

Thomas P. Costin Oral History Interview—4/5/1976
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Biographical Note

Costin, City Councilor (1947-1955), Mayor (1955-1961), and Postmaster (1961) of Lynn, Massachusetts and a labor-management negotiator of the Post Office Department (1963-1967), discusses the Massachusetts Democratic Party's divisions and changes, the John William McCormack supporters' anti-Kennedy sentiment, and the events leading up to John F. Kennedy's assassination, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

with

Thomas P. Costin

April 5, 1976
Lynn, Massachusetts

By William J. Hartigan

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HARTIGAN: This is Bill Hartigan in Lynn, Massachusetts and I'm visiting with Thomas Costin, postmaster of Lynn, Massachusetts. The purpose of my visit is to interview Mr. Costin on behalf of the oral history department of the John F. Kennedy Library. Mr. Costin was a former city councilor for Lynn, later on became mayor and resigned as mayor to become postmaster of this office.

Tom, when did you first meet President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

COSTIN: Bill, my first meeting with President Kennedy was back in 1946 when he was running for the office of congressman. It happened to be at an open rally in Boston. I was on my way to school, having just been discharged from the United States Marine Corps. It was through my meeting him at that time that I got the idea of public service and the next year, while a freshman at Boston College, after he had been elected congressman, I ran for the city council in Lynn and at the age

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of 21, became the youngest councilor elected up until that time.

HARTIGAN: Then you went on later on to become mayor, making you the youngest mayor ever elected, is that correct?

COSTIN: That's true. But in between my first election as city councilor and mayor I had several meetings with President Kennedy. I represented the city in 1948 or '49 at a state convention of Amvets [American Veterans of World War II] where Jack Kennedy was the principal speaker, and our friendship, I think, developed really from that date. We kept up a correspondence after that convention.

Early in 1952, I received a call from Jack Kennedy from Washington [D.C.] and he asked me to meet him in Boston. I met him one afternoon in his apartment on Bowdoin Street, and he there asked me if it would be possible for me to have a house party for him at my home in Lynn to meet some people because he was thinking of running for a higher office. At that time, it was undecided whether he was going to run for governor or run for the position then held by Henry Cabot Lodge, as United States senator from Massachusetts. The thing that was holding him up at that time, as you remember, because you were involved, was that they were waiting—the Democrats were waiting—for Paul Dever [Paul A Dever] to make up his mind, since he was governor, whether he was going to run for reelection or take on the Republican senator. And early in February of that year, '52, Rosemary [Rosemary Costin] and I had a house party, where we had over seventy people to come and listen to the Senator, and I'll never forget

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it. That morning I received a call from Frank Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey], who then was his acting secretary, or was the secretary, and he told me that Jack wasn't feeling very well because he had a reoccurrence of malaria and he wasn't sure how long, or even if he would be able to make the house party that evening. Well, as it developed, he did come to the house party and it was a rainy evening, and he came about nine o'clock, and because of his physical condition, he [interruption] sat most of the evening giving a talk, and I'll never forget it, his talk was about his recent trip to Southeast Asia, or...

HARTIGAN: Vietnam.

COSTIN: Vietnam, and that area of the world. And as it ended up, instead of Jack Kennedy leaving early, we ended up in my kitchen with Rosemary and I, Frank Morrissey, and Jack, about one o'clock over a cup of coffee, and this is really, I feel, the beginning of his drive to go around the state and to meet people to further his political ambitions.

HARTIGAN: Tom, what were your early impressions of the then Congressman Kennedy when—these were early stages of his political activities. What were your impressions of him?

COSTIN: Well, I have some very distinct impressions of him at the time because I had heard people say that Congressman Kennedy at times acted aloof and wasn't able to meet people, but I didn't find it this way. I found that if there was anything of his character that would give this impression, I think it was more a shyness. He

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had to develop—and he did, as the years went on he had to develop the ability to go out and to actually project himself to meet people, and as his campaign for the Senate progressed, I think he lost this shyness and he was able to go out and, not only to meet people, but really to project his very warm personality. But the one thing that did happen in the early part of 1952, was that when he was at our home speaking that evening, I noticed that he was really wrapped up in his subject and he could really project and get people interested in what he had to say. The following month, we had him back in Lynn to give a talk on March 17 at the Friendly Knights of St. Patrick. And his topic that night was on St. Patrick himself, and he didn't come over very well that evening, because I don't think he really had prepared himself for his topic. The following month, in April, he was back in Lynn again to a Knights of Columbus communion breakfast, and again he gave the same talk that he gave at our home in February, and again he was able to really project and get the people interested in his topic. And it occurred to me that the subjects that he was well versed in, and that he had prepared himself on, that these were the subjects that he could really get people interested in. As he developed, over the years, running for the Senate and then reelection, I found that he was able too—in every area that he became interested in, that he became knowledgeable in—that he was able to project himself and was able to get his audience interested. I think in 1960,

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at the—during the presidential campaign, that this was proven when he took on his Republican opponent, Mr. Nixon [Richard M. Nixon], that he prepared himself so well [Interruption] that he gave the impression—and it was more than an impression, because it was actually the way he did everything—that he was well versed in his subject matters.

HARTIGAN: Did you feel as though he was—in those early meetings—did you feel as though he was presidential material?

COSTIN: In the early meetings, in early '52 when he was running for the Senate, I didn't think it at the time. But the time it really hit me was in 1956 when you and I were working for him—we were both delegates to the Democratic convention in Chicago. Then, talking with people from other parts of the country who had met Jack Kennedy for the first time, and realizing the great magnetism that he was able to project, and the way he handled himself during this convention, right then and there, I felt that at some future date, the Democratic Party would be looking to him for their candidate for the top office.

HARTIGAN: During the first senatorial campaign, did you have any experience with the other Democratic factions in the party while you were campaigning for President Kennedy? I believe that a former friend of ours was the secretary for Lynn at the time, Dan Day, and you were city councilor, but you were working very

diligently for the then Congressman Kennedy. Did you have any experiences with the other factions of the democratic party during that campaign?

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COSTIN: Yes. We found that what you would call the regular members of the Democratic city committee—were—I won't say anti-Kennedy—but they didn't go out of their way to help his candidacy at all. And as it developed in the city of Lynn—I'm quite sure from what I've heard from other areas—it developed that two organizations seemed to be working. We had a Democratic, the regular Democratic city committee, and then we had a Kennedy committee. And it seemed that one was working against—not working against the other—but one was working so that we didn't have a real, true, united Democratic front at the time. I think that the feeling was that Jack Kennedy was stepping out of bounds that he should have waited until somebody in the Democratic Party came to him and said, "we want you to do this." But they felt that he was not looking to the regulars in the Democratic Party for his campaign and, really, I think that it's because of the way he campaigned and the people that he called upon, that he was successful, because if he'd waited for other people to do things for him, they never would have been done. But they went out and they put on a well organized campaign with people who, in the past, never got involved in politics, the younger people and people who looked askance at the political arena.

HARTIGAN: Did it reach the point where you had separate head quarters for Kennedy and Governor Dever?

COSTIN: Yes, yes. In Lynn we had separate headquarters and it's not that we wanted it this way, but it was felt that because of the—I don't want to use the word—antagonism that seemed to develop, but it was there,

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that we'd be better off having our own headquarters, and working our own area.

HARTIGAN: How did this strike the professional Democrats, separate headquarters?

COSTIN: They were very upset about it. They felt that we should have been looking to them for the entire workforce in the campaign. But we found from past experience that we couldn't wait on these people because you have to remember now, you had an incumbent senator, Republican senator, who in the past had received a great many Democratic votes and the type of campaign that had to be developed, was one that was altogether different and had to be new in order to do the work that had to be done, and that was to unseat Henry Cabot Lodge, who was a formidable candidate.

HARTIGAN: To what extent, if any, did this division affect your campaigning for the then Congressman Kennedy?

