

**Mary Boylan, Oral History Interview –JFK#1, 11/29/1966**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Mary Boylan  
**Interviewer:** John F. Stewart  
**Date of Interview:** November 29, 1966  
**Location:** Boston, Massachusetts  
**Length:** 25 pages

**Biographical Note**

Boylan, a secretary in the Boston and Washington Offices of Senator John F. Kennedy (JFK) and in the social office of the White House, discusses transcribing dictated correspondence and speeches for JFK, interactions with JFK's constituents, and JFK's final campaign trip through New England in 1960, among other issues.

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**Suggested Citation**

Mary Boylan, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, November 29, 1966, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Oral History Interview

Of

Mary Boylan

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Mary Boylan—JFK#1

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First of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Mary Boylan

Boston, Massachusetts

November 29, 1966

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Why don't we begin by me asking you when you first saw John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

BOYLAN: Well, the first time that I can remember seeing him was back around 1951, I guess. It was in a parade, coming down School Street in Boston. And I had heard the bands playing, and I left my office and dashed up the street in time to see him walking. All the other older politicians were riding, waving to people; but he was a young congressman, actually, at that time, walking. And he had recently returned from the service—I hope I'm correct in this—and...

STEWART: This would have been in 1946, in his first campaign.

BOYLAN: That's right. That's right. That was way back. I waved, you know, very excitedly. And he left the line and came over and spoke to me, and he said, "Hello, how are you?" You know, like he always does. I can remember not knowing too much about him because he was fairly new in politics and thinking he was terrific to be walking this parade route. And I went back to my job and completely forgot politics.

But then in about 19—, I think it would be 1952, '53, he was then our United States

senator, and he needed somebody who could do the speeches, take his dictation rapidly, in Boston. And in his Boston office, he had one woman who had been with him, Grace Burke [Grace M. Burke], many years, but she didn't take dictation as rapidly, or couldn't get around as fast as he needed somebody to. And my name was suggested. And I was asked to come into his office and, whenever he came to town, to do his dictation. And I did that for a period of about four years. I found it very exciting, and it would be something you'd do on a Saturday. It was never during working hours, it was always on a Saturday or a Sunday when he was in Boston. And I loved the excitement of it.

STEWART:        You were taking both speeches and correspondence?

BOYLAN:        Speeches and correspondence. When he would fly into Boston, usually the Washington office would send him up a batch of correspondence to be answered from here. And he would dictate answers to the letters—usually just before he'd make a mad dash to the airport. I did most of the work in here at 122 Bowdoin Street. He'd have the driver waiting to take him, and his aides would be standing around to hurry him to the airport, and he'd gather up a bundle of correspondence and start dictating just as fast as he could go, and dropping each letter on the floor, then to the next one. Then he would just dash out, and I would go around gathering up all the different letters that had been dropped and try to put them in some order and get them typed up. Actually, at the time, I had been working for him as an employee.

STEWART:        Were there ever any major goofs in this rapid dictation, that you recall?

BOYLAN:        Not that I recall. Actually, it seems as if we never failed to be handy when he needed us, and it was always split-second timing on everything. And then the mail would be sent to him in Washington, and he would sign it. He liked perfect work, he never wanted a letter to have any errors on it. And he never made long replies. He got right down to it in two or three sentences, to the meat of the correspondence. But I remember the time I was appointed, when he offered me a job. It was the time that Senator and Mrs. Lehman [Herbert H. Lehman; Edith Altschul Lehman] were being honored at the Harvard Club. Senator Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] were having a cocktail party in their honor, and they had invited about three hundred lawyers from the Boston area, from the Massachusetts area. I had handwritten all these envelopes sending out the invitations, and my sister-in-law, who is from New York, heard me talking about it and mentioned she'd love to meet Senator and Mrs. Lehman again. And was there any chance I could get her an invitation? I said I doubted it, but I would go up to the office and ask. At that time I wasn't actually employed by him. And when I went into the office on my lunch hour, there was great excitement. He was in the office, and I didn't realize this. He was leaning over the files, and he was asking Grace Burke for some candy. Did she have any Hershey candy? And somebody asked me to take my coat off quickly, the Senator wanted to talk with me. And he turned around, and he just said, "Mary, how would you like to work for me?" And this was the beginning. I just immediately said, "I'd like that very much." I went home that night and said to my mother, "You'll never guess what I did

today. I just accepted a job with Senator Kennedy.” And then I was sworn in, and I took the oath in the office with him—rather, he gave me the oath of office there. And that was—I’m just trying to think of the exact date. I don’t remember it at this time, but I could look it up. And I worked then from then until the latter part of February in 1958.

STEWART: You worked here in Boston?

BOYLAN: Here in Boston, 1702 Federal Building. And I acted as his—I did secretarial work for him. I was his secretary, and I did dictation, and I did his speeches, and I answered much of the correspondence, and handled the civil service cases, and did whatever was required.

STEWART: Who else was in the office with him at that time?

BOYLAN: Grace Burke was in the office, and Frank Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey] came in. He wasn’t there usually during the day, but he would come in, say, around five, five-thirty at night. And there was an old friend of Jack Kennedy’s, Dick Conroy [Richard Conroy], who used to come in around three in the afternoon to relieve Grace at the phones and talk to the constituents. He was not paid, he was just a friend of Jack’s.

STEWART: Who primarily in the Washington office did you work with, who did you have the most contact with?

BOYLAN: I worked under Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.], and I handled all the Massachusetts correspondence. I answered all the letters from constituents from Massachusetts for his signature. And I worked here in Boston with Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] many times on speeches, and Muggsy O’Leary [John J. O’Leary], and Fred Holborn [Frederick L. Holborn] in the Washington office. But I did work under the administrative assistant, Ted Reardon, and Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln]. Evelyn and I did similar work; she did the work in the Washington office that I did in Boston: his schedule, and getting him his reservations, and things like that.

STEWART: What were the biggest problems that you remember?

BOYLAN: Oh, the biggest problems we had, he would change his mind, you know, he would call and say or he’d tell me, or somebody would tell me, that I have to get him on a certain plane, and he would not be able to make that plane. And as a result, I would sometimes put him on four or five different flights and figure I’d be sure to hit one of them. At that time there was a three dollar charge for a “no show.” And he hated this thing. Even though he had to have a reservation, he....

STEWART: You had no choice but to make a number of them.

BOYLAN: But after a while I became so friendly with the airline personnel that

there was sort of an understanding that they would reserve a seat for him, even if he failed to show up. And I usually handled it that way. One time he had come up to Boston to make a speech, and it wasn't handed to him when he left Washington. As a result, I had to call the Washington office, and they dictated from a copy of it. And I had to just gather people from their offices to come in, and we had somebody taking it down—I'd be taking it down, dictating, and somebody would be typing it up from my notes. We barely got the speech finished in time for him to make it and to give it to the press. These things all happened without any warning. We just sort of jumped right into it with both feet.

STEWART: What about the correspondence, what were some of the bigger problems that you ran into there?

BOYLAN: Well, lots of times they were on some immigration case here in Boston that we would immediately send to Washington because most of his immigration cases were handled out of Washington. But, locally, most of the people were looking for jobs, some type of civil service employment. And he said to me at one time, "Don't go through the routine correspondence if you can pick up the phone. If you have the head of an agency, Mary, just pick up the phone and ask what the person's prospects are and then write a nice little letter." And I used to compose my letters, and they were signed by him usually when we sent them to Washington.

STEWART: Was there ever a problem in determining what letters should be sent down, to someone down there, and what you could handle yourself, or what could be handled here in the Washington office?

