

Janet Lee Bouvier Auchincloss Oral History Interview –JFK#1, 9/5/1964
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Auchincloss, mother of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy (Jackie), discusses John F. Kennedy (JFK) and Jackie's wedding, the birth of their children, the houses that JFK and Jackie lived in, and humorous anecdotes about JFK, among other issues.

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Janet Lee Auchincloss
Janet L. Auchincloss

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Janet Lee Bouvier Auchincloss—JFK#1

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First of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Janet Lee Bouvier Auchincloss
(Also present Hugh D. Auchincloss and James Lee Auchincloss)

September 5, 1964
Newport, Rhode Island

By Joan Braden

For the John F. Kennedy Library

BRADEN: Do you remember when you first met him [John F. Kennedy]?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I first met him at dinner at the Macauleys' [Edward Macauley] in Washington—when they lived on 23rd Street as it comes down to Massachusetts Avenue. I think I sat next to him. And I knew about him because I had already met Charlie Bartlett [Charles L. Bartlett], who was a great friend of his, and I was very much impressed by this young man.

BRADEN: Was he then the junior Senator from Massachusetts?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No, he was then a Congressman.

BRADEN: Congressman then.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: He didn't become Senator until 1952, the year before he and Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] were married, and I think I met him in 1950 while Jackie was in Paris.

BRADEN: So, two years before Jackie met him.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Well, I don't know when she first met him. She was in Paris the winter of 1949 and '50 so she

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probably met him that next winter, '50 to '51. She must have known him at least two years before they were married.

BRADEN: But even then, you thought he was impressive and remembered him?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes. And the thing I best remember about that night is that when we left, we were driving down the street and I saw this tall, straight, purposeful young man striding down the street, I said to Hugh D. [Hugh D. Auchincloss, Jr.], "There's Jack Kennedy" or "young Representative Kennedy. Shall we see if we can give him a lift?" He didn't seem to have any car or any place to go and he was just walking on into the night. So we stopped the car and said, "Can we take you anywhere?" And he said, "Thank you very much. That would be very nice," and hopped in the car. There was something about him not bothering to ask anybody for a lift or not bothering to call a taxi...

BRADEN: Just striding on.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: ...but just finding him marching on blocks from the Macauleys' house—that was very endearing. I can't describe it to you, but he had a sort of a Lindbergh [Charles A. Lindbergh] quality to me at that point. I certainly had, of course, no idea I would ever see him again.

BRADEN: Then, Janet, did you see him again before Jackie met him?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Well, you know, Joan, I have tried to remember chronologically when I had seen Jack and what all the moments in our lives were, and I've absolutely blacked out on this.

BRADEN: But there's no time that you can think of particularly that you...

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I can't remember at all. There was so much stuff in the newspapers about Jackie meeting him across asparagus or the soup or whatever it was. [Interruption] I can't remember when she met him.

BRADEN: Well, Jackie told me last night about how she had known Jack for three years before they were married and that he wanted to

get married but they couldn't—he wanted to get married and didn't want to get married—and then told me about the night that he finally did. She

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went off to the Coronation. Is that right? That you sent her off with Emily Foley's young daughter, Aileen Bowdoin (now Mrs. Russell Travers)—is that right? Do you remember that?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, well...[Interruption]

BRADEN: Now, we were talking about when Jackie went off to the Coronation with Emily Foley's daughter. Why did she go, Janet?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Emily suggested that Aileen had an opportunity to go and wouldn't it be nice for Aileen if Jackie went with her. I thought it would be a wonderful thing for her. At that point she was awfully tired. She had been working for the *Times-Herald* [*Washington Times-Herald*] all winter, Lee [Lee Bouvier Radziwill] had just been married to Michael Canfield, and I thought Jackie really needed a change. So I suggested it to her. She didn't want to go at all at first. And I said, "I should think the *Times-Herald* would be happy to send you and another reporter to write up the Coronation, and if they don't want to, I'd like to give you the trip because I think it would be a great experience for you," and because I felt she needed it. She rather indignantly said she didn't want to go and...

