

Robert E. Thompson Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 12/17/1965
Administrative Information

Creator: Robert E. Thompson

Interviewer: Ronald J. Grele

Date of Interview: December 17, 1965

Length: 35 pages (Please note: There is no page 18)

Biographical Note

Thompson, journalist. Press Secretary, John F. Kennedy's Massachusetts senatorial reelection campaign (1958); Washington correspondent, Los Angeles Times (1962-1966) author, *Robert F. Kennedy: The Brother Within* (1962), discusses his contributions the 1958 campaign as Press Secretary and coverage of JFK's presidential campaign and time in the White House, among other issues.

Access

Open

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed October 31, 1973, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

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 The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form.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

Transcript of Oral History Interview

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

concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

Robert E. Thompson, recorded interview by Ronald J. Grele, December 17, 1965, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Robert E. Thompson

to the

JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

I, Robert E. Thompson, do hereby give to the John F. Kennedy Library, for use and administration therein, all my rights, title and interest, except as hereinafter provided, to the tape recording and transcript of the interview conducted at Washington, D.C. on December 17, 1965 for the John F. Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. The interview is to be opened to general research at the discretion of the Director of the John F. Kennedy Library; his decision to be based on such considerations as potential embarrassment to living persons or their immediate successors, the interests of national security, or potential prejudice to the friendly relations between the United States and foreign nations.

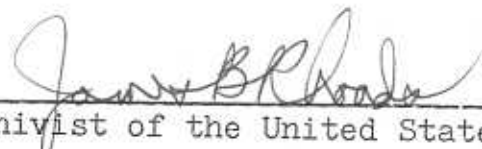
2. Researchers who have access to the transcript of the interview may listen to the tape; however, this is to be for background use only. Researchers may not cite, paraphrase or quote from the tape during my lifetime, except with my express permission.

3. I hereby assign literary property rights to the United States Government.

4. Copies of the interview transcript may, with the Director's discretion, be deposited for use in other institutions.

5. This agreement may be revised or amended by mutual consent of the parties undersigned.


Robert E. Thompson


Archivist of the United States

Date

Oct. 22, 1973

Date

October 31, 1973

Robert E. Thompson – JFK #1

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Robert F. Kennedy's (RFK) contributions to Adlai Stevenson's campaign in 1956
2	John F. Kennedy (JFK) as a senator and his work with the McClellan Committee
5	Thompson's position in JFK's 1958 senatorial campaign
7	Goals of the Kennedy organization in 1958
8	Joseph P. Kennedy's role for JFK's campaign
9	Individuals responsible for organizing JFK's campaign
11	The Kennedy family's issues with Frank Morrissey
13	Earning the favor of newspaper publishers
14	Religious and ethnic issues in the 1958 campaign
15	JFK's associations with other Massachusetts politicians
20	Thompson's reasons for leaving JFK's campaign team and returning to newspaper reporting
21	Thompsons's coverage of the Los Angeles Convention for the <i>New York Daily News</i>
23	The birth of John F. Kennedy Jr.
24	JFK Administration's style of press relations
26	Thompson's impressions of JFK's staff
27	JFK's relationships with different news media companies
29	The relationship between JFK and RFK
31	Relations with the press during times of crisis
32	The two sides of JFK's personality
33	JFK's skills as a politician
34	Dwight D. Eisenhower's impressions of JFK
35	Planting stories in the press

Oral History Interview

with

ROBERT E. THOMPSON

December 17, 1965
Washington, D.C.

By Ronald J Grele

For the John F. Kennedy Library

GRELE: Mr. Thompson, do you recall when you first met John F. Kennedy?

THOMPSON: I can't recall when I first met Senator Kennedy. I covered the Rackets Committee [United States Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Field] from the day that it began when Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] was Chief Counsel.

GRELE: This was the McClellan Committee [John L. McClellan].

THOMPSON: The McClellan Committee. I met Bobby Kennedy in the campaign of 1956 when he traveled with Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson]. I was covering Adlai Stevenson. I can't remember that there was any introduction to Jack Kennedy other than that he was one of the senators. He was obviously a very interesting senator and, at that time, a very important senator because of what had happened in 1956 and what was expected to happen one way or another in 1960. Just in talking to him he got to know who I was and I got to know who he was, obviously. So there was no real introduction. It was just a matter of covering the man and seeing him day to day. That was in 1957, early '57 I would say.

GRELE: On that campaign trip in 1956 what did Robert Kennedy do?

THOMPSON: I would say that Robert Kennedy proved himself a very astute observer. I don't think he did much in the way of advising Adlai because I don't think Adlai Stevenson and his people ever called on Bobby. But Bobby traveled cross-country. With his mind—

[-1-]

and it is a very alert mind—I think he absorbed every mistake the Stevenson people made. He started that at the convention in Chicago. He saw the mistakes his own people made in the fight with Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] over the vice-presidential nomination; he saw that they had a complete breakdown of communication within the Kennedy organization which, of course, did not happen in 1960—he went to great lengths to avoid that in 1960. I think that going across the country with Adlai, he very astutely, very alertly watched every move that was made. He appeared on the platform at various times and was introduced. He, I'm sure, was consulted by Jim Finnegan [James A. Finnegan] on occasion, but I don't think he played any really active policy role. But from the standpoint of the Kennedy family and the Kennedy organization, it was a very important trip because Adlai Stevenson made a great many mistakes in 1956—not that he could have won anyway. But there was a great deal of agonizing over things that took his time away from, you know, essentials of the campaign. I think Bobby Kennedy learned a great deal that was put to work for the benefit of his brother four years later.

GRELE: Did you have the feeling that he was there as the eyes and ears of his brother or he was doing this just for his own enlightenment?

THOMPSON: Oh, no. I think, first of all, obviously the Stevensons wanted an association with the Kennedys—the Stevenson people. That was very important. Jack Kennedy had made this very big run for the vice presidential nomination and had come very close to it. He obviously had captivated a large, substantial section of the American populace. Stevenson was a divorced man. The Kennedys were Catholics. So, obviously, Bobby was invited to go along as an observer and as an adviser. So it was important to Adlai. But I think that, also, Bobby Kennedy, knowing the ambitions within the family, used this opportunity to the very best effect for his own brother and the family ambitions that lay ahead.

GRELE: You say you met Senator Kennedy while you were covering the Rackets Committee. What were your impressions of him at that time other than the fact that you already said that he was an interesting senator?

THOMPSON: It's hard now at this late date to disassociate Senator Kennedy from President Kennedy. Obviously he was always a man—I don't like the word glamour, but I suppose it really fits—he was in a sense the glamorous member of the Senate after the '56 convention. He was a very charming member obviously. It was always very interesting in the Senate in the years that I covered it that there

were just a few men who so captured the public or who the public was cognizant of, that when they walked on the floor the people in the gallery knew who they were. Joe McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] obviously was one. Estes Kefauver was one. And Jack Kennedy, after '56, became one. Whenever

[-2-]

he was on the floor of the Senate or whenever he walked onto the floor of the Senate the galleries began to mutter, and there was always this little stir because he was Jack Kennedy.

I think Jack Kennedy was a basically good senator. I think he was a conscientious senator. I don't think that he was as diligent as he might have been. I think that both he and Bobby..... Bobby did a tremendous job with the McClellan Committee, I think also that there was always this side issue or side question of he and Jack using this to benefit Jack's political ambitions. It was the normal practice that Jack would come in probably midafternoon. Bobby would have certain questions ready for certain witnesses, and Jack would ask them and they would be answered. Usually, they were the most pertinent questions of the day. They made the headlines. They got on television. I don't say there was anything wrong with that but this was the practice. Bobby really carried a helluva load. While Jack participated, he certainly didn't participate to the extent of Senator McClellan, or Senator Ervin [Sam J. Ervin, Jr.], or even Mundt [Karl E. Mundt], I would say.

GRELE: Do you recall offhand what your impressions of his impressions of the people who came before that committee were?

THOMPSON: I think it was largely disgust with the racketeers that they had used their positions in the labor movement to their own financial benefit. I think there was a great amount of disgust and contempt not just for them but with men on the business side, the go-betweens, who also had corrupted this movement. On the other hand, when Reuther [Walter P. Reuther] and his union [United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America] were up there the investigation of the Kohler [Kohler Company, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, 1954] Strike, I think Kennedy always had a rather genuine affection for Reuther. Reuther was clean. He may not have agreed with Reuther ideologically on everything, but I think he admired the fact that there was no taint of real scandal in that union.

I think one thing you must say for the Kennedys throughout their life—I'm speaking of this generation [Bobby, Jack and Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy]]—there has been no taint of financial scandal in anything they've done. I think this has been very important, and I think that Bobby has always been circumspect because he has spent most of his lifetime going after people involved in scandal. I think that this is a very meaningful thing in their lives.

GRELE: What would be your answer to the criticism of men like William Buckley [William F. Buckley, Jr.] of the *National Review* that the hearings were simply a cover-up for Reuther's union?

THOMPSON: I don't think that's true at all. I covered those hearings. As I recall—let me go back a minute—the investigation was born out of sort of a joint resolution introduced by Senator Ives [Irving McNeil Ives] was one and I think McClellan was the other. I covered them from the day that resolution was introduced until—I then worked for the International News Service when International News Service was combined with UP [United Press]—I guess it was the end of May in 1958. I don't think that anybody ever laid before that committee any real documentary evidence of any corruption within the UAW. Now there was violence within the UAW. I don't think there was any question about that in the Koller Strike [Kohler Strike]—and other strikes—but I don't think there was any cover-up of any kind of the UAW. That doesn't mean that Jack Kennedy wanted to get into a fight with Walter Reuther or that Bobby wanted to get into a fight with Walter Reuther. They certainly did not. Walter Reuther was pretty important to them. But I don't think there was ever any cover-up because McClellan would never have stood for a cover-up and not that they ever attempted to do so anyway.

