Hynes to become chairman of the Massachusetts State Democratic Committee. No, not chairman, but as I guess, national committeeman. But I wish, in retrospect, that the president had had more time for Hynes and a better understanding of how much Hynes had done and had tried to do for him, because they were both people who saw eye to eye on the real things of life. You could never hear a harsh word from Hynes about Kennedy. In fact, when Hynes came back from the Democratic National Convention in 1960, I believe it was, he told me, (I remember we were at the same golf outing), he said to me, "Hirsh, the hand of destiny is on that fellow. You can't stop him." He had a high appreciation, not only of his qualities, but the reasons for his being and so on.

But I must tell you something interesting in connection with the Democratic National Convention in 1960 where he was nominated, and which I did not attend, although I had planned to attend with Mayor Collins [John F. Collins]. Incidentally, this was sort of a sensational incident in my life and the life of my family and among all the local pols who knew me and so on. It was the weekend following the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles where Kennedy had been nominated and this was a Sunday and Kennedy was returning to Boston. He was going to stop off at Logan and be greeted by the mayor and the governor, Furcolo [David Foster Furcolo], at that time; then he was going to go off to Hyannis. I knew Kennedy well enough so that I didn't have to run to Logan Airport to wave my hand and shake his hand. I knew how busy the fellow was. What did I want to be, one of the crowd and show off I knew the president? But I was trying to see Collins about something. I was leaving the next day, Monday, for a vacation in Maine with my wife and I couldn't get out of it. There were some important matters, so Collins said to me, "Why don't you come out to the airport where I'm going to greet Kennedy who you'll want to see, too, and then when we get through with that reception, you and I can have dinner." So that's how I happened to be at the airport.

Well, sure enough, the plane comes in and, of course, the place

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is mobbed with—I don't know if you were there, Ed, at the time, but the place was mobbed with all kinds of Democratic politicians. The plane comes in and there's the long stairway

down and because of Collins' physical condition they had constructed a ramp, a wooden ramp up from the base of, say, the temporary stairway of the plane up to a platform where presumably and ultimately the mayor and the governor and various other dignitaries were going to officially greet Kennedy after he got off the plane. So I was out there and naturally I was curious to see and wave my hand to our Democratic national presidential nominee, but I wasn't there for the purpose of rushing up the platform; of getting my picture taken or any such thing. I don't believe in that hoopla. If you're going to help a fellow, help him. You don't help him by getting your picture taken with him. The publicity is for him and not for you.

But anyhow, what happened was that he gets off the plane and then he goes up this ramp. There's this platform at the end of the ramp. There's Furcolo and there's Collins and standing behind them is Johnny Powers [John E. Powers] who detested me for reasons I will indicate shortly, and various other local pols. Furcolo made a speech of greeting and Collins made a speech of greeting. Then Kennedy got up to respond and there I am, standing in front of this platform just watching six or eight or ten feet in front of him and he hasn't seen me. But in responding he says, "Governor Furcolo, Mayor Collins," and then he turns around and sees me and he said, "And my friend, Hirsh Freed," and the place was in an uproar; a quiet uproar among all the Collins people who were there, who knew me, and all the state pols and all that. Why should he say, "Governor Furcolo, Mayor Collins and Hirsh Freed" and this thing is going to go over television nationally and so on and so forth? Why Hirsh Freed? And why not John Bananas and why not Senator Powers and all that? That was a sensational incident in my life, but there's a background to that story which I'd like to tell you.

Incidentally, of course, immediately after that everybody was kowtowing to me and ribbing me and so on and this went on for weeks. As it happens my sisters down in New York had watched this on television and they were absolutely amazed when it happened and my younger son was at home watching it on television with some friend, so naturally from a personal point of view, it was unusual. A lot of people asked me why did he single me out? I forget the exact words! "My good friend, Hirsh Freed," or something of that sort. I'll tell you what I thought happened. He was trying, I think, to express his thanks to me for something I tried to do for him in the preceding year and this is what had happened.

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As you may or may not know, Ed, I was very active in Collins' first campaign for mayor. I think for a long time the only two in that campaign were Collins and myself. We were running against Johnny Powers who was then president of the senate as he was until he recently resigned. Incidentally, there was great enmity between Powers and me ever since Hynes' reelection as mayor. He always attributed Hynes' reelection when he first ran for mayor to my activities against him, Powers, and on behalf of Hynes. He was deeply resentful and, in fact, hurtful to me on every occasion that he could.

We were running for mayor, that is Collins, was running for mayor against Powers in 1959. Of course I knew that Kennedy was running for president even though he didn't make his announcement until early the following year. He was travelling all over the country making his impressions in California and Illinois or Alabama, trying to get people to know what he looked like and sounded like and all that. We were running this campaign against

Powers and we were making terrific strides. One day we got word that Kennedy was going to endorse Powers for mayor of Boston and Collins was worried. Collins wasn't worried because he thought anything except that it might be hurtful to him. I, on the other hand, thought it was a bad thing not merely because it might hurt Collins, but it might also hurt Kennedy; because we had so much on Powers that we had not yet used against Powers in that campaign for mayor of Boston; had so much material, verified and documented material, not at all favorable to Powers, in any sense of the word, that I felt that Kennedy was making a terrible mistake associating himself with Powers where material derogatory to Powers was going to come out. Incidentally, Collins and I were absolutely certain that Collins was going to win and I didn't want Kennedy associated with a loser.