BRADEN: Well, she probably didn't want to leave Jack Kennedy.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: That was exactly it, as I soon found out. Then I said to her, "If you're so much in love with Jack Kennedy that you don't want to leave him, I should think he would be much more likely to find out how he felt about you..."

BRADEN: That's good advice.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: ...if you were seeing exciting people and doing exciting things instead of sitting here waiting for the telephone to ring." I think I was right because while she was in England, her drawings of the Coronation appeared on the front page of the *Times-Herald* three or four times, and they were really very good, very clever. I didn't see him while she was there, but he must have seen them. I know that because he was always impressed by Jackie's gifts, he must have been impressed by these.

He called me up from, I think, Cape Cod, the day she was flying back from England, and asked me if I knew what flight she was on and

Farm. I do remember his saying to me once when he was here—I think we were sitting on the terrace, and he said to me, “Mrs. Auchincloss, don't you think that this place is just about as beautiful as any place on the whole Atlantic seacoast?” This is the kind of thing that Hugh D. likes to hear, but Jack did love this place.

BRADEN: Did he sail when he was here, Janet?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: When he was President, he had the *Honey Fitz*, which used to come up to the dock, and he'd go out nearly every day for lunch on it, good weather or bad, and then come back and work for a few hours. And then he had the *Manitou*, the Coast Guard sloop was it, or schooner?

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: It was a yawl.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yawl. We went out on that a few times. Some of the pictures of Jack I have that I like best were taken by the Navy chief who used to go out with us, with Jack at the helm.

BRADEN: Did he ever sail with Caroline [Caroline Bouvier Kennedy] on one of the smaller boats up here?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I don't remember. Caroline was out on the *Honey Fitz* all the time, but I don't remember her on the *Manitou*. Was she, Jamie?

JAMES AUCHINCLOSS: No, I don't think she was.

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: Did you tell her about the white shark?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Oh, yes. Jack had a wonderful game he used to play with Caroline. I'm sure somebody else has told this. She would ask him to tell her a story, and he had a fictitious character—a white shark, and all this shark ate was people's socks. Caroline used to ask him—I suppose she was about three or four years old—where the white shark was, and he would say, “Well, I think he is over there and he's waiting for something to eat.” And I remember his saying one day to young Franklin Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.],

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“Franklin, give him your socks. He's hungry.” And poor Franklin had to throw his socks overboard, which made a great impression on Caroline.

BRADEN: Back to the wedding, was the wedding here in Newport?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, it was. It was at St. Mary's Church on Spring Street, and the reception was here at Hammersmith Farm.

BRADEN: It was back here.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: It was a beautiful, clear, bright, but very windy day. You can notice in the pictures standing out against the post and rail fence how the bridesmaids' skirts are blowing out and Janet [Janet Auchincloss Rutherford] is fixing Jamie's [James Auchincloss] lace jabot and their hair is flying in the wind. I always think of those bright, clear days as Jack's sort of days.

BRADEN: Was the reception out on the lawn?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, we had the bridal table in the sort of a niche (the kitchen windows are above it), and then there were tables out all along the lawn. It was a little bit different out there then because the old terrace was there where Meyer Davis was playing and—well, it's gone now.

BRADEN: Were there any toasts, Janet?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Oh, yes, there were. Every bridesmaid, every usher made speeches and toasts.

BRADEN: What about the President? Do you remember anything he said then?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I wasn't sitting at the table, you see. We were wandering around. I think there were nine hundred people here. I think I heard a few toasts, but I don't really remember what his might have been. Do you, Hugh D.?

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: No, I don't.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I have a feeling that at some point someone called us over and Jack made a toast to me and to Hugh D.

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BRADEN: But you don't remember what he said?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I don't remember what he said. I should. I'm sure it was worth remembering and was funny as well as touching, but I just can't.

BRADEN: Then they went off that night, I presume?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: They went to New York that night, and the next day they flew to Mexico.

BRADEN: Then did they go to live in Washington right after then? Did you see them often after they were married?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I think they stayed up at Cape Cod quite late that fall and I think that first winter they lived on Dent Place. So I did, of course, see them quite often then. And the best book that Jackie has ever written was one she wrote that winter...