COSTIN: Well, I think what happened, I think that we had to disassociate ourselves with the regular party organization in the city and we had to look to people, as I said earlier, we had to look to people who in the past never got involved in politics. These are the younger people, the people who never thought of working for a candidate before. And we got these people interested and, as a result, I think Jack Kennedy was successful for this reason alone.

HARTIGAN: Did this interfere at all with any of the fundraising activities that you'd try to put on? This division I'm talking about now?

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COSTIN: Yes. I think that this division did hurt because the people that you would normally go to to help a Democratic candidate were already tied up with a governor, and, as a result, they did not want to go with this unknown quantity who was a freshman congressman, more or less; they would rather go with quantity of a Democratic governor who had several terms and was coming up for another one. And so, he appeared to be the man who would be the shoo-in, and the Senator was the one who had the uphill battle all the way.

HARTIGAN: At that time, did you sense the future of the pros who were supporting Governor Dever for reelection, did you sense their defeat early in the campaign.

COSTIN: Well, we thought that, from the campaigning that we were doing, that either we were doing something wrong, or that something was going to happen because there was a feeling that the voters were looking for a change. And in the early part of the campaign, we weren't sure whether that change was going to be the elimination of a Democratic congressman, Jack Kennedy, or was going to be the elimination of the incumbent governor. But as the campaign developed, it did appear that the pros were in trouble with their candidate and we weren't sure whether the troubles that he was experiencing were going to fall over onto senatorial campaign or not.

HARTIGAN: Kennedy's committee in Lynn, I'm assuming, used the same basic tactics in campaigning that went on throughout the state, namely, the teas for the women?

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COSTIN: Yes. We had several teas for the women where the candidate himself was present, members of his family came in. We had one big reception at the new Ocean House in Swampscott, where we had an overflow crowd. It was at these affairs that we got the feeling that a great change was taking place because the other affairs for the regular Democrats were not being as well attended as the affairs for Jack Kennedy and it was these events that kind of told us that something was in the wind.

HARTIGAN: Were there any other observations that you'd like to make or experiences that you'd like to relate to us with reference to that first campaign for the United States Senate?

COSTIN: Yeah, you know, one of the things that really—well, it wasn't so much the first campaign for the Senate, but back after the Senator was elected, became Senator—in his reelection campaign in 1958 I was given the dubious distinction of being the chairman of the registration drive for reelection and this was one of the positions that...

HARTIGAN: Nobody wanted.

COSTIN: ... no one wanted, yes. I received a call from the Senator from Washington and he asked me if I would come to Washington. I was mayor at the time and I went down and he asked me if I would take on this dubious distinction of being his man as the, to head up this registration drive. And he told me that he had talked with then Congressman McCormack [John William McCormack], who was Speaker of the House, who had his man that he was

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interested in taking on this position, and the former Governor Dever, and the Democratic state committee chairman, Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch]. And they all agreed that they would go along with Senator Kennedy's selection, which was myself. But he also asked me to go and to visit these individuals just to make sure that there were no hard feelings on their part. Well, I did this. I visited each one of them. And I'll never forget a meeting with the former Governor Dever. He said, "Tom, I want you to realize that now," he said, "you're sticking your head above the water and," he said, "the minute you do this in Democratic politics in Massachusetts," he said, "there are people who are going to be trying to kick it off." And, this of course, did develop.

One event did take place in 1958. We had a television program that was scheduled for a six o'clock viewing on Channel 4 in the Boston area and at this meeting, we were to demonstrate the cooperation of all facets of the Democratic Party. At that meeting, on television, we were going to have Pat Lynch, who was the Democratic state chairman; we were going to have John McCormack, who was the Speaker of the House; we were going to have Foster Furcolo; we were going to have Senator Kennedy; and we were going to have myself. And we were all going to show the Democrats and the voters of Massachusetts how everybody was united for this reelection campaign. And I'll never forget it, we all assembled at 5:30 at the television station everybody waited and the Senator was not present, and about three minutes before we were to go on television, the Senator came into the studio, and he was the only

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one who was nice and tan, he was the only one who came in and changed his white shirt to a blue shirt, he was the only one that was made up to go on the television station. That night, after the program, my wife mentioned the fact that the only one who seemed to be relaxed and who seemed to project himself so well, was Jack Kennedy. And I thought of this many times after the 1960 presidential election, that this is exactly what Jack Kennedy did, he prepared himself in every way. He made sure that he knew the topics that were going to be discussed, he made sure that he projected well and, I think, this is why he started to develop and would have been, I think, a great president. Because everything he did, he did well. He prepared himself in every way possible, and it was a shame that he wasn't given the opportunity to really show the greatness that each and every one of us who were involved with him over the years, knew he possessed, and knew that would have developed it had he been given the opportunity.

HARTIGAN: Tom, in 1956, as you mentioned, we were in Chicago at the convention as delegates. Would you like to relate your experience for the record, with reference to that exciting convention that we attended?

COSTIN: Well, Bill, as you and I know, we really had no idea when we went out to Chicago, that things were going to develop as rapidly as they did. We had been told that there might be a possibility of the vice presidential nomination being thrown open and that

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there might be a possibility of Jack Kennedy being one of the nominees for the position. But, it wasn't until we got out there that we saw the great surge for a Jack Kennedy. The only area we didn't see the surge was in the Democratic group from Massachusetts, the delegates going out there.

We had, at that time, we had some of the old pros who were anti-Kennedy, as you remember. We had former Congressman and former Mayor Curley [James Michael Curley], who was, of course, not very fairly disposed toward Jack Kennedy. We had members of the Democratic state committee who weren't very well disposed toward Jack Kennedy because he had upset them in bringing in his own chairman in 1958. And we had others who just didn't want to do anything to help a Jack Kennedy.

And I'll never forget it, when we went out there, and one of our first meetings when there's a possibility that he might be considered, that everybody was given a little assignment to do. Somebody had some signs made, somebody to have articles printed—the *Reader's Digest* article reprint we had done; in fact, it was done in Massachusetts, then it was flown out to Chicago. And I'll never forget it, that I took two hundred dollars out of my own pocket and went to a department store that was having a sale on plain ties, a dollar a tie, and I told them that I'd buy two hundred ties if the sewing machine area upstairs on the second floor, where they were giving demonstrations, would print or have sewed on the tie, Kennedy with a V.P. at the end

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of it. And I'll never forget the meeting we had after we passed these ties out when I told Jack Kennedy what we had done, he said, "What did you do with the ties?" I said, "Well, we passed them out." He said, "Passed them out," he said, "you could have probably picked up ten dollars or thirty dollars for those ties to help out the campaign."

I'll never forget when he was introduced as the speaker to second the nomination of Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson], that we had a small demonstration that we hoped would expand into a larger demonstration and we had our signs ready and we all ran up, the ones who were true Kennedy fans, all ran up to the front and not everyone in the Democratic delegation got out of their seats to give us a hand. But these are some of the interesting things that happened.

HARTIGAN: On the serious side in 1956, there were, as you very lightly mentioned, some reservations on the part of some of the delegations, if I'm not mistaken. Would you like to comment on some of those?

COSTIN: Well, as you remember, each morning, the New England delegations—and this was through the efforts of Jack Kennedy—the New England delegation would meet for a breakfast that would be hosted by a different state each morning of the convention. And I'll never forget the morning that Massachusetts was the host and Jack Kennedy was going to be the principal speaker for that morning. Well, we had all the delegates from New England at the breakfast, and how just before, just after Jack Kennedy had been introduced and while he was in the process

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of his talk to the New England delegation, how the door opened and former Governor and former Congressman Michael Curley walked down the center of the hall and he had some of his cohorts stand up and give him a big cheer and how this broke up the breakfast right in the middle of Jack Kennedy's talk. And also... [Interruption]

I remember that there was big hassle when we first arrived about who would receive how many seats in the delegation and I know that this took up quite a bit of the time of the Democratic state committee chairman. But there was at some points, even open hostility toward the Senator from Massachusetts who was the head of our delegation. And it really didn't.... I don't think it took anything away from the Senator, but I did think it took away from the Democratic state committee, and as a result of our meeting in Chicago, I think that a change was brought about on the membership when we returned back to Massachusetts. So that in the future, that never happened again.