So one Sunday in September or October of '59, I chased up Kennedy on the telephone through the assistance of Mrs. Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln], who's a wonderful woman. I called her in Washington; she gave me his itinerary in Illinois. He was making about a dozen speeches that day; it was a Sunday, I remember. And from Illinois he was going to go to California. I wanted to get hold of Kennedy and I ultimately got hold of him at midnight in Quincy, Illinois and we took up the matter which was on my mind. After the usual greetings I told Kennedy that I understood or had heard that he was going to endorse Powers for mayor of Boston. In the first place, I said to him, "What the hell are you getting into a local nonpartisan fight?" Secondly, "What the hell are you involving yourself in a situation where if Powers loses you're going to look bad?" I said, "You are running for president of the United States. What the hell are you putting your

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marbles in a basket in a local contest here, which may make you look like a dunce?" I said to him, "Jack, we do not want your endorsement. Jack, I'm absolutely certain we're going to win." I said, "You'll check on this and everybody will tell you that I'm crazy, but I'm telling you, Jack, we're going to win. But, Jack, we're going to win because I'm going to use stuff on Powers to show everybody what a faker, a crook and everything he is. And you cannot afford to associate yourself with this unfavorable image of a local guy. Besides, what the hell are you endorsing a guy in a nonpartisan election for?" He said, "Hirsh, what the hell can I do? This fellow is my friend, and he campaigned for me and all that." I said, "Jack, every son of a bitch in this town campaigned for you and you don't owe your election to anybody except yourself." I said, "If he campaigned against you he couldn't have stopped you." I said, "He didn't mean anything. Are you suggesting that you, Jack Kennedy, owe your election to Congress or Senate to Johnny Powers, because he was your campaign manager or a campaign manager again?" I said, "Are you ridiculous?" He says, "Gee, Hirsh, how can I go against a friend?" I said, "You've got a very good excuse. It's a nonpartisan local election; he's not running as a Democrat and you're just not taking sides or announcing how you're voting in a local nonpartisan election in which you're going to vote. You're a voter in Boston and all that, but you ought not to take sides." I said, "There's ample precedent for that." He says, "Well, I've got to think it out," and so on and so forth. I said, "Look, you check on how the campaign is going" and I said, "I'll tell you, you'll find a lot of people disagree with me, but Jack, remember I'm working for Collins, but I don't want your endorsement. I just want you to protect yourself." Well, he thanked me very much. And obviously he followed the

campaign very closely and obviously he had checked on what I had said with people like Ed McLaughlin [Edward F. McLaughlin, Jr.] and others who were then with Powers and they told him I was crazy and Powers was going to win by a mile and, “Yes, Collins was coming, but he’d have to come 4,000 miles a minute to close the gap,” and so on and so forth. And of course you know what happened.

We beat Powers by almost 25,000 votes and election night, I know, because there were plenty of witnesses, Kennedy, who was then in California, checked with McLaughlin who apparently was his closest information man on this thing and was just giving him hell over the phone blasting the crap out of him for tipping him off wrong, because, in the meantime, Kennedy had made some half hearted endorsement of Powers which was in the papers and which didn’t hurt us, and in fact which we capitalized on; which was the basis incidentally of Collins’ famous speech which I will take a little immodest pride in saying I wrote. “I’m All Alone.” That speech. You remember that one?

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“Because I’m All Alone.” Every pol from Kennedy and McCormack [John William McCormack] and Eddie McCormack [Edward J. McCormack, Jr.] and so on, is with Powers; we were “all alone” and we capitalized on this to beat him even worse perhaps than we would have beat him otherwise. But immediately after that election, Kennedy having a lot of national political enemies, they wanted to capitalize on this thing and tried to get Collins or me to make some public statement about his endorsement of Powers and so on and so forth and Time Magazine sent over a reporter immediately to interview Collins on the thing. But Collins was gracious enough and smart enough and I think generous and kind enough to say nothing of the sort and so on and so forth; a gesture which I hoped and I think was appreciated by the president. But at any rate, I think what the president was trying to say when he said “Governor Furcolo, Mayor Collins and my good friend, Hirsh Freed,” I think he was trying to say thanks for something which only he and I knew about; that I had tried to keep him out of trouble in the preceding year by not letting him go too far in the local fight for mayor. At least that’s my interpretation of the thing.

Anyhow, I immediately wrote him a letter when I got back from Maine. He was down in Hyannis and I sent him a contribution and as a matter of fact, if you give me a chance, I’ll dig up the letter I wrote to him and his reply. Yes, I see I wrote to him on July 27, 1960. I won’t read the whole letter, but I said,

Dear Jack: I want to thank you most sincerely for your friendly personal greeting at the Logan Airport on the occasion of your return to Boston. It was a most gracious gesture on your part and filled me with happiness and pride in our long association. You may be interested to know that the television coverage was both wide and deep. I received numerous telephone calls and letters, many of them from other parts of the country, commenting on the unusual and complimentary circumstances.

Then I went on to say,

It is a long time since we first met for lunch at the Ambassador Restaurant in Boston, now no longer in existence, when you were first campaigning for Congress and I first made up my mind that you were going to be a president of the United States. Your accomplishments in the public service have filled me and all your friends with the greatest pride and satisfaction. I'm even more certain of your election than I was confident of your nomination. Needless to say, if there is any additional way in which I can be of service.

and so on, and I enclosed a check. He wrote back,

Dear Hirsh: Please excuse the delay in my reply. (A couple of weeks had passed.) I want you to know that your very kind letter and generous support are both a great source of encouragement to me. I, too, was very happy to see you at Logan Airport.

and so on.

You know, speaking of contribution enclosed, I hope you won't let me forget to let me tell you about a contribution I made to him which he lost and which I had to make again and which we had a lot of fun about. Why don't I talk about that right now. What had happened was that when he was running for senator again in 1958, somebody, I think it was perhaps Dewey Stone [Dewey David Stone], ran a cocktail party for him and obviously and with my pleasure and that of everybody else present, obviously one of the things we were expected to do was to make a contribution for his campaign purposes. He had a great stunt, Kennedy, as you know. Whenever he had these meetings, he had a photographer and you had your picture taken with him. And this happened several times I'm glad to say, because now I have these wonderful mementos. But at any rate, at this particular meeting it was October 3, 1958, I see. While I was having my picture taken with him I gave him a check for \$500. And I see now because I have the original check, Frank Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey] told me in what name to make out the check. You know how these political committees are; this was the longest name I'd ever seen because it reads, "Citizens Committee for Furthering the Interests of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" and it was pretty damn hard to get it on even a long check. But anyhow, I gave him this check for \$500 and he put it into his coat pocket, jacket pocket while we were engaging in conversation for the camera man who was taking our picture.

