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Biographical Note

Polly Fitzgerald was a cousin by marriage of John F. Kennedy and worked on several of Kennedy's campaigns for office. She also organized women in Robert F. Kennedy's senatorial race. This interview focuses on Fitzgerald's involvement in organizing women's teas and receptions for Kennedy's 1952 senatorial campaign; 1958 senatorial campaign; and 1960 presidential primary and presidential campaign.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Polly Fitzgerald

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Polly Fitzgerald Oral History Transcript

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Oral History Interview

with

Polly Fitzgerald

August 19, 1967

For the John F. Kennedy Library

FITZGERALD: My name is Polly Fitzgerald.

INTERVIEWER: Could you, Polly, we want to thank you for inviting us into your home today. We like you, if you will, to reflect for a moment and try to recall the first time you remember having met the late President Kennedy.

FITZGERALD: To the best of my recollection, the first time that I met him he was a young congressman and I think that it was at the wake of his grandfather, John F. Fitzgerald [John Francis Fitzgerald], who was my husband's uncle. I remember being captivated by his charm even in those few minutes that we talked. And the next time that I saw him he was the guest speaker at the Ace of Clubs, which was a Boston organization that his mother founded. He had just been on a trip to the Far East, I think. And he spoke to the club about his experiences. After that time there was an article in the

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newspaper criticizing some of the things that he said in that talk. And I was very upset about it because I thought he was wonderful and I didn't like it that this article was detrimental to him. And so, I wrote into the newspaper and the letter was printed. Later when Judge Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey] met my husband on several occasions and said that the congressman would like me to work for him in his campaign. I wondered if it was perhaps as

a result of the fact that I had written this letter into the newspapers or whether it was something that was prompted by Judge Morrissey. I just have never known and I've never been able to find out exactly how I did become involved.

INTERVIEWER: Had at that stage, had John Kennedy's 1952 campaign actually gotten under way or was this quite some time before the actual campaign had been moving into the second gear?

FITZGERALD: This was before the campaign had started at all. I went into 122 Bowdoin Street and met the congressman and Judge Morrissey, and Congressman Kennedy asked me if I would like to help in his campaign. And I said I would. And he asked me to setup a tea for women. This was a completely new idea in politics. Then I

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said, "Well, I want to help you, but I don't know anything about politics." And he said, "Well you don't have to know anything about politics, all you have to do is be interested in people." And he sent me up to Worcester to begin the organization of the first tea.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the things you did when you went up to Worcester? Did you go up with an organization? Did you go by yourself? Did you have an assistant?

FITZGERALD: I went with Helen Doyle who was the secretary in his office. And we worked out of his office in the Federal Building. And my husband drove us up as I remember, and we met Ed Maher [Edward C. Maher], a young lawyer in Worcester, who had been host to the congressman on several occasions when he had spoken to men's groups up there. And he had specified that I go to see him because he thought of him as a friend and thought maybe he'd be helpful to us. Actually we just went about organizing the teas the way you would organize anything for women. We talked to him about a place where we might hold it, and told him that the congressman was especially anxious that he'd be able to meet all kinds of people,

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people from all walks of life. So we wanted to start with a committee. And we did that. We had a committee meeting of about a hundred women who were representative of all walks of life – housewives, teachers, women who worked, women who'd been involved in politics before, and people who had never thought of being in politics.

INTERVIEWER: How did you approach these women? Did you send them a letter, or an invitation? Or How did they, how were they notified that this tea was going to be held?

FITZGERALD: Well Ed Maher called them on the telephone and invited them to come to a committee meeting and asked them if they would be interested in working for the candidacy of Congressman Kennedy for Senate. Then, after this initial meeting with him in Worcester, we organized a group of women who would work here out of Boston aiding in making this tea a success in Worcester. We had the first meeting in my apartment in Cambridge. There were maybe a half dozen of us. And we were inspired to a great extent by Father James Keller [James Gregory Keller] who had spoken in Boston the year before for the Junior Guild of the Infant Savior, and he had written a book

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entitled *Government is Your Business*. And he had, was presenting this idea that you can change the world just in your own little way by being one person and doing one small thing that eventually if a great many do a small thing, then you can reach out and really change the world. And he talked a great deal about the fact that you should be interested in your government and in whom you're electing. And that it would be important for just the ordinary person who might never have thought they could be effective before, to really do something and try to influence our government by electing the right person. So it was to a great extent that we were influenced by his thoughts. That we really felt maybe we could help Congressman Kennedy. I mean I think before this time, you'd think, "Well what could I possibly do?" And this was a new concept. So a half a dozen of us got together in my apartment and we decided to form a committee of people who would like to work. And each of us went out then and called friends and said, "Would you like to work for Congressman Kennedy who is going to run for the Senate?" And in a matter of a few days, we had a group of about

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fifty people. And we met in a room in the Miles Standish Hotel, and we told them that our first project was this tea in Worcester. And that, of course, the people of Worcester would run this tea, but that we wanted to be sure that enough people would come to meet our candidate so that it wouldn't be a waste. And we just thought that he was so wonderful, we felt sure that if we could get a great many people to come to see him and meet him, that they'd think he was wonderful too. So that we decided that every one of us, the fifty of us, would call and write letters and go to see anyone at all that we knew who lived in the Worcester area. And in this way we'd supplement what the people up there were doing.

INTERVIEWER: When you had this list and you were fairly well along, did you transfer your activities from Boston up to Worcester or did you just go up there a day or two before the event?