GRELE: To your knowledge was this the first time that John Kennedy had come into contact with Walter Reuther?

THOMPSON: I think he had had some contact. I don't know that Bobby had. As I recall from talking with Bobby, Bobby always, up to that time, had had something of a distrust of the ideological liberal. Walter Reuther and Arthur Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg], both of whom he came into contact with in that period, I think were very good for Bobby because he realized that here were two men who, I suppose, were philosophical liberals, much more than any member of the Kennedy family—yet he found they basically were rather realistic and decent men, hard working and diligent men. But I suppose Jack Kennedy had met him or known him. That is, really the Kennedys and Reuther came together in that hearing, I think.

GRELE: What were the relations between Senator McClellan and John Kennedy?

THOMPSON: I think they were cordial. McClellan had in those days a very close, affectionate feeling for Bobby Kennedy—almost a father-son relationship at that particular point. I think McClellan liked Jack Kennedy. I don't think there was a member of the United States Senate who disliked Jack Kennedy. That was pretty hard to do. I think that the McClellan....In fact, I know that people on the McClellan staff used to sort of laugh slyly. They knew that Jack was using the thing as a springboard to the presidency. You know, I mean Jack would come in in the afternoon when the television lights were on and ask the proper questions of the proper witness after Bobby had handed them to him and then saunter out. They realized that. But at

the same time Jack Kennedy was there when he was needed. He was there for the executive sessions. It wasn't always a matter of walking in at the right time; he was in and out. And I think that McClellan liked Jack Kennedy. I certainly do.

GRELE: Did you also cover the labor bill that came out as a result of this hearing?

THOMPSON: I did.

GRELE: What was your impression of John Kennedy's handling of that bill?

THOMPSON: I covered the first bill, the Kennedy-Ives bill, which was defeated. That was in '58. Actually, while that was in the process of being considered, it was when INS [International News Service] collapsed, and I went to work for Jack Kennedy on his campaign. By 1960 I was working for the *New York Daily News*, and I also covered that. I'll talk about the '60 bill because the '58 bill failed, and I don't think that I can remember a great deal about it because I shifted jobs right in the middle of it.

At the end of the '60 bill, I wrote a letter to Jack Kennedy in which I had said I thought that probably the most courageous, hard working thing he'd done in his Senate years was to get that bill out of the conference committee. I must say I never saw Jack Kennedy work any harder than that in the Senate. I never saw any senator more determined, more completely convinced that this had to be done. He went into those conferences, and they were difficult conferences. He had not just Republicans but southern Democrats lined up against him. While that bill came out, the Landrum-Griffin Bill [Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959] basically did not greatly resemble the Kennedy-Ives Bill which passed the Senate, still, it was a compromise bill. If it had not been for Jack Kennedy and his real dedication to getting that bill out....There was time and time again when that thing could have blown up, when it could have gone out the window, but it didn't. Now I'm sure Jack Kennedy knew he had to have a labor reform bill as part of his presidential campaign. There's not much question about that. But beyond that, I think Jack Kennedy and Bobby were convinced that there had to be a labor reform bill, and you had to compromise to get it. He really kept the group going, the House and Senate conferees, day in and day out. At night, in the evening when they would come out they were bitter and they would have nasty remarks about each other. But I must say I was very impressed with what Kennedy did in that particular instance.

GRELE: You say you joined the Kennedy staff in May of 1958.

THOMPSON: Well, I think INS....I'll tell you that little story if

[-5-]

you're interested in it. I might be interesting. I had been with International News Service, I guess, seven years. You know, Jack

Kennedy once worked for INS years ago. I suppose that was one of the interests. He always used to talk to me about INS. About a week before, or maybe that week, before we got the notice we were merging with UP, and the rumor was spreading, I had gone in to see him, and he was very interested in this. He knew the Hearsts very well, and old man Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] had had very close contact with Mr. Hearst [William Randolph Hearst]. So he was interested in this. Well, on the next Saturday we had been invited to a party at Bobby Kennedy's. Well, that day about noon or shortly thereafter I was working in the Senate and the word came out across the INS wire that they were going to merger with UP. Of course, there were very few who kept their jobs. Most everybody lost their job. Well, we went on out to the party at Bobby's. Jack and Jackie [Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis] came. We were standing out around the swimming pool. At one point, I was standing alone, and Jack came over and talked to me about this thing and expressed his regrets that this happened. He said, "If you don't find anything, I can find a place for you in my campaign in Massachusetts." I liked him very much. I always like Jack Kennedy—very impressed with him. I did have another interview, I suppose the following Monday, set up, and there were a couple of things in the wind. But he said, "Come in and talk with Mrs. Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln] and arrange an appointment with me." So I did. This intrigued me. I wanted to do it. So I went to work for him handling the full public relations press aspect of the '58 campaign. I worked in his office here, I suppose, from mid-June until about Labor Day. It was a hectic goddamn thing because I didn't have any desk, and it was very cramped. There were just three rooms.

To be quite candid it was a very difficult situation. There was some real division in that office between Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] who had been with Kennedy for many years and who, in a sense, represented the Kennedy of the past—a charming, charming fellow, but still he represented the Kennedy of the past—and Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen], who in a sense represented the Kennedy of the future. I found dealing with Sorensen extremely difficult—I think just because at that point he didn't want anybody else in the office, you know, who wasn't really a part of his own staff.

But anyway, I worked for Kennedy. I put together a film for him which he used in the campaign and which he later told me he thought was the best thing he had in the campaign. We showed it over television through Massachusetts, and we showed it daily in headquarters on Tremont Street in Boston. I put together a large tabloid which was distributed throughout the state, and, oh, you know, press releases and little speeches and that sort of thing. Then about Labor Day I moved up to Boston and stayed there for two months until the day after the election and came back to Washington. There was an opening with the *New York Daily*

[-6-]

News. Kennedy had known John O'Donnell [John P. O'Donnell], who then was Bureau Chief, very well because of his father. His father and John O'Donnell had become close friends back in the days of the New Deal. O'Donnell admired Jack Kennedy very much. So I applied for the job, and because he liked Kennedy and Kennedy wrote him a nice letter, I got the job and went to work for the *New York Daily News*.

GRELE: What would you say was the goal of the Kennedy organization in the 1958 campaign in Massachusetts?

THOMPSON: To win the biggest election, biggest proportional vote in the country—bigger than Symington [Stuart Symington, II] in Missouri, bigger than Mansfield [Mike Mansfield] in Montana, bigger than any other Democrat—the largest vote in the country. I think Mansfield went over it slightly. I think percentage wise Mansfield got just slightly higher. But Kennedy’s vote was just a little head of Symington.

GRELE: As Press Secretary, you must have been concerned about the fact that Massachusetts papers kept upping the percentage of the vote.

THOMPSON: Jack Kennedy was very, very upset. Furcolo [John Foster Furcolo] made an announcement that Kennedy was going to win by a million votes. That was just not in the cards and Jack Kennedy’s pragmatic, realistic mind—also, I should say his suspicious mind because he had a very suspicious mind. He always suspected that Furcolo did this on purpose so that once the vote came in people would say, well, you know, he was supposed to win by a million votes, and he won by either hundred and some odd thousand. I must say Jack Kennedy had a very suspicious mind. This always intrigued me because he always felt that there was something devious about a great deal that happened. Maybe there was. I suppose that came from his father. His father once said, “Never trust anybody doing anything for you. You have to do it yourself.”

GRELE: Are there any specific events that you can recall where this came into play other than the Furcolo announcement?

THOMPSON: Oh, no. I can remember it at various times, but no, that was a specific thing. I can remember—well, I’m trying to recall—there were some things involving people who wanted Jack Kennedy to make speeches for them. Well, you know, “Why do they want me to make a speech? What’s in it for us?” and that sort of thing which is the normal political outlook.

An interesting little sidelight on the ’58 thing was that Mr. Kennedy was a rather big force up there. He had an apartment on Beacon Street right directly across from the Common from headquarters. It became

[-7 -]

a rather embarrassing thing because one or two reporters came in and Mr. Kennedy was sitting in the headquarters in an office (on Tremont Street) he had there, and they interviewed him. Well, the Ambassador’s concept of running the campaign in Massachusetts was that you campaign on economy and good government—I forget what the issues were but they were issues that were not the issues that Jack Kennedy saw. Jack came in one day and had seen them interviewing his father, and it disturbed him. He talked to Kenny O’Donnell [Kenneth P. O’Donnell] about this. It was interesting that Jack himself wouldn’t go to his father, and ask him not to do this. He asked Kenny and Larry O’Brien [Lawrence F. O’Brien] if they couldn’t get the Ambassador to stop doing this sort of thing. I always thought that was a very

interesting sidelight that he himself would not go to his father and ask him to step aside. He asked other people to do it because he was embarrassed, and it did disturb him. I don't know how it ever worked out—I mean whoever got to the old man. It may have been Bobby. I don't know. I think Bobby always had a real understanding between Bobby and the old man. They were very much alike.

GRELE: Who were the reporters?