Sure enough I had occasion to write to him on March 8, 1959, and please let me refer to this correspondence, asking would he please cash the goddamn check, because it hadn't come through yet, through the bank, and this was a check of October 3, 1958 and here it was on March 9, 1959. It still hadn't come back. As I said, I had written to him on March 9, 1959, suggesting that he look in his pockets for the check and if he's got it, let the committee deposit it and that if he didn't have the check and if they had a deficit, I'd be glad to stop payment and send another check; but if they neither had the check nor needed the money then I'd like to send him another check as I said as my first contribution to any committee in existence for the purpose of defraying the expenses of Jack's current campaign effort by which I referred to his presidential effort. So I got a

letter from Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] who's also a very, very fine person and Kennedy was lucky to have Ted Reardon with him as he was with most of the people around him. I got a letter from Ted Reardon saying that Jack couldn't find the check and so on and would I send a duplicate check to Joe Healey [Joseph P. Healey] of his senator committee, which I did. On March 23, I sent this check to Joe Healey and then on March 24, '59, John Ford who was his treasurer, acknowledged the check for \$500 and said, "If the previous check of October 3 does come to this office, we will return it to you," and thanked me and so on.

Then I got a letter from the late president dated April 15, '59 which was a good example of his sense of humor,

Dear Hirsh: This is just a note to let you know how deeply I appreciate your generous support of my campaign for reelection last fall. I think I properly should extend "double thanks" for the "double trouble" you went to to see that I got your support.

An obvious reference to the check. That was the end of it until 1961 when I got a letter from Ted Kennedy dated June 20, 1961, a letter from Ted Kennedy saying,

Dear Mr. Freed: I'm enclosing a check in the amount of \$500, which I regret was not used up at the time. However I know that the matter was taken care of and thought you might like to have this for memory's sake.

And he sent me back the original check which had turned up in one of the president's old suits. So I wrote to Ted Kennedy explaining what the whole thing was about and he wrote very graciously and that's the story of that check, anyhow; the history of a check which he lost or misplaced and which I have here as a valuable memento, which they finally returned to me on June 20, 1961, having shown up someplace and I really got a great kick out of that particular one.

You know the late president had a delicious sense of humor. He was peculiar in the impressions he made on people. Sometimes some people couldn't understand him. I've seen him attend a banquet in his honor where people paid a \$100 apiece just to come there; maybe 1,100 people and they were all looking forward to a speech and all that and he'd let them down with an eight minute, almost perfunctory "thank you" and nobody complained because they felt perhaps they weren't entitled to any more. Perhaps this was unconscious evidence of how little he valued their importance to him except as soldiers in the army, but when he was in a small group he scintillated, he was

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brilliant. I mean he exuded not only charm, but he had a delicious sense of humor.

I remember how graciously humorous he was about the necessity of raising \$1,000 apiece from people who couldn't buy one-tenth of his financial worth and how delicately he put it that although he had all the money in the world to spend on it, he'd be subject to criticism if he did. And therefore he had to come to us poor guys for \$1,000 apiece and how

humorously he put the fact that he might have to come again, and so on. But anyhow, the closer we were, I don't mean closer in the sense of intimacy, but the smaller the group, the brighter he was. I've attended many cocktail parties for political and other purposes where the late president was present, but he had such personal charm that he captured you. The smaller the group, the greater the unanimity and the immediacy of the capture.

But I was talking about his sense of humor. Back in 1954, apparently in the Democratic primary, John F. Kennedy of Canton, a fellow who worked for Gillette in a warehouse or something, had run for Democratic nomination for state treasurer with his name, "John F. Kennedy", and had won. Of course everybody attributed his win to the fact that his name was John F. Kennedy. By that time, the other John F. Kennedy, our beloved president, was famous as a byword in this commonwealth. So I wrote to him on September 15, 1954. I said, "Dear Jack, I am thinking of running for governor, but under your name and would like to make immediate legal arrangements with you for rental thereof." So I got a letter back from him in his handwriting and this is possibly something that the library might want to have, although I hate to part with it. It's undated, but it's in response to my letter of September 15, 1954 and it says, "Dear Hirsh, you can use it any time for free. Do you think when I run again people will think that I'm running on John F. Kennedy of Canton's name? After all, he had it first. Best, Jack."

That's an example of his sense of humor and it's also an example of the sort of camaraderie between us. He knew I was ready to do anything for him and I never looked for anything from him, assistance for somebody getting into the country or some client might have some problems, I will say this, he was there 100 percent and everybody in his office and so on. He knew that I wasn't looking for any job; I wasn't looking for any status; I wasn't looking for being president of this or chairman of that. Maybe I was a darn fool not to, but that's the way I was built and am built. I'm not sorry for it and he appreciated that I wasn't trying to interest myself in Jack Kennedy for Hirsh Freed's benefit

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as much as that Hirsh Freed wanted to participate in bringing to fruition the promise of Jack Kennedy. He understood that and I tried to make it clear all the time.

MARTIN: Hirsh, in your career and association with Jack Kennedy, did you ever work in connection with ethnic groups?

FREED: Yes, I did. As a matter of fact, in specific ways I was perhaps of more value if that's the word, I don't mean importance, but more value on certain occasions to Jack in connection with ethnic problems involving particularly Jewish people, than perhaps in any other concrete way.

But before I give you the details of that, I think you remind me that among the ethnic groups in this state and city are the Irish Catholics. I'm not going to insult you by saying that many Irish Catholics are my friends, but I could tell you truthfully that whatever success I've had is due in large measure to the wonderful friendships and examples of friendships that my numerous Catholic friends have exhibited on my behalf from time to time without my even asking. Just a wonderful sentimental people and I hope you understand the sense in which I

say this. But like everybody, they have, in certain areas, like any other nationality, creed or color, as much pugnaciousness and bravado and superiority complexes they may have in certain directions, they've always had an inferiority complex in other directions. It took me a long time to convince a lot of my Catholic friends that Jack Kennedy was going to be the first Catholic president of the United States because they didn't think it was possible, or in the cards, or it was even slightly improper, for a Catholic to become president of the United States.

Now I remember riding back with Frank Murray, Judge Frank J. Murray, of the superior court; a wonderful, wonderful person. I remember riding back with him from one of Hynes' golf field days at Marshfield one night, some summer way back, and Frank was driving his car through some back roads and it was dark as hell and we were talking about Kennedy. I said to Frank, "Kennedy's going to be the first Catholic president of the United States." That took Frank aback with such a start that I thought he'd go off the road. He said, "It's impossible. Prove it to me." And so on. So speaking of ethnic groups, believe me, it took more convincing of the Catholics that Kennedy could become president than it took of any other group, because I never came across a Jew who thought it was impossible for Kennedy to be elected. I came across some who weren't voting for him, but never any who thought there was any impropriety in electing or any unusualness in electing a Catholic president of the United States.