HARTIGAN: Did you notice any reaction, or did you notice the reaction, or the attitude for that matter, of the McCormack group at that convention?

COSTIN: Yes. The McCormack group was anti-Jack Kennedy and...

HARTIGAN: That was in addition to the Curley group.

COSTIN: This was in addition to the Curley group. In fact, what it all stemmed from, as you well know—you were a member of the Democratic state committee—that in 1958, Jack Kennedy realized that if he was going to do anything with the Democratic Party in Massachusetts, that he had to do away with the cronyism that had developed

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over the years on the Democratic state committee. We didn't have too many young people; we didn't have too many people with innovative ideas. And it was because of this that Jack Kennedy realized that if we were going to use the Democratic Party as a state organization that it had to be drastically changed. In 1958, he took it upon himself to go from community to community to make sure that the Democratic city and town committees brought in new blood and he went to try to interest them in getting his own members on the committee so that we could have a change in the leadership. We had a fellow from the western part of our state, who was known as "Onions" Burke [William H. Burke, Jr.] because he was an onion farmer, who was our party chairman and who was, at the time, a very close associate of the McCormack people. And I remember him coming to Lynn and sitting in my office when I was mayor and talking with the two Democratic state committee people—George O'Shea [George J. O'Shea] who was the Democratic state committeeman and Mary Kennedy, who was the Democratic state committeewoman—to get them to vote for Pat Lynch, who was a former mayor of Somerville, Massachusetts, and who was the man that Jack Kennedy was interested in becoming head of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts.

One interesting story in relation to this. It just so happened that Mary Kennedy, who was the state committeewoman, her nephew, John Quigley, was working for the Democratic paper in Lynn that was owned and run by a Mr. Enwright [Frederick W. Enwright] and Mr. Enwright was very close to John McCormack and when he found out that Mary Kennedy was going to, that there was a possibility that

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she might vote for Jack Kennedy's man, who was Pat Lynch, he called in John Quigley and told him that if his aunt voted for Jack Kennedy's man, Pat Lynch, that he would lose his job. When we had the meeting at my office, Mary Kennedy mentioned this fact, that her nephew would lose his position. Jack Kennedy said that it was so important that we have this change, that if her nephew did lose the position, that he would find a job for him on his own staff. As it developed, Mary Kennedy did vote for Pat Lynch, but John Quigley never did lose his position.

HARTIGAN: Were there any other.... I know that you were active in a very important way during that fight for the state chairmanship—having been a member of the committee myself I know what you did—were there any other intra-party struggles or experiences that you'd like to relate to us during that time when the fight was on for the chairmanship?

COSTIN: Well, you know, with everything I have been reading about what took place back in those days, there are people who are trying to minimize their feelings and trying to minimize what did take place, but from my own personal experience, I found that there was a very strong anti-Kennedy feeling with the McCormack people, and regardless of what has been written since that time, as far as my own personal experiences were concerned, my own personal observations, I did find that there was a definite anti-Kennedy feeling with what I call the Democratic pros. The Democratic pros would be the McCormacks, the people who were strong Dever people, the people who, in the past, did have

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some control over the Democratic Party. They resented, to a great extent, the fact that a young congressman who would not make certain commitments to them was coming in and taking over the Democratic Party, and they resented it greatly.

HARTIGAN: Did you get any reaction from the professional politicians when the then Congressman Kennedy, refused to vote on a petition for Curley's pardon? Do you recall that?

COSTIN: Yes. As I mentioned earlier, the pros in Lynn, who were on the Democratic city committee, were very much opposed to the likes of a Jack Kennedy coming in, being as young as he was, and not having come up through the ranks, as they said, and that he would try to take over this organization that they had run for so many years. And they had always looked upon a James Michael Curley as one of their own, so to speak, and they resented greatly the fact that Jack Kennedy would not go on this petition. There were even some feelings that were expressed to me that if I didn't go along or by sending letters to Jack Kennedy at the time, that it might hurt my own political career in Lynn. But it never did.

HARTIGAN: You were still mayor at this time, at the era that we're talking about in terms of the state committee, and did you go to other parts of the state on behalf of Pat Lynch's candidacy?

COSTIN: Yes. I talked to other mayors, Democratic mayors, I also talked to other members of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts because, at that time, because of my age,

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and because of my association with Jack Kennedy, I was considered a Kennedy man. And most of us who were close to him, at that time, as you know, traveled quite a bit, did quite a bit of telephoning, to help out this candidacy because we were convinced that if the

Democratic Party were to go anywhere, it had to do it through a new face, through a new, during a new era, and this was, we felt, the beginning of this new era.

HARTIGAN: What were you confronted with visiting these mayors, fellow mayors, in the state when you were out talking for this cause? [Interruption]

COSTIN: Well, I think the responses that I received depended on the age of the individuals and his association with members of the Democratic Party. As I traveled the state, the closer I was to Boston, and the age of the individual, if he were friendly with McCormack, he would be anti-Kennedy and wouldn't do anything to help out. If the man were younger, a younger mayor—and we had several that were elected at the same time I was—they were looking for changes and they would do everything they could to help Jack Kennedy. As we progressed and went out to the other parts of the state, McCormack influence was not that strong. However, the Dever influence became apparent, and when you talked to mayors or chairmen of boards of selectmen, where the Dever influence was felt, they were not prone to help out. When you got to the middle part of the state, where “Onions” Burke, the—at that time, who was the incumbent head of the party—he had a strong influence, and, of course, you couldn't move the mayor. But again, the age of the individual and

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his position in the party determined whether or not he was going to help out a Jack Kennedy for a new chairman. [Interruption]

HARTIGAN: Tom, could you relate, for the record, your experiences in dealing with Ken O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], during this period of changing the party?

COSTIN: Well, actually, my experiences with Kenny O'Donnell didn't really develop until about 19—well, this was the year 1958—when he came in and was working out of the Boston headquarters. And to me, Kenny O'Donnell was acting as the coordinator for most of this activity. I, also, at that time, was the first time I got to know Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien]. I received a letter from Jack Kennedy and then he called me and told me that there was a fellow out in Springfield, Massachusetts that might give us a hand on the registration drive and lining up support. That was my first time meeting Larry O'Brien. Then, as the campaign developed, Larry and Kenny O'Donnell worked out of the Tremont Street office [260 Tremont Street] [Interruption] where most of the activity was coordinated. And, again, I think it was through their administrative ability that a lot of this was put together.

HARTIGAN: Going back to the election between Furcolo and Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall], Kennedy was then a United States senator and some of the

reports indicate a refusal on the part of the then Senator Kennedy to give any help or support to Furcolo causing the Furcolo people, who were also Dever people to feel that Kennedy let them down. Can you

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relate any of your experiences during that particular campaign?

COSTIN: I really had no direct contact, either from or with Senator Kennedy regarding that issue; in other words, he never called me to say don't help out. He did call one time to help me to coordinate a political rally at the time that would have helped out Foster Furcolo, but at no time in my conversations with him did he indicate to me that he didn't want me, or anybody associated with me, not to help out in that campaign. I never...

HARTIGAN: Well, actually, your activity that you did perform under his direction was helpful.

COSTIN: Was helpful, would have been helpful, yes.

HARTIGAN: This issue of the so-called feud between the McCormacks and the Kennedys, how deeply involved—other than what we've stated—did you actually become in it?

COSTIN: Well, I had always been known in the Lynn area, from the earliest days, as being a Kennedy man. Every time that a Kennedy was involved in a campaign against a McCormack, people knew exactly where I stood. I was contacted by Ed McCormack [Edward J. McCormack, Jr.] back in the early '60s when he ran against Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] and he wanted to know if, at this time, I would be helpful to him. I told him no, that there was no possible way, but that any time in the future that he was going to be a candidate for any office, where a Kennedy wasn't involved, I'd be very happy to help him out.