BRADEN: I didn't know she'd ever written anything.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: ...and that she gave to little Janet. It was called *A Book for Janet: In Case You Are Ever Thinking of Getting Married This is a Story to Tell You What It's Like*.

BRADEN: Did she draw pictures in it, too?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, she drew absolutely wonderful pictures of her waving goodbye to Jack as he left the house in the morning and, of course, they were all funny caricatures. There was one of the dome of the Capitol all lit up at night, very dark, and there was a rhyme underneath it about when you saw the light burning there late at night and he wasn't home yet, you knew that the country was safe because he was....

BRADEN: Because he was at the office then?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I don't know what's happened to that book. Hugh D., do you remember it?

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, I remember the book.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: It was deeply touching in a beautiful way.

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BRADEN: I hope Janet still has it.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Well, no, Janet doesn't have it. I know that because I have most of Jackie's books that she wrote and illustrated, and somehow, I think she took it or Jack wanted to see it and she took it to show to him. I haven't seen it for years.

BRADEN: How much later was Caroline born? Another three years?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Caroline was born in November of '57.

BRADEN: Were they living then in Washington?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No, she was born in New York. I can't quite remember why they had an apartment in New York that fall. I think it was.... I can't remember whether Jack was having some more back trouble or whether Jackie wanted to have the baby in New York because she had been going to Dr. Smith (obstetrician in New York City who delivered Caroline) there. I don't remember quite why Caroline was born in New York, but she was, at the New York Hospital.

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: There's where Jack was going to be all night because he went there.... And he said, well, it's for his baby.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Hugh D. and Jack and I waited in the waiting room at the New York Hospital to get the news. Caroline was born at about 8:30 in the morning on November 27th. This was a Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving. Jamie, who was just a little ten-year-old then, was at school in Aiken, South Carolina. We were going to go down to Aiken to spend Thanksgiving with him—it was their big holiday and they weren't allowed to leave school—and we were taking Janet with us. When the doctor had arranged for Caroline to be born before Thanksgiving instead of after—he could arrange this, since it had to be a Caesarean—we came rushing up to New York to be there, and Janet came with us so that when the baby had arrived safely, we would take off for Aiken from New York.

I remember how frustrated Janet was. She was twelve years old and she adored Jackie—she adored Jack, she was terribly excited about the thought of a niece or a nephew—and they wouldn't allow her in the hospital. So the hours that Jack and Hugh D. and I sat

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and waited in the hospital, poor Janet was sitting outside on the curbstone, a very mad little girl.

I'll always remember Jack's face when the doctor came into the waiting room and told him that the baby had arrived and that it was a girl and that Jackie was fine and the baby was fine. I will always remember the sweet expression on his face and the way he smiled. And the doctor said, "She's very pretty." And I don't remember that he said anything.

BRADEN: Did he see her right away?

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: He said something to the nurses about, "She's easily the prettiest baby in the room, don't you think?"

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: That was when he saw her through the glass an hour or so later.

But I just remember his sweet expression and sort of a smile. We had been talking when the doctor came in about did he care whether it was a boy or a girl, and I guess he wouldn't quite say. He said anything would be all right with him. I suppose perhaps everybody thinks they would like a boy for their first baby, but certainly, he just looked radiant when he heard that all was well.

BRADEN: Jackie told me last night that he wheeled the baby in the first time that she saw the baby.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, I suppose he did. He seemed perfectly at home with babies. I don't ever remember his having that stiffness or that being-afraid-to touch them that Hugh D. seems to have always had.

BRADEN: She also said that when Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings] came to see the baby that the President didn't point the baby out and said, "Now Lem, tell me which one of the babies in the window is the prettiest?" And most of the times, Lem got the right one, but once the wrong, and he didn't speak to him for two days. Jackie said last night that she still remembers this as the very happiest day of her life. Well, then, after Caroline was born, then they were in Washington in the N Street house?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes. Well, let me think. The first winter that they were married they were in Dent Place. The second winter, that would have been '54-'55, wouldn't it?

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MR. AUCHINCLOSS: They used to be out at Merrywood in the summertime.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Then they came and lived at Merrywood in the summertime.