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Coming back to the ethnic business, as far as concerns Jewish people, as I told you earlier, in this conversational interview, I had the feeling, the pleasant feeling, I wasn't offended in any way, the feeling, at one time, that Kennedy didn't know any Jews. Maybe I was the only Jew he knew, at that particular time; at least politically or personally, in the sense of asking who's this and what's that. Although he was generally familiar, let us say, with the Jewish question or the Palestine question he knew it only as a young man, who while his father was ambassador to England had taken trips through Europe or travelled in the Near East or something of that sort. He knew it in a very academic way. He never had to come to grips with the questions of Italians or the Negroes or Jews or for that matter, Irish, in any specific and immediate way as a politician or a statesman or however you want to put it. The result was that when he became congressman for the first time—he was after all a well known name and his name solicited and his interest was solicited on behalf of various people of Jewish origin, various organizations of Jewish association and various movements of importance or consequence, or let us say, of interest to Jewish-American people. He didn't know any of these people and he didn't know any of these organizations any more than, as a young man, I would know what the Catholic sodality was or something of that sort. I'd have to ask and he used to ask me. I used to receive phone calls from him from Washington as to who was this guy and who was that organization and should I associate myself publicly with this and so on.

And I looked over my correspondence; as a matter of fact, I found that as early as October 4, 1946 he got in touch with me with respect to a fellow here in Boston named Edward Parsons. He wanted to know more about him because this fellow Parsons wanted to help him in his campaign effort. He hadn't yet been elected, although he was subsequently

elected. So I didn't know Parsons very well, but I checked up on him and told him that he was a fine fellow, of liberal tendency and could be of some assistance, so on. There was that.

I noticed that on April 30, 1947 he inquired of me with respect to should he give, lend his name publicly to some group headed by the late Ben Hecht in connection with Palestine activities. Well, Ben Hecht was a nice guy and so on, but I checked up and found out that that particular group included a lot of wild-eyed guys who weren't so much irrational but irresponsible. Some of them were associated with some of the murder and terrorist gangs and didn't really have the support of the community; the Jewish community, nationally and locally and internationally, that they ought to have for their efforts and I so advised him and he kept away from that one.

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Then in 1947 he sent me a letter which he had received from his only Jewish buddy during the war, a fellow named Shilcar. Jack, at that time, was in the hospital undergoing some treatment and Shilcar wrote to him. I've got a copy of his letter here someplace, and a clipping of his letter as it appeared subsequently in the Jewish Advocate. This kid wrote to Kennedy to encourage him while he was ill, telling him that he had been on his back in hospitals and the only thing that kept him going was getting letters. He was sending it on that basis and telling Kennedy what a hell of a nice guy he was to him when he was his chief and all that, identifying himself as his only Jewish buddy in his group. If sometime you'd like a copy of that, I can give it to you. Then I arranged to have that published in the Jewish Advocate.

Then I got on February 11, 1949, an inquiry from him about some organization which I'll have to spell out for the tape. It was called Mazoon U'Rufuah Le Israel. It was Hebrew for Organization for the Relief of Israel or something, and he wanted to know if he should be associated with them. And I see that I've got a mess of correspondence here; February 11, February 16, February 26, March 3, March 12, March 23, March 27, all about whether or not this organization was one that he should identify himself with. And my answer was that my investigations were that this was not a harebrained, nor irresponsible group but an organization of not strong direction and leadership and he graciously got out of that. Later he wrote to me and thanked me especially for having kept him out of it because somebody else told him they got into trouble with it.

Then I noticed that on January 10, 1951 he wrote me about should he associate his name with the American-Christian Palestine Committee. And I wrote him on the basis of my investigation that he definitely should, because it had a lot of important people of the community, both Catholic and Protestant, associated with it. And he did. That was the type of thing he used to consult with me on, as far as individuals and organizations were concerned.

I notice here that I had the pleasure of introducing him when he spoke on February 16 or 18, 1951 at Temple Emeth Brotherhood out in South Brookline. He wrote me his overfulsome thanks for that.

But now let's get down, not to people and organizations, but issues. You understand, Ed, that when the war ended you had the situation in Palestine which was of grave concern not only to Jews in America, but non-Jews in America and throughout the world who felt that

Britain ought to carry out the mandate which it had undertaken and implement the Balfour Declaration and that there

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ought to be a homeland or a state for the Jewish people in Palestine and that there'd been many problems and many undertakings, but that it was a moral undertaking perhaps on the part of the world at large, not to give the Jews who wanted to settle in Palestine something that they weren't entitled to merely because they were asking for it, but that a just solution of an international problem required a homeland, if not a state, for the Jews in Palestine. And of course, at that time, there was the question of the partition of Palestine and all that.

Jack had never taken a public stand on Palestine. While his position wasn't suspect, being unknown, his views on the matter were feared. If they were unfavorable, say, to Jewish aspirations, then they were feared. But if he could be induced to favor them, his espousal of the cause could be of great importance, not only in this nation, but internationally. He could not so much flavor the thing, but strengthen the thing as well. But of course you and I know that you could not hornswoggle Jack Kennedy to a public position on anything unless his mind was made up that way. So he always had the guts. Let's put it this way, he wouldn't go out of his way to offend Negro voters or anything. But it would take more than the pope and the archbishop and the cardinal to get him to espouse something which all Catholics believe in merely because he was a Catholic and there were votes in it. So you couldn't dragoon him for purely political reasons into espousing the side let's say of the Palestinian issue which was popular with Jews in this city, this state and this nation merely because there would be votes in it. He might have his troubles over it, but you couldn't get him—you had to convince him; you had to sell him. I was instrumental, not so much in selling him, but in helping him educate himself to the position that he ultimately took, to his great satisfaction and to our great satisfaction.