THOMPSON: I can't remember. I think it was local—I think probably the *Boston Globe*. I can't really recall now. Also John Cauley [John R. Cauley] of the *Kansas City Star* came in, as I recall, and interviewed Mr. Kennedy. You know, the general feeling was that Mr. Kennedy, while he was there and he was very important in the financial arrangements—in fact right at the height of the campaign, as I recall, Lord Beaverbrook, who's an old friend of his, came to Boston; he had a luncheon and invited editors from all over the state to this luncheon—but still they wanted him to be in the background and not in the front. Because, after all, Mr. Kennedy had a great many enemies especially the labor and civil rights movement and among Jewish voters.

GRELE: I've been told that the organization, or the staff, tried to ignore him as much as possible.

THOMPSON: You can't ignore Joseph P. Kennedy. I'll tell you. [Laughter] In my eyes Joseph P. Kennedy has always been the most dynamic man in that dynamic family. He's a pretty hard man to ignore.

GRELE: But I've been told that they tried to give him no functions, isolate him more or less.

THOMPSON: Yes.

GRELE: Who was the organizing intelligence of that campaign?

[-8-]

THOMPSON: Well, of course, you're speaking to one who's very un-objective, prejudiced in this thing. I think Larry O'Brien is an absolute political genius. Kenny O'Donnell was very important. But in this thing or organizing, getting things going, starting in every community in Massachusetts and building up a Kennedy organization precinct by precinct, town by town, county by county, Larry O'Brien was an absolute genius. He started in 1952, and he kept it going for six years. In '58 it was still there: it was nourished and then, of course, it was spawned nationwide in 1960. So I would say the organizational genius was Larry O'Brien.

GRELE: And Robert Kennedy was...

THOMPSON: Bobby obviously had a very great, great interest in this thing. Bobby knew what was going on. Bobby, in '58, didn't come up until late. Teddy was supposed to have the title....Teddy had the title of campaign manager. I guess. Well, Teddy was still in college. Teddy was up there during the summer months and went back to college, the University of Virginia, I guess, around Labor Day and shortly thereafter. A very cute little line I remember. Of course, old man Kennedy, especially when Teddy was there, was the real dominant force in everything. When Congress adjourned, Jack took off for Europe for a couple of weeks—the Riviera. But Joseph P. Kennedy was the real dominant force so much in the summer months. He had this apartment over on Beacon Street. Teddy had the title of campaign manager, and when he got ready to go, we were all there and he said, "Well, I'm going to go now." He said, "If anybody comes in and asks for the campaign manager, just tell them they'll find him over there on Beacon Street where he's always been."

GRELE: What other members of the staff were effective? Do you recall?

THOMPSON: Effective? Well, you see, that was a very small staff up there. They had a great amount of volunteer work. Sorensen was up there writing speeches, although most of the speeches Sorensen was writing were speeches that Jack delivered when he went out across the country. There were very few prepared speeches in that campaign. I think there was one rather important civil rights speech. There was a civil rights meeting in the, I think, Copley Plaza Hotel which now is the Sheraton Plaza. Kennedy brought in....The only member of the Senate that he wanted to appear for him was Senator Douglas [Paul H. Douglas] of Illinois. Paul Douglas came in and made the major speech of this civil rights dinner. I remember in his speech, Douglas said he felt that Kennedy was a man qualified to go into any office, even the highest in the land. Funny, I don't know whether you know the Boston newspapers but it was that type of thing that in those days just didn't get coverage. It was Saturday night.

[-9-]

I think today *The Globe* would have given it a helluva run. *The Globe* has changed greatly. But in those days the concept of the Boston papers was you ran two columns. One was the Democratic column. One was the Republican column. And it didn't matter what was news and what was not news. I mean, those were the two equal columns.

It always intrigued me that Douglas came in and made this and that Kennedy wanted Douglas.

GRELE: Why Douglas?

THOMPSON: I guess he thought first of all this was a civil rights thing. He felt that Douglas' credentials with the liberals were better than anybody else's. He never really explained it, but I always felt if he had to have somebody—and he had to have somebody for civil rights—Douglas was the best man. Douglas was respected. Douglas was not regarded as a radical. Douglas himself was a New

Englander. And I think he always rather admired Douglas. Harry Truman [Harry S. Truman] came up during that campaign...

GRELE: Excuse me for a minute. This is Justice Douglas [William O. Douglas] or Senator Douglas?

THOMPSON: Oh, no, Paul Douglas—Senator Douglas.

GRELE: He was a New Englander?

THOMPSON: Yes, he was born in New England.

GRELE: Oh, I didn't know that.

THOMPSON: Yes, he was born, I think, in Massachusetts or in Maine. I don't know when he sent to Illinois. Probably after college. And if you listen to his accent, you can tell still. He still has a native New England accent.

Truman came up during that campaign, but not at the request of Kennedy. Kennedy didn't want Truman in there because, you know, Truman didn't have any great support in Massachusetts even that late. He was out of the presidency, but he still could embarrass you. But John McCormack [John William McCormack] got Truman to come up and campaign for Eddie [Edward J. McCormack, Jr.], his nephew who was running for Attorney General. Of course Kennedy had to appear at the dinner that night, and he did. I don't remember what his remarks were, but he carried it off very nicely. But a very interesting sidelight on that was that a reporter, whose name I'd rather not mention, was talking to Truman that night privately in his suite at the hotel, and he was asking about Jack. Truman said, "Jack's a fine young man. He'll do a fine job in anything he goes after.

[-10-]

But I can't support him for the presidency because I don't want Joe Kennedy in the White House." Of course, Truman sort of carried that over anyway later on.

GRELE: Did Marjorie Lawson [Marjorie M. Lawson] handle the civil rights aspect of that campaign?

THOMPSON: Marjorie, yes. Marjorie and Belford [Belford V. Lawson]. Marjorie was very active. That's where I got to know Marjorie. I have a great admiration for Marjorie Lawson. I would say, yes. You asked about somebody else, and Marjorie escaped me a minute. It's odd because I saw Marjorie up in New York the day the Pope was up there and chatted with her. Yes, I had great admiration for Marjorie. She was a very intelligent, capable woman. She never, in those days, could get Kennedy to go quite as far as she wanted him to go. She may have told you. But she was up there throughout most of the campaign. They have a home over on, not Nantucket...

GRELE: Martha's Vineyard.

THOMPSON: Martha's Vineyard. She was there through much of the summer, and she was there in the fall. Marjorie was very helpful. Helpful—I don't think they took her advice but she tried. She knew the direction she felt Kennedy might move. I think if there was any problem, the Negro vote was not as important in Massachusetts as Marjorie probably thought it was. By the same token, Marjorie was thinking nationwide, and in that particular era there was not much coverage on Kennedy out of Massachusetts. There were contests going on all over the country, and when Kennedy went out of the state to make a speech, people wrote about it. There were a few reporters going in and coming out, but a speech like the speech the night Douglas was there I don't think got much coverage at all.

GRELE: How did she work in with all this male staff?

THOMPSON: Marjorie? Well, you see Marjorie wasn't a working member of the staff in the sense that she was there every day doing something. Marjorie would come in as an adviser. She would go up and talk with Sorensen. She'd come down and talk with me. She would talk with Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman], who I like and admire. She would talk with Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey] for whom I have contempt.

GRELE: Why?

THOMPSON: Oh, he's a miserable little pol, I think Francis X. Morrissey is a poor boy who is rather clever and who's not unintelligent, who hitched his wagon to Joseph P. Kennedy. I think you would find if anybody within the Kennedy organization were to speak candidly—and I think this would include Jack Kennedy and Bobby (I don't know about Teddy)—they would agree that there's no

[-11-]

place on the federal bench for Frank Morrissey. He's not the man who would have the temperament for it. Frank Morrissey is a little kind of guy who was always promising the world to everybody and then calling me or calling O'Donnell or calling somebody and saying, "You produce it." You know, that type of fellow. He ran Kennedy's office, or supposedly ran his office, up in Massachusetts—the senatorial office—and even the girls who worked for him felt this way about him. There's not a great deal of integrity there. There's not much diligence when you look at his law record and how he got through law school and finally passed the bar. He's not a man who ever has done much reading or done much studying of briefs. He's a man who has been a manservant for Joseph P. Kennedy. I never could really understand this thing. It seems to me if I were Joseph P. Kennedy and if I could look back with all the tragedy and know that I had one son in the presidency, and one son as Attorney General and then as Senator, another as Senator, and that the years ahead held the possibility of another going into the White House, why you'd want to push your luck

and put this unqualified man on the federal judiciary...I just don't quite understand it. He's taken care of Morrissey in every conceivable way. I'm sure he got that city municipal judgeship for him out of Furcolo. He got it in 1958 or at a time when Furcolo needed the Kennedys very badly politically. I don't think there was ever anybody at this end of the Kennedy operation who had anything but basic contempt for Frank Morrissey. When Teddy or somebody made a speech and said that people were opposed to him because he was a poor Boston boy who worked his way up, well, that was not true. It had nothing to do with it. God Dave Powers [David F. Powers] is a charming, bright, wonderful guy, and he also was a very poor Irish boy who worked his way up. That has nothing to do with it. It's just that Frank Morrissey is really a pol. Go ahead.

GRELE: Getting back to the campaign. The goal was to get as many votes as possible. Massachusetts politics is probably one of the most complex arrangements in the country. How did you go about appealing to all the various factions, forces, groups in Massachusetts to turn out this vote? Shall we take them one by one? Was there a separate campaign for Boston and Western Massachusetts?