BRADEN: Right after Caroline was born then?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No, they never lived at Merrywood with Caroline because I think Jackie took her up to Cape Cod. Then they had their own house there.

BRADEN: I remember that last night Jackie told me that while she was in the hospital with Caroline she was so anxious to have a house of her own that the President—well Senator he was then—had gone down to Washington and picked out the N Street house because he liked the door knocker. Do you remember that?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, I do sort of remember that. She had looked at a million

houses the spring before or that summer, I guess, when she was in Washington, and couldn't make up her mind. I think he was the one who made the final.... He always loved old houses and he loved old anything that had any historic interest. I remember when I heard that Hickory Hill was going to be for sale, where Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] and Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] now live. Jackie and Jack had been thinking of building at Merrywood. George Howe had drawn plans—Jackie had really drawn all the plans and George had consulted with her as architect. She wanted to have a one-story house with a sort of a courtyard, perched up on a cliff over the river. It all got rather complicated, bringing in water and heat—and rather expensive. When I heard about Hickory Hill after Justice Jackson [Robert Houghwout Jackson] had died and Mrs. Jackson [Irene Jackson] was going to sell it, I told her about it. She went out and looked at it, Jack looked at it, and I think that what really attracted him about it was the big trees and the fact that Andrew Jackson—who was it who lived at Hickory Hill? Hugh D., who was it?

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: I forget.

BRADEN: Actually, Justice Jackson lived in it didn't he, just before he died?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Justice Jackson lived in it and he was living there and owned it before he died. We had dinner there with him three times. He still owned it

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and it was bought from his estate. He used to ride from there all the time.

BRADEN: Janet, did they live out in Hickory Hill for a while?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Oh, yes. They bought it and moved in there intending to live there always, and they did quite a lot of remodeling. I remember all the effort Jackie went to for Jack's bathroom and dressing room. The shoe shelves had to be just in the right place to reach and the drawers had to be so he wouldn't have to lean over to open them—so that it wouldn't hurt his back. I remember the endless trouble she took over that. But they had only lived there about—let's see, that must have been.... She lived in the Childs' [Blair Child] house on Dent Place in the winter of '53-'54 and the next winter in Joe Bryan's [Joseph S. Bryan] house on P Street. Then it must have been that winter that they bought Hickory Hill—that would have been '54-'55; '55 to '56 they must have been in Joe Bryan's house. I guess the next winter must have been the one.... 1956-57 in Hickory Hill.

BRADEN: The N Street house, after Caroline was born.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: But that wasn't until after Hickory Hill, you see. But Hickory Hill, they spent so much time remodeling it. I guess they must

have bought it in the spring and worked all through the summer. Then when they moved into it, it was still in a state of being fixed.

BRADEN: Did the President help? Was he interested in the remodeling?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I think he was terribly interested, but it was a difficult place for Jackie to live. When you are married to a busy senator...

BRADEN: It was out so far.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: She was alone very much out in the country, because Jack would not get home until very late at night for dinner. When she lived in Georgetown she could rush down and have dinner with him or he could come home late.

BRADEN: I remember you told me once about the remodeling of the N Street house in the beige period. Tell about that.

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MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I remember that as an example of Jack's great patience with the foibles of women. Jackie took tremendous interest in the house. She had had the experiment of living in the country and it really had been too lonely for her there. I think particularly because she was having Caroline that winter.

BRADEN: That must have been right.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: That was it, she was having Caroline when she was living out there, so she really was rather lonely. You couldn't drive the car into town in the middle of the night to join Jack for dinner, and he couldn't get away. Everybody decided that the best thing would be for her to live in town where he could bring somebody home with him and they could get home under their own power, or if he couldn't get home, she was in the city with people around her. Then Ethel and Bobby, I think, were in very crowded quarters in town, so that worked out very well. They bought the house from Jack and Jackie.