BOYLAN: No, there wasn't any problem. Sometimes there was a little play between the Washington office and Boston. In fact, one night, I remember it was about six-thirty, and most of the people in the government agencies had gone home, and a very nice-looking woman with two very well-dressed children appeared in the doorway, and she said, "Is this Senator Kennedy's office?" And I said, "Yes, it is." The door was always open. And she said, "Well, I'm—" She mentioned her name, and she said, "I'm here for eleven hundred dollars." And I said, "For what?" And she said, "Eleven hundred dollars?" And she kept pointing to the desk drawer as if I had kept money there. And I said, "Well, who sent you for money?" And she said that she had been in the Washington office, and she started to pour forth her story.

It seemed that she and her family were leaving Poland, and the health authorities discovered that her husband had a spot on his lung. So they wanted her and the children to come. And her husband, in the meantime, had treatment and things had cleared up, but she needed some money. And she had gone to Senator Kennedy's Washington office, and they advised her to go to Boston, and all they said to her was, "Go in and see Mary Boylan. She'll take care of you." And this is what she needed, and this is what should be done because....

So she was very insistent, and I asked her if she would go down to the immigration authorities, down at the Custom House, and she was very, very upset. She had thought that I had money in the drawer, and I could just hand it to her because Jack Kennedy was going to

help her, you know. So I called Ted Reardon the next day, and he just said, “God!” He said, you know, “We thought maybe we could help her out by just sending her up there because we couldn’t do anything for her here.” What she really wanted was money.

The constituents were really comical. You know, if the Senator, then the Senator, had to sit there and listen to the tales of woe, he would have been helping every one of them, you know. That’s the type he was. But you found out after a while that some of these were professional. They made the rounds of each political office, and they would come periodically, you know. Some of them were slightly unbalanced. And some of them were just chronic, you know...

STEWART: I suppose you get so after a while, you could spot them fairly...

BOYLAN: I could spot—at first I couldn’t. I’d lend a very sympathetic ear, and I was very sorry for them. And I’d end up taking most of the correspondence home, to do at home, because I had spent most of the day just listening to them. Very rarely could get out for lunch. I also took a lot of dictation that would be sent to Ambassador Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.], giving him, you know, the story of the happenings here in Massachusetts, which he was interested in politically.

STEWART: I assume the volume of mail continually increased, and increased especially after 1958, or so.

BOYLAN: Yes, the volume of mail in Washington was tremendous, because even though he was senator from Massachusetts, people from every state wrote to him on different types of problems and on many legislative matters because he had a fine staff. He had Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman], Ted Sorensen, Fred Holborn, and Richard Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin]. I worked with all of those boys.

STEWART: And when did you to go Washington then?

BOYLAN: I went to Washington, March 10, 1958. He called me from Palm Beach and asked me if I was going to Washington, and I said, no, I didn’t think I was. You know, I had thought it over. And I got a call from Evelyn Lincoln on a Thursday night that the Senator would be in Boston Friday, and he wanted to see me at his apartment at 122 Bowdoin Street at nine o’clock. And I came here, it was a very rainy Friday morning, I came here, and there was a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door. So I went back downstairs to the janitor, Joe Murphy [Joseph Murphy] and his wife, who invited me in for coffee. We said, “Well, I guess maybe the Senator is sleeping, and we won’t disturb him.” And by eleven o’clock I was getting kind of uneasy. I knew he had sent for me at nine, and I had been down there. I asked Mr. Murphy to go up and check and see if there was any reason why, you know, the sign was still on the door. And he was up here, very agitated, wondering where was Mary!

STEWART: Oh, my God!

BOYLAN: And so Joe said, “Well, she’s been sitting down there since about eight-thirty waiting.” And he said, “That sign wasn’t for Mary. She should know better.” So I came up, and Mr. Morey [Robert F. Morey], who was the driver, was here with him, and he took me into the—was it this room here?—no, it was his living room. He said, “Now, what’s the story on Washington? What’s your reason for not wanting to go down there?” And I remember, I said, “Well, you know, I’m very happy here in Boston.” And he said, “But I need you in Washington. You know all about Massachusetts.” And he said, “You know, if you come with me now, I’ll take you to the White House.” And I never....

STEWART: Is that in 1958?

BOYLAN: 1958. And I never forgot that. And I said, “You know, my mother [Mrs. Boylan] said that you’re going to be our next president.” And he just beamed, you know, like this is.... And he said, “Well, what’s the answer?” I kind of hesitated, and I said, typical Boston fashion, you know, I said, “Could I have time to think it over?” And he said, “When will you let me know?” And I said—this is Friday morning—and I said, “I’ll let you know Sunday.” So I didn’t discuss it with anybody. I went down to the office and did my work. And I went to church on Sunday, and I thought about it a little bit at church, and I thought, “Oh, really, Mary, this is the third time that he’s asked me. I think I won’t have another chance.” He did mention, he said, “There’s a hundred and fifty girls that have applied to work in Washington.” He said, “I can’t imagine anybody not wanting to go.” I told him that I didn’t know if I could swing things financially. And he said he could take care of that, you know, which he did. He arranged to give me a check out of his own account in New York. But he also informed me that I made more money than most of the girls in his office, and he couldn’t very well bring a new girl in making more money.

So anyway, I asked him, he said, I called the apartment here Sunday morning, and he answered the phone himself. He had just come back from the airport. He had been down at Hyannis Port, apparently on Saturday, and came up. And I said it was Mary, and he said, “Yes.” And I said, “Well, I’ve decided to accept.” I remember he said, “Oh, God, that’s great.” He said, “Call Ted Reardon now.” He said, “When are you going to go down?” Then I hesitated, and I said, “Would I be able to take a vacation? I haven’t had one in a year and a half.” Because when he’d be up here in the summertime, you know, he was down at Hyannis Port and back and forth, and he was busiest then. He said, “You just tell me the date you’ll be down. Take as long as you want, but just give me a date.” I said, “All right, how about March 10th?” And that was it. So I left Boston March 9th. They were wonderful. They sent me a welcome letter, and arranged for me to stay with one of the girls in the office. I remember the first day down there, he just waved like I had been there for three or four years. “Hi.” You know, it wasn’t anything new to him, I guess, to have employees coming down there.

STEWART: Did you have many problems settling in down there in the office that...?

BOYLAN: No. I’ll tell you, the girls had been telephone friends. I was Mary in the Boston office, there was Mary and Grace, and on many cases we

had terrific understanding. I could call and ask them questions, and they would call up here. And if he forgot things, or if he wanted some information, they could call me, and we could relay it to him. And the girls were very, very much of a unit. I mean they were one together behind him. And they really welcomed me, which made it so much nicer than going into a place where you might be resented.

STEWART: You had really learned all about the office at a distance.

BOYLAN: At a distance.

STEWART: You knew just what to expect when you went down there.

BOYLAN: However, it was the first time I had lived away from home, and they had welcome dinners, and they showed me so much hospitality. He had said, "You'll like all the girls. They're all looking forward to your coming down." I did say that I'll be home in three weeks, I'll never last, and at first I came home every chance I got. Then the drive home on weekends was getting to be kind of a grind, and it would go from six weeks to two months. Then after a while you couldn't pry me out of Washington. I just, you know, got to like it.

STEWART: What were you doing? Were you working just generally for everyone in the office, or...?