THOMPSON: Well, from my standpoint—and I must say Jack Kennedy got mad at me once over this. I had been a newspaperman, and my idea was that if you have a press announcement, you send it to all the press. Well, there was an announcement we put out—I forget what it was but it was a liberal thing. Whether it was an announcement that George Meany was supporting him or something, I don't know. But I sent it to all the papers. Well, when Jack learned that I sent it to the *Boston Herald* [and] *Traveler* or *The Globe* or I guess any of those Republican Boston papers, he got mad. He didn't think that they should have had this sort of news. You know, Jack, like any big politician, is pretty good at managing news if he can. So there were certain things in a sense.

[-12-]

Everywhere he went, and he had a tremendous itinerary, we would prepare a statement of supposed remarks that he was going to make and send them in advance to the newspapers. If he were going down to New Bedford, there would be a prepared Kennedy statement on Kennedy's views on the fishing industry. Mike Feldman and I would usually work these up together. Mike did a great amount of this, and I would put the finishing touches on them in the press room and send them out. If he were going up to the Berkshires, there would be the special problem of the Berkshires. If he were going up into Lawrence or into other mill towns, there would be the problems of the mills. So that we always sent these out in advance of his arrival there. If there were an afternoon paper, and most small towns have afternoon papers, there would be a story of prepared remarks of Jack Kennedy. He never followed these particular but that was the thing. It would be true in Boston, too. He would discuss the problems of the Italian-Americans, Italos, as they call them up there, on Columbus Day. You know.

GRELE: Was there any attempt to curry the favor of the publishers of the large newspapers such as the *New Bedford [Standard] Times*.

THOMPSON: Oh, indeed, indeed. Oh, yes, that was very important. That was where Mr. Kennedy was very, very influential and effective, I think. I don't remember now which papers supported when up there. I remember the *Christian Science Monitor* supported Kennedy's opponent, and Mr. Kennedy felt that was based on religious issues rather than anything else. Although I never understood that because his opponent was also a Catholic. But I think it was because Mr. Kennedy felt that they didn't want to see Jack go on up to the presidency since he was a Catholic. Yes, though I forget the name of the man who was the *New Bedford* publisher.

GRELE: Basil Brewer?

THOMPSON: Yes. He was a very good friend of Mr. Kennedy and Jack. Well, also as part of this thing, every town that Jack went into on that campaign, and he went into just every town in Massachusetts—Larry and Kenny put together a superb itinerary—he made it a point at every stop to see the publisher and editor of the paper. Now for instance, Mr. Kennedy, the old man, had very close contact with Choate [Robert B. Choate, Sr.] of the *Herald and Traveler*. They traveled somewhat in the same big financial circles on Beacon Hill. There was some rather nebulous thing.... Morrissey was also in contact with the Choates and those people, but I think just as sort of an intermediary with Mr. Kennedy. Morrissey didn't do much of anything in that campaign. He was after all a city judge. And while he was at headquarters spending a lot of time sitting around talking, I don't remember that he made any contribution. He may have raised some money, but nothing beyond that. But Mr. Kennedy, with the big Republican publishers in Massachusetts, did try his best, and Brewer, as I recall, did support

[-13-]

Jack. *The Globe*—I don't remember what *The Globe* did and I don't remember what the *Herald Traveler* did either.

GRELE: About the religious issue, was there an attempt to balance the Protestants of the west against the Irish Catholics of Boston and somehow bring them together?

THOMPSON: The religious issue I think at this time in Massachusetts was not important. First of all the man, Celeste [Vincent J. Celeste]—was that his name?

GRELE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Celeste, who ran against Jack, was an Italian Catholic. It wasn't a matter of religion, you know. It was a matter of the ethnic question of whether you were an Italian or an Irishman.

GRELE: Well, how did they deal with that, especially with their relations with Furcolo?

THOMPSON: Well, Jack, as I recall, marched....Now this is a question I can't address myself to with any authority. I'm not even sure I should talk about it. But there are a number of ethnic newspapers around Boston. It may be true everywhere. In a sense you buy them. I mean the party that's willing to buy the most ads and the biggest ads gets their support. I remember this was true. You know, it was really blackmail. Kennedy wouldn't go for it all the way. I think we took certain ads in certain papers—Polish, Italian, maybe a Jewish paper, I don't recall. But he wouldn't be blackmailed into pay exorbitant rates. But, of course, the Kennedys had much more money than the Republicans in that campaign. Support of those papers was always rather important in the ethnic groups. We did have some good Italian support. We had Italians working in the campaign. We had Italian leaders who would announce their support of Jack Kennedy, and we'd get this out in the papers and get in the ethnic papers. In this tabloid we put out, of course, we had what he'd done of the Italians, how he'd supported the immigration bill. Oh, yes. Another thing. We had little televised endorsements. One of the endorsements was Senator Pastore [John O. Pastore] who happened to come from the neighboring state of Rhode Island. That was one of the things for the Italian vote.

But Celeste was not known. With the Italians in Massachusetts, Kennedy was then very big. I think the overriding factor in a lot of peoples' minds was the Celeste was really nobody. The overpowering things with Catholics, whether they were Poles or Irish or Italian, was that really a vote for Jack Kennedy was a vote for a Catholic going to the White House. That was very, very important, I think, although this was never mentioned. But it was a very subtle thing all through the campaign I think.

[-14-]

GRELE: What were the relations between John Kennedy and Foster Furcolo at that time?

THOMPSON: Strained. They ran together and they appeared together at various things—not often. We ran completely separate campaigns. We had a couple of meetings with Furcolo's people but only to plan get-togethers. And we had a couple meetings with Eddie McCormack's people. Another sidelight. Toward the very end of the campaign, Jack Kennedy got the feeling that Eddie McCormack was going to lose. I wish I could remember now who his opponent was. A man with a fairly good name. This was '58.... Anyway I remember we were arranging various joint appearances here and there with people. Jack said, "Let's not have anymore appearances with Eddie McCormack. He's going to lose I think, and it doesn't do us much good to be associated with him." There was also a nephew or a distant relative of Senator

Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall].

GRELE: John Saltonstall [John L. Saltonstall, Jr.].

THOMPSON: Who ran for Congress. I remember Jack made one appearance with him, but he shied away from him too because he knew that he was going to lose. Kennedy didn't like losers.

GRELE: Well, both of these men, Edward McCormack and John Saltonstall, come from very high credentials in Massachusetts—McCormack for his obvious relation to his uncle and John Saltonstall because of his old-line ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] liberal support. Was this or was it not a factor?

THOMPSON: Well, it wasn't a factor because John Saltonstall was running, as I recall, against Curtis [Laurence Curtis], wasn't he?

GRELE: Yes.

THOMPSON: In what really was a blue stocking Brahmin district. It didn't do Jack Kennedy any good to be associated with him up there because he wanted the Brahmin vote. An ADA liberal had no meaning in that district for Jack Kennedy.

GRELE: But didn't Jack Kennedy want the support of the ADA liberals?

THOMPSON: Oh, I think he had it. There was never any question, really. Where else could they go? They couldn't go to Celeste. You know, this is always a question. I mean you go so far—I mean he brought Paul Douglas in, you know. You go so far to achieve the support of one group, and you know you have them. Sometimes you can be wrong. But once you know there's no place for them to go, and you don't have to go out and get them, you know.

[-15-]

GRELE: What about his relations with the Speaker and Eddie McCormack?

THOMPSON: At that point they were on the mend. They were not really very good. Of course Eddie McCormack won that year. They were really not too good. But they were not brutal as they had been. The big fight over the leadership of Massachusetts was over, the Kennedys had won. I remember one of the first things Jack told me when I went to work for him was about this fight that he won with McCormack—he had won over McCormack—and that there were bad feelings. Kenny O'Donnell at that time always maintained that it was McCormack who sabotaged Jack Kennedy in the Chicago Convention. I don't know whether he'd say that today, but he did at

that time: that it was McCormack who signaled Rayburn [Sam Rayburn] to recognize the Tennessee delegation. There was this feeling throughout the Kennedy organization.

GRELE: I've been told at one time that John Kennedy felt that that was the lowest political deal he had ever engaged in—that fight in Massachusetts. Is this true?

THOMPSON: I never heard...

GRELE: The combined convention procedure—the fact that they had to push and pull so many people in so many different kinds of ways.

THOMPSON: Yes. I never heard him say that.

GRELE: What was his impression of Massachusetts politics?

THOMPSON: Well, of course Jack Kennedy always had, I think, a real feel for the history, the tradition of Massachusetts politics. Certainly there's no state in the union that has a great tradition, you know, going back to Webster [Daniel Webster] and the Adamses. He always had a good feel for that. That was important to him. Then, of course, you have the amalgamation with the Irish Catholic in his own family. I think he knew obviously there was a great amount of corruption. This was the time I think there was still some talk of Bobby running for Governor, just general talk—a governor who could really move in and do something up there. I can't remember Jack really talking a great deal philosophically about that—or anything. I can't say I ever had any real philosophical conversations with Jack on these things. We talked about the realistic matters involved in the politics in Massachusetts—the McCormack issue, both Eddie and John.

A question arose because Sinatra [Frank Sinatra] wanted to come up and put on a big show—oh, I forget, Dean Martin, I guess, was to be in it

[-16-]

and Lawford [Peter Lawford] and all—for Jack. Well, we went over that with the old man, not much with Jack. It would have been a big thing out in the Garden [Boston Public Garden]. Kenny felt very strongly that this was wrong. He felt, first of all, the Sinatra image was not right. He didn't trust the Celeste people at all. He thought that they might try to start a riot among the colored people and the white people out there. Old man Kennedy, you know, was going around asking everybody. He didn't have much feeling. I think he sort of wanted it. He liked Sinatra. Of course, Sinatra and Lawford were very close at that point. My feeling was I didn't know Boston politics well enough. I said, "I'm a Californian, and in California it would be fine, but I couldn't speak for..." Of course it was agreed upon. Jack himself said, "Well, it's a nothing, so why have it? We just won't do it." And they didn't do it.