I remember that when she got the N Street house, it was going to be just right—it was going to be absolutely marvelous. It was a house with a lot of feeling about it and a lot of charm, but she did that living room, the double living room downstairs, over at least three times within the first four months they were there. I remember you could go there one day and there would be two beautiful needlepoint rugs, one in the little front drawing room and one in the back one towards the garden. The next week they would both be gone. They would have been sent on trial. Not only that, but the curtains were apt to be red chintz one week... We were having dinner there one night and Jack didn't get home until quite late, after we had finished dinner. He was having dinner on a tray. At that moment the room was entirely beige:

the walls had been repainted a week or so before, and the furniture had all been upholstered in soft beige, and there was a vicuna rug over the sofa that Jackie still has. I can remember it in the White House on the sofa in the Oval Room. And let's see—rugs, curtains, upholstery, everything, was suddenly turned lovely different shades of beige. I knew how wildly expensive it is to paint things and upholster things and have curtains made, but I can remember Jack just saying to me, “Mrs. Auchincloss, do you think we're prisoners of beige?” [Interruption]

When Jackie was in the hospital after John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] was born, Jack was already President-elect, but he brought Caroline out to Merrywood, really, every day that whole week. He was terribly busy seeing all sorts of people, trying to form his Cabinet and spend time in the

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hospital with Jackie and peering at John. But he brought her out to Merrywood every single day for that week or ten days or two weeks or however long Jackie was in the hospital. He had a couple of ducks that somebody had given him, and he brought them out and put them in the little kennel runs at Merrywood which were sort of bedraggled. Jamie was home then. Why were you home then? For Thanksgiving vacation, I guess.

JAMES AUCHINCLOSS: No, it was for Christmas then. No, Thanksgiving. You're right.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: It must have been Thanksgiving because John was born the 25th of November. I remember that Jamie was feeding and watering and cleaning out the runs after these ducks. I can remember Jack saying once when one duck escaped and went over to the pond and Jamie went over to catch it—one of the great compliments he paid Jamie was to say, “Good boy with ducks.” [Laughter] It doesn't sound funny now, but it was.... But the other thing...

BRADEN: He must have been very excited about having a son.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I think he was absolutely thrilled because he really, really cared so much about children. He cared about all the right things, Jack. Some people love children or they love animals or they love beautiful things, but he seemed to me to really—he not only loved beautiful people or beautiful houses, but he loved beautiful writing and he loved beautiful pictures. He cared a great deal about anything that was beautiful whether he—I don't know how much he knew about music, but he liked hearing beautiful music.

BRADEN: And he kept learning all the time, didn't he?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: He really loved animals desperately. He used to come out to Merrywood. After they left Hickory Hill, they left Tippy, a golden retriever they had, with us. Jack, as you know, had a terrible allergy for dogs, which he never fussed about. He never complained. For somebody

who must have spent a great part of his life in real physical agony with his back, I never heard him fuss. You would notice how, when he had to tie his shoelace, he had to bring his foot up to his hand to tie it instead of being able to lean over. You could often see from the way he had to do things how uncomfortable it must have been. And yet I never remember his calling attention to it. I do remember that when

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he came here, we always used to let the dogs out of the room because he would suddenly be unable to breathe. His eyes would swell and his face would swell.

BRADEN: I never knew that. They always had dogs, didn't they?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: You see, they were all right outdoors, but he couldn't have them in the house with him. At Hickory Hill they had Tippy and he'd play with him outdoors, but if he were shut in a room with him or if a dog had been sitting in a chair and then he sat in it, something about the allergy. Funny, but little John has it now from the ponies.

BRADEN: Oh, I noticed it today when he came in, with his eyes.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: He's just gotten interested in the ponies and he's just loving sitting on them and riding around, but every time he does, he comes in and his eyes are all puffed and swollen, and then you put cold water on them and they seem to be all right for a while. I think that Jack's whole allergy to animals only started after his experience in the Pacific. I think it had something to do with it—and that all those days on an atoll with nothing but coconut milk or whatever they lived on may have started this and all the sickness he had after it, because I think that I've been told that as a boy he could have dogs.

Anyway, he used to come out to Merrywood to just call on Tippy. He has come out and not even told us he was there just to pet his dog and talk to him. He really, really loved dogs, animals, and he got the greatest pleasure out of watching Charlie, the little Welsh terrier that Caroline had, and all the dogs they had, but he could not be shut in a room with them because this would happen. If we forgot to put a dog out, he would never say anything about it, but then suddenly he would walk out of a room and I would remember. And he would go off and use whatever spray he had to use to try to get himself breathing again.