BOYLAN: No, I handled all the Massachusetts mail. That was my specific area. All correspondence that came in from constituents, no matter what the problem was, I would answer. If it were on an immigration case, I would route it to the girl who handled immigration; and if it were on legislation, of course, it went to his legislative assistants. We were part of a very exciting operation, and we all had a chance to go over on the Senate floor, in the gallery, rather, and watch him on the floor.

Mrs. Lincoln, when I first went down there, said, "Perhaps you'd like to go to the dedication exercises at the Taft Memorial." And they gave me an invitation that the President and Mrs. Kennedy had received, and I remember I was just down there I think about a week when this happened. I had a camera, a very small camera, about the size of a prayer book, in my pocketbook. I was sitting, perhaps, in the second row. I noticed men, pretty husky men, like football players, and their eyes traveling all around, but it never dawned on me these were Secret Service men. And when I went to open my pocketbook, all of a sudden I was surrounded, and I had to show what I had, and I had to give it over to one of them who—I said it was only a camera. I was going to take a picture of President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon] and the group as they walked in. And they said, "Well, you never do something like that." And that was my first lesson in how well the president is guarded.

STEWART: So you continued to handle Massachusetts affairs right along, or...?

BOYLAN: Yes, I answered all the Massachusetts mail that came to me in

Washington. And very many times I recognized a name from a chronic case back in Boston. They would write to the Boston office, and they would write to him in Washington. And I did work on speeches, many times I was called in to do that.

STEWART: To take dictation from him.

BOYLAN: Dictation on speeches, yes. They had one girl who had gone to school down there, and who had taken some dictation. Previous to going down, I had gone down to the Cape and worked down there. He might call up and ask me to meet Dave Powers [David F. Powers] in Harvard Square, and we would drive down. And he would dictate, sometimes as many as ten speeches. And while I'd be typing them up in the office down there, he and Dave might go out and play golf. And this would go on for two or three days. Then he and Ted Sorensen would cut, and they would revise, and take a paragraph from another speech, and put it in here. All this was done under pressure because he'd be due to take off and go someplace else.

STEWART: It could have been very frustrating to see your work all chopped up and have to do it over again, and this type of thing.

BOYLAN: Yes, but, you know, working for him—I think anybody that worked for him just adjusted themselves. I just knew whenever I did a page that it might be all cut up and might be all over the place, and I might have to do it over. He might change it four and five times, which he often did. But sometimes even while you would be typing, he would be writing, and that was where the difficulty came. You could read your own notes, but it was very difficult to read his handwriting. And if you asked him, which you sometimes hesitated to do, he'd say, "Well, of course, you know what that is." You know, it was....

STEWART: Did you get used to it after a while? Could you read his writing fairly well?

BOYLAN: Yes, after a while I knew that a big long wavy line meant, you know, like several letters. "O" and "m" you could almost distinguish what it was. I know taking dictation from him was really a challenge because he spoke, oh, he must have spoken about two hundred words a minute. And I could take dictation at two hundred and twenty words, and he kept me right on my toes all the time. And one time he said to Dave, you know, he said, "No matter how fast I go, she can still get it down." And it seemed like he was testing me, you know, all the time. But I never, never remember asking him to repeat. I think I was a little bit afraid, you know, so that I pushed myself. He never had time really. When he did something, then that was it, he was off someplace else.

STEWART: Your speed, I assume, then increased as you....

BOYLAN: Pardon?

STEWART: Your speed increased as you went along?

BOYLAN: Yes. As a matter of fact, had I not been taking this court reporting course at Harvard, I'm sure that I never could have kept up with him because in school you take dictation at about one hundred and twenty-five words a minute. At least I did. And court reporting, you have to get a speed up around two hundred. He didn't like stenotype; he liked to have a girl, an employee, to have a notebook because he'd often say, "Now turn back three or four pages and read me what I said there." He seemed to know just where he was in your notebook. And fortunately, I dated everything, every letter I ever took from him, and I still have all the notebooks.

STEWART: You saved them all?

BOYLAN: For some unknown reason, when I left that Boston office, I had all these notebooks in a file drawer, and I just thought, well, maybe someday I'd like to read my notes back. And now I find it brings back everything, you know, just to read the notes because they're dated, and there are speeches in there, and there's letters. It brings all these people like Joe Curnane [Joseph A. Curnane] and Dave and everybody alive again, you know.

STEWART: You should definitely keep those.

BOYLAN: I'm using them to help me to remember what I do remember about JFK.

STEWART: They must be an invaluable source.

BOYLAN: I know. I'm delighted that I had that—it wasn't foresight, it was the way you were trained in school, that you may, ten years from now, have to read back your notes for some reason or other. I'm sure that most people never do, but now I have those.

STEWART: So, did you continue to work on Massachusetts affairs even after the presidential campaign started, or did you move over to...?

BOYLAN: When the presidential campaign started, he asked me if I wanted to go down to the Esso Building and to work with Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith]. And would I go down, and I preferred to be in the Senate—I had never been involved in campaign work—and I liked the Senate work. And the campaign had just started in '59, and it was so new, and there just didn't seem to be anything to do really, and I like to be busy. It was not something he forced on you to do; he just asked if you'd like to go. And Steve Smith asked—Steve knew me from the Boston office—if I wouldn't like to come down and work for him. However, I continued to stay on in the Senate when he went to Wisconsin. Part of my reluctance that I was timid about flying. But I had flown several times,

because he would call up and say, “Hop down to the Cape.” And he’d expect you there ten minutes after he hung up. And so you’d have to just fly out. And I figured if I was on the campaign, I’d have to do a lot of flying, and I just wasn’t too eager to.

However, once we got to the White House, I never missed a trip to Hyannis Port, or to Palm Beach, or up to Boston, whenever he.... I remember flying on Air Force One, which was a tremendous experience, because that was in May of 1963 at the anniversary of Boston College. We left, the White House staff car picked us up about ten minutes to one, took us to Andrews. And there was great pomp and circumstance. I can remember the Air Force Band playing, and everybody saluting him, and Dave Powers was waving goodbye to his wife and children, who were flying up to visit their family up here. And the President came out of his compartment on the plane, and sat down with Mrs. Powers [Jo Powers], and Jo, the children and myself. And I know we were having Bloody Marys—and we were slightly embarrassed; we hoped he thought it was only tomato juice—because Dave had told the steward that his wife was very uneasy about flying, and I was, too. And he told him to mix a real good Bloody Mary, just serve them, don’t ask them what they want. But he come out and sat down. He asked me if I was going up to see my family and a few other little questions, you know, and went back. I was with him in the car with Dr. Burkley [George G. Burkley] when he picked the site for the library.

STEWART: Oh, were you?

BOYLAN: Yes. We had gone out to Boston College. Oh, there was tremendous excitement because whenever he came to Boston, everybody that ever knew him was there at the airport, and the Secret Service men were there. I had asked my family—well, I said maybe I’d have a couple of hours, I wouldn’t bother going out to BC, could they meet me there? But in the excitement and confusion, they went out to BC, and my brother met me at the airport. And he said, “We better just hop in this car and get out to BC. That’s where everybody is.” And we got out there rapidly. When I got out there, I met Muggsy O’Leary, and he said, “You better be right in the car because when we move, there won’t be time to go looking for you in the crowd, and you’d miss the flight back.” So I heard the speech, and I was down behind the stands. Dr. Burkley rode in our car, or I mean I rode in his car rather. My brother was a graduate of BC, and he had a ticket to the exercises. But as we were coming down around the stadium in the motorcade, I heard somebody yell, and I said to Dr. Burkley, “Oh, could we maybe stop the car?” And he said, “No.” And the trooper, who was a Bostonian, stopped the car, and I said that it was my brother, and he just got in on—he was not a corpsman, but he was part of the White House medical staff. He left his car out at BC, and he rode as far as the airport.