Another point came into my mind a bit ago, and I wish I could have written it down. Oh, I know, towards the end of the campaign Jack went on television—I guess it was

statewide—and made a speech. There was a series of things. His mother [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] was on. We didn't use the family as much in '58 as they had in '52, but they were on. The question was who would introduce him. A number of names were thrown out. One of the Adames was up there at that time—but I forget—and Mr. Kennedy suggested it. I suggest Dr. Sarah Jordan who's now dead. Names were bandied about. Finally, we agreed on Dr. Sarah Jordan. But I remember Jack saying, "I wish I could get old Leverett to do it."

GRELE: How were his relations with Senator Saltonstall?

THOMPSON: They were good. You know, I think they had a pretty good understanding. I never heard him say anything bad against Saltonstall. He liked Saltonstall personally. I think he admired him. I don't think he felt Saltonstall was the most industrious senator. But I think he admired him. They always had this sort of agreement: if you don't step on my toe, I won't step on your toe. And Saltonstall didn't do much of anything. He might have announced his support for the entire Republican ticket, but that was all.

GRELE: Was there any backfire among the labor leaders over his involvement on the McClellan Committee?

THOMPSON: Not in that campaign that I remember at all, no.

GRELE: Was Gardner Jackson still there at that time?

THOMPSON: Who?

GRELE: Gardner Jackson.

[-17-]

THOMPSON: No. He had been there in '52. That had been the '52 fight, and I don't remember ever meeting him. I remember hearing the old man talk about him in a very disparaging way, but I don't ever remember meeting him. The old man was very vicious recalling him from '52. But as I recall, there really weren't any issues against Jack. Celeste, you know, didn't have any money. He was unknown in the state. What campaigning he did—he talked about Jack using this as a steppingstone to the White House. Well, hell, that didn't matter because, by and large, most of the people that voted for Jack wanted him to go to the White House. He talked about Jack building the Saint Lawrence Seaway. But all the big major members of the Maritime Union [National Maritime Union of America] were for Jack anyway so that didn't go down. You know, Kennedy got a very, very good vote. Well, I don't remember the percentage.

GRELE: 800,000.

THOMPSON: Yes, well 68 percent, 66 percent—something like that. As I recall, he wanted to beat Symington very badly. Symington’s was 66 percent or something like that. But I think Mansfield went up a little bit over. Mansfield didn’t really count.

GRELE: Was there then at that time a conscious attempt to involve the people at Harvard [Harvard University] in the campaign for their future use?

THOMPSON: I can’t recall.

GRELE: Archibald Cox was already...

THOMPSON: Cox had been associated with Bobby in the investigation here, you see. I suppose there were.... You see, like in any campaign there are groups you go out and solicit these groups and then you announce their support. Well, there were groups from Harvard, obviously—professors. James MacGregor Burns was running for Congress that year, and he came down. We did a little television—Jack did a little thing where he supported Burns. I don’t think he knew Burns too well at that point. He got to know him later when he wrote his book. But that was at Williams [Williams College] not Harvard.

I do remember we put together this tabloid. Mr. Kennedy went over everything. The text showed Jack at Harvard. I think Mr. Kennedy had said he had been elected to the Board of Overseers by the biggest vote in history or something like that. Jack, as I recall, crossed the “biggest vote in history” out or whatever the phrase was. But he didn’t want that. It was typical of Kennedy taste and his refusal to exaggerate. He was willing to use the fact that he had been elected to the Harvard Board of Overseers, but he didn’t want to go too far with it.

[-19-]

GRELE: Did the McCarthy issue come up during that campaign at all?

THOMPSON: No. That was a dead thing—long gone.

GRELE: You left the Kennedy organization shortly after the campaign.

THOMPSON: Yes.

GRELE: Why?

THOMPSON: There were problems. I had a talk with Jack the morning after the election. I had had difficulty with Sorensen, and we...

GRELE: What kind of difficulty?

THOMPSON: Well, just that we didn't get along very well, Ted didn't try to help me at all. I got along very well with Mike Feldman. I didn't see much of Jack in the campaign. We didn't have much contact. He was in and out but not much in headquarters at all. While he liked the work I did in the campaign, it just didn't seem to work out right. I sort of wanted to go back to reporting. Of course, there was two years left before the election. It had been a terribly arduous job because I was handling everything. I was putting out press releases. And I was handling reporters who came in, putting together this movie and putting together the tabloid. Well, I must say I almost worked myself to death in Boston. So we just sort of talked the thing over, and we agreed I would go back and look for something else. Then this thing with John O'Donnell came up and I was very pleased to go back. Of course, Jack wrote a very nice letter to O'Donnell. I guess I went to work for him. At that time the New York newspaper strike was on. I left Kennedy's staff around the first of the year.

GRELE: Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] then came on as the press secretary?

THOMPSON: Oh, not for over a year.

GRELE: Not for over a year. No one handled press relations?

THOMPSON: No, Jack always handled his own press relations previously, and it was just a matter of getting out speeches and delivering them.

GRELE: Yes.

[-20-]

THOMPSON: I don't think Pierre—Pierre was with the committee, you see, with Bobby—I don't think Pierre went with the Kennedy staff until....Well, you see, Kennedy didn't announce until a year later. Then I think it was after that. Now Pierre might have been helping him, I don't know. I don't think it was until some time in early '60 when Pierre went over from the committee directly to the staff.

GRELE: This is off the top really, but when you were working for the *New York Daily News*, were there pressures from Jack Kennedy to give him more coverage or pressures from people on the *Daily News* to hit him as a liberal?

THOMPSON: Nothing.

GRELE: Nothing?

THOMPSON: Nothing of that kind of thing at all.

GRELE: Did you have any further contacts with John Kennedy?

THOMPSON: Oh, yes. I covered him. Well, we went down, you know.... That was '60, and the labor fight was on. No, that was '59. I said '60. The Landrum-Griffin [Landrum-Griffin Bill] may have been in '59.

GRELE: Yes, it was.

THOMPSON: Yes. There was that. I covered the Senate room on the hearings. And then I covered Kennedy throughout the Los Angeles Convention. In fact, I flew out on the plane with him to Los Angeles.

GRELE: Covered him at the convention?

THOMPSON: Yes. Not on the campaign, just at the convention.

GRELE: For the *News*?

THOMPSON: Yes.

GRELE: For the *News*.

THOMPSON: Yes, I flew out on the plane with him and covered him throughout.

GRELE: How was the handling of the press during the convention?

THOMPSON: I followed him, you see. It's hard to say. I followed him everywhere he went from one delegation to another. There

[-21-]

wasn't any question of handling the press other than just going and listening to him and talking to him when you could.

GRELE: But he was available?

THOMPSON: Yes. Well, if you would follow along. They're all available at that time. Then, I didn't cover him during the campaign, but after the election when he went to Palm Beach, I went to Palm Beach with him and stayed there. Then I became White House correspondent for the *News*. I was that until I came to work for the *Times* as White House correspondent. I did that up until—oh, I stopped covering the White House on a regular basis along just about a month before Kennedy died. I made the last trip with him. He went to Florida the weekend before the assassination, and I made that trip. I went on the major trips. We made this tremendous cross-country tour in September of '63, and I covered him on that.

GRELE: That was the conversation tour?

THOMPSON: Yes. It was a very interesting trip.

GRELE: Back to the convention. Do you recall anything interesting or significant about the convention? Were you there when something particularly notable happened or occurred?

THOMPSON: No, I can't remember offhand. It was a hectic time. I do recall—and this has been recorded I suppose, although it was not record in Teddy White's [Theodore H. White] first book—when he went down to see Rayburn to talk about the vice-presidential nomination. He went out the back door of the suite at the Biltmore. There were only about three of us who were standing at that end. We went down the elevator with him. We said, "Where are you going, Jack?" He said, "Well I'm just going down to have a cup of coffee with Mr. Rayburn." He went in. I don't think he was in there fifteen minutes, and then he came out. Of course, that was the conference that sealed Rayburn's support of Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] as Johnson for Vice President. Then, of course, we were out at that apartment out in Hollyhood [Hollywood, California], the Beverly Hills, where he was staying and rode back into town with him. Then I didn't see Jack, I don't suppose, after that until the election when we went down to Palm Beach.

GRELE: What did you do at Palm Beach?

THOMPSON: Well, that's when he was appointing members of the Cabinet. I do recall—of course, we were there for, oh, I guess two, two and a half weeks. We came back the night before Thanksgiving. Of course, we went back Thanksgiving night, and that was the night little John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] was born. I took my wife and little boy with me and left them at the airport at one o'clock in the morning. We came

[-22-]

back aboard the plane. In fact, I wrote a letter to Mrs. Lincoln. She had the story of that a little bit confused in her book. I had known Evelyn and like Evelyn very much. I wrote to her and thought she might correct for a future edition. He did not learn the birth of the baby until we were airborne coming back. The plane landed in Palm Beach, the *Caroline*, because he learned Mrs. Kennedy had been taken to the hospital. The press plane was already there and we were all standing out at the airport. I remember seeing him come down the ramp and looking very, very serious and preoccupied which was unusual because there was a large crowd there, and he always came off smiling. He went directly into the terminal building. I remember asking, and people said, "Well, Mrs. Kennedy has gone to the hospital." So he went to a public phone or, I guess, it was a phone in the office there and called. Then he came back out, and he said, "We're going back. We'll go back aboard the press plane." Well, we all got aboard the press plane. I can remember leaving my wife and boy at the airport. The

door closed, and my little boy called, “Daddy, Daddy.” Then I remember in midair—and he was up in the forward cabin standing in his shirt sleeves holding the earphones—he got the word that the baby had been born—a little boy—and Mrs. Kennedy was doing fairly well.