HARTIGAN: What was his reaction to that position?

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COSTIN: Well, I know that he was very upset with some people. But, he realized exactly my close ties with the Kennedys from the earliest days, and he wasn't too upset with me. But I know that he was rather upset with other people in the community that I had contacted for Ted—that he felt they didn't have as close a tie with the Kennedy organization or the Kennedy family as I did at the time—and I know that he was rather bitter about some people.

HARTIGAN: Approaching somebody like you, who was a known strong Kennedy man,

what reasons did Ed McCormack give you for his feeling that you should be with him?

COSTIN: The biggest reason that he used with me was the fact that he felt that since he had worked so hard for the Democratic Party, and had been a candidate and had been successful, that really he should be given the opportunity for higher political office. Conversely, he felt that since Ted Kennedy did not have any position, elected position, that he was really running on the coattails of his brother, that he should not be given the opportunity to take on this very, very high position of United States senator. This was the reasoning that he used not only with me, but with other people. But again, I say, I felt I made the right decision in doing what I did.

HARTIGAN: You were with Ted Kennedy irregardless of the fact that the polls at that time indicated that the only Democrat that could beat Lodge's son [George Cabot Lodge], who was running for office at the time, was Ted Kennedy. That was in spite of the fact that the polls indicated that?

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COSTIN: I would have been with Ted Kennedy if the polls indicated anything. I was, as I said, I was a Kennedy man from way back and I don't think the polls would have influenced me at all anyway.

HARTIGAN: Did anybody else try to change your position on behalf of Eddie McCormack?

COSTIN: Well, here again we had the very same people who, in the past, had been anti-Kennedy and had been pro-McCormack people, known as pro-McCormack people. These are the ones who, again, became very active. But as I say—as the results proved—Ted Kennedy was successful.

HARTIGAN: Tom, at this point, I'm going to turn the tape. [Interruption] Tom, sticking with the state committee activities, could you relate to us some of your experiences with Pat Lynch after he was elected chairman of the Democratic state committee?

COSTIN: Yes. I think that Pat Lynch did a remarkable job in a very difficult area. You have to remember, now, that the Democratic Party as I saw it—and I'm speaking as one individual—was really broken up into many factions. We never had a real united Democratic Party, as such. We had, what I would call a factioned party. We had Kennedy Democrats, McCormack Democrats, Dever Democrats; every candidate seemed to pick up his own little following. Pat Lynch had to pick up a Democratic state committee and a Democratic Party that had many, many wounds because there were very great feelings

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on the part of the people who were ousted from the Democratic state committee. And there were many people who felt that since they were on the outside now, that they had to form the loyal opposition, even within the party. But through the efforts of Pat Lynch and—Pat had been mayor of one of our largest cities, Somerville, Massachusetts for many years, and he knew the inner workings of the political system—he was able to really take this factious group, the Democrats of Massachusetts, and he was able to weld them, as best he could, into a fairly cohesive force so that by 1960, when we went out to the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, we didn't have the divisive forces that I had seen four years earlier. I think that it was due to a great deal of effort and time put in by Pat Lynch in that position.

HARTIGAN: Your opinion, then, of Pat Lynch's term as chairman, you thought he did a very effective job?

COSTIN: Yes, I did. The reason I think he did is because he really worked at the position. I felt that one of the reasons we had to have a change in the, at the head of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts was because the previous head of the party came from the western part of our state and he didn't spend as much time on the day-to-day workings of the Democratic Party that Pat Lynch was able to since he was only minutes away from the Boston area. And I think that this closeness to his office really had some effect on the effective way he was able to carry out his duties.

HARTIGAN: Did you have any experience with the former chairman, the late—he's deceased now—John Carr [John C. Carr]?

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COSTIN: No, I didn't have too many dealings with him. I did have some dealings with his son [John C. Carr, Jr.], who later became the mayor of Medford, I believe it was, but I didn't have that many dealings with John Carr.

HARTIGAN: Because interestingly enough, John Carr was very helpful to Pat Lynch when he was chairman. Of course, they were both mayors together, I understand, at one time...

COSTIN: Yes, they were.

HARTIGAN: ...and even though he was a strong McCormack man, he did, in true dedicated fashion, work very hard for no money, with Pat Lynch, I think—for the record. But you didn't?

COSTIN: No, I didn't have.... All my dealings were with Pat Lynch but, this being so, it would just confirm what I stated earlier, that he was able to take all

factions and weld them into a fairly united force by 1960.

HARTIGAN: That's right. That's the point I was making: that John Carr's activity was solely because of Pat Lynch, I think.

COSTIN: Yes.

HARTIGAN: Tom, you also attended—we attended together as delegates—the 1960 convention in Los Angeles. Would you care to relate some of your experiences to us about that convention?

COSTIN: Well, I think that by the time we got out to Los Angeles, that really all the work had been taken care of. I think that it was really anticlimactic because all the drudgery, all the sensationalism had developed the months previous to the convention. I think the win in West

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Virginia, and the other wins that Jack Kennedy was able to come up with, really proved that he was a candidate for all men. We knew that when we arrived in Los Angeles, that it was a pretty foregone conclusion that he had the votes pretty well wrapped up, and he was able to do it. And I think we have to give a great deal of the credit to the candidate himself because he did things that no one else could do. He was the only one who could go down and face, by himself, a gathering of Baptist ministers. He was the only one who could walk to the small deserted coal mining towns of West Virginia and sit down to talk and to listen to the coal miners that everyone else had forgotten. He was able to go to the big cities of New York and Chicago and to deal on a firsthand basis with the leaders of the Democratic Party. And I think that even though you and I, Bill, and a lot of other small people maybe helped out in our own little ways. I think it was the candidate himself who had to go out and do the hard, day-to-day campaigning and make the hard and direct decisions that he did, that was able to bring about that very nice result in Los Angeles.

HARTIGAN: Were you active with other mayors or other delegates from other states in the 1960 convention, Tom?

COSTIN: Yes. We helped to develop, as one of the things that the President, then senator, had me work on, was that we had a conference. We set up a conference of mayors in Pittsburgh to bring to the forefront the needs of the large industrial cities. We selected

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Pittsburgh as the site and the mayor of Pittsburgh [Joseph M. Barr] was the chairman of the event to point out the needs of the large industrial cities. We had mayors from all over the

country who came, and the principal address was given by the Democratic candidate, Jack Kennedy.

The purpose of the meeting was to emphasize how we needed a change on the Washington level to get the thinking of the big city mayors with the problems that they were confronting on a day-to-day basis, such as urban development, health care centers, and the like. And Jack Kennedy in his senate positions, had been very favorably disposed to taking care of some of these problems, and the legislation he came up with after becoming president did point to some of the areas that were developed

HARTIGAN: Did you feel as though—being active with the mayors' conferences—did you feel as though he was in pretty good shape with the mayors of the country?

COSTIN: We felt—and we were dealing directly with the large urban city mayors—that if the vote were taken just in these areas alone, that there wouldn't have been any problems; and as it developed, the vote that he did receive in these areas, was very favorable. These were the votes that put him over in areas like Illinois, it was the Chicago vote. It was the area.... Well, in New York, it was the large urban vote that really helped him out. I think the reason he was helped out in these areas, was because he was directing a lot of this legislation and a lot of his attention toward the problems of these people. People who were living in these areas.

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HARTIGAN: After the Convention, did you become active in the presidential campaign?

COSTIN: Yes, just on a limited basis though, Bill, because I was in my second term, or third term, as mayor, and I was having some problems on my own, in my own city, with urban redevelopment, and with some of the other problems that big city mayors have. I consider Lynn, even though at the time it has a population just under a hundred thousand.... I couldn't do as much at that time as I did previous to his nomination. But what little I did, I hoped did help out.

HARTIGAN: Did you get a chance to visit any other state on behalf of the candidate?