At the airport there was one little incident that was very funny. There were crowds around, and I said to my brother, “Why don’t you come in and look at the plane?” He said, no, he wouldn’t do that. He’d just stay in the background. However, Jack Kennedy spotted two of his oldest friends. They both had the same name, Jimmy Collins. And he called to them and said, “Would you like to see my plane?” And they said, “Sure.” And they came over, and they got aboard, and they next thing you knew, we were airborne. They didn’t even know we had taken off. It happened so fast. And they said, “Have we left the ground?” And Jimmy said, “Where are we going?” I said, “You’re on your way to Washington.” And they

were startled because neither one of them had any money with them. They had left their car at the airport, they hadn't told anybody.

General Clifton [Chester V. "Ted" Clifton, Jr.] came out, and I mentioned it to him, that they were kind of startled that they were on their way to Washington, and was there anything that could be done? He said, well, he'd find out from the commander-in-chief. And he went back and explained their plight to him, and apparently he thought he'd have a little fun, and he said, "Well, tell them during weekends Mary Boylan will show them around Washington." So actually what he did was to tell General Clifton to arrange for a plane to get them back. But I often regretted that my brother hadn't been fortunate enough to come aboard, too, just for the flight on Air Force One.

STEWART: That was the day you mentioned he went to the library site, or at least....

BOYLAN: Yes. We were coming from Boston College, down Market Street onto Soldiers Field Road. And as we passed the stadium—it was just as we were about to come to Western Avenue—the car stopped, and I remember Admiral Burkley, everybody jumped, these Secret Service men, everybody jumped out immediately, and we thought something happened. And he had gotten out and he was just very casually looking around, and pointing across the river. We learned afterwards that he had a choice of Brookline, or, I think, maybe Washington or Cambridge, and he decided on this particular site.

STEWART: At the Lars Anderson. I think that's a....

BOYLAN: That is in Brookline, isn't it?

STEWART: Right. My former boss, Dr. Grover [Wayne C. Grover], at the Archives, I think wanted the Lars Anderson site.

BOYLAN: That would have been a very.... And, of course, he was born in Brookline. But I really think he preferred Cambridge because he had gone to school here, and from an academic and scholarly viewpoint, he thought this was the perfect setting. And I was particularly happy because it was on the border of Allston, the town I come from, and it was very familiar territory. And I was very happy that I was with him the day he picked this particular spot out.

STEWART: Well, what did you do during the campaign? Were you still in the Senate office?

BOYLAN: Yes, I stayed in the Senate office building, and I had the misfortune to be in a fire during that time, a flash explosion in the incinerator in the apartment building. But I didn't go on the campaign until the very end, until just before the election. The work of the Senate office had to go on, and you could go if you wanted to, but I chose not to. And because you would be traveling so many states, and

you really wouldn't know, and I preferred to keep doing the work I was doing, and he thought it would be nice if every member of his staff went on some of the campaign trips. For the last one that went from Washington into Connecticut to New Hampshire to Rhode Island...

STEWART: The final few days.

BOYLAN: ...finally into Massachusetts, was the one I chose. And that was the most exciting part of my whole career, I think, because every place we went, even though we had been working very late at night.... The employees of the Nixon office would poke their heads in and tell us, "You might just as well go home because.... We'll give you a job; you'll be standing in line in November." We just kept working without thinking too much of it, and we had the feeling from the reaction of the people that he certainly was going to be elected president. And it was kind of a holiday, you know, fiesta-type atmosphere because they were just jubilant.

I know in Burlington, Vermont, the people had been standing out there—it was freezing—in below zero temperatures waiting. And finally when he did appear, the crowd would surge toward the Senator. I remember Ted Reardon's wife [Betty Jane Reardon] almost had her hand crushed. And he would just scoot around. The Secret Service men couldn't keep track of him. He would be going in one direction, he'd flip around and go a different way, and he was sort of playing tricks on them. But the crowds were jubilant, and in New Hampshire it was the same way. And then when we got into Rhode Island, it was very late in the morning, early in the morning rather, it was about two, and the people had been standing there all evening. There was still a tremendous crowd.

STEWART: In Waterbury, Connecticut, was one of the late evening...

BOYLAN: Yes.

STEWART: I think he came from Bridgeport, and then went to New Haven, and then came up the Naugatuck Valley area to Waterbury. This was 1:30 or 2 in the morning. There was still a crowd on the green there.

BOYLAN: Yes. In Rhode Island it was bitter cold, and we were all being put up at the Biltmore Hotel in Providence. And it seemed as if we only got there actually about four in the morning, and I'm sure the hotel had never had to handle a mob scene like this. You would almost think he had been elected at that time. At six or six-thirty in the morning, you could hear bands playing, and I turned to my roommate, Kathy Rafferty [Katherine Rafferty], who also worked for him in Washington, and said, "Oh, Kathy, we'd better get out of here. The parade has started." And from there, from Rhode Island—I'm just trying to think, did he just come directly to Boston? It can't be because...

STEWART: I think he probably went from there to Bridgeport, and then on up to Springfield.

BOYLAN: That's right because they ferried the planes, and we went by motorcade through the towns in Connecticut, and then into Springfield. And everywhere we went, the streets were lined, even the schoolchildren were out from the first to the eighth grades with the nuns, and they were waving flags, and they were clapping. All of us, I think, were just, you know, we all acted like politicians; we loved it because it seemed like they were all smiling faces.

STEWART: What were you doing work-wise on this whole trip?

BOYLAN: This was not a working trip for me. It was strictly going home to vote. And I remember coming into Boston. When we got to Logan Airport, the crowds were tremendous. Then we came through the tunnel, the Callahan Tunnel, and a woman, somehow or other, with a big boat tagged on behind her—you know, on a trailer—had got into the motorcade, and she was frantic because we were going at a terrific pace, and she was trying to keep up with this boat sashaying behind. And then, as we came into Boston, you just couldn't move. Luckily we could get through, and I remember coming on Washington Street, and waving to all the people I knew, and then going in towards the Garden [Boston Garden]. However, when we got into the Garden, the crush was so tremendous that many of us just turned away and didn't attempt to come into the Garden because even though we had badges and everything, it was like a frenzied mob, and the little bridge—they had taken us in sort of the back way of the Garden—the weight of the people almost caused the bridge to collapse. And most people tried to get out of the way quickly.

STEWART: And where did you go election night?

BOYLAN: Then, of course.... Pardon?

STEWART: So election night....

BOYLAN: On election night I went home and stayed up to.... The next day, of course, everybody voted, and then that night we watched the returns. We stayed up almost confident that he was—knowing he was going to win, but loving every minute of it because we had all been out and sort of all charged up with the excitement of the last final swing into Massachusetts.

STEWART: What did you do after the election? Did you go back to the...?

BOYLAN: After the election, I frantically tried to get through Hyannis Port to ride back, to fly back, with the crowd, and everything was just, as you could imagine—not confusion, but everybody was bent on something else, and I ended up flying commercially from Boston, from Logan. And we went back. I was just trying to think. It was more or less a cleaning-up operation then because we were getting ready for the White House. And none of us knew actually until.... Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith II] came down, I remember that, and Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] asked me if I would like to help him out, that the future President thought since I came from Boston and

knew the routine, I could be of great help to Ben Smith. And I stayed with him for about two weeks, and gave up my vacation, my leave, which I intended to take.