GRELE: What were his reactions at that time?

THOMPSON: He seemed relieved. I mean he seemed very, very tense and very concerned. Then he seemed a little relieved. Of course, when we got into Washington, he went directly to the hospital.

GRELE: I mean were they typical father reactions about having a son?

THOMPSON: Only what he said to Mrs. Lincoln when he said to her, “Next time, I think I’ll call him Abe.” But no, it was such a difficult situation. Mrs. Kennedy had had problems before, and nobody knew what the state of her health was at this point. So it wasn’t that kind of revelry.

GRELE: Before we get into the White House years, I’m going to turn the tape over.

THOMPSON: All right.

GRELE: You covered the White House during the presidency of John Kennedy. Do you recall in general the Kennedy style of press relations?

THOMPSON: Kennedy style of press relations?

GRELE: Were they good, bad? Was there anything special or notable about them?

[-23-]

THOMPSON: I would say Kennedy press relations were basically good. Salinger was a basically good press secretary. I think it took Pierre almost a year and a half, maybe two years, to really get to the point where he knew exactly what was going on, where Kennedy had the complete confidence in him to trust him and make him privy to all that was happening. That’s always a difficult situation with a president, I think. While the President had known Pierre, it took him awhile to have this real shakedown. He had not known him the way he’d known O’Donnell or O’Brien or Sorensen, Feldman and Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan]. So there was this period.

I think Jack Kennedy used the press conference superbly well and superbly well for his own benefit. Not that it wasn’t an interesting thing. And there was quite a bit of news that came out of this. But he, of course, was a man ideally suited to television. I think televised press conference worked very, very well for him and helped him greatly. It helped establish him with the American people after the closet vote in history. His charm came through; his

quick mind; his intelligence. In a sense—of course, Johnson has broken away from it—it sort of set a pattern which other presidents should not have to obey. I mean having it televised live—because there are presidents, and I don't mean Johnson, but there could be presidents for him the live televised press conference could be a disaster when you have to stand up there and answer a question. Johnson has never had any difficulty in making mistakes. I don't think he would because he's got a very good mind, but I remember Truman—before I came to Washington, but I've heard people talk of this—used to make some mistakes in press conferences. Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] did on occasion. When you're standing before a live television camera, it can be pretty dangerous for you. So that, while Kennedy handled it superbly and it worked beautifully for him, I don't think it should be a practice for all presidents. Every president should adapt the mode which is best suited to him.

But Jack Kennedy's press relationships were basically quite good. I think, as with any president, there is a shakedown, there is a change. When he first went in he was seeing a great number of people—a great many reporters and a great many columnists. From my understanding, in the last year there weren't many. The best thing I liked about Kennedy and it was only an annual thing—the press relations were with it—was Palm Beach every year right around New Year's. Maybe the day before or the day after we would have a very big backgrounder in his home. We would sit around, and for the first hour we would go around and ask questions maybe on foreign policy. Then we'd have a coffee break, and then for the next hour we'd talk about domestic issues. It was the one real chance you had with Kennedy off camera in a sense. You really got a much better feeling about the man personally—much more than you ever did on televised press conferences, I think.

[-24-]

GRELE: What were your opinions of the Kennedy innovations in press handling such as the live television press conferences? Were you in favor of this or opposed to it?

THOMPSON: Well, I have nothing against the live television press conference except that there are an awful lot of reporters who think they're actors. You know, you would have to get on television. Therefore, that's a problem. It's difficult to pursue a question because you ask one question, and then you're expected to sit down and somebody else can ask a question. But, as I say, I think it was a very good for Jack Kennedy and it was good for the American people. I would like to see Johnson do it once in a while, although he doesn't particularly like to do it.

GRELE: I've been told that John Kennedy, as contrasted to Eisenhower, opened up the White House to the press so that staff, like O'Brien and O'Donnell were available.

THOMPSON: That's right. This was very true. This was, I must say, a very important aspect of what went on in the White House in the Kennedy era. You could go see anybody and talk with them. There came a time when, I think, the various members of the staff were expected to tell Salinger which reporters they

had talked to, but you could. I went in to see O'Brien and O'Donnell all the time and Dungan. You could see Sorensen if you wanted to and Feldman. Bundy [McGeorge Bundy] was a little more difficult. But there were people who would. Mac Bundy would almost always see the *New York Times* man or else the *Herald Tribune* man.

GRELE: He would let them in but...

THOMPSON: Well, I think, you know, there are certain parts of the media which are most important. I think this was true with Kennedy. You could always rate them with Kennedy. NBC [National Broadcasting Company] was the number one network in his mind and then CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System] and ABC [American Broadcasting Company]. If you gave them a priority I suppose you'd start out with NBC, the *New York Times*, and *Time Magazine* were most important in Kennedy's mind. Then he'd say CBS, *Newsweek*, ABC, and so on down the line. This is true of anybody. It's true of Johnson. It was, I suppose, true with the Eisenhower-Hagerty [James C. Hagerty] operation.

GRELE: What about the wire services?

THOMPSON: Very important. Yes, they're always important but in a different sense. I mean, the wire services are expected to be vacuum cleaners in a sense. You don't find much in the way of interpretation. But the President sees the *New York Times*; he sees the *Washington Post* every day; he sees the *Herald Tribune* sometimes. Therefore, he....I'll go back to one thing—the story of Bobby becoming Attorney General. After the election in 1960 Kennedy went down to the ranch to see

[-25-]

Johnson. We spent the night, and coming back on the plane, Bill Lawrence [William H. Lawrence], who was then the White House correspondent for the *New York Times*, stopped and talked to Kennedy and asked him about an attorney general. Kennedy suggested to Lawrence—he said something to the effect, “How about Bobby?” My feeling has always been that that was Kennedy's trial balloon. And where but in the *New York Times*? There's no other paper that, you know, you can do it in. Possibly, the *Washington Post*, but mostly the *New York Times*. So there are certain facts of the media which are more important than others, obviously. It always will be this way.

GRELE: Back to opening up the staff to the press. Did these men, in general, handle their press relations effectively? I mean this could open the President to a series of gaffes.

THOMPSON: I think they always were most judicious. I can't ever remember....First of all, I think that Kennedy had a staff which was well attuned to Kennedy personally. I don't ever remember any grave difficulties.

They were all bright and intelligent men. They were serving Kennedy. The thing about the Kennedy staff that always intrigued me was that nobody but Kennedy could ever had brought that staff together and held it. There were so many divergent personalities and interests there. Kennedy was the single catalyst that could hold them. There was no other way you could ever bring O'Donnell and Sorensen, together, for instance. There was never much love lost there. I think the relationship with O'Brien and Sorensen maybe was a little better but not much. So that he had a really divergent staff. I don't suppose that there's any other way you would...I think that Bundy and O'Donnell and the rest always got along well, but still normally you wouldn't find Bundy working with this group of people. So Kennedy was the real catalyst that held this group together.

GRELE: Did you ever have any particular problems about stories you had printed or stories you couldn't get at the White House?

THOMPSON: The only problem I ever had, really difficult problem, was in 1961 when Kennedy flew to Key West to meet McMillan [Harold M. MacMillan] during the Laotian crisis. Kennedy had been president three months, I think, at the most—two months, maybe, or two and a half. I worked for the *New York News*. Salinger that night in Palm Beach arranged a backgrounder from which he excluded me of the *New York News* and the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Washington Star*, and, oh, well, there might have been another paper too. I don't know. I heard about this. I protested it, and protested publicly at Pierre's briefing. We had a bit of a row over it. My understanding from O'Donnell later was that Kennedy himself was quite disturbed that Pierre had excluded certain papers, and it never happened again.

GRELE: Why?

[-26-]

THOMPSON: I don't know. My understanding was he felt that this was in the British tradition. You bring in certain friendly papers and leave out other papers. He was going to try this. Well, I don't think he ever tried it again.

GRELE: In general, or in specific, what was Salinger's concept of the job? You say that he experimented with this British system?

THOMPSON: Well, I think Pierre is a bright, bright guy, you know. He basically was a good press secretary. The arguments I would have against Pierre: number one, he was very sloppy, a very sloppy administrator: number two, when you were out of town, especially Palm Beach or a place like Newport, Pierre was always so busy social climbing that it was hard to have much contact with him and to really find out. But he could be helpful. He could be very helpful, and my relationship with Salinger was always pretty good really.

GRELE: What about Malcolm Kilduff [Malcom M. Kilduff]? Did you have any contacts with him?

THOMPSON: Oh, yes. I know Mac very well. Well, he was the second man. I always got along well with Mac. There wasn't much he could do to tell you or to help you, but once in a while I'd find Mac good for guidance.

GRELE: You have described institutionally the kind of press establishment in the White House. Now personally was there a kind of establishment such as...