BRADEN: During the campaign, Janet, did you spend any time with Jackie and the President-elect?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No, we spent the.... During the Convention [Democratic National Convention], when he was nominated, Hugh D. and I went over to Hyannis Port with

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Janet and Jamie and we were with Jackie during the convention.

BRADEN: Which must have been very exciting.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: It was terribly exciting. I can't remember—I went down to Kentucky and campaigned for Jack. It was not exactly my dish of tea. Although he didn't carry Kentucky, it's my proud boast that he...

BRADEN: That he asked you to go?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No, he didn't ask me to go. I went because the girl I roomed with at college came from Lexington, Kentucky, and she called me up desperately and said that they weren't doing well and they wanted some member of the Kennedy family to come down there, one of Jack's sisters or brothers, and nobody could at that moment. And she said to me, "You'll have to come," I said, "I'm no good at this sort of thing." And she said, "Well, everybody just wants to see somebody connected with Senator Kennedy." So I felt about as creepy about that as I do about making a tape recording, but anyway, I went, feeling like a fool. I think I asked Jack first whether he thought I should go or not, and he was very much amused and really, I think, very pleased that I was going to go. I did shake a lot of hands and go to a lot of ladies' teas. I went to Stephen Foster's Old Kentucky Home where there was a great reception, and the Governor's daughter drove me all over the place. Anyway, the two counties that I campaigned in, if you could call it campaigning, he carried.

BRADEN: Wonderful. You should have been able to get to more counties.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I was prepared to do a lot of campaigning this summer.

BRADEN: At the time of the Inauguration, were the children with you, the day of the Inauguration? I remember you were in the parade and so forth.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No. No. We weren't in the parade. No, we... Which children?

BRADEN: Caroline and John.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Where were Caroline and John then?

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BRADEN: I don't know. I was just trying to remember. You did hear his speech and so forth.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Oh, yes. You see, we were snowed in at Merrywood the night before the Inauguration. We had all of our children. Where was Lee? Lee was not here. Lee had come over, I guess, when John was born and had to go back to England before the Inauguration. Isn't that true, Hugh D.?

JAMES AUCHINCLOSS: No, Lee was in Palm Beach, wasn't she, with Jackie?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I think so but then I think she had gone back to England before the Inauguration. Yes, that's true. I know that. She was not here for the Inauguration. But I remember Hugh D. getting stuck in the snow. Jamie flew down from school; he was still at the Fay School at Southboro, Massachusetts. The blizzard began about 2:30 in the afternoon, and Jamie's plane was the last one that got in to the National Airport. And Owen, wasn't it you and Owen who went to meet Jamie?

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, it was Owen (James Owen, our butler).

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Owen and Jamie tried to persuade Hugh D. to stay in the car because with his emphysema he is not supposed to get pneumonia. Anyway, Hugh D. did walk something like five miles through the deep snow that afternoon because all the cars were stuck on the parkway coming from the airport to McLean. And anyway, Yusha [Hugh D. Auchincloss III], Nini [Nina Gore Auchincloss, Tommy [Thomas Gore Auchincloss], Janet, Jamie, Alice (Yusha's wife)—well, I don't know how many people we had in our house—none of us got out that night because the two government cars that had been assigned to us to take us to the Inaugural Concert at Constitution Hall could not get up the driveway. I think if we hadn't had the government cars we might have got there. But they blocked the driveway. So the two soldiers were also snowed in at Merrywood because they couldn't get out. None of us got out that night. And the terrifying thing is...

BRADEN: Then the next morning did you all go together?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: The great thing was that Mr. Carper, the local snowplow man, himself appeared at 6 o'clock in the morning with the snowplow and got us all out, including the government cars, so that we did get to the Capitol for the Inauguration. Hugh D. and I were in the stand in back of the President [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and the President-elect.