FITZGERALD: No, we never moved in on what the people there were doing. This was their tea, and they were doing the work of it there. They addressed the invitations, they did all the work of the tea in that area. All we wanted

to do was be

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sure that it would be a success. And we didn't want them, we didn't want to detract from what they were doing at all. We simply wanted to supplement it, and we thought maybe we'd know some people that they didn't know. And through people that all of us might have gone to school with, or have been associated in business with, or maybe that we had relative there, or a Just in the simplest kind of way we tried to think of people in that area who could join their effort. Actually, that's what it amounted to.

INTERVIEWER: Well, through these contacts were people told that the event was going to be held on a given day at a given time, or did you actually, once you had a long list or long catalog of people, send out an invitation through the phone or in the mail?

FITZGERALD: No, they were written invitations, but what we did was we tried to channel all these people into the committee of the people who were working in Worcester. In other words we'd say there was going to be a tea in Worcester and would you like to work for it, and then we would channel these people into the committee that was working so that it would just grow to be a

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bigger one. But there were written invitations and actually it was the president himself who decided on how these would be worded. He was a very sensitive person and he was very concerned. He didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings as a result of having these, and he was worried that maybe some people would feel that they would, that they were uninvited because obviously you just couldn't think of everyone. And so the ideal developed that everyone who wanted to come to this tea could come and would be welcomed. And we tried to spread this idea by word of mouth. In other words, everyone in the committee would go out and say to everyone they met during the course of the few weeks between the first meeting and the tea. Anyone is welcome to come to this...

INTERVIEWER: Invitation or not? You're welcome.

FITZGERALD: Yes, but you, anyone who would like to have an invitation may ask for it by simply sending a name and address to this particular headquarters where the work was being done. And then the invitations were actually announcements. And this was the congressman's wish that it wouldn't say you are cordially invited and then anyone who didn't get it, you see, would feel uninvited.

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So they were announcement type of things and they would just say tea and reception in honor of Congressman John F. Kennedy and Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy], who was his mother was also a guest of honor with him.

INTERVIEWER: On that day?

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Very good.

FITZGERALD: At this first tea.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think Polly, was the genesis of that first tea? Do you think it might have gone back to the house parties that John Kennedy attended in Charlestown in the '46 campaign, where a group of neighbors and people got together and he saw then in those days that this was an idea or a way of meeting people and that it may have eventually evolved into the tea concept? Or do you have some other thoughts on the subject?

FITZGERALD: Well no, I think this could very well have been so. I'm sure it was his own idea because he was so interested in all the details of it in the beginning. And his idea was that he would have an opportunity to meet many, many people, but to meet them personally. And this was the secret of his charm. He did remember every

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face that came through the receiving line. And I think what you say is probably true.

INTERVIEWER: Cause he, we've talked to people who've described meeting people in the old days in '46 in Charlestown ...

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And he enjoyed these parties because it gave him a relaxed, rather intimate meeting with new faces and new people. And I've often had the feeling that that might have been the first seed of the idea of eventually doing the teas in '52.

FITZGERALD: I wouldn't be surprised. Although I'm sure it was never expressed or said, at least in my presence, what the reason was.

INTERVIEWER: Or how it came about.

FITZGERALD: Or how it came about. But I do know that in the beginning, he said

we'll have one and we'll have it in the heart of the Commonwealth. And then, when it was so successful, he went on from there. And he said, "Now, let's go on, we'll have others." And then in the end we had thirty-three.

INTERVIEWER: Statewide?

FITZGERALD: Statewide.

INTERVIEWER: Thirty-three. For a moment let's talk about

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that first tea in Worcester. After the invitations had gone out, after the word of mouth had spread, after the word of mouth had spread that you're welcome even though you don't have an invitation, I imagine there was great anticipation to see how many women would actually come? Would you describe your feelings and the feelings of the committee that day when you were in Worcester?

FITZGERALD: We worried, we worried that no one would come. I remember that. And it was a rainy day. And oh, we were just sure we'd get there and no one would be there. But one of the girls who worked on the teas was reminiscing with me only yesterday and she said that she can remember that Henry Cabot Lodge was standing outside the Bancroft Hotel, I think it was call in those days, and someone said to him, "What are you doing here?" And he said, "I'm up here to see what they're doing here." And when we got out of the car and went into the hotel, it was just teeming with women. And we just couldn't believe it; we were so excited because we really didn't know until that moment whether the people would come or not.

INTERVIEWER: Was the candidate on time that day?

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FITZGERALD: I don't think he was ever on time. [laughter] But that was the excitement of it, waiting for him. And then, when he came, it was just always worth it to everyone. All the working, waiting and planning because there was just something about him that communicated so to people. And as the women went through that line, he had an indefinable something that made every woman there feel that he needed her to work for him. It's nothing that could be put on. It was just

INTERVIEWER: Completely genuine.

FITZGERALD: It was genuine. It was something within him that communicated itself to people so that, I think that, probably 75% of the women who left there were ready to go right out and work for him.

INTERVIEWER: Did he give a formal speech? Or was it just a few remarks to the audience that day at the tea?

FITZGERALD: Just a few remarks. He never spoke for very long.

INTERVIEWER: No issues or things of that sort?

FITZGERALD: I can't remember that there were any issues now. It seems to me that there was just a few remarks because he wanted to be sure that he met everyone there. Thus, the emphasis was on the personal. And of

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course, the people were all standing. There weren't any chairs. It was a tea in the same sense that it would be a tea in your home if you had open house say four to seven and you had a hundred people in your home, you wouldn't expect that they would all sit down. They'd mill about and talk to each other and have tea. And so this was the same type of atmosphere that they tried to create.