COSTIN: Yes. I traveled—as most of his early friends did—I traveled to other areas. And it must be made known by somebody, that a lot of people took time from their own work, used their own money, to help the candidacy of Jack Kennedy. A lot of people got involved with him, and they did because he was saying the things that they felt had to be said at the time. And I think that this is the secret of the Kennedy success, is because people, ordinary people, did get involved. They did take their own time, used their own money, to try to get across the philosophy of their candidate, and I think this is one of the reasons why he was so successful.

HARTIGAN; Tom, for the better part of President Kennedy's term, in the House and the

Senate, you were the mayor of a large city.

COSTON: Yes.

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HARTIGAN: Did any of his legislative activities attract your attention? Did you follow them to any great extent at all?

COSTIN: Well, I can't point to any one area. I do know that he was very much concerned with the area of education. I also know he was very much concerned with what was happening in our larger cities and that every time that I talked to him, or went to Washington on a problem dealing with urban redevelopment and federal funds to take care of the dilapidated and blighted areas of our city, that he was always willing, ready, and able to assist. But I think that his biggest forté was that he was just interested in the problems that affected the average citizen.

HARTIGAN: The St. Lawrence Seaway bill developed quite a bit of hostility in this area, if you recall. Did you have any thoughts on that?

COSTIN: No. I didn't.... I should say this. It didn't bother me at all. Because even though the primary effect appeared as though it was going to hurt the people in New England, I felt that the secondary effect would be of great benefit to us. And that was one of the things about Jack Kennedy. I think that he had the ability to see much farther ahead than a lot of the people on his level at the time. They were only concerned about the immediate effect of certain legislation. They couldn't see the secondary effect or the long range effect. And people listened to what he had to say, and if they just looked at the final results of what that bill

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was going to do for the entire country, they would have realized that what he said was so true. And I think that that's why it didn't bother me, because I felt that the secondary effects would have meant cheaper goods for area and would have helped out. In fact, I think it would have helped out even today with the energy crisis.

HARTIGAN: That's a good observation. Tom, are there any other areas that—from your personal experience—you would like to relate for the record, with reference to either political or social, or with reference to your association with the late President Kennedy?

COSTIN: Well, all I can say is, that there are a lot of people who have stated—and they've been politicians—that the one thing they didn't like about Jack Kennedy was that he forgot his friends. I never found this. I found that when he became president [Interruption] that it was just as possible for me then to talk with him

and to bring him my problems as it was when he was a senator, or when he was a congressman.

Just speaking for myself, just taking care of his friends, I had—at that time in 1960 or 1961—when he became president—I had just finished 15 years of active political life; I had a young family of five children at the time. And I had just had it as far as active political activities were concerned. And the position of postmaster came up in Lynn and I went down to the White House. I told him that I wanted to get out of active political life. He asked me if I wanted to go to Washington and I told him no, that I was not interested in anything in Washington, that I just wanted to be a big fish in a little pond back in my own

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little community of Lynn and that I wanted to become postmaster. And as a result of my going down to him, I did become postmaster. So, speaking from my own personal experience, he didn't forget his friends. He remembered me.

But there was also a human side to Jack Kennedy. When I became postmaster, I became very active in the postal affairs on the national level, and I also became national president of all the postmasters in the country in 1967. I gave a speech at one time, about Jack Kennedy and about my association with him and I had so many requests for the speech, that it was made into a record. I would like to give that, a copy of the record, to the archives.

The reason why I want to do it is because there is one little incident that I relate about an assistant postmaster general, a fellow by the name of Elmer Paul Brock, who helped Kennedy in the early days during his campaigning. When Kennedy became president, he appointed Elmer Paul Brock as an assistant postmaster general in charge of the bureau personnel. It became one [Interruption]. It developed that Elmer Paul became very ill—in fact, he had cancer. He was called to the White House one day and he thought he was being called there to represent the Post Office Department on a matter, and he related all this in a letter to me, which is part of the record. But, just for the purpose of this tape, he turned around and Dick Donahue [Richard K. Donahue] was there, and brought in the President and the President said how glad he was to meet him. Elmer Paul Brock said, you know, how happy he was to be there, and he said that, something to the effect that he

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realized how busy the President was and how much he appreciated him taking the time just to meet him. The President said “Well, Mr. Brock,” he said, “I have many problems,” he said, “but my problems aren't as personal as yours and,” he said “I want you to know that I do appreciate all you've been able to do for your fellow citizens.” Elmer Paul ended the letter to me by saying that all this took place because the President of the United State had heard that one of his associates had a terminal case of cancer and he said that he was able to give me this brief moment of history that I'll be able to pass on to my seven sons.

I merely bring this out to show that even in the busy day in the life of a president, that he was able to take time out to call in one of his associates in one of the agencies who did not have too long to live. In fact, Elmer Paul Brock, was buried on March 22, 1963 and who knew at that time that only a few months later, that on another day, November 22nd, that the

man who took this time wouldn't be able to take time for himself, and was to lose his own life.

HARTIGAN: Tom, in your capacity as president of the National Association of Postmasters, you traveled the country very extensively, met with many, many postmasters—I think there were about 35,000 postmasters in the country at the time, maybe more—many of them having been appointed by other presidents. Were you able to sense any of their reactions to the new president, President Kennedy?

COSTIN: Well, I think that the Democratic postmasters in the

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country were very happy to have another Democrat back in the White House. And I think that the Republican postmasters were a bit apprehensive because even though they were protected now by the Hatch Act, and they couldn't be hurt, I think they were all apprehensive that maybe changes would be made that would hurt them. However, in my travels—and I went out as national president in 1969, which took in the first year of another Republican administration—that I can honestly say that the people that I dealt with in that period of time from 1960 through 1969, never felt that Kennedy or the Kennedy people...

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

COSTIN: ... time from 1960 through 1969, never felt that Kennedy or the other Kennedy people, so to speak, ever went out of their way to do anything to hurt them, and that as long as everyone did his or her job, that they had nothing to fear. I think that this was one of the hallmarks of, maybe, his Administration.

HARTIGAN: Would you like to conclude with a generalization of this part of your life, associated with President Kennedy?

COSTIN: Well, I think, that this, really, I think of my association with Jack Kennedy and the people who were around him has had a tremendous effect on my life. Because I found that, in my years working with and for him, that I came away from each meeting that I had with him, with a stronger sense of purpose and a feeling that everybody can, and does have, an effect on what does take place in their environs. And in working with

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him, I felt—as everybody did who worked with him—that they picked up this enthusiasm that he had. The only thing that has really disturbed me, is the fact that he never was able to finish and do all the things that I felt were lined up and just ready to come to fruition. If he had only been given his other year.

Then I also feel that he would have had another four years. I think there would have been a great change, and I think that the spirit that the American people have lost in the last several years, would never have taken place if he had been given this opportunity to finish out his term. I think his loss was—and will be proven in the future—that his loss was the beginning of the loss of spirit that we seem to be experiencing right now in the country.

HARTIGAN: What is your reaction to the publicity that's coming out now with reference to women expressing their experiences with the President? What is your reaction to that when you read it in the papers?

COSTIN: Well, my first reaction is that it's too bad that these people didn't express themselves, these stories didn't develop when the individuals who could answer for them, were around to do so. I can just say from my own experience of working closely with Jack Kennedy as a candidate for Congress, as a member of Congress, as a candidate for Senate, as a member of the Senate, as a candidate for president, as a president—in all these years, when the opportunity might have been present where this would have been

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brought forth in my own experience, my own personal knowledge it never did. I never at any time had any knowledge or any thought that this could have taken place or did take place. So from my own experience, I couldn't say yes it did, or no it didn't. All I can say is that from working with him, from being with him, that I find it very hard to believe the things that are coming out now.

HARTIGAN: Tom, finally, where were you on the day of the assassination?