I'd like to give you some of the details of that, because perhaps you wouldn't get it from any other source except possibly Lew Weinstein [Lewis H. Weinstein]. Now referring to my notes, what had happened was that... Well, anyhow on the subject of Palestine I knew Kennedy well enough to know that you couldn't con him into a position; that he wasn't going to come out and favor partition of Palestine or a Jewish state in Palestine or even a Jewish homeland in Palestine merely because there were votes in it, or because there were votes in it, or because he was going to do me a favor. He wasn't built that way. That was the type of mind we had in this very, very great man. But I discussed the matter with him from time to time, and frankly, at the beginning, while he wasn't opposed, he had been sufficiently influenced, let us say, unconsciously influenced, by "Arab propaganda" and I say that in quotes, realizing

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that many people of the gentile American community consider anything about Zionism as being Jewish propaganda. Let's say there's propaganda by the Republicans, the Democrats, the Jews and the Arabs and the Germans and the Russians and so on. At least, let's say he

was overly sensitive to some of what I think were the obviously false arguments of the Arab propaganda.

I believe this, that if there's anything wrong with any of the Jewish arguments on Palestine and Zionism and so on, that there were enough critics of that propaganda to detect and point out the weaknesses of the arguments, statements, or assertions. I did feel that he had not examined sufficiently some of the arguments that were associated with the "Arab propaganda" side of this question. But I also knew that if you could point out to Kennedy that today was Tuesday and not Wednesday, he would accept the fact, not the argument. Whichever was the fact is what controlled his position on the matter.

When we first started talking to him, telling him that ultimately he had to take a position on this, after all, he was a congressman. By the way, this was long before he dreamed of running for not only president, but senator. This was back in '47. As a congressman from Boston he had to be concerned with something which was of concern to many of his constituents. Don't forget, Brighton was in his district and we had a lot of Jews and Zionists in Brighton. So even politically they were important to him. But certainly they were people in his district and they had an issue concerning them, so necessarily he had to know something about that issue in order to declare himself. I was never fearful that he would declare himself the wrong way from, say, our point of view. I was fearful that he would, being such an intellectual machine, that he might find some of the argument valid emotionally, but not valid intellectually and logically or something of that sort.

At any rate, I first started talking to him about this at the insistence of a few fellow Zionist organizations and particularly Lew Weinstein. I had a meeting with him and I told him that I'd like to have him sit down with a small group of people here in Boston whom he could respect, people whom he knew by name and reputation and ask them any questions he wanted to on the subject in order to form an opinion. So I made arrangements, I know from my correspondence, to meet with him on April 17, 1947. I'm pretty sure that was a Saturday afternoon at 2 o'clock in a small room at the Parker House. And besides Jack and myself there were present Lew Weinstein and Izzy Muchnick [Isadore Muchnick], Morris Michelson, a local attorney and a very skilled attorney, very actively identified now, as then, with Zionist activities, and Benjamin Ulin. He was the senior of the group, a non-lawyer, a local merchant of great cultural and philanthropic background, who, incidentally,

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right now is president of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies. We met with Jack. I think Frank Morrissey may have been along, I'm not sure, during all or part of the meeting. We discussed the thing and it was agreed that they would assemble materials for him to digest and so on. We also talked about the possibility of his making some public utterance on the subject at some suitable, prominent occasion.

The people I had there you couldn't help respecting for their ability, their knowledge and so on. These people were learned in what they were saying; they weren't just propaganda. They were people who were devoted to a cause. They knew they were right and they couldn't help but speak the truth as they saw it and, as I believe, they had it.

He was impressed and he was impressed with the veracity and the authenticity of the materials and he made up his mind. Yes, he favored our position, which at that time involved the partition of Palestine. So he wanted to make arrangements for a suitable occasion and I had some correspondence with him. He was going to address some Jewish gathering, maybe some brotherhood or something. I said, "No. There's going to be a New England regional convention of the New England Zionist Region on Saturday and Sunday, June 14 and 15, 1947 at the Bradford Hotel and if he liked I could arrange for him to make a speech." This would be his first public utterance on the subject at the banquet on Sunday night when we expected six or eight hundred people. I suggested that he use that occasion, particularly because one of the other major speakers would be Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, now deceased, who was a great orator. I guess his pulpit was in Cleveland. He is, as I think I just indicated, now deceased; a very prominent head of the Zionist movement in the United States. Well, sure enough we so arranged it and he made his speech. I find in my files a copy of that speech, his first public utterance on Palestine.

The curious thing about that speech was that it made not only the usual hit with people because Kennedy was an agreeable and popular person as to whom they had a lot of curiosity, it was a significant speech because of the fact that it came from him and what he said and so on. But curiously enough the thing that was most eventful to him was the fact that for the first time in his life he heard Abba Hillel Silver speak. To him he had never heard a speaker like Silver speak, who was quite an orator. That was what was memorable to him about the thing. I have, as I say, a text of his speech here, a carbon copy of it. If the Library wants it, I'll be delighted to furnish it and keep a copy for myself.

Now when he did become Senator.... You know, to do things to

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really please the Italians you really have to be an Italian to understand all the ins and outs of things. To please the Irishmen you've got to know all the ins and outs of the Irish county organizations, what's going on in Dublin and what's here and so on and so forth. Similarly, not to please, but to prevent criticism, in any group, Negro, Jewish or otherwise, you've got to be in on everything and unfortunately Kennedy, in his innocence, started to make some votes, or to make some indications of attitudes on the Palestinian question when it came to foreign aid to the Near East so that his political opponents, Lodge and so on, were trying to make capital among the local Jewish people that Kennedy was really against Palestine and really against aid to Israel and so on. Naturally, here, people were concerned, so the climax was that I had to again arrange a meeting at the Parker House—but this was a Saturday morning I remember—not to straighten him out, but to give him an opportunity to explain to these people just where he stood and so on and so forth.

So the arrangements took a long time because I know on January 21, 1952, the earliest time we could set for this meeting was on February 27, 1952, a breakfast meeting; an off-the-record meeting at the Parker House. I remember that Weinstein was there and Ulin and the late Henry Berlin and Aaron Bronstein [Aaron J. Bronstein], a local attorney, and Judge Rome, my late partner, and Judge Jennie Barron [Jennie Loitman Barron] and Judge Lewiton—I don't know if he was judge at that time. We had about twenty or thirty people, Jewish people, sincerely and unselfishly devoted to the interests of the United States, the

local community and with legitimate interests of the Palestinian government, and so on. I arranged for Jack to be there, to be interrogated any which way they wanted and he didn't have to alibi himself. All he had to do was explain what were the sources of the misunderstanding and, of course, that he was telling the truth. We had examined the record and so on.