STEWART: Stayed with him in...

BOYLAN: With Ben Smith, and Ben offered me a job. He was going to be the temporary senator from Massachusetts until the next election. However, I told him that, you know, I remembered that he said, "If you come with me, I'll take you to the White House." And it was such a, you know, like a dream, that I hated not to go. And Ben said he understood. He did say, however, "You know, wherever Jack Kennedy is, I'll be very close behind, and you'll always be part of the group." I said, "Well, I still would like to be with him down..." I felt that I started out with him, and I wanted to finish with him.

After we got to the White House, we seemed to see less and less of the President, but I do remember one day I had to go over to the dispensary with one of the Eisenhower holdovers, as we referred to them. And I just happened to have a little pad of paper and pencil. I was going to make a phone call from the pay phone. And on the way back, coming past the Rose Garden, as I went through the little room that's outside of the, not the conservatory, but the White House flower room, I heard somebody say, "Oh, Mary." And I turned around, and I was slightly startled to see the President in his terry cloth robe. He had just come out of the pool and was walking through.

I said, "Oh, hi, Senator." And he smiled, and I said, "Oh, President." And then I corrected myself and said, "Mr. President." He kept smiling and laughing at me, and, in typical fashion, you know, he said, "Say, would you take a letter?" And this other girl said—she was so stunned, you know—"You'd never seen President Eisenhower, and it would never be so informal." And he said, "For the Nobel Prize dinner reception, would you add this name to the list? Would you give Miss Baldrige [Letitia Baldrige] this name and make sure an invitation went out to so and so?" And he rattled on.

When we got back to our office in the East Wing, the girl who was the Eisenhower holdover said, she practically collapsed, "We just spoke to the President." You know. This was just typical of how they acted, you know. And she said, "And Mary took the dictation just like she expected he was going to give it to her." It wasn't that much dictation, but, you know, I wasn't prepared for it really.

STEWART: There were quite a few people that stayed on, weren't there?

BOYLAN: Yes. As a matter of fact, in the office that I was assigned to, in the social office, I felt very uneasy because they were all Eisenhower dedicated workers. And he asked me at the time where I was working. He had really gotten far away from his staff. He was just so busy as a president. And he asked me if I liked it, would I prefer to work any place else, and who was I working for. He was the type of person, the first time I met him, he made a tremendous impression on me. I was very young. I was perhaps twenty, and he had such a winning personality that when I was asked to work for him, I had not any hesitation, actually. Except that he sort of assumed that you'd always be there, and never, his driver and his other aides used to say, you know, "We've never let

him down once.” But he was very kind, too. Sometimes when he’d say, “Come down to the Cape,” he’d say, “Bring your mother along for the ride.” And she’d be thrilled, of course, you know, to be going down, as most people were, and he would come downstairs. Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] might be there.

I remember one time Bobby had just shampooed his hair, and he came out, and he gave my mother the “Hello, how are you?” You know. And the Senator, he was senator then, came down and said, “Hi, Mrs. Boylan, would you like something to drink?” And she was offered tea or Coke or a glass of milk. But he was very thoughtful, and then he said, “Why don’t you take the keys to the car, Mrs. Boylan, and drive around while I’m dictating?”

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

STEWART:       Why don’t you just pick up....

BOYLAN:       Well, we were talking about down at the Cape. My mother wouldn’t like to let on that she was much too old to drive and, furthermore, never had got a license, and she’d tell him that she just liked to sit on the porch and enjoy the view. And he would dictate and dictate, and then I would type it up. Bobby would be very, very nice taking her around, showing her the room downstairs where all the dolls from foreign lands are and the movie room. I was impressed with how nice they were to an older person, that they weren’t too busy to show their nice bringing up, you know. That they were just as thoughtful of somebody’s mother as they would be of their own.

And we’d be invited to stay for dinner, and we usually declined. We felt that it was a nice gesture on their part, but I was there just to work, and I didn’t like to appear over anxious to do that. However, I often did stay at the Cape when he stayed there, you know, for a period of time. I was there before Caroline [Caroline Bouvier Kennedy] was born. And most of his letters were regrets—very joyful. He was regretting all these different invitations because he and his wife were expecting a baby, and he wanted to be right there and not traveling or committed. And I know he seemed very happy—this was three weeks before Caroline was born—very happy, but he couldn’t understand how his father could stay down at the Cape when, after the Labor Day, it seemed so cold, you know, because Caroline was born in November. And this would be late October or early November, and it would be kind of windy and drafty in the big old house down there, but very charming to me. I thought it was just delightful because there were rooms filled with pictures of the Kennedy family, of the early days, when he was ambassador. Perhaps I should explain about that. Perhaps I should go back to say that when I was in school....

I went to a Boston business school when I graduated from high school. And the first time I had ever even heard about the Kennedy family was in school when the teacher I had in accounting mentioned that all the girls who were studying to be secretaries there should strive for the type of position this girl held as secretary to Ambassador Kennedy. She described her duties. She said that she would have to take care of all the shots for the children when they were going over to Europe and keep track of their dental records and their report cards. And her duties weren’t strictly like an office secretary; it was like a family secretary. And I thought, “Wouldn’t that be wonderful! Imagine going to Europe and being a part of this family.” At that time I never thought that I would be part of the family group, too.

I had taken dictation from Bobby the time he got the Lantern of Freedom Award. He came into Boston, and he sent for me right away. He had very little time, he was giving the speech that night. He dictated it, and he revised and corrected it as they were marching into the main hall for the banquet. And I would go back into some room and grab a typewriter and do it, and then give it to one of his aides to get up on the stage. And it would all appear as if it had been planned for weeks in advance, when actually it was a very frantic last minute thing, but it would come out beautifully. They seemed to work terrifically under pressure, and they could wear anybody out, you know, that wanted to be. But if you were dedicated and devoted, as most people were, it didn't bother you at all.

But one night I remember I had just got home from his office, I was working for him, and I got a call to hop into the Ritz-Carlton right away from one of his aides—I don't recall who it was at the moment—and to bring my notebook. I got into my old car, and I drove in and parked it on Marlborough Street. Bob Morey and another one of his aides were there, and a doorman waiting to park my old car, which I had parked down the street. I got taken right up to, I believe it was the eighth floor, where he and Jackie were getting dressed for a dinner. There was a knock on the door, and somebody said, "Mary's here." And he said, "Tell her to come right in." And I remember Jackie had this beautiful Dior white gown on that had powder blue French chiffon flounces, you know, and she just looked beautiful. They were going to be honored guests at a reception for an Ambassador Brosio [Manlio Brosio] from Italy. And as soon as I came in the door, they were dressed, but he was still, like, putting his cuff links in his cuffs—he started dictating, and Jackie said, "Oh, Jack, couldn't you wait until we at least get downstairs?" And he just kept right on dictating.

So they were ready to leave, and we got on the elevator. And he kept right on dictating. We went through the lobby and out into the car, and he dictated all the way over in the car. And I almost broke my leg trying to get out of the car after him. We walked into the Copley Plaza—you know, the Sheraton Plaza—and he was still dictating, and he said, "Now, don't leave my side, there'll be people"—you know, at this little cocktail party, pre-banquet party—"come up and speak to me, but I'll turn aside." We went into the hotel, and I did follow him. He would come over—he'd get out of the receiving line and come over—and he'd dictate another sentence.

STEWART:       What was he dictating?

BOYLAN:        It was his speech, all about the early Italians who had come to this country; very interesting speech, but it only amounted to two pages. However, he thought it up right out of, you know, his mind.