COSTIN: On the day of the assassination, I was waiting at my home to talk to two government officials. And it's one of the few times that I was home for lunch during the lunch period, and I would not have been there if I hadn't been waiting for two government official my house that afternoon. And I was sitting in the living room talking with them—they had just arrived—and my wife had on the radio [sic] program "As the World Turns." And the program was just about to being when I could hear through my conservation, the TV blaring out and it mentioned just three words that I could catch, *Dallas*, *Kennedy*, and *shot*. And I wept.

HARTIGAN: What was Rosemary's reaction? The same thing?

COSTIN: Well, I think that anybody who had either known Kennedy or had been associated with him, or even the ordinary citizen who had just observed him their president, I think the very same reaction was felt. In my record, I point out certain things, as you know, Bill. Three weeks before, or two weeks before, I had been to your office in Washington and I had discussed with

you what I, and two other post office people, had picked up at Dallas, Texas. And how we had contacted the White House on the newspaper stories we had seen, and on the conversations we had with people in Texas. And as I brought back to you on November 12 in Washington, that there was a very strong anti-Kennedy feeling there that had developed through local newspaper stories that had actually suggested to people that the best thing for the country would be to have the President killed.

HARTIGAN: You refreshed my memory. I recall now that you did come to my office with that. Do you have any more detail on that meeting in my office?

COSTIN: Well, yes I do. The reason I had been in Dallas was that I had been working on a three member team to help to implement President Kennedy's executive order that called for equal employment opportunities within the postal service and the whole federal government. And we had been sent to the post office in Texarkana, Texas where the head of the Ku Klux Klan was a member of the workforce. One of the things that we were forced to do there was to break down the wall in the lunch room because they had two separate lunch rooms, one for the whites, and one for the black. The blacks were not given the opportunity to eat in the same area with the whites.

HARTIGAN: What year are we talking about here now, for the record?

COSTIN: We are talking about 1963. And we were down there in August of 1963 and we had to go back in November

and we were there on November 8. There was strong feeling at that time because this action was taking place throughout the federal government; that the segregation that had taken place in federal installations had to be broken down. It was so bad in Texarkana the whites would not eat on the same lunch area and the people were going out and eating in the back yard rather than integrate and eat with their black fellow workers. We had to break down and close off the rest areas that were set aside—the toilet areas that were set aside for the blacks—and made the management enlarge the white toilet facilities so that black and white would use the same.

It was coming back on that Friday evening, Thursday evening, into Love Field, when Mike Barone who was one of the members of the team, and Warren Bloomberg [Warren M. Bloomberg], now the postmaster of Baltimore, Maryland, and I stopped. Mike and I went for a cup of coffee and Warren Bloomberg went to get a haircut. When he came back from the haircut, he said to me, "You know, they don't like your friend here too much." And I said, "Who's that?" He said, "President Kennedy." I said "Why?" He said, "While I was having my hair cut, I mentioned to the barber how the President was coming in in a few weeks to visit Dallas, Texas, and the barber dropped the scissors and said if he comes in here, he better

have the National Guard to defend him or he's going to be shot." And in the ride from Love Field into the hotel in Dallas, the conversation was developed between Mike Barone and

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Warren Bloomberg. I didn't open my mouth because the minute I did, they knew I was from Boston. But these two postal people developed a conversation with the taxi driver and brought up again the subject of Kennedy coming into Texas and the driver spun around and said, [Interruption] "If he comes in, he won't get out alive." That night we, we documented five other people, the bell captain at the hotel, a waitress and a bartender who told us the very same thing. We were shown the following morning at the district office, the regional office of the post office department, actual full-page paid ads from a group in Dallas, making the suggestion that it would be better if President Kennedy were killed because of the legislation that was now being implemented.

HARTIGAN: You mean the legislation is the equal employment opportunity?

COSTIN: Equal employment opportunities and the other things that were happening on the Washington level. It was right after that, when I came back that week, that I called you in Washington, set up an appointment to see you, I brought you down the material, and with the other documentation. You called Kenny O'Donnell at the White House. We talked to Kenny and Kenny said, "If you'll come over to my office...." And we did. He pulled open his bottom drawer and he showed us separate files where he had eight other different people, the first one being Ambassador Stevenson, who had been in Dallas and was hit over the head with a sign, and he recommended

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that the President not go to Dallas, Texas. And there to were seven other different people who recommended to the President that he not go. And, as you remember, Kenny O'Donnell's statement to us that Jack Kennedy had to go in order to bring together the two warring factions of the Democratic Party. There was a Connally [John B. Connally, Jr.] faction, and there was the Yarborough, Senator Yarborough [Ralph W. Yarborough] faction, and that the only one who could bring them together was the President. Kenny also mentioned the fact that this would be the first trip that Jacqueline Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] would be present at. And I remember seeing that morning, the morning of the 22nd, on television as I was getting ready to go to work, Jack Kennedy was put in the background and all the emphasis was put on Jacqueline going to the breakfast and everything else. That's why, when I heard those three words, *Dallas*, *shot*, and *Kennedy*. That I wasn't too surprised from the attitude that I had seen there two weeks earlier. But you know, one of the other ironic items with my relations with the President—and it also is mentioned on the record—that in 1961, when I was down there to see the President about becoming postmaster in Lynn. The day I did talk to him, he was on crutches and with me that day, I had John Quigley, who was a reporter for that Lynn paper. When Jack Kennedy came out of his office, he asked us if we would like to go with him while he accepted the keys to a brand new

limousine that had a hard top bubble that was to be used to protect the President. When I saw the President again in 1963, in October in

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Philadelphia, he had that hard bubble car, but yet the time he needed it, in Texas, the hard bubble wasn't with him.

HARTIGAN: Just for the record, Tom, and this is not an unusual misconception, that bubble was not a bulletproof bubble.

COSTIN: Oh, it wasn't?

HARTIGAN: No, it was a weather, strictly for weather but it's not unusual. Most people thought that the bubble was bulletproof, but it was not. I think Ken O'Donnell explains this in one little part of the book. I think he should have made more of it because most people have that impression that had he had the bubble on, it would have been different, but unfortunately.... And yet it could have been because it would have been some deflection, we don't know. But it was not a bulletproof bubble, anyway.

Tom, on behalf of the John F. Kennedy Library, I really want to thank you for taking this time out of your busy schedule as postmaster in Lynn to participate in the oral history of John F. Kennedy and his Administration both in the Congress and the Senate and in the White House. And also thank you for the pleasant memories you have revived in me and also our friendship that developed out of President Kennedy's political activities.

And, in conclusion, I would like to request that if going through your memorabilia, you find anything that you feel would be of interest to posterity that should be in the Kennedy Library, I'd appreciate it if you would either call me or call Dan Fenn [Dan H. Fenn, Jr.], or Dave Powers [David F. Powers] over at the Library and they will send somebody out to evaluate it and be

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more than happy to accept that as a donation on your part.

COSTIN: Wonderful. I'd like to give a few copies of the record that was developed because I have a lot of the other small little items that might be of interest.

HARTIGAN: Thank you. This is Bill Hartigan with Tom Costin at the post office in Lynn and the date is April 5th, 1976.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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Eulogy of John F. Kennedy by Thomas P. Costin, Jr.

Thomas Costin, Jr., President of the National Association of Postmasters of the United States, and it was donated to the Library by Mr. Costin. [Bill Hartigan's voice]

When we look backward at the intricate pieces that set the pattern of man's life, or of a nation's history, we are very often surprised by the coincidence of certain events, especially when those events touch us personally. Since history can teach us the meaning of those events, it behooves us to learn from them and to share this knowledge with our fellows. Because of his close association with some of the most significant happenings of modern times, Thomas P. Costin, president of the Postmasters Association of the United States, has spoken extensively throughout the nation in an effort to convey his personal impressions of recent history and the lessons that we may all learn from it. The great number of requests for copies of his speech have prompted him to record it for his many friends across the country. It is a pleasure to present the Honorable Mr. Costin:

The poet Longfellow once wrote, "there are things of which I may not speak, there are dreams that cannot die, there are thoughts that make the strong heart weak." I come to you not to preach a sermon or to give a speech. I would like to take this opportunity, however, to tell you a story, a true story, my story, one that started many years ago.