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MRS. BRADEN: During the Inauguration.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS All the children were in seats facing him. In other words, we could only see the back of Jack's head as he delivered the

Inaugural Address, but the children were in seats facing him. Mr. Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] had a lunch for all members of the families from out of town at the Mayflower [Hotel]. Jackie and the President had lunch at the Capitol.

BRADEN: Did they come to the party at all?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No, they didn't come to the Mayflower lunch. We had a great deal of trouble getting from the Mayflower to the presidential box in the reviewing stand outside the White House, to watch the parade, because of the snow. A couple of buses that were supposed to take people were stuck. It was a wild furor there, but anyway, we did get there. Jackie shortly left the reviewing stand to go and take a rest. But the President stayed, as I remember, from start to finish.

BRADEN: I remember he looked so young and handsome.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I remember the moment when the PT-109 float went by.

BRADEN: Did that please him?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I think it pleased him enormously.

BRADEN: Did you see them often after he was in the White House, or was he so busy that you didn't see him as often as you had? I remember being there several times when he called you. He did seem every now and then to check in with you, didn't he?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, he did. I saw them quite often.

BRADEN: Did he call you after the Paris trip? Somebody told me that he had called you to tell you how well Jackie had done in Paris. Do you remember that?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: He was very, very thoughtful about things like that. I think that one of his great qualities was that he was so very easy to be with. He had less stiffness—I think, in a way, two generations in the same house

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are rather a strain. And even though it's great fun when your children have friends staying with them, one feels that they will have more fun if you're out for the evening, at least some nights. But Jack had an extraordinarily cozy quality.

It was the summer that Jackie was in Italy with Caroline—that must have been the summer of '62. It wasn't last summer, '63; she was having Patrick [Patrick Bouvier

Kennedy]. I was in New York and Jack called me at the Colony Club. I was having a talk with Betty Tuckerman (Mrs. Robert Tuckerman, a friend, and mother of Nancy Tuckerman) and was told that I was wanted on the telephone. Somebody said, "It's the White House calling. It's the President." I was quite overcome. He used to call me Mrs. Auchincloss, but then sometimes he would call me "Mummy," in quotes, you know. For some reason, this always seemed very funny to him, that anybody should be called "Mummy." I don't know why, but he thought it was very funny. I said, "How did you know I was here?" Of course, he didn't know where I was. He had just told the switchboard to get me on the telephone. He said, "Would it be convenient if I came up and stayed with Uncle Hugh and you?" John and Miss Shaw [Maud Shaw] were with us. I said, "It would be perfectly wonderful. We'd be thrilled to have you."

So he did. It wasn't as easy as all that to have the President of the United States spend the weekend with you, because all sorts of furor ensued to which, I suppose, he was rather oblivious. The Secret Service appeared and ninety-nine telephones were pulled in and out, the Newport police went into a tailspin and put little booths up here and there, and the Coast Guard whizzed around the dock. All of this I don't think he was particularly conscious of because he was an extraordinarily unpretentious man, although he had the greatest natural dignity of anybody I've ever known—whether he was in a white tie or in a bathing suit. Anyway, I remember what a very good guest he was. He always was extremely thoughtful.

BRADEN: Is this weekend the last one he stayed?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No. This was last summer. He stayed that weekend in the guest room at the top of the stairs. I went in there one afternoon, and it was absolutely boiling hot. When the wind goes the wrong way—that room only has one exposure. He never complained about it. He would come off the boat about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and go into the room. He would have several people come in and talk to him during the afternoon, and then he would work. He would have a lot of papers with him. And he would sit in there and work. As he was leaving after that weekend,

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he said, "If it wouldn't be too much trouble, I might like to come back next weekend." And then he said to me, sort of hesitantly, "Do you think next weekend, if I come back, that maybe I could have our old room on the third floor?" That was the room that Jackie had as a girl and that she is sleeping in now. I said, "Mr. President, you must have our room"—because when he came with Jackie in September each year, Hugh D. and I used to move down to the Castle, which is the yellow farmhouse here at Hammersmith Farm, so that they could have the house to themselves and relax better without wondering whether we would be waiting dinner for them or wondering whether they would be home for lunch, or whatever. He absolutely refused; he said, "I just don't want you to. I wouldn't be comfortable if I thought you had moved out of your room for me." Needless to say, we did anyway the next weekend when he came. He was a most thoughtful guest.