The people went away satisfied of his brilliance and his leadership and of his true devotion to any cause he espoused. It was a fortunate thing, in a way, because Lodge people still misrepresented his view on the thing in the election. We had to straighten out Phil Kramer because the Lodge people had reached him. It would take hours to go into all the details and ramifications, but that was the sort of thing you asked originally about ethnic activities.

I'll put it this way; until he got around in the communities so that he knew hundreds of Jewish people, I was for a time being, let's say, his source of information and checkpoint on Jewish people and organizations and I feel that I did him and this country and the Jewish people abroad a service in helping him educate himself, and I say "educate himself" advisedly, because nobody could educate him.

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He informed himself on any subject, whether aid to parochial schools or veterans or aid to Israel or aid to the Near East or Far East or whatever was the subject; this was the kind of a guy who before his marriage spent all of his time with books, committee reports, magazine articles, either writing them or reading them and so on. He was not a sieve, but he was a collecting point for data on every subject. That's why he was so well prepared for the presidency. The son of a gun had studied every question. He had the time to; he was a bachelor.

That about give you a summary of my relationship, my activities and so on. I can say off the record on this record that we also shared another little secret. Neither one of us thought too much of Harry S. Truman. We thought he was a hell of a nice guy and a terrific scrapper; a guy who would get off the floor and fight and so on. But no more than he had approved of Jim Curley for certain reasons, did he approve of Harry Truman for other reasons. He didn't go along with this Maragon [John Maragon] stuff and so on. He thought that, well, it was the difference between Kennedy and Truman. Truman could not only let the boys do what they want and let them get away with what they want, but defend them to the last goddamn bit. Whereas Kennedy not only wouldn't tolerate that sort of activity, but he'd kick his own brother out of the house if he found him participating in that kind of activity. At the same time he wasn't a holier-than-thou guy, but with all due allowances he still didn't feel the justification for personal corruption in politics, or tolerating or closing your eyes to it.

You and I know, Ed, you as a newspaper man and I still as a semipro politician, if you want to play the game that way you can make a lot of money or pick up a quick buck or all that, but the road leads to jail or should lead to jail. A lot of the boys are paying the penalty now for the quick buck and all that. But the difference between Kennedy and them, in one respect, was that they could never see, and still don't see, what's wrong with it. He always knew what was wrong with it. There are some of the local pols who see what's wrong

with it or are fearful of taking it, but many of them think you're a hypocrite when you say there's something wrong with taking a buck for how you vote on a particular thing. Some of them don't know that that Crime Commission is in existence. They think that's like the Crimean War for somebody else. They still are looking for a buck. They just don't know what you're talking about, as though the income tax system was foreign to them and the [Berlin] Wall was foreign to them and Korea was foreign to them, but I hope they don't have their rude awakening.

The significant thing about Kennedy was, not that he was a sissy or a schoolmarm or could afford to be honest or anything, he just didn't see why you had to steal. Oh, he believed in political patronage and he was not adverse to a political friend of his getting rewarded with

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a job or a contract or something, but he certainly couldn't see as part of that bribing somebody for the job or bribing somebody for the contract or paying him off or anyone else for that thing. All right, if you were entitled to it, get it, but get it on the basis of how you were entitled to it. He didn't believe in the hanky panky and God bless him for it.

MARTIN: Hirsh, what did you think of Jack Kennedy's organization in his congressional and senatorial campaigns, as well as his presidential?

FREED: I'd rather talk about his organization and the people associated with him after he was elected and as senator and congressman and president than merely during campaigns. My answer would be that his organization was terrific in two ways; both as people and as an organization. Let me tell you what I mean. Ted Reardon was an awfully nice guy to talk to. If I took my kids to Washington and Kennedy couldn't be there, why Ted Reardon squired these kids around and arranged for things as though they were his own kids or his own father or his own brother. But on top of that, if you needed something from Ted Reardon or from, was her name Mary Davis—or Mrs. Lincoln or any of the girls in his office when he was congressman or when he was senator.... Look, they were Johnny-on-the-job, not only when you asked them, but after you asked them. They used to call you from Washington to follow up, "Was it all right?" The thing that they had done perfectly, you understand. That's how decent they were. They learned that from Jack Kennedy himself because Jack Kennedy was the kind of guy....

I remember walking into the Waldorf Astoria into an elevator with a deceased client of mine, a wonderful guy named Jack Sandler of Sandler Shoe Company and we had had some problem in Washington and I had to go to Kennedy with Jack Sandler to get his help and by golly we walked in there and there is Kennedy and said, "Hello, Jack." He remembered everything; followed up what happened and so on. This was typical of him because he not only remembered the name—I can't do that thing, and a lot of politicians can't—but he remembered him, talked with him about the thing. But they were so wonderful for this fellow and to me in that matter. It didn't mean a buck to me, but it kept this fellow out of some small trouble. Every one of them.

An example is when I tried to get hold of Jack and I had to chase him up in Quincy, Illinois. Now how the hell would I find him in Quincy, Illinois, except through Mrs. Lincoln?

She was so nice about it. I had to grab her on a Sunday morning at her home in Washington. She gave me his whole goddamn itinerary.

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Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] I met for the first time down there. I was no intimate of his at that time, but I quickly realized what this fellow was and of course to me Ted Sorensen is part of Jack Kennedy. I may tell you, I read in the paper, I was out of town at the time, but I read in the paper recently that when Ted Sorensen was honored at a Massachusetts Catholics, Protestants and Jews.... Well, first of all I was amused because that's the first time they honored one and a half Jews—because you know Ted Sorensen is half Jewish by birth. But I read in the Globe last Sunday that he had referred to the fact that when Jack Kennedy's grandfather was city councilman from East Boston, there was a man named Theodore Sorensen who was also. I didn't begrudge him the fact, but I had discovered that through a suggestion of Johnny Hynes. Going through old city records we found that when Patrick Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] was a city councilor there was also this Theodore Sorensen who was a city councilor at the same time.