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After being discharged from the United States Marine Corps, in early August of 1946, I entered college in Boston, attending classes in the evening but during the day, becoming interested in a candidate who was running for public office. He was campaigning for the Congress of the United States and in a very small way, I tried to help him. That year, he became a congressman, and in that year, I became interested in public life because of him.

Before I became twenty-one years of age, I was knocking on doors and ringing doorbells asking for assistance to run for public office myself. In the following year, 1947, I became an elected official of my own city at the age of 21. As my political career progressed, the political career of this young congressman also progressed, as I became a mayor, he became a United States senator. His name was John Fitzgerald Kennedy. During the years of 1956, 1958, and 1960, I helped him, and he helped me.

In 1956, I was elected a delegate to the national convention of the Democratic Party at Chicago, and that year a very small group almost made him the vice presidential nominee for the Democratic Party. In 1958, I headed up his reelection campaign registration drive in the State of Massachusetts. In 1960, once again, I became a delegate to the Democratic convention. This time at Los Angeles, and with the help of thousands of others, we did make him the Democratic nominee for president. Three months later, he became the 35th president of the United States.

In early April of 1961, I found myself at the White House one day meeting with the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy. I told him there was only one thing I wanted from his Administration, there was only one job I was seeking, that after fifteen active years of political life, of twelve and fifteen hour days of fighting for

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such things as urban redevelopment, and housing for the elderly, working for better schools, trying to keep the tax rate down for my citizens, I found that I was tired and at the age of thirty-five, wanted to retire from active public life. I told him that I wanted to become postmaster of my city. During the meeting, we were interrupted by the President's administrative assistant, Ken O'Donnell. Ken came in and informed the President that he had to go to the West Wing of the White House where he was to receive a presentation of keys for a new limousine. The President invited me with him and, if you remember back in early in 1961, because of an injury to his back, he was on crutches. As he hobbled along the corridor with me at his side, we went to the northwest patio of the White House and there I watched as the President of the United States, received keys to a limousine, a limousine that was built especially for him with a new bubble top, the bubble top that was to be used for added protection. Two months later, I became postmaster of the city of Lynn. In June of that year, I began my so-called retirement.

A short while after receiving this appointment, I was called by the Post Office Department to help them set up a training program for postmasters on three new executive orders passed by the President. One had to do with equal employment opportunity in the federal service, another had to do with labor and management relations for all federal employees. The Post Office Department started this program under the direction of a very young, but vigorous, individual, a man by the name of Elmer Paul Brock, who at age thirty-six, had the very important position of deputy assistant postmaster general. I worked with him on a program of labor management training for postmasters, which was to be given at the University of Oklahoma at Norman in early 1963.

On January 25th, a Friday, I found myself in Washington driving

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out with Mr. Brock to the airport at Baltimore, Maryland, and on the way out to the plane, this young man told me how a few days earlier, on January 22nd, he had met the President for the first time. I was so enthralled with what he told me that I asked him if he would write it down and send it along to me. And he promised me he would.

We flew to Dallas, Texas, and that afternoon, we had a meeting with regional officials, as well as postmasters in the area, at which time they were told the positions that they would have to take and what they would have to do to implement the executive orders passed by the President.

The following morning we could not fly to the University of Oklahoma because of bad weather conditions. It was necessary to take a train ride for four and a half hours, and on this train ride, once again, I had the opportunity to sit with the young dedicated public official as he told me his philosophy of life. After listening to him once again, I asked him if he would take the time to write down his thoughts and send them along to me, and once again, he promised that he would. We arrived at the University, and after several days of working, Elmer Paul Brock became ill and returned to Washington.

After the training program was over, I returned to my own office in Lynn and began to prepare my own staff for the work ahead in the area of labor management. Two months later, on March 19th, I received a call from Washington, and I was told that the young deputy assistant postmaster general, Elmer Paul Brock, at age thirty-six, had passed away. A few days later on March 22nd, I attended my first official burial at the National Cemetery at Arlington and after attending this very brief but solemn, devout service, I went to the Post Office Department on Pennsylvania

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Avenue where I was informed by the late Elmer Paul Brock's secretary that she had two letters for me, which after reading, she asked if she could keep and make a copy for me. She wanted the originals for the widow and the children of the deceased Mr. Brock. I told her that it would be perfectly all right with me and in reading over the letters that he had prepared for me, this is what he said. The first he entitled "A Meeting with the President":

On Thursday, January 17th, Richard K. Donahue, a friend and member of the White House staff, called to ask when I was going to have lunch with him at the White House. He suggested some time the following week, and I promised to call him back. On Friday, January 18th, I had my secretary call Donahue's office and suggest the following Tuesday, since that was the only date I had available in that week. It was agreed that I would be at the White House by 1:00 p.m. I was conducting a staff meeting on Tuesday, January 22nd when my secretary buzzed me to say the time was changed to 12:30. My first reaction was to cancel because I was afraid Dick Donahue was being pressed for time and I did not want to add to a difficult day. Nevertheless, I did not. At 12:30 I arrived in a limousine at the northwest gate. We drove to the West Wing of the White House. I was ushered in and taken at once to a most attractive room where I was ordered to wait. As I browsed around, I soon recognized that I was in the room where the Cabinet meets. It seemed to me the room was set for a meeting, and frankly, I became quite concerned. My immediate reaction "Good heavens, the Cabinet is going to meet and they think I am here to represent the Postmaster General." I grabbed a phone in the hallway, called Donahue's office, expressed my fears, and was assured, "Mr. Donahue was close by and will meet you in the cabinet room shortly. It was delightful to browse around

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a room with so of much history abounding. Books from the Library of Congress, each chair with a nameplate for each cabinet member, the distinct swivel chair of the President, with a silver humidor directly in front of his place. It was exciting to behold. I had been seated but a few minutes when my dear friend, Richard K. arrived. "Hello, Elmer Paul, how are you?" "Richard, how the heck have you been?" I responded. To which Donahue replied, "Turn around and meet the President." Frankly, I didn't believe him. I was sure I would find my old friend, Ralph Dungan,

Special Assistant to the President. I turned and there stood John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35th President of the United States, a smile on his face, hand extended. "Mr. Brock," he said, "it's a pleasure to meet you, won't you come into my office," through his secretary's office, to the oft-times lonely office of the President, picking up a photographer along the way. "I understand you've been having a problem," said the President. "Something of a problem, sir," I replied. Now we were in his office waiting for the picture to be taken, with a sense and strong feeling of the President being taller and therefore, looking directly down at me, said, "Many people have told me you are a man of great courage." It was easy for me to say, "Well, sir, I face only one crisis and you face them every day in the week." And the President, without hesitation, replied, "But mine are not so deeply personal." With that, the picture taking ended, he laughed and said, "I hope they turn out." He led me back to the secretary's office, introduced me to a couple of his staff people, and referred me to Dick Donahue, who remained waiting in the cabinet room. As we shook hands goodbye, I could only say, "You are very kind, Mr. President." All of this took place because a President of the United States heard that one of

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his associates in government, had an advanced case of cancer. He gave me a brief moment of history which I pass on to my five sons.

Elmer Paul Brock's oldest boy was seven; his youngest, two months. In the second letter to me, he said and I quote:

People have said many times how amazed they are that I should face death with such apparent calm and good grace. They do not reckon with two important things. One, since cancer is a disease over which the individual has no control, and about which the individual can do nothing, it seems futile to get upset about the matter or to evidence any serious concern and, two, since I have spent a major portion of my life telling and trying to demonstrate how people should live, it seems only fitting and proper that I should tell them, and try to show them, how to die. Indeed, I now find that in the approach to death, as in the approach to life, there are both deeply philosophical and highly pragmatic considerations to which much thought must be quite given. Still, when all is done, nothing looms quite as urgent as the salvation of one's soul. Truly I can say that God, in his infinite wisdom, knows what is best for each of us.