Hugh D. always remembers as one of the coziest times we ever had was one evening when he was here—I think perhaps that first weekend, while Jackie was in Italy with Caroline—there were just the three of us alone that evening. I think the next night I asked a few people here that I knew he liked and could relax with a bit. But that night we were alone, and we got talking about Jackie and Lee when they were children and about him. He was always so terribly interested in anything that had ever happened to anybody, I don't care whether they were old or young or connected with him or not. I think he had a tremendous interest in how you felt about everything. I could always remember him saying, “Well, Mr. Auchincloss, what do you think of something,” or to me what did I think of something—something that I might not know a thing in the world about, but I suppose he wanted to get every angle on it. Do you remember that?

BRADEN: He really did care. And remembered.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, I think that memory was something that.... I suppose it's one of the greatest gifts that anyone could ever have. Jackie has the same kind of memory.

BRADEN: Then, Janet, I remember you told me about how thoughtful he was of little Janet.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: Yes, but the particular night I was talking about, I remember telling him a story about Lee and about how she used to weave tall stories when she was little and I was upset, because I thought it very interesting for a child to tell great fabrications—but she told one that turned

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out to be a rather embarrassing one when she was about six years old. I told her the story of George Washington, and I was talking to her very seriously about having to tell the truth. She was sitting looking at me and I said, “What am I going to do with a little girl like you? You know about George Washington and you remember about the cherry tree?” I had told her how when his father came home, he was so angry when he saw this cherry tree cut down that he said, “Who did this?” George could easily have blamed it on the pickaninnies, but, I said, you know he grew up to be a great man, he was the father of his country and nobody is ever anything unless they tell the truth. Then I said, “What do you think George said?” Lee was sitting on the edge of her chair by this time because I had really worked up to quite a climax and gone into a long preamble. When I said, “So what do you think he said?” Lee said, “He said he didn't do it, of course.” [Laughter]

Well, Jack almost fell off his chair and he said, “She didn't! Oh, no.” I said, “Oh, Lee, I told you what a great man he grew up to be and that everybody has to tell the truth or they can never hope to be a good person.” Lee said to me, “Well, Mummy, I think he should have waited until the next morning when his father wasn't so mad.” This delighted Jack.

I remember that we sat downstairs in the sitting room until something like 1:30 in the morning just talking about this and that. Well, I think that when the President of the United

States can do that with a couple of old people like Hugh D. and me, it is a very good thing to remember.

MR. AUCHINCLOSS: You told her about the hair, didn't you?

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: No. There's nothing chronological about that.

BRADEN: It doesn't need to be chronological.

MRS. AUCHINCLOSS: I think when I was telling about how we would sit there and watch the living room decor change three times in three months, which is not only rather nerve-wracking but also very expensive, he had tremendous patience and tremendous wisdom and I think he greatly admired some of Jackie's qualities. But often I think he reacted very differently to things than she did because he had a less introverted nature. At least, this is the way he seemed to me. But sometimes he would look at her with a really puzzled look, but he would never say anything hurting to anybody.

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I remember the day that young Franklin Roosevelt was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of Commerce, that Jackie was out at Merrywood. This was just the spring of '63. And she had come out because I had told her she could have whatever she wanted in the way of rhododendrons and things to take down to Wexford. She and I were walking around the grounds when the Secret Service agent came rushing out and said the White House was on the telephone. She rushed into the house, came back and said, "I have to go in immediately. It's the swearing in of Franklin Roosevelt." Somebody else was being sworn in that day, too. I can't remember who, but I ought to because it was somebody, I think, in the Cabinet. And she said, "You've got to come with me." and I said, "Oh, I can't. I'm not dressed." And she said, "Oh, yes, yes, do." I knew that the swearing-in would be in the Cabinet Room, right off the President's office and that all the press and the television cameras and everybody else would be there, Jackie was in a pair of slacks and a funny looking windbreak and really untidy hair. And at that point, she was going through her more exaggerated hair...

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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