But anyhow, they were wonderful as people and they were wonderful as part of an organization. I wish I could have the efficiency. I hope for you that you have the efficiency that every one of them had as part of an organization. But they were not just people who were following out Kennedy's instructions, "Do this for Freed," or "Do this for Jones," or "Do this for Murphy," or "Do this for Smith," they were wonderful people besides.

I'll say this, in the early years Frank Morrissey was very, very good. In the latter years of Jack Kennedy's life I sensed, and a lot of other people sensed, not that he was aloof to Frank, but that he didn't attribute the same value to him as Frank attributed to Frank. Maybe we all felt, and I think it's probably a fact, that Frank owed his position more to his fealty to the ambassador rather than to Jack. I think there was a lot of ill feeling; maybe wasn't mutual, but certainly on the part of Frank Morrissey towards Ted Reardon. I think a lot was jealousy of Ted Reardon.

But at any rate, Ted Reardon, to me, is one of the finest gentlemen that ever lived and I hope that this is a means of letting him know somehow. Ted Sorensen, Mary Davis, Mrs. Lincoln, you name them and they were top people. Also I want to say this, it was obvious that these people were in love with their boss and were doing it for him and not what they could get out of it.

Ted Reardon told me an interesting little story. I bumped into him at the Armory the night of the Ball up there, the Kennedy Inauguration, which reminds me again of something that alarmed me very much and made me feel very badly and perhaps I was indirectly responsible for the lack of care which possibly led, not led to,

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but permitted his assassination. I bumped into Ted Reardon and I said, "How do you feel?" because there he was. He told me that that morning or just before that he had breakfast or lunch with Jack Kennedy and he said to Kennedy, "Mr. President," and the president said to him, "Mr. Ambassador."

The thing that I refer to, we went to that Armory, that big Ball, and there were of course Secret Service everywhere and so on, but Mrs. Freed [Rosalind Bloom Freed] and I walked out to a second floor balcony inside the entrance there and there was no one there. This balcony was inside the entrance to the Armory and had a complete view of the entrance of the Armory and any nut could have stood there with a pop gun and shot the Supreme Court, the president-elect and everybody there. I regret so much that I didn't write to the White House saying that with all the precautions they take they don't take precautions, because as a matter of fact, when he last came to Boston I was camped out in the Sheraton Plaza writing speeches for Collins' campaign for reelection. My room was just next to a balcony over the entrance to the Sheraton Plaza and I walked out of my window onto that balcony and any nut could have got out of any window and shot anyone who was riding in that motorcade which led me to believe that the only way they can protect any president of the United States is to force everybody to close all windows in buildings along the route and have a cop on every balcony and so on, because otherwise it's open season.

You know, Ed, to go through these notes I made the other day which are chronological notes of what I found in my correspondence, there are one or two things which I might want to highlight. I do want you to believe and to anyone who ever listens to this that I'm sufficiently modest and sensible, that I don't want to encumber this tape with references to all my letters with him on every subject and all his courteous and kind replies, because the purpose of this tape is not for my self aggrandizement and I'm sure of that. But I know that I had occasion to write to him on December 26, 1947 to tell him that I'd had lunch with Tom Eliot [Thomas Hopkinson Eliot]. Now I don't remember whether Tom Eliot was then congressman or not, but Tom Eliot had been congressman when his district consisted of Cambridge and Brighton and part of Newton. Tom Eliot told me and I communicated to Kennedy how favorable his impressions of Kennedy were. Yes, I guess that's the right grammar. How favorable his impressions were of Kennedy's conduct and activities as congressman as compared with what he had anticipated or had heard about him with references to the depth of his intellect.

I think I told you before we taped this that curiously enough I found that in 1948 Bobby Kennedy, the attorney general, had written

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a series of articles to the Boston Post also on the subject of the Near East and all that and that I had written to Walter Winchell a couple of times enclosing copies of those articles by Bobby Kennedy, pointing out not only that these were the independent views of a non-Jew, on the subject of the Arab-Jewish question, but also pointing out how brilliant they were. So apparently I recognized even then that Bobby Kennedy had a lot on the ball, too.

I had always thought, incidentally, that Jack Kennedy if he had any weakness as a governmental official, that it was in the field of taxation and I had told him so. As a matter of fact, I even told that to Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] after Kennedy became president and when Steve was up here running Ted's campaign a year or two ago. I always felt that Jack Kennedy, for various reasons, and I can understand the reasons, he never had to work or run a business organization so he may not have been family with some of the inequities and stupidities of our present income tax system, which as far as I'm concerned was going to lick

this country; not the Russians or the atomic bomb. I think this country's going to be beaten by the income tax system, not because you shouldn't pay a lot of money in taxes if you make a lot of money, but because of the crazy hodgepodge system which dampens incentive and destroys initiative. I'm sure it does in my case, believe me, because it's pretty goddamn hard to work as hard as you should for the common good of your clients after you reach a point where you're wasting your own mind and your physical resources and it's all going to the government. While you're willing to give 50 percent of it, you'll be damned if you want to give 80 percent of it, so you stay at the 50 percent level.

Anyhow, I did write to him I know back in '58 and earlier than that. I had written to him on such things—as long as there were profit sharing trusts and pension funds for employees or corporations including the \$1,500,000-a-year presidents of these corporations, why shouldn't there be for the self-employed people like lawyers, doctors and accountants who weren't even subject to social security? He told me, at the time, in his correspondence that he wasn't sure that he was sympathetic with the point of view that I expressed although there was Congressman Eugene Keogh's [Eugene James Keogh] bill on this. I also made recommendations to him about deductions to parents, tax deductions for tuition paid for kids going to college.