THOMPSON: Why, I think it almost followed this line you see. You have to go back to the campaign, first of all. There were certain reporters who were assigned to Kennedy in Wisconsin and stayed with him. Well, that was very important: Sander Vanocur of NBC (there was a very good relationship there for quite a while): Bill Lawrence who was with the *New York Times* and later went with ABC: I think Hugh Sidey of *Time Magazine* had been along (he had known Kennedy in the Senate anyway). I remember after Kennedy came in—of course, Vanocur came to Washington and became the White House correspondent—Kennedy asked an executive at CBS, why he did not assign to the White House the same men they had had with him in the campaign. So there was that relationship. NBC did some special shows with Kennedy and on Kennedy, and there was a big romance for almost a year there with NBC. And NBC was, after all, the most popular. He knew Vanocur very well. He didn't know the CBS correspondent, and he didn't know the ABC correspondent very well until Lawrence shifted over. The *New York Times* has always been very important in Kennedy's life; he read it thoroughly. The *Washington Post*—I don't know how much regard he had for the *Washington Post*; he knew Phil Graham [Philip L. Graham] fairly well, and he used to read it.

[-27-]

GRELE: Well, Phil Graham didn't come to the White House.

THOMPSON: No, no. He was the publisher, but he knew him. Kennedy had had a personal relationship with him.

GRELE: On the *Times*, did Tom Wicker [Thomas G. Wicker] cover the White House?

THOMPSON: Well, it started out with Lawrence. Lawrence went over to ABC. It seems to me for a while Ned Kenworthy [E.W. Kenworthy] was there, and then Wicker was there, oh, I guess for a year and a half. I think. I can't recall exactly. Maybe Wicker came in right after Lawrence. I'm not sure.

GRELE: He really made his name on the Kennedys—or through the opening up of the White House?

THOMPSON: Who's that?

GRELE: Wicker.

THOMPSON: Yes, I guess so. Yes.

GRELE: What about his friends? Was there ever a problem with people who had been his long time social friends like Joseph Alsop [Joseph W. Alsop] or Charles Bartlett?

THOMPSON: How do you mean?

GRELE: Well, did they have special access to him or were they given...

THOMPSON: Oh, yes. Well, Ben Bradlee [Benjamin C. Bradlee], well Joe Alsop, though less I think.

GRELE: And Phil Graham.

THOMPSON: Well, of course he was a publisher, and that was different too. Charley Bartlett and Ben Bradlee, offhand, were the only two. Oh, Max Freedman. While I'm sure Kennedy talked a great deal with them, I don't know whether this access was very valuable in giving them material to write. It may have been since his death, but I'm not sure it was at that time because I think they all honored the confidence unless there was something very specific he wanted put out. I think they honored that confidence. Otherwise they couldn't have been his friend. There's always this thing you know, that once you get in the White House you can't make friends. You have to rely on all you've made before you got there.

GRELE: How did the deal with men who are in and of themselves almost institutions like James Reston [James B. Reston] or Walter Lippmann?

[-28-]

THOMPSON: I think he always got along with them. Somebody told me, and I think it may have been O'Donnell, last year not long before Kennedy died that he hadn't seen Reston probably in months. He probably had not seen much of Lippmann. But Lippmann I think always admired him; I think Reston always admired him. I think Kennedy probably was amused by Reston in the sense that Reston is a very talented writer and a pretty astute observer, but he can shift positions. Sorensen refers in his book to Kennedy's view of a certain columnist. He said, "Well, the position he takes today will not be the position he takes the next week." I'm sure that he was referring to Reston.

GRELE: In your book on Robert Kennedy you described in general terms the relation of the Attorney General and the President. Do you have any specific recollections that would illuminate those relations?

THOMPSON: None except that Jack Kennedy I just don't think ever made a major move of any kind before or after he got in—I'd say from '56 on—without Bobby somewhere in the background. Bobby Kennedy was a very, very important and powerful force in his life and in the government—you know, in foreign affairs, the Cuban question, all of these things. Jack Kennedy needed Bobby Kennedy, and, of course, Bobby needed Jack, but there was a great relationship in that Jack for all his charm and all his intelligence and plenty of courage disliked personal unpleasantness. Of course, Bobby never shunned personal unpleasantness. Bobby could really do all the hatchet operations for him. He could be blunt and he could be cold and he could be tough for Jack Kennedy. It was an unusual and very worthwhile, a very valuable relationship from that standpoint, I think.

GRELE: In writing your book, *The Brother Within*, did you get cooperation from the President and the Attorney General?

THOMPSON: Yes, I had talked with the President, and I talked with the Attorney General many times.

GRELE: Were they at all skeptical about the results of the book and did they say, "Well, why are you going to do that?"

THOMPSON: No, oh, Bobby did. Bobby felt that, and he was right, there wouldn't be many people who would read it. But he was cooperative and very good about it.

GRELE: Did they ever try to influence your biases one way or the other? Or did they know them so well by then....

THOMPSON: Oh, I don't think so except in the sense that you always—you know when in public life you talk your side of the story.

[-29-]

No, no, there was never any. I was trying to recall my interview—of course, most of it's in the book—with Jack. Bobby was so important to him. He was a very, very great source of strength in Jack's life.

GRELE: Clark Mollenhoff [Clark R. Mollenhoff] in his book on the Teamsters—I can't really say he disputes you, but did you ever discuss with the President or with the Attorney General the work of Clark Mollenhoff on that committee or...

THOMPSON: How do you mean he disputes it?

GRELE: Well he ascribes to himself a greater role in the investigations.

THOMPSON: Who, Mollenhoff?

GRELE: Yes.

THOMPSON: I don't know. I know Mollenhoff was a man who was instrumental in the beginning of the Teamsters thing. There's no question about that. I think I referred to that in my book.

GRELE: Yes.

THOMPSON: I don't know beyond that. There was a good relationship between Mollenhoff and the Kennedys. It sort of soured. I remember somebody on Bobby's staff complaining that after Jack had become President, Clark was down trying to tell Bobby how to run the Justice Department. But I can't speak as to how much investigation Clark did. Bobby put together his staff. I'm sure Clark was in there helping where he could. I just don't know.

GRELE: Were other press relations soured?

THOMPSON: Well, I shouldn't use the word soured. I say cool. Yes, I suppose, but I can't think of any offhand. You must realize that things have changed so greatly since Jack Kennedy died. Jack Kennedy was under a great deal of pressure and in a great deal of trouble at the time of the assassination. People have forgotten that. You know, we go back, and Reston was hammering at him and other people were hammering at him. There was a stalemate on Capitol Hill. Things were going very badly in Vietnam: Diem [Ngo Diem] had just been overthrown and killed. Oh, gosh, it seems to me there were a number of things. We had had a problem in Berlin just a few weeks before his death. Of course, there had been a change in the British government about a month before, and there'd been a change in the German government. These weren't problems for him, but there was a lot going on—a lot of unrest and difficulty in this particular period.

[-30-]

There was a lot of criticism of Kennedy. But publicly, he always was able to handle it in a light, humorous way. Privately, I don't know. I understood once he made a rather cryptic and curt remark about something Arthur Krock had written. I'm sure he did about Reston.

GRELE: Was he particularly touchy about criticism?

THOMPSON: I think privately he might have been about certain things; publicly he never showed much.

GRELE: I've been told that he was really furious at a *Time Magazine* correspondent—not Sidey, the one with the long German name. I guess it was somebody from the editorial staff.

THOMPSON: I don't know. Was he?

GRELE: No Sidey.

THOMPSON: He liked Sidey.

GRELE: Do you recall anything interesting or significant about the relations with the press during times of crisis such as the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Berlin? Did press relations change?

THOMPSON: Well, of course nobody knew what was going on during the Cuban Missile thing. I always felt that there was a point during the Cuban Missile Crisis, from the standpoint of the American people, when Pierre should have called in just those select few who cover the White House all the time and whom he trusted and knew—and they probably wouldn't number more than twenty—and tried to give them some feeling about what was happening which they could related to the American people. I don't know whether that could have been possible. I always felt that that could have been done because there was a terrible, terrible week of unrest and tension in this country and in this world, obviously.

GRELE: Right after that crisis Arthur Sylvester made his famous remarks about use of the news.

THOMPSON: That's right. That's right.

GRELE: What was your opinion about this whole concept of managed news?

THOMPSON: I will say I don't get upset or overwrought. I think any president is going to try to manage the news the very best he can. After all, that is the nature of politicians, and I don't know of any president....I'm not sure that Eisenhower

[-31-]

himself ever did it but certain Jim Hagerty did it. Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] did it superbly well. Truman and his press secretaries did it. Kennedy did it. Johnson does it. It's the nature of the animal. And you've got to face the fact, which I think some people in our media do not face, there are times when it becomes imperative from the standpoint of the

security of the nation—at least in this day and age—to control certain aspects of the flow of information.

GRELE: Did you see the President during these times?

THOMPSON: No, no. Not except when anyone saw him publicly.

GRELE: I was going to ask you: How was he under stress?

THOMPSON: I couldn't say. I really couldn't say although I have heard that he was fine, superb, but I couldn't say. Jack Kennedy always intrigued me. I was intrigued by his charm and by the two, in a sense, the two faces. Basically, in personal conversations he could be a very earthy man. His language could be equally as crude as Lyndon Johnson's. He could be personal in talking about other people.

GRELE: Can you recall any specifics?