STEWART:       Where was it to be given?

BOYLAN:        It was to be given in the hotel, Copley Plaza—at that time Copley Plaza—as a welcome to Ambassador Brosio of Italy. He was being honored. And I may have a copy of the speech. Sometimes I kept a carbon, but I know I kept it in my notebook.

STEWART:       It was to be given that evening?

BOYLAN: That evening in, say, about, oh, thirty or forty minutes. I rushed around after he said, "I guess that'll do." He had dates, he had very good background, almost as if it was a little composition he had written in school, and he had no notes or anything. He must have done a little research on it and read about it, and just dictated it right to the notebook. And I typed it up. I found an office in the hotel where there was a typewriter. But they had no carbon paper, and I had to run around and get carbons because the press would be right there waiting to grab the speech, and there'd be no chance to edit it or change it or anything.

And I remember when it was finished and I had given copies to the press, I then went into the banquet hall, and he was seated at the head table, and I crouched along the back of the banquet table and handed it to him. He looked down to this creature and said, "Oh, thank you very much. Wouldn't you like to go out and sit down and have something to eat?" I had left my dinner at home, and I thanked him, and I said, no, if that was all, I'd just as soon not stay around. Usually I stayed to hear him deliver a speech. I heard afterwards from people that were there that the speech went off beautifully, and you'd think he had prepared it for weeks in advance. And, of course, I'd read it the next day in the paper, and it would be exactly as he had dictated it. A lot of people would say to me, "Oh, I should think you'd be so nervous." And I never was, I never seemed upset when he was dictating. It was just a determination to get every word he said. And not to ask him to repeat.

STEWART: And you can't ever remember asking him to....

BOYLAN: I don't ever remember asking him to, say, for instance, find a word.... I do remember him saying, "Turn back three or four pages," and he almost seemed to know in my notebook where he had said a certain word, and he'd say, "Would you read that back?" Then he'd think about it and say, "Okay. Now, ah...." And he'd go right on. He'd regress a little bit. I never remember him being—I can remember him one night at the hotel when they sent for me to get a state trooper and get over to the airport right away; he thought he left his speech on the plane. And I did just that.

I got over to the airport, and the plane had been put up in a hangar. And it turned out the hostess in Washington was a brand-new hostess, nobody even knew her Boston address, and something had been handed to her. And she, being new, just put it in the rack above the first seat and completely forgot it. So, oh, here it was, here was this speech, and I was going to be able to deliver it in time to him. He was stalling making the speech, and Ted Sorensen was there, and everybody was hovering around.

As I came in, they practically snatched the folder from me, and when they opened it up, it was not the speech; it was something some girl in Washington had handed in error to the driver, who, in turn, handed it to this new hostess, and she—it was just one of those things, and he was just crestfallen. However, without any notes or anything, he got up and delivered a speech, and nobody in the audience had any idea.

STEWART: What was the occasion, do you recall?

BOYLAN: I was just trying to think what the occasion at that dinner was. I have a

feeling it was one of the Democratic dinners where they.... It wasn't the time of the salute to members of Congress. That time they had the Armory on Commonwealth Avenue. I was called here to 122 Bowdoin Street. I had been invited to go to that dinner that night. It was one of the few things I could get to while I was working for him, and I had gone home to get dressed. And while I was at home, the call came that, "Hop into the apartment right away," the Senator was going to dictate a speech.

I came up here, and there were several people milling around, you know, people looking for favors and people wanting to see him. He dictated it, and I dashed down the hill to the Federal Building and typed it up. My car was parked in the Federal Building in his parking space. And I got into the car, armed with the speech, and proceeded out to Commonwealth Avenue, and everything was blocked off because Senator Kennedy was arriving. And I tried, oh, I was desperate trying to convince the police officers that I was his secretary, and I had his speech, and they said, "Tell it to the next officer." So everyone I went to just laughed.

Finally I convinced one policeman. I showed him the speech, and I said, you know, he really had to have it, would he see that I could get in? And somebody took my car and parked it for me. When I went in, it was just confusion, it was like the convention. And I finally spotted somebody that knew him, and they told me which room the groups were in, and I could get to him. And I handed him the speech personally. And he just gave me a big smile and said, "Thanks very much." He was tremendous that night. He had a very bad cold. I remember that he had to have a shot. I shouldn't perhaps even say this, but he had to have, you know, like a vaccine. He had such a bad cold. But he got up, and it was just a tremendous evening.

That was the first, that was the salute to Congressman McCormack [John William McCormack]. And the next salute would have been to Governor Furcolo [Foster Furcolo], honoring the Massachusetts members of Congress—well, the Massachusetts Democrats, really. I think that was the first, last, and only one. I don't recall that they had one for.... I think it started off that way. At that time I was at home; that was while he was still a senator.

STEWART: Were you at the convention?

BOYLAN: In California?

STEWART: Right.

BOYLAN: No, I didn't go out to the convention.

STEWART: The one in 1956?

BOYLAN: No, I was at neither convention. I had never been to a convention. However, some of the office group thought it would be good for me to know what a convention was like, and I went to the one in Worcester. It was easy to understand because it was a smaller convention. And then I stayed on at the White House, and the Johnsons [Lyndon Baines Johnson] took a group of us, flew us to the convention at Atlantic City, so I got to get the feeling of a convention. However, the mobs

used to terrify me, you know, and you had reason to feel that way because the people get all keyed up at a time like that. I know at one time somebody had fainted, and the word got passed around that somebody had just shot the President. This was President Johnson. So everybody was—nobody knew which way to turn.

I do remember the convention, though, when he lost to Kefauver [Estes Kefauver]. I know at that time it was a surprise that he had picked up as many votes on the floor because he didn't go to that convention, I don't think, thinking that there was going to be this tremendous buildup. And I was home watching the convention on the television, and I was so upset when Kerr [Robert S. Kerr] got up, you know, when Rayburn [Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn] gave him the nod, and he switched the vote to the Senator from Tennessee. But, of course, that was all planned.

Earlier at Senator Kennedy's birthday party down at the Twin Cities, you know, New Bedford and Fall River, he had gotten up and introduced Senator Kennedy as the man he would like to see in number one or number two spot. And this was at his birthday party where the Twin Cities honored him. There were about twenty-five hundred people there. I remember I had been down there early, and he drove in with Bob Morey and his group, and he spotted me, and he stopped the car, and he said, "Oh, you're down here." You know, like "Where did you get the ticket?" That sort of thing. And, oh, it was just tremendous. There were so many people, you know, up for him. And the *New Bedford Standard Times* did a beautiful rotogravure pictorial of him in the early days.

But I distinctly remember Kerr, Senator Kerr—and I really wasn't too hep on all the members of Congress—getting up and making that statement so that when he cast his vote for Kefauver, I was crushed. And then, of course, when I saw him lose, I thought, how could he do that, you know? I thought he was sort of a traitor. But, in reality, it was in that defeat that he was victorious.

STEWART: Oh, yes. You mentioned some kidding around with people in Nixon's office during the campaign. How, in general, were your relationships with those people, did you see much of them?