But the most significant letter that I had from him on the subject of taxes was a letter from him dated June 5, 1958 and if you don't mind I'd like to read you parts of his letter. Looking at a carbon of my letter of May 5, 1958 I had mentioned to him that there were so many inequities and nonsensities in our income tax system that it would require too many reams of paper to describe them all. But I did think that the outstanding vice in our entire

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income tax picture was that instead of having, or creating any incentive to people it seemed to have built in "decentive", a word I sort of coined myself to contract with incentive. I suggested that from the point of view of personal economic productivity, either through personal service or investment of venture capital, our income tax system was absurd. This was apart from the loopholes that might benefit Texas oil millionaires and so on and so forth. My basic position, as I was trying to express to him, being that I didn't think that people objected as much to the tax rates, no matter how high they were as long as they were fair to everyone and were not so high as to give a fellow an incentive for quitting either by saying, "What the hell do I want to invest my money for when I won't be able to get a dime out of it even if I'm successful?" and "Nobody's going to be my partner, least of all the U.S. Government if I lose it." Or, "Why should I work so hard either as a doctor or a lawyer or an accountant or a writer, author or actor or actress, having in mind that these things are important not only to the national economy, but to the national culture and so on, to have people contribute whatever artistic and creative abilities they have and they shouldn't be stopped by a nonsensical tax system which says to them, "You're a wasting asset; don't waste it too rapidly."

Well, he sent me a letter on June 3, 1958 and now as I reread it it's sort of a forerunner of the ideas he expressed really when he submitted his program of revision for our tax system shortly before his unfortunate decease. This is what he said—I'll read most of it because I think it's worth having—

Dear Hirsh: Many thanks for your very thoughtful letter regarding permanent improvements in our tax system. I am most grateful for the care and effort that went into your statements. As you point out there are all kinds of inequities, rigidities, and archaisms in our tax system. There are certainly also some 'deceptive' (using my word) "written into the tax structure and every need for a periodic reexamination of the system to keep it aligned to current realities and necessities. For example, the whole excise tax system is a crazy quilt as the Wall Street Journal suggests. Moreover, there are loopholes and dodges which detract from the integrity of our tax structure. I have not myself felt,"

he says,

"that a temporary or sporadic tax cut was the best therapy during the current recession. The effectiveness of tax cuts depends a great deal upon their timing. Though it is likely that some selective tax cuts would provide a stimulus it would be dangerous to make a haphazard cut. I fear that a high level of taxation is a burden which circumstances will impose for many years."

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Then he goes on to say something which is rather significant because it shows his essential modesty as well as the incisiveness of his approach. He says,

"I am certainly interested in considering searchingly any constructive proposals for a general tax revision. I do not feel, however, that I am the best man able to take care of the leadership of this. I do not sit either on the [Senate] Finance [Committee] or the [Senate] Banking and Currency Committee and taxation is an enormously complicated stretch of legislative terrain. In any event, though, I shall always welcome suggestions from you and other authorities in this field, and you may be assured of my continued sympathetic interest. With kind regards,"

and so forth.

Now the point, Ed... This is the only written exposition of any opinion by Kennedy on the subject of taxation that I ever came across, either in correspondence or elsewhere, because he seemed to be either gun-shy of the subject, or keep himself away from that, being more concerned with matters of international politics and foreign policy and so on. I had not recalled this letter until I went through this file and it is rather significant because what he says, in a sense, is the basis of the tax cut program that he finally did put in when he became president.

Now I've probably taken more time and more tape than is justified, but I do want to add this which I'm reminded of. You know, I said before that he and I shared a very high admiration for a lot of the fighting qualities of Harry Truman, without necessarily approving of him entirely as a politician, statesman or president. But I remember now that I was visiting him shortly after he first became senator; and he knew what I thought of Truman, I knew

what he thought of Truman and he showed me his guest book with signature for guests and he opened it up and there on the first page, very first signature was that of Harry S. Truman. And he looked at me and laughed and I laughed and we thought it was a pretty good joke.

Now I don't want posterity to think that Kennedy's opinion of Truman any more than mine was that derogatory. On the other hand, I think history has already recorded that Harry Truman must have either suspected something of the sort or had his own reasons, not particularly approving of Jack, because he didn't particularly readily cotton to the idea of Jack's becoming Democratic National nominee for president.

I ought to say this. I've entirely omitted the reference to

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the 1956 Democratic National Convention in Chicago when Jack and Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] ran this neck and neck race for the vice-presidential nomination. Now Jack Kennedy didn't realize it, but there again Johnny Hynes did a lot of work for Kennedy even though he had placed Kefauver's name in the nomination for president in 1952. It wasn't a question of divided loyalty. If Kennedy wanted it, Hynes was with him. I know I did a lot of leg work on that floor and it was an exciting thing, but as matters turned out it was probably a good thing for Kennedy that he didn't get that nomination because minus the four years that he had in 1960 and with Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] running for reelection, being Democratic vice-presidential nominee in 1956 might have been a deterrent to his career rather than a source of advancing it. In any event, it was an exciting episode in his life and in the life of many of his friends.

Now, if you have any questions, Ed; if the Library wants any copies of any correspondence I have, or any clippings or anything, I'll be delighted at some time to go through my files and make available to you the originals or copies of anything that anyone wants.

I would like to say this in what I supposed is my fourth or fifth conclusion: To my dying day I will consider it one of the tragedies of my lifetime that Jack Kennedy is dead. One of the greatest experiences of my life that I knew him, helped contribute in whatever small measure, not to his becoming president, but to making available to the world one of the truly unique young, brave, valiant princes that the world has had the benefit of knowing, however briefly. He was like a star; he was a bright star. He ascended into heaven and maybe, I'm not particularly a religious person, maybe God had his hand on Kennedy all the time and just took him away from us. As a citizen of the United States, I can only hope that in the next century we have a few more men like Jack Kennedy and it's not so much a personal tragedy to me. That would be a selfish consideration on my part to think that I'm the only one who feels his loss in a personal way. It's such a sad thing that he should not be available to us today, because he had so much and was giving so much to the entire world. Anything I should add now would sound purely maudlin. I try to convey not so much the exclusiveness of my feelings in this matter, but what I sense is perhaps the feelings of literally hundreds of thousands of Americans. It isn't a case of regret or it's just too bad, but personal loss. Not personal loss of something that benefited us personally, but personal loss of something that benefited the entire world and I appreciate the opportunity to put these sentiments in recorded form. Thanks very much, Ed.

MARTIN: This has been an interview with Attorney Hirsh Freed of Boston. The interviewer is Ed Martin; the date June 5, 1964.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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