INTERVIEWER: Did the local women that participated, was there a great deal of excitement amongst their organization as to who was going to be the pourers and who would be the servers and who would be on the greeting line? That sort of thing. Was there a participation excitement?

FITZGERALD: Oh there was, there was. Yes. All of this was planned by the committee in the beginning and they tried to have something for everyone to do. You see, there would be hostesses and these would be made up of the original people who were on the committee and then other friends of theirs that they might like to suggest. And the function of these women was that they would circulate among the guest who came and make them feel at home. And they'd wear little badges with the word "hostess" on them. And since they were

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the people who had done the inviting, they would, and it was going to be so big, we thought that perhaps it might lose a little of the personal. So that if these women could circulate and talk to their friends and say, "I'm so glad you came." Or bring them up in the line and say, "Congressman Kennedy, I want you to meet my friend," Why then the whole thing would be very, very personal even though it was very large. And the pourers were generally women who were prominent in the community, whom the committee wanted to honor in some way. And we'd, and they tried to allow each woman to pour just for maybe ten or fifteen minutes so that a great many could pour.

INTERVIEWER: And replace her with another?

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. But the participations thing, was it a good key to the success of it? Obviously, of having them feel a part of it, you know.

FITZGERALD: It was. And these women all had addressed the invitations that went out and they had then on the day of the reception, they actually did the work. And they had guest books so that people could sign in them, so that every woman who had been on the committee and worked from the beginning also had a part that day in making it successful.

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So that this, this was the key to the success in the personal feeling of it. That every woman felt herself identified with the congressman.

INTERVIEWER: When the candidate arrived and after his opening remarks to the assembled ladies, did they set up a receiving line and was Mrs. Rose Kennedy part of that line? Or were the sisters part of that line? How was that worked out?

FITZGERALD: Yes, they were. Mrs. Kennedy would receive with her son and also that day two of the girls were there Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] and Pat [Patricia Kennedy Lawford] came. And so they were all in the receiving line at that particular tea.

INTERVIEWER: They would introduce themselves as the candidate's sister or mother? And it would be a handshake?

FITZGERALD: As I remember, when he spoke he introduced them on the stage. And he, when he said these few words he introduced his mother and his sisters.

INTERVIEWER: How many people would you estimate were at, appeared at that tea? Several hundred or several thousand?

FITZGERALD: Oh, well over a thousand, I'm sure.

INTERVIEWER: So it was a smashing success?

FITZGERALD: Oh, it was. It was.

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INTERVIEWER: Did the candidate have anything to say to you personally or to the

original committee personally after the tea with any thoughts or reflections or any ideas that he may have had?

FITZGERALD: Well, I remember very well that of course none of us wanted to approach him because we felt this was a day for the people in Worcester. This was their tea and we didn't want to intrude on any of this, but of course, we were so anxious to speak to him and see if he was pleased. I can remember a group of us standing to one side in a hallway that he had to pass through as he was going to leave the hotel and I could still see him on his crutches. He started to go out and then he saw us, and he turned and came back. And came over and told us how wonderful it was and how delighted he was, and said, "Now, we'll have to get to work and on from here."

INTERVIEWER: So you knew there would be more of that day?

FITZGERALD: So we knew that day that there would be more.

INTERVIEWER: You said that he was on crutches. Apparently he was having trouble with his back during this period?

FITZGERALD: Yes, he was. He was on crutches at that time. I suppose to relieve his back.

INTERVIEWER: Now with that many women having attended the tea one would think that it would have been a mistake

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to let them just have a good time and leave without taking advantage of the fact that you have a thousand people, a thousand names, a thousand addresses. What did you do to take advantage of this?

FITZGERALD: Well the ladies had all registered in books when they came in, and then the congressman wrote letters to them afterwards and thanked them for coming and told them that he'd hoped to see them again and hoped that they would be interested in his candidacy. So that we didn't lose them.

INTERVIEWER: No, hardly. In fact you were building a feminine army of workers?

FITZGERALD: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Throughout the state.

FITZGERALD: That's right. And then these women went home and talked to their families, their husbands, and women love to talk. And they love to talk

on the telephone. Everywhere they went I know they talked about this young man.

INTERVIEWER: The first tea having been such a smashing success, Polly, did that dissipate or stop any negative attitude that some of the campaign organization may have had toward the tea concept itself? Or was it a tough battle throughout the campaign

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to convince members of the campaign committee that the teas were a strong tool to use in order to work for Jack Kennedy? Did that convince everyone that the teas were a positive thing and a successful campaign gimmick and that they should continue? Or was it always an uphill battle trying to?

FITZGERALD: Well, now to tell you the truth, I don't think we ever knew what anybody else was doing or what anybody else thought.

INTERVIEWER: Thought.

FITZGERALD: You see, this started, the Worcester tea started early. We began to work in February as I remember it, and the tea, I think, was in April. And then we went on to, we were still in the very beginning, we were working out of his congressional office. And some of the girls went, we'd go in there at night and use that office after the business of the day was completed, for space. And then we moved into a headquarters, I think, on Kilby Street. And when we went in there to that headquarters, I'm sure I'm not answering your question, but I'm just thinking.

INTERVIEWER: It's all right. It's all right.