BOYLAN: Yes, I knew a couple of them by first name at the time, and I've forgotten it now. But their office was directly across the hall. And when they would have a little party, as most Senate offices do—they have a little party for the help, usually on a Friday—they would come over and borrow ice cubes, or if they had guests.... But the only two offices that would be working at a tremendous pace at, say, 11 or 11:20 at night would be Senator Kennedy's and Senator Nixon's. And they were very smug and confident, you know. After all, the Republicans were the incumbents, and he had Eisenhower and everybody behind him. And it was just a foregone conclusion that a Catholic, Irish, Bostonian wouldn't have a chance because you weren't just depending on Massachusetts, you were depending on all these different states where people had different ideas. So a couple of them came over, and very, you know, confidently said, "There's no sense in your working as late as we do. You know that you haven't got a chance. But in November we'll take care of you, we'll give you a job." And at the time we thought they were right, you know, that we were working, you know, in vain.

But at the same time we never stopped, we never slowed up, and people did work around the clock. It was nothing to find people in there, his legislative aides, on a Sunday working. Nobody went home at 6:30 or 7. They worked as late as they had to for the tons of work that were there. When he would come in, I remember him so very well coming in. He would get off the elevator on the third floor—he had a suite of three offices, and I was in the one nearest to the elevator—and he would come right in the door. Sometimes you wouldn't even look up, you would never even think that it was the senator, and he'd come right over and he'd pick up some paper you had just put down on your desk, and he'd read it. Then all of a sudden you'd look up, and you'd be flustered, and you'd say, "Oh, good morning, Senator." And he'd say, "Good morning." But he noticed who was on the job, and he was usually there promptly in the morning.

STEWART: Now in all the time in the White House, you were in the social office?

BOYLAN: I was in the social office. I worked under Tish Baldrige. Pamela Turnure was the press secretary, and Tish was the social secretary. And they were very happy days, because we were right next to General Godfrey McHugh [Godfrey T. McHugh] and Navy Commander Shepard [Tazewell T. Shepard, Jr.], and General Clifton—Taz Shepard and Clifton—and every time there was action or anything exciting, you would notice the flurry of people going up and down the corridor. And during the Cuban crisis, at that time I can remember Tish Baldrige came into the office, and she said to us, "I have an announcement to make." And she said, "All of you should start praying like you never prayed before. Tonight you're going to hear some news that's going to be very shocking, and none of us know what the outcome is going to be." And it was kind of tense for us because there had been a lot of activity over in the—I'm trying to think of the name of the room. You know, the one where they—not the Diplomatic—you know the room I mean. It's not the Treaty Room, but the little room where McGeorge Bundy was. It had a name, though. It just slips my mind.

But anyway, I did go to a friend's home over in another part of Washington. They had a huge television. I thought I wanted to be with friends anyway. And these girls were very religious, and they decided that they would start praying since this was the word from the White House. We did, and then we watched the television. His voice sounded very tense to me, and I knew him so well so that I knew that this was terribly serious. I was very proud of the way he handled it, and I do know that I felt that he would never short change Americans because whatever decision he made would be for the good of the country. He would rise above any personal—well, what's the word I want to use? He wouldn't think of how it was going to affect him either politically or personally; it was how it was going to affect the American public.

STEWART: How was the work divided up in the social office, what exactly was...?

BOYLAN: Well, in the social office there was, of course, the part of the office where all the engraving, handwriting went. And the area that I was in, all the

letters to the President and Mrs. Kennedy sending gifts, all the gifts for the heads of foreign countries that came there were gift-wrapped there. I remember the time he went to see Pope John [Pope John XXIII]. I gift-wrapped...

STEWART: Oh, is that right?

BOYLAN: Yes, and I made it very special. I used—of course, all the gifts were done with White House specially embossed paper that has the presidential seal and the ribbon was white satin and gold. And instead of the usual type of bow and everything, I made a cross. I made it a little bit unusual.

And then I was at the White House when they had a party for Dave Powers. And I have a complete set of the official pictures that are really tremendous, you know. Apparently Dave called up and said that the President—none of us ever referred to him as anything but the President once he became president—had asked Dave to stay, he had something that he wanted. And Dave had told his wife he'd be home early because it was his birthday, and they were going to have a little family party. And Mrs. Jo Powers had been calling me to find out what time this was getting underway, when was the White House car coming to pick them up and get them in there before Dave tried to get home.

I met them, and we went in. Everybody was in the Cabinet Room. The table had been covered with white tablecloths, and Rene Verdon, the French chef, had beautiful cakes and éclairs and all different types of French pastry there. And there were champagne glasses for a little, just a little, staff party, and only a hundred of us were invited. And all of a sudden President Kennedy came through Evelyn Lincoln's office, which was off of his office, into the Cabinet Room, with Dave following and looking startled.

Everybody said, "Happy Birthday!" And then we drank a toast. We had some gifts, like a huge comb because Dave was bald-headed, and all that stuff. And he received a citation from the President, which General Clifton read to him; it was a very formal citation. And then everyone drank another toast, and somebody gave him a sweatshirt that said, "Vigah," and everybody roared about that. But I remember how relaxed and how informal the President was, and he was laughing; he couldn't laugh hearty enough, you know. And I can remember some of the Eisenhower Republicans, a few of them that happened to be holdovers that were there, asking, "Could you imagine if President Eisenhower ever saw this going on in the Cabinet Room?" And I thought it was so great because he had the courage to.... Sure. The Cabinet Room was a very formal place, but it could be used for this occasion.

And then, of course, they had a little celebration for the President on his birthday in May. Dave's birthday was in April. And the President didn't want anything that would detract from the big—Dave's was a spontaneous, tremendous celebration; they read telegrams from all the old crew up here, you know, congratulating him on making it from usher at St. Catherine's in Somerville to the doorkeeper at the White House. So they had a similar type of party, to which we were all invited, in the Officers' Mess in the White House, which nobody—it was very, very inadequate. I can remember how glad he was just the same, and there were pictures, you know. He made as little of it as possible because, after all, it was sort of a follow-up on Dave's. And the first time you do something like that it's a big laugh, but the second time it gets kind of monotonous. But he didn't like it, partly, I think, because

it was for him. You know, he could enjoy Dave's party, but he didn't like being the center of attention.

STEWART: You were at the White House all the time right to....

BOYLAN: Yes, I was at the White House. I remember distinctly two days before the assassination. I don't know whether you want me to mention this or not.

STEWART: Yes, go ahead.

BOYLAN: I never saw as many friends or relatives as I did after I went to the White House. All of a sudden everybody became—even the most obscure person, people like myself, literally just a member of the office staff, all of a sudden you worked for the President. So people came en masse, and you were constantly being sought out to get them through the White House, which you could do. You could do it for a member of your family. But sometimes I used to feel as if half the people going through had called on me, and I'd be shut off any moment.

But there was a girl and her husband who had known President Kennedy when he was a congressman. Her father had been his photographer, followed him all over the state. She came down with her husband, who was attending a patent attorney's convention, and she said, "You know, I'd really like to...." I had taken her through the White House and into the President's office; he didn't happen to be there at the moment, but she wanted to see him. And I explained to her that things were totally different, that he was the President, and you couldn't see him unless you had an appointment, and she couldn't understand this. She said, "But I mean people that knew him." And I said, "Well, he is the President now, and he's guarded by Secret Service."

So, never say die. The morning that he was leaving for Dallas, she called me and she said, "You know, I'd give anything if I could just see him." She said, "I promise I won't even ask to speak to him. Is there any way?" And I said, "Gee, I don't know of any way that you could see him. However, if you want to come down and go through on the public tour, you might get a glimpse of him as he's taking off in the helicopter; he's due to take off at such-and-such a time." So she came down at 9:30; the public tours started at 8:30. And Homer Guenther, who was General Guenther's [Alfred M. Guenther] brother, was in charge of White House tours. And something he never did before, he said, "Oh, Mary," he said, "the President's helicopter is out there. Why don't you bring your friend and go out and say goodbye to him?" I couldn't do anything else, and I really should have been on the job upstairs, but she was there, and she was overjoyed.