I returned to my office, continued my work, and once again, I was called by the Post Office Department, to become a troubleshooter, to travel the country with two other individuals in the postal service. We traveled from state to state, from office to office, to help postmasters arrange their training programs, to make sure that they understood the spirit as well as the letter of the law as spelled out by the President in his executive orders.

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In late October of 1963, we found ourselves working at Paterson, New Jersey and on a Wednesday morning after finishing our work, I was invited to attend a dinner at Philadelphia that evening, a dinner where the President of the United States was to be the principal speaker. We arrived for the dinner and I found myself seated with the postmaster of Philadelphia and his family. And when the President arrived, the postmaster's two daughters asked me to take them up to meet him, and I told them it would be impossible, considering the guard the President had around him, that we just could not do it. They insisted, however, and when the President finished his speech, we went up to the front of the room and as we got to the outer ring of the security guard, the President was backing out to the folding doors behind him. Without thinking, I raised my voice and yelled "Jack, Jack," and perhaps because he got my Boston accent, he saw me and waved me through. By the time we reached the back of the hall and out the alleyway we were only able to see him enter the limousine that he had received two years before with the bubble top. We waved goodbye, and I told the girls not to be upset, that there would be other opportunities to meet the President and perhaps in the very near future, they would be in Washington and I could take them to the White House where they could meet him in his office. I have no yesterdays. Time took them away. Tomorrow may not be, but I have today.

A month later, I found myself with my two companions working in Texarkana, Texas. We finished our work on November 7th, a Thursday, and late that afternoon, we flew into Love Field, Dallas. As one member wanted to get a haircut, the other member and I went to have a cup of coffee. Half an hour later, the man returned quite upset

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and said to me "You know, they don't care for your friend down here," and I asked, "What do you mean?" He replied, "Well, in my conversation with the barber, he told me during our discussion of President Kennedy coming to Dallas in a few weeks, that if he did come, the President had better bring the troops from Little Rock [Arkansas] because if he didn't, he'd be killed. That evening, we talked to seven other different people, and during the conversations, we brought up the fact that the President of the United States was coming to Dallas. Six of them told us that if the President of the United States did come to Dallas, Texas, that he would be murdered, shot, killed, or assassinated. The following morning we invited people from the regional office of the Post Office Department to meet with us and we asked them, "What's happening here in Dallas?" and they told us, they told us of the hate and the malice being generated in that community. They showed us full page ads, signed by responsible citizens of the community inciting someone to take the life of the 35th President of the United States.

The following week, on November 12th, I went with the other member of the Post Office Department team to Washington, with a special report on the Dallas situation and in talking with Ken O'Donnell, the administrative assistant to the President, I told him, "I don't want you to think I'm overly upset, and I don't want you to think I'm foolish," and then I outlined to him what we had heard the week before in Dallas. He told us of five other reports made by other people in the government and outside the government informing the President

of the United States that he would be better off for his own safety, not to travel to that community.

The following week, on November 22nd, I found myself home for lunch

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for the first time since I had become postmaster. I arrived home about 1:15 and while having a sandwich and a cup of coffee, my wife left me at 1:30 to go into the living room and turn on the television set to watch her favorite program, "As The World Turns." I heard only three words, 'Kennedy,' 'Dallas,' 'shot,' and I wept.

Three days later, I attended my second official burial at the National Cemetery in Arlington. John Kennedy was laid to rest, not too far from Elmer Paul Brock, a man whom he had met for the first time on January 22nd. One man was laid to rest on March 22nd, and second was assassinated on November 22nd.

Both these man died of cancer, one from cancer of the body, over which he said he had no control, and the other from cancer of the spirit over which he had no control.

This is not the end of my story because two weeks later, I found myself in Baltimore, Maryland, finishing up the final report on our trip to Texarkana, Texas, and again on a Wednesday night, I was invited by a member of the post office team to go to a Kiwanis Club of which he was president, for dinner. We arrived a little late, and were seated on the outer aisle and shortly after we arrived, three businessmen of that community of Baltimore, responsible citizens, came in and sat across from us. Immediately, their conversation went something like this. The first man said to his companion, "How stupid can people be, changing and renaming streets and schools and parks, after this fellow Kennedy?" And the second one said, "If I had my way," and he mentioned the main street of Baltimore, "I would rename it Oswald Boulevard." And it dawned on me, it dawned on me that the President of the United States could have been assassinated in Dallas, Texas as he was, or Baltimore, Maryland, or Boston, Massachusetts.

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All the water in the world, no matter how hard it tries, can never, never sink a ship unless it gets inside. All the hate in the world, the blackest kind of sin, can never hurt you the least bit, unless you let it in.

A year later, late in the evening on November 22, 1964, I found myself flying out of National Airport in Washington D.C., and it just so happened because of wind conditions, as the plane took off from the airport, we passed over the National Cemetery in Arlington and as I looked down, I could see the flame on the grave of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the flickering light lined up with the lights of the Washington Monument and down the Mall were the lights of the Capitol. And these thoughts came to me. "One year has passed since that date, when death arrived and said I cannot wait. One year has passed since he did die and still his people ask, 'why, oh, why?' One year has passed since his small children so straight did stand, as the caisson carried their father across the land. One year has passed and she did light the flame, a flame that signifies a nation's shame. One year has passed that time, how short it seems, but still his people continue to dream his dreams. Am I involved in this, my

nation's shame, am I involved, am I to share this blame? Did I, in this crime, take part? The answer can only be found in each heart. This dear friend, this hero, this president, was our country's most important president, who was not afraid to act in the time of strife, even though he did might mean his life. He spoke out against those who spewed forth hate and tried to pass new laws before it was too late. It was during this time he went to Dallas, the city where some hearts were filled with malice. It was here that he met up with death, it was here that

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he did taste his last breath. Am I involved in this, my nation's shame? Am I involved, am I to share this blame? If I search and find any hate or malice in my heart, then I too, in this crime share a part. Let us ask forgiveness from the Lord above, and petition him to fill our hearts with love so that in the future, no small children will have to stand as a caisson carries their father across the land."

It was my wish and my hope that this would be the end of my story, but yet another chapter was written a short while ago, a chapter which found me standing in an honor guard at the casket of another friend at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, a chapter which found me attending a funeral mass, a chapter which found me being flown to Washington D.C. on the late Senator's private plane to attend my third official funeral at the National Cemetery at Arlington. I want to take each and every one of you with me on that long afternoon as I waited, I want you to come with me as I watched a little boy dressed in blue, who was also waiting, a small boy of three, waiting for his father, watch with me as this little boy in blue, romped up and down the green grass of Arlington National Cemetery, listened while he tells a few close to him, that he is waiting for his father to come. Here with us, as a warm day is replaced by the dark chill of this night. Watch as the boy reclines on the grass, with his left hand outstretched and his right arm entwined around the neck of his dog. Come with me and watch while he is abruptly awakened late that very same evening, watch with me as he tries to understand why his mother doesn't speak to him as she passes. Stay with me and watch while his older brother carries a loving burden up the grass incline to his final resting place. This boy in blue will not know for many years why the arms that used to entwine him, why the eyes that used

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to look upon him with loving care, and the voice that used to call his name will never do so again.

These deaths brought to me the realization that no man really retires. You cannot withdraw from society, you cannot pull back from your responsibilities. I find that you are still a member of the community, that you are still a member of humanity. As much as you would like to do it, you cannot abdicate this responsibility. As leaders of our community, we must stand up and do that which is right. I do not come to you as a group. I am not concerned with numbers, I don't ask you to sign petitions. I don't ask you to march in parades. I come to you as an individual and I ask you to search your own heart to wipe out this cancer of hate

that is eating away today at our society so that in the future, no small children will ever again have to stand as a caisson carries their father across this land.

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[END OF EULOGY]