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FITZGERALD: The first meeting that we had in at that headquarters, there was no furniture in the building. And I remember that the congressman was going to come that night, and this was our first meeting of our committee of say fifty people. And we carried bridge tables from our homes and rented typewriters, and carried in chairs. We just carried in all the furniture for that first meeting. And he came that night and his father was there, Judge Morrissey, Mr. Ford [Francis J.W. Ford] was going to be the treasurer of the campaign. And a man named Lynn Johnson from New York, who had, I think he worked with the Kennedy enterprises at that time. But he was there. And all of us. And that was before Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] came to be the campaign manager. It was all just a little bit informal at that point I think. And we worked on the planning of the teas that spring. And then in the summer Bobby came to take over as campaign manager and then of course, many other facets of the campaign emerged. But I honestly must say that I had no idea of what anybody else was doing.

INTERVIEWER: [inaudible]

FITZGERALD: We just kept on it, and oh, also another thing is that in the very beginning we worked in the

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first two teas, I think. With, no, I think it was only the first one that we worked through Ed Maher who was someone whom the congressman, as I say, had spoken through and so forth at various organizations. After that then Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] came in early. And Kenny was working on getting Kennedy secretaries in each city and town. And from that time, before we'd go into a city or town to organize the tea, we'd talk to Kenny and say, "Who is our Kennedy secretary in this area?" And he would, he was going through the process at that time of choosing these people, and then he'd tell us who the one was that we should work through initially. And he would set up that arrangement, and then we'd go there and see that person and begin the work on the teas.

INTERVIEWER: You just mentioned that meeting that night in the empty building where you brought in chairs and tables and whatnot.

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any particular excitement that night that over the fact that the ambassador [Kennedy, Joseph P., Sr.] was coming?

FITZGERALD: No, he was very quiet. In fact,.... I'm trying to think. I don't remember him saying anything.

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INTERVIEWER: He was just there?

FITZGERALD: He was just there.

INTERVIEWER: And did, was there any, were there any comments by the candidate? Did he come that night?

FITZGERALD: Oh yes, the candidate came and he conducted the meeting, and....

INTERVIEWER: Can you recall any of the things that were discussed? Do you remember what he said?

FITZGERALD: Well, I think he wanted to know, I mean, he wanted to know exactly

what we were doing. And, isn't it awful, I'm not sure if Bobby was there that night.

INTERVIEWER: That really isn't too important at this stage, but...

FITZGERALD: No, I don't remember that.

INTERVIEWER: ...it was the first kind of official meeting on the teas.

FITZGERALD: It was the first kind of official meeting that we had, yes. And I, oh I do remember this. They showed us colors and things that might be used in bumper stickers and asked us what we thought about this. And what colors we thought might be effective. Oh, and another thing, the president that night gave me a copy of "Survival" which was, had been reprinted from the *Reader's Digest*. It was the first article

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that was printed about his story of his PT [PT 109] boat and their rescue. And he asked me to take it home and read it. And I was thoroughly shocked the next day when he called me up at home and said, "What do you think about that article? Do you think it would have any value? Should we use it in the campaign?" And I was so astounded that he would ask me for my opinion, but I realized later of course, that this was typical of the way he thought. He really wanted to know what the average person thought. And, so he always questioned people wherever he went because this was the way he found out what they were really thinking. So that he really knew the people who were working for him and who were interested in his candidacy. And he thought a great deal about their opinions and he valued what they thought about things.

INTERVIEWER: What did you tell him about "Survival"?

FITZGERALD: I told him that I thought it was wonderful, and that I thought people would be very interested in reading about it.

INTERVIEWER: Can you recall...

FITZGERALD: And that he shouldn't...

INTERVIEWER: ...if, if "Survival" was indeed used during the campaign?

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FITZGERALD: It was. "Survival" was used during the '52 campaign. It was printed up in little pamphlet forms, and we gave them out at all the teas. So every woman who went home took a copy of it.

INTERVIEWER: Can you think of anything else that was done at the tea besides giving them the “Survival” and having them sign the guest book and then the handshakes?

FITZGERALD: Yes, we gave them other literature. We gave them bumper stickers for their cars. And another type of pamphlet I recall, it had his picture on it, because “Survival” was just a copy from the *Reader’s Digest*. It didn’t have a picture of him. And then, I’m trying to think.

INTERVIEWER: It’s all right.

FITZGERALD: Perhaps not in the very first teas but later on we used them as an opportunity to have people sign up for other activities in the campaign. I remember there was a youth committee set up, and there was going to be a youth rally later in the campaign at Symphony Hall in Boston. So there were little index cards printed and a table set up, and representatives from this youth committee would come to all the receptions. And any

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young people who were there could sign up to belong to this committee, and plan for this rally. Then also, it was planned that there would be a television program at the end of the campaign, “Coffee with the Kennedys.” And, so that later on in the teas, not in the beginning, we had cards for people to sign to give coffee hours in connection with this program. And that was another thing that one of the girls said to me yesterday when we were reminiscing. She said she can remember, perhaps it was at the meeting that night, that the congressman turned to her and said, “What do you think about television? Do you think we should use it or shouldn’t we?” And this apparently was a question in those days about how effective television would be and whether there should be a program on television.

INTERVIEWER: That’s interesting, Polly. My God. Do you think that as the teas progressed, that those of you who were very much a part of the organization at the beginning were aware of the impact that they were having on the campaign? Or was it not until much later that you became aware of this? Could you see....

FITZGERALD: Well, of course. The thing is maybe it’s typical of a woman, but we just thought it was the

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greatest thing that ever happened, and we just didn’t know anything else was going on. We just worked as if everything depended on us. And we were just sure we were electing him. [laughter] I don’t know, this may be the woman’s approach.