I went out through the Oval, the Diplomatic Reception Room, and the helicopter was there, and I saw Kenny O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien [Lawrence O'Brien]. They were all whacking each other on the shoulder. They were always happy as a lark. And this was the first political trip to start off the '64 campaign. And this was in November. So he had gone aboard, and Admiral Burkley was standing beside me. It was kind of a rainy day, and he said to me.... I said to my friend, I said, "Remember, he's the President. Don't make a move, don't attempt, even if he recognizes you, don't attempt to move because the Secret Service are right here, and it would be embarrassing to me and to you." She said, no, she wouldn't.

But she waved, and he recognized her. And she said, “You know what he’s saying? ‘What’s that crazy nut doing down there, and how come Mary Boylan’s not working?’” But anyway, he waved, and he seemed to be very anxious to get going. Finally, Jackie came out.... Little John-John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] came out in a yellow slicker, and he looked like an ad for Gorton’s codfish cakes. And he ran up the steps, couldn’t get up there fast enough. This was a little treat that the President gave him; he took him out to Andrews, let him ride the helicopter, and then he came back by White House staff car. And Jackie came out in a beautiful white coat, and she had a big black hat on. It was sprinkling, so General Clifton took his raincoat and sort of held it over her hat and helped her up the steps. And it seemed like it took her a long time, from the time he was aboard, to come out. And, of course, once she was aboard, he waved goodbye, and that was the last time that I saw him.

But two nights before the assassination, I had been working rather late, as we did in Washington, anyway. I received a call from a young cousin who was attending a Four H Conference in Washington. He had been selected, among other college students, to attend. And he thought that if he could break away from one of the lectures, he’d like to have a chance to see me and also to get down to the White House.

And I never was busier, and I thought, “Oh, why?” You know. He had been down before with relatives, and I thought, “Oh, what....” Well, I said to him, “I’ll tell you what. I’ll make arrangements with the guard for you to come into the lobby, but I’ll keep working and then maybe we can have dinner or something after.” And it was about seven-thirty when he got out of the conference, and the guard called me and I came down. I said, “I’m almost through what I’m doing. So I’ll just finish up in the office, and maybe you’d like to see the President’s office.” So I asked the guard permission, and he said, “Sure.” He said, “Mrs. Lincoln’s over there.” He didn’t mention that the President was there. If he had, I’m sure I would never have gone over. And he said, “It’s alright.”

So we walked through the White House, and each guard recognized me as we came through, and I introduced my young cousin. When we got over, Evelyn said, “Hi, Mary.” And I said, “Hi, this is my young cousin. He’s here in town, and I thought I’d show him the President’s office, maybe, and let him sit in the rocking chair.” And she said, “Oh, the President’s in there working.” “Oh,” I said. “Well, maybe we’ll settle for a picture or something.” And I introduced her—his name was Jerry Power—and I said, “Oh, gee, you know, he would love to see the President. If he could just peek in.” She said, “Wait a minute, I’ll ask.” Evelyn was always very, very gracious about anything like that. She was really tremendous.

So she went in, and she spoke to him. She came out, and she said, “You know, he’s working on his Dallas speech.” This was two nights before. And she said, “He says you just wait a minute.” So at this point, you know, my cousin said, “What’ll I say?” He was a big tall boy about six-foot-three. I said, “Be sure just to say ‘Mr. President.’ He’ll do the talking. You must answer any questions, but don’t.... Be sure to say ‘Mr. President.’” And he said, “Okay.” And this is a boy who won all kinds of contests, speaking contests.

All of a sudden the President emerged, and he said, “Oh, hello, Mary, is this another relative?” And I said, “Yes, as a matter of fact, it is.” And I introduced him, I said, “Mr. Jerry Power from Worcester.” And he said to him, “Oh, hello, Jerry. Where do you go to school? What are you doing in Washington?” And he fired about five questions at him. And he was almost transfixed. He was so overwhelmed by the size of the man, and then he said, “I go to

St. Anthony's in Manchester, Mr. President." He said, "Oh, we were down there during the campaign, remember, Mary?" This completely threw Jerry because he said, "Imagine, St. Anthony's is just a small"—up in Manchester, New Hampshire—a small town, and he remembered it."

So anyway, he said, "What are you doing in Washington?" He told him he was attending this convention, and he said, "Oh, that's great." He asked a few other questions. And he said, "Maybe you'd like to come into my office," knowing that was the very reason that he was there. He said, "Come right in." And he went back to his desk and continued working. And he said, "Just look around, Jerry." And Jerry said he was so overwhelmed by being there in the office with the President of the United States, he said, he could hardly see anything in the room. He said he felt very awkward even looking. And he thanked him, and he came out just beaming. And he said, "Nobody will ever believe this." And he went back to the convention. We had dinner at Bonat's, Bonat's Restaurant, you know where that is, up there on—is it Vermont Avenue?"

STEWART: Yes.

BOYLAN: B-O-N-A-T-S. It's a French restaurant. And neither one of us could really eat much—I, because I was not as hungry as I should be at that hour, and he because he was overcome with this introduction to the President. And so when he told this group that he was with, they just said, "Oh, yes, we have a cousin in the White House; sure, we met the President." You know, they just kidded him. I had told him that he could bring the group to the White House the next day. The President was still there; it wasn't until the following day that he went to Dallas. Friday around noon...

I actually had no premonition; even though we had heard all those different stories, I had absolutely no inkling. Sometimes you look back, but I hadn't. I went to the White House and did my work. And I called up a girl in the comptroller's office who lived in the same apartment building that I did, Florence Sexton, and asked her if she'd like to have lunch at the Treasury Building, which is right across the street. And she said, "Okay, let's have lunch about one o'clock." So we went over there and, you know, I said, "I just don't feel like eating. I don't know why. I guess I just haven't any appetite. I'll have a cup of tea." And she said, "As a matter of fact, I'm going to have just a cigarette and coffee. I don't feel like eating." And then she said, "I bet you wish you went to Dallas." And I said, "No, I'm not that anxious to get on planes. Things will quiet down for a while because this is the beginning of his campaigning, and our work will not be so hectic."

So we had hardly finished the tea when some woman came flying through the Treasury cafeteria, and she recognized Florence; she had worked with her. She just blurted out, "Mr. Kennedy's been shot." And it never occurred to me. I never thought of him as a Mr. Kennedy—it was the President. So I turned, the woman was dashing through the restaurant—she had just heard the news—and I said, "Which Mr. Kennedy?" And she just glared at me and said, "The President."

Well, with that, we left everything right on the table, and we just flew out of the Treasury Building. And I recognized all the White House guards, and one in particular knew I had come down from Boston, and he said, "Mary," he said, "he's in surgery. It's not fatal." So I went in the White House, and I went into my office, and everybody was crying. See, I

had taken a later lunch. And I looked at everybody, and I said, "Why are you crying? The President is in surgery. He's going to be alright, I'm sure." You know.

STEWART: No one believed it.

BOYLAN: At that time, Tazewell Shepard came down the corridor, and somebody said, "Is he dead?" I could hear the voice, and I just saw him nod his head. He had just come from the.... Well, I don't know whether it was over at the dispensary or where he was coming from, but he was going past my office there. So then everybody just broke down and cried, you know.

STEWART: Why don't we shut it off?

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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