THOMPSON: Well, just about writers and columnists and either public figures, you know. And yet publicly he handled all of them so beautifully. He always had the light touch, the finesse. He was just a very intriguing man I thought. But at the same time, and I know everybody uses this term, but he was outwardly a dispassionate man. I was very intrigued by the story Mary McGory had last week that when Bundy's father died, Kennedy said to Bundy, "Who's going to handle the wheat agreement?" That was all he said. This is typical Kennedy. He might have felt inwardly that there was a problem, sadness, but he was a very dispassionate man outwardly. One fellow who had known Bobby for years whose name I'll not mention, but who was a very close friend of the Kennedys and still is, once said, "Jack has never been able to give anything of himself to anybody." I think this is basically accepted. It may not be true within his family although I think within his family basically it was a question of everybody giving to Jack in his adult life—Bobby giving to him, and his sisters converged, and they helped Jack. But I think it was basically true that Jack Kennedy, even possibly in his marriage, I don't know, was a man who found it difficult to give of himself. Go ahead.

GRELE: Did he ever talk to you about his relations with other members of the administration: Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk], Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.]?

THOMPSON: No.

[-32-]

GRELE: Can you think of anything we've missed?

THOMPSON: No, but I probably will when it's over.

GRELE: Well, when we send you the transcript, if there's anything you feel you'd like to add just add it in. Well, thank you very much.

THOMPSON: I must say I admired Kennedy. I didn't know him real well. I only knew him off and on. He was never unkind to me. He was very kind at some points. I've always been grateful to Kennedy when it was a very dark night in my life when INS folded and he said, "Come and work on my campaign." I think like any politician, when you're close to him, you realize he's a much more Machiavellian individual than people realize. People say to me the difference between Kennedy and Johnson is that Johnson is a politician. Well, hell, Kennedy was a great politician, a superb and brilliant politician. He never would have won the nomination if he hadn't been.

GRELE: He's so great that people don't think of him as a politician.

THOMPSON: That's right. That's exactly it, you see. He could not have won that nomination in '60 and beaten Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] if he hadn't been. Of course, Nixon really fell into a trap because the Kennedy people knew—I think Dave Powers told me—from the polls and all that all they had to do was get Kennedy on television with Nixon. They didn't even have to open their mouths, it was just the comparative...

GRELE: You mean they knew this beforehand?

THOMPSON: Yes. That's why they fought for this, to try to get Nixon on television. And Nixon went for it. You know, he wanted to do it. He was so carried away with his own powers of oratory that he never realized he was making a grave mistake.

GRELE: Was that one of his....You didn't cover the campaign.

THOMPSON: No, I covered Eisenhower's part in the campaign the last month.

GRELE: What was Eisenhower's part?

THOMPSON: Oh, he went around speaking. He had good crowds, good receptions. My personal feeling has always been—I don't know, maybe destiny plays a part in these things—if Nixon had used Eisenhower in certain specific places the last week, he might have been able to pull this thing out. Illinois was one. I think Eisenhower—the vote was so close and Eisenhower is so popular, still,

[-33-]

although I must say his second term was not spectacular—he could have pulled the thing out for Nixon.

GRELE: Who were the relations between Eisenhower and Nixon?

THOMPSON: I really can't say. I read that Eisenhower said, and I've read what Nixon said. I really don't know.

GRELE: In the Republican campaign was there an overall organization? When Eisenhower was out speaking, did Nixon's Press Secretary take care of Eisenhower's speeches? Did he oversee them or anything?

THOMPSON: Nixon and Eisenhower agreed that there would be certain speeches at certain places. From then on it was just a matter of Hagerty and the speech writing staff figuring out where Eisenhower would go and when, and what he would do. Eisenhower always has said he was willing to do more. Of course, it was understandable that Nixon didn't want him to do more because people would say, "Well, you're just riding in on Eisenhower coattails." At the same time, I think Eisenhower could have helped more than he did. He was willing to do so.

GRELE: What were Eisenhower's opinions of John Kennedy at that time?

THOMPSON: At that time I think—I know this on authority—in '60 Eisenhower told a friend of mine that he couldn't understand how they could elect Jack Kennedy. This was before the election, but it was running close. He couldn't understand how the American people could elect Jack Kennedy—he referred to him as a "Pipsqueak"—over Nixon. He said he could understand how they might have favored Adlai Stevenson, who was an erudite intelligent man, over him, but he could never understand how they could ever favor Kennedy over Nixon. But he didn't know Jack Kennedy then. I think that by the time Kennedy died he had a much different assessment of Kennedy. I can't help but think that he had to have.

GRELE: Was he at all concerned over the charges that this had been eight years of stagnation, that we weren't going to go any further...

THOMPSON: Well, I think if you go back and look at the campaign, while there were charges, rather general charges, of let's get America moving, it's not moving—and I'm sure Eisenhower was concerned.... In fact, as I recall, there were some times in the course that he did get mad about certain accusations. But there was never any personal aggravation. Kennedy was very clever. He steered clear of Eisenhower completely because he knew that he couldn't.... That was one area he had to stay clear. That's why I never understood Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater]. I never understood Goldwater last year when he

would publicly make the accusation that Kennedy time the Cuban Missile Crisis for political benefit. It seems to me if there was one thing that was absolutely sacrosanct, it was Kennedy last year. For the Republican candidate to stand up and make these charges against a man who had been assassinated a year before was foolish. First of all, I don't think there was any truth in it. Secondly, politically it was asinine.

GRELE: One other question before I leave...Did you ever feel that John Kennedy was handling the press in order to influence congressional opinion?

THOMPSON: I don't quite know what you mean.

GRELE: Well, would he give you a story or a particular line on a story in order to get into the press in order to influence a pending vote in Congress?

THOMPSON: He never did to me. I think that all throughout the White House then, as in almost any situation—yes, there were planted stories. Let's face it. Sorensen says that in his book—that Kennedy definitely planted stories. This administration plants them. Every administration plants them. There was no question about that.

GRELE: Can you think of anything else?

THOMPSON: No, not offhand.

GRELE: Thank you very much.

THOMPSON: You're quite welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Robert E. Thompson Oral History Transcript – JFK #1
Name List

A

Alsop, Joseph W., 28

B

Bartlett, Charles, 28
Beaverbrook, Lord, 8
Bradlee, Benjamin C., 28
Brewer, Basil, 13
Buckley, William F., Jr., 3
Bundy, McGeorge, 25, 26, 32
Burns, James MacGregor, 19

C

Cauley, John R., 8
Celeste, Vincent J., 14, 15, 17, 19
Choate, Robert B., Sr., 13
Cox, Archibald, 19
Curtis, Laurence, 15

D

Douglas, Paul H., 9, 10, 11, 15
Douglas, William O., 10
Dungan, Ralph A., 24, 25

E

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 24, 25, 31, 32, 33, 34
Ervin, Sam J., Jr., 3

F

Feldman, Myer, 11, 13, 20, 24, 25
Finnegan, James A., 2
Freedman, Max, 28
Furcolo, John Foster, 7, 12, 14, 15

G

Goldberg, Arthur J., 4
Goldwater, Barry M., 34
Graham, Philip L., 27, 28

H

Hagerty, James C., 25, 32, 34
Hearst, William Randolph, 6

I

Ives, Irving McNeil, 4

J

Jackson, Gardner, 17, 19
Johnson, Lyndon B., 22, 24, 25, 26, 32, 33
Jordan, Sarah, 17

K

Kefauver, Estes, 2
Kennedy, Edward M., 3, 9, 11, 12
Kennedy, John F., 1-35
Kennedy, John F., Jr., 22, 23
Kennedy, Joseph P., Sr., 6-9, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19
Kennedy, Robert F., 1-6, 9, 11, 16, 19, 21, 25, 26,
29, 30, 32
Kennedy, Rose Fitzgerald, 17
Kenworthy, E.W., 28
Kilduff, Malcolm M., 27
Krock, Arthur, 31

L

Lawford, Peter, 17
Lawrence, William H., 26, 27, 28
Lawson, Belford V., 11
Lawson, Marjorie M., 11
Lincoln, Evelyn N., 6, 23
Lippmann, Walter, 28, 29

M

Macmillan, M. Harold, 26
Mansfield, Mike, 7, 19
Martin, Dean, 16
McCarthy, Joseph R., 2, 20
McClellan, John L., 1, 3, 4, 5
McCormack, Edward J., Jr., 10, 15, 16
McCormack, John William, 10, 16
McGrory, Mary, 32
Meany, George, 12
Mollenhoff, Clark R., 30
Morrissey, Frank X., 11, 12, 13
Mundt, Karl E., 3

N

Ngo Dinh Diem, 30
Nixon, Richard M., 33, 34

O

O'Brien, Lawrence F., 8, 9, 13, 24, 25, 26
O'Donnell, John P., 7, 20
O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, 24, 25, 26, 29
Onassis, Jacqueline B. Kennedy, 6, 23

P

Pastore, John O., 14
Powers, David F., 12, 33

R

Rayburn, Sam, 16, 22
Reardon, Timothy J., Jr., 6
Reston, James B., 28, 29, 30, 31
Reuther, Walter P., 3, 4
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 32
Rusk, Dean, 32

S

Salinger, Pierre E.G., 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31
Saltonstall, John L., Jr., 15
Saltonstall, Leverett, 15, 17
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., 32
Sidey, Hugh, 27, 31
Sinatra, Frank, 16, 17
Sorensen, Theodore C., 6, 9, 11, 20, 24, 25, 26, 29, 35
Stevenson, Adlai E., 1, 2, 34
Sylvester, Arthur, 31
Symington, Stuart, II, 7, 19

T

Truman, Harry S., 10, 11, 24, 32

V

Vanocur, Sander, 27

W

Webster, Daniel, 16
White, Theodore H., 22
Wicker, Thomas G., 28