INTERVIEWER: You know, I, they tell us that many a time you would get on the platform or stand in front of the ladies and make a few comments to them, probably before the candidate would arrive. Do you remember whether the kind of thing you would say either before he arrived or after he had concluded his remarks? Many people have told us that you did speak to the ladies.

FITZGERALD: Well I did. Usually before he came I'd talk. I'd talk to them at the original committee meeting, and to interest them in planning for the teas. And then I would speak to them that day. One thing that I used to say over and over and it got to be kind of a joke. And yet it wasn't a joke because I meant it. Just a sincerely, I used to tell them that – this was at the original committee meeting – that we wanted them to go out and just get everyone they knew to come to this reception. To use every device to interest people to attend. And to

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tell people that they were to come whether they thought they were interested in his candidacy or not. Because we were so sure that if they just came and heard him speak and met him, they'd be so impressed with the impact of his personality and his intellect that they just would go out and vote for him. So this little phrase got to be kind of a joke. Bob used to kid me about it and imitate me when I'd say, "If you will just come and see him and hear him, and feel the impact of his personality and his intellect, you will be bound to vote for him." [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: That's wonderful.

FITZGERALD: But we really believed this. This was so true. And that's why I think that.... Well, I wouldn't want it ever to seem that what we did was contrived in the sense that we did work as a group. We moved around the state. We tried to supplement what all these people were doing. We tried to form a pattern in what we were doing everywhere. We tried to be sure that one tea wouldn't outdo another. That they wouldn't get to be social excesses. But we, in all of this, we worked so hard and did all these things because we were sure that if we could just get the people

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to meet him, he would sell himself. So that, I don't know if I can express this correctly, but much of this seems contrived when you say we, the way in which we worked and way we went about it as if it were a business. But we knew that in the end, he was going to sell himself. It was nothing that we did could elect him. It was only that we could make sure that he was exposed to enough people, and we just knew that if all these women came and met him, that they would work for him. And he'd be elected. And we just took that simple an approach to it.

INTERVIEWER: So you really gave them the forums? Actually these teas were more or less groups and forums of people that enabled him to communicate directly with them in large numbers.

FITZGERALD: This was it. Yes. This was it. And we knew from the first teas the things that would be really helpful. In other words, we, these women gave so much time over all these weeks and months. They really became so excited and enthused that they didn't do their housework. And they didn't, you know, cook the same kind of meals. [laughter] I'm sure that they weren't baking cakes and making good lunches and so forth. But they gave all

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this time. And they gave it because they got so inspired and excited about working for him. They thought he was so wonderful. And, so we wanted to help them, and not have them maybe waste time, and so we'd show them little short cuts that we learned from one tea to the other just to be helpful to them. But this was kind of the role that we played. We just went around in the background trying to help make sure that there'd be all the people that should there to meet him.

INTERVIEWER: And successful. They tell us that in many of the communities the tea was such a social occasion that it was almost a stimulation to the economy of the community. Women went out and bought dresses and went to the beauty parlor and fixed themselves at their best so that they would look lovely when they would attend. And then, in a way, it affected the community... the economy of the community in some cases. Could that have been a distortion? Or could that very well have been true?

FITZGERALD: Well, I don't know. I suppose women always go to the hairdresser and buy new dresses when they're going to a party. I honestly couldn't testify to that, but I do remember this. That

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in the first few teas, the women actually brought tablecloths from their homes and their own services and everything to some of the halls in which the teas were held. The first one of course, was in a hotel, but some of the others were held in very barren halls. And women brought linens and silver coffee pots and things from their homes, so that the tables would be pretty and everything would be just as nice as if it had been held at home.

INTERVIEWER: Was there pretty much a basic guide or a basic format as to what should be served and what should be on the table? Like did you have cookies or cake? Or tea and coffee, or just tea? Was that all worked out?

FITZGERALD: Well, yes. We tried to keep the refreshments very simple. Because you know, it would be so easy for one woman to try to outdo another or one group of women. And have theirs more lavish than another. You know, this wouldn't have been good. So that we use to ask them to have just simple cookies and tea and coffee.

INTERVIEWER: In '52 then, it could pretty well be said that it was truly the tea party campaign, if you did thirty-three throughout the state in a year? It was quite an important part of the campaign, and must have had some impact?

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FITZGERALD: Well, of course we thought it was. And actually I think the most important thing about the teas was the fact that for the first time in political history you had a different type of woman working in politics than you would ever had before. John Kennedy inspired just a different breed of woman to be interested in him. I really think that up until this time there were women who had worked in politics but they were women who would go out and work for every candidate in the party. They were identified with politics. This time it was different. And these weren't foolish women; these were a high type of woman. People who were just, never thought that they would ever become involved in working for a candidate. The whole thing took on a new aspect. But he was such an unusual person, and this came through to people. And he just inspired them to want to work for him. So that to me, that's the importance of the teas as far as his history is concerned. I think it should be said that a whole new kind of woman became interested in the government of this country and in electing candidates to public office.

INTERVIEWER: Wonderful. Polly, would you say that the tea party approach influenced future political

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campaigns in this state?

FITZGERALD: Oh, definitely.

INTERVIEWER: Could you enlighten us a little on that?

FITZGERALD: Well, I just know that every candidate who ran for any office after that time....

INTERVIEWER: Used.

FITZGERALD: Used the teas. To such an extent that when he ran for the second time in 1958, it just seemed ridiculous to have the teas again, as such,

because they had, everyone had been teaed to death in the meantime.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do in '58 in place of the teas? That was a different kind of campaign of course, wasn't it?

FITZGERALD: It was, yes. Actually, I didn't do very much at all in that campaign Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and Kenny O'Donnell did all the organizational work of all the appearances that the candidate made in that campaign. And as I recall it, he went around the state into every single community meeting people. And they had sometimes receptions in the evening in schools, but men and women were invited and they weren't teas and there weren't any refreshments served.

INTERVIEWER: House parties rather than the...

FITZGERALD: And, well, no, I think they were more like large

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gatherings at the end of a day of campaigning in a city or a town. But then they would have a hall in a big school that night so that...

INTERVIEWER: Groups.

FITZGERALD: ... groups could come and hear him speak and meet him.

INTERVIEWER: The problem that year was to build up as large a vote as possible...

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: ... so they would have impact nationally.

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I believe he ran against a fellow named Vincent J. Celeste?

FITZGERALD: Yes, he did.

INTERVIEWER: And beat him something like five to one.

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Well, when was the next time that the tea party concept was used in the political life of John Kennedy? Did you use it during the primaries of 1960?

FITZGERALD: Yes, we did.

INTERVIEWER: In Wisconsin? West Virginia?

FITZGERALD: We used it in Wisconsin. In Wisconsin we didn't call them teas. We just called them receptions because, oddly enough, people out there told us that they weren't great tea

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drinkers. That they drank more coffee and that to call them a reception would be better rather than to have the connotation of teas. But we did the same kind of thing there in order to have him meet a great many people. But also out there people told us that we should not have functions just for women. That we should have men and women. That it was customary in that part of the country for women not to go out in the evening alone. That they always wanted to go with their husbands. And so we did, have men and women at those functions, but it was because that's the way the people wanted them.

INTERVIEWER: Modification of the original.... Were they successful? Those gatherings?

FITZGERALD: They were. They were very successful. And it was harder perhaps than it had been in '52 in Massachusetts because in Massachusetts he was the native son. There was that kind of interest. In Wisconsin he was that young senator from Massachusetts.

INTERVIEWER: The outsider.

FITZGERALD: The outsider. This is it. But there again you had in every area that we went into a small nucleus of people who were interested in him, excited about him, believed in him, and through their enthusiasm they built committees of people who worked. And it was the same kind of thing again. As soon as the people met him and heard

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him, they were inspired by him and they wanted to work for him.

INTERVIEWER: We would assume or believe that in Wisconsin that in addition to modifying slightly the tea format that the candidate himself had something much more serious at that time to communicate to his audiences than he did in '52?

FITZGERALD: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell us a little bit about the sort of thing that he said in Wisconsin?

FITZGERALD: He spoke about the office of the presidency. What an important office it was, and I couldn't bear to misquote him so I, that's why I'm so hesitant.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's all right. Something that's approximate.

FITZGERALD: But, he spoke about the great influence that the office of presidency had. And why he sought this position and why he wanted to serve his country. And I, well I'm just afraid because I don't remember exactly the things he said.

INTERVIEWER: Did he bring up the religious issue at all at those gatherings in Wisconsin?

FITZGERALD: Well not in Wisconsin that I remember. No. The first time the religious issue was brought up was in West Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] was his

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apparent opposition in Wisconsin. Is that correct?

FITZGERALD: Yes he was.

INTERVIEWER: Did he ever discuss Hubert Humphrey in those meetings? Or was it strictly Jack Kennedy's position and his own message rather than discuss or mention Hubert Humphrey?

FITZGERALD: I can't remember any discussion of Hubert Humphrey. I just think it was his own message.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, his own?

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you in Wisconsin, Polly, working that campaign? A number of weeks?

FITZGERALD: Yes, went to Wisconsin for the first time for a weekend when they had the first meeting of the first Kennedy for President Club of Wisconsin.

And that was in January of 1960. I remember meeting Bobby in the railroad station in Chicago and we went up on a little train together 'til, to Milwaukee. And Kenny O'Donnell and Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno] met us in the railroad station. And we drove...terrible, I can't tell you what city it was held in. We drove to a city where we held the first meeting. Larry O'Brien was there, and Ivan Nestingen [Ivan A. Nestingen] was the mayor of Madison later

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Under Secretary of [the Department of] Health Education and Welfare. And a group of maybe fifty people, and it was a little restaurant by the side of the road. A very unimpressive looking place. And I remember that we had to walk through the restaurant where the people were sitting eating to a back room where the meeting was held.

INTERVIEWER: Could it have been Baraboo, Wisconsin? Not sure?

FITZGERALD: I don't know. Isn't it awful?

INTERVIEWER: It's all right.

FITZGERALD: I, I just don't remember what the name of the place was.

INTERVIEWER: Was the candidate there?

FITZGERALD: The candidate was not there.

INTERVIEWER: Just Bobby and Larry?

FITZGERALD: Bobby and Larry and Kenny. And I remember sitting there that day thinking this is history being made, and I'm here. I couldn't believe it. Bobby stood up and told these people that the future of his brother lay in their hands. And that his work that they were going to do could be the – right here in Wisconsin – could be the very thing that would elect him to the presidency and determine his whole future. And just the way he spoke to them, you just had the, I don't know, you just

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had this feeling that his was history and you were right sitting there listening to it. I remember having the feeling. But anyway let's see, that's not what you asked me. You asked me how long I was in Wisconsin.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

FITZGERALD: Well that was the first. Then I went back two weeks later. And when I first went, I don't want to talk about myself though.

INTERVIEWER: It's all right. It's all right.

FITZGERALD: Well I was going to say, I remember Bobby asking me if I'd come and saying, I'd said, "For how long?" And he said, "Three weeks maybe." And that seemed like an eternity to me. Well anyway, I went and I was there about a week, and he said, "Will you stay until April fifth?" I think that was the primary date. Is that right?

INTERVIEWER: Mmuh

FITZGERALD: And the tears rolled right down my cheeks, because all I could think of was my two children and my husband. But anyway, I stayed and then went from there to West Virginia. I think maybe the only reason that it's important that, to say anything about myself is that I always felt that I represented all the women

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who worked for him. I think the fact that I left my husband and children and went to work for him was a thing I never would have done for anybody else. And so many women did the same kind of thing. They may have only left their houses by the day, but they went out very single day and put everything else aside to work for him. I can remember a woman in Appleton, Wisconsin. Her name was Shirley Schakaski. And she got up at about five o'clock in the morning and brought her four children in the car, and they had their breakfasts in their hands - pieces of bread and cold cereal - to drive me to and airport because I was going to another place to set up a reception. And she didn't do that for me. She did it because she loved him so much and she knew I was there to plan for him and I was going on to another place. And this was typical of the kind of little things that women did everywhere for him.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever get any letters from people in Wisconsin in response to the gatherings or the parties or the groups that you had for Jack Kennedy there? Did anyone ever write you and give you any reflection or thoughts about meeting him or attending an affair of that sort in Wisconsin?

FITZGERALD: Well yes. I have one letter I found only

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today as I was looking through things, from a lady in Wisconsin who wrote to me. Let me see if I can put my hand on it. Should I mention names? [pause] This is a letter I found, I had forgotten I had, from Mary Ryan Murphy in Green Bay, Wisconsin. She wrote me a little note and thanked me for coming. Incidentally, it's February 19th. Isn't that interesting? It was that early in 1960. And she enclosed and

article from the *Green Bay Press Gazette*. And she said, "I thought several of the remarks were snide, and could have been blue penciled. At any rate those who did attend were thrilled and I had several calls today from people who attended." And then she goes on. Let's see what else in here that might be of interest to you. She said, "I think I forgot to tell you that one of the observations made during our telephoning prior to the reception was that several persons said they were not interested because they were Republicans, but there were none who said they were Humphrey supporters. I'm going to stop in at the Northland Sunday night to look over the crowd at the Humphrey meeting." And then she mentions, and this is really interesting, I think. I won't tell

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you the name of this little nun. She might be embarrassed now. She mentions a nun at a private girls' school where she had called to see if she could have some songs duplicated, that we were going to sing at the reception. And this, she said, "This little nun called me this morning when I was out, and when I called her back she was not available. I'm wondering if she wanted to apologize for her curtness to me when I asked about the duplicating of the songs." And this is very funny because I that so many people in those days thought that if anyone was a Catholic they were for Jack Kennedy, and actually there were many who weren't ... This might be of interest to you. This was an article. "Senate Race". Does anybody have that?

INTERVIEWER: No, this we don't have. No, this is good.

FITZGERALD: Don't you have that?

INTERVIEWER: No, we don't have this, no.

FITZGERALD: Well, I'd like to get that back too, but....

INTERVIEWER: No. All right. Good. This is one I don't have.

FITZGERALD: Yeah, there's, there he is. There's a natural picture.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, great. That's great. What's taken. That's in?

FITZGERALD: Cambridge.

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INTERVIEWER: Harvard. Cambridge. That's great. That's the first one I've ever seen of that.

FITZGERALD: And here he is, meeting people coming through the line.

INTERVIEWER: Great.

FITZGERALD: “Large Kennedy contest plus orthodox campaigning against rounds of tea parties and wholesale handshaking.”

INTERVIEWER: Oh, wonderful. Funny, our people didn’t find that one.

FITZGERALD: And there he is again.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

FITZGERALD: There’s another of Eunice.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

FITZGERALD: That’s a good...

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that’s a nice shot.

FITZGERALD: That’s a nice shot!

INTERVIEWER: I wonder who took those? Good still.

FITZGERALD: Isn’t it good?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Photographs, doesn’t say who did the photo. No.

FITZGERALD: Ah, no. This is *New York Times Magazine*.

INTERVIEWER: We could probably contact them if they have it in their library. Good shots.

FITZGERALD: That’s good.

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INTERVIEWER: Polly, after the rigors of Wisconsin and apparently it was quite an experience for you having left your family back home in Massachusetts and gone out there for many weeks in kind of new territory, so to speak. I’ll bet you were anxious and glad to get back home, but home didn’t mean Massachusetts. Guess the next stop was West Virginia.

FITZGERALD: It was.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember how you got involved with the West Virginia

primary? Was it just a follow through right after Wisconsin? Boom, into West Virginia? Or did you get a chance to come home to Massachusetts for a short while and then were you approached and asked if you'd come down into West Virginia?

FITZGERALD: I remember so well being on the plane and we had just touched on the ground coming in from some reception. And it was maybe a week or so before the end of the Wisconsin primary. And the president said to me, "Are you almost through here with what you have to do?" Because, of course, our work was always preliminary to everything. And I said, "Well yes, there is just one more tea left." So he said, "Well, do you have to be there for it?" And I said, "Well no, not really." I didn't know what he was driving at. So he said,

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"Well why don't you go home dear, and rest and then go to West Virginia?" [laughter] And it took my breath away because I just hadn't thought about going to West Virginia. And the terrible part of it was that as long as he sent me home I felt I had to go. And the whole time I was in Wisconsin I wanted to be in Massachusetts. And the one night that I would liked to have been in Wisconsin was election night, and I was at home. [laughter] But anyway I came home that week and then went down the day after the Wisconsin election to West Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: There, of course, you probably made contact with the state chairman, with the chairman or someone who was responsible?

FITZGERALD: Yes and actually the whole campaign was different in West Virginia in the sense that it was thought that the people there wouldn't be as attracted to receptions or tea parties so they had all different types of functions there. And we, we had some receptions in big cities, and then they had other kinds of parties. And....

INTERVIEWER: Did you go up into some of the depressed areas? Or did you work out of the major cities?

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FITZGERALD: No, I worked out of the major cities...

INTERVIEWER: Major cities.

FITZGERALD: ...really, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Of course there he was talking religion to the people.

FITZGERALD: He was. And I always felt that he really won that election by the things

that he said over television. I think he, he really came through to all the people in all those television broadcasts that he made there.

INTERVIEWER: West Virginia?

FITZGERALD: Yes, in West Virginia. And he, he met the religious issue head on.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say, Polly, that in West Virginia that your activities were more diversified than in the earlier days with specifically teas and women's groups?

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: There you were working in many directions on many types of projects?

FITZGERALD: Exactly, it wasn't nearly as clear cut as it had been in the Wisconsin primary.

INTERVIEWER: Apparently you found it difficult to say "no" to Jack Kennedy?

FITZGERALD: I guess everybody did. There was just something

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so special about him. You couldn't put your finger on it, but.... And you had the feeling always that this was such an opportunity to be identified with him and to help him. And, I don't know. It's difficult to explain, but people like him don't come along very often. And it was just written all over him that he was special, and that you just felt so lucky that you could know him and be part of making everyone else know him.

INTERVIEWER: Before we go on to the actual presidential campaign of 1960, and I have to believe you were active in that?

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Could, could you tell us about the change that you noticed, if any, in the candidate from the young congressman trying to get a victory over Mr. Lodge to the young man in the primaries of West Virginia? Was there a change? Did you notice and evolvment here?

FITZGERALD: Oh yes, definitely.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe what it was you felt?

FITZGERALD: I think perhaps that's what is so exciting because those of us who worked with him could remember him from the early days. He had a shyness about him actually that was one of the things that was

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most attractive about him when he was very young, when he was first a congressman and running for the Senate. He wasn't what you would call a natural born politician. He liked people but it wasn't that easy for him to put himself in the limelight. And it was this little bit of shyness, this quality of making you feel that he needed you to help him do this thing that came through to people. And yet, he wasn't so shy that he wouldn't look at people. He looked everyone right in the eye. He looked right into the faces of the people. And I can remember one time in Milwaukee at the reception there. A friend of mine went through the receiving line by herself. Then afterwards I said, "Have you met him?" And she said, "Yes, I went through the line." And I said, "Oh, I'm so disappointed. I wanted to take you through and introduce you." I said, "Come on back so I can tell him who you are." And I went back with her and we went through the line again, and as I started to introduce her, he looked right into her face – and there were five thousand women at that reception in Milwaukee – and he said, "I met you before."

INTERVIEWER: How remarkable.

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FITZGERALD: But, when, he, it was so interesting to watch him mature and gain this assurance that, of course, he had by the time that he ran in the presidential primaries. He matured as a senator. For even seeing him a year after he was elected to the Senate, you could see how he had emerged from the young, boyish congressman that he was. I don't know how to explain it.

INTERVIEWER: Except that, too, he was now concerning himself with and thinking about not the local issues of Massachusetts now, but the national issues, the grand scale picture, rather than the local picture of the John Kennedy you knew in '52. Early or prior to '52. Now he was dealing with the issues that had national importance and he was concerned with things that were in the nation's interest. And I'm sure that this John Kennedy was a change from the Kennedy you knew originally where he was really concerned with Massachusetts per se.

FITZGERALD: Well yes, that's true. Although I think he was always interested in the national issues even, you know, as a young man when he first spoke for the Ace of Clubs. And he had just

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taken that trip. He was, even in those days, thinking ahead to the importance of many of these countries in the Far East and the Near East that other people weren't thinking about in those days at all.

INTERVIEWER: So you'd say that his concern about the world and where it was going and America and where it was going was part of his thinking from the very early part of his life?

FITZGERALD: I think so. I think it was part of his training and part of his thinking always.

INTERVIEWER: Can you recall his impact upon the people of West Virginia? ... Here was a Catholic from New England, son of a wealthy man, he went in there with some pretty difficult credentials? How did he get through to the people in West Virginia? Do you recall his impact on them.

FITZGERALD: Well I just remember that it was, it was the same everywhere. No matter where he went. If the people came to see him, you'd watch their faces as they'd come out after they heard him speak and after they'd met him, and many of the ones who went in with very sour looks and as disbelievers and, came out with a whole different look on their faces. We'd stand in

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the back of the hall often and watch them as they were leaving. And there were very few who weren't converted, who took the trouble to go and see him and hear him.

INTERVIEWER: And you say that he used television to good effect in West Virginia?

FITZGERALD: Yes. That's my recollection. That he did. He was on television a great deal.

INTERVIEWER: Did you stay for the victory in West Virginia? Or did you have to go back?

FITZGERALD: Oh no. That was a wonderful night. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall? Do you recall that night?

FITZGERALD: I do recall that night. Yes it was wonderful. And it was an intimate occasion in that there, there wasn't a great crowd of people. He had gone home to Washington [Washington, D.C.] as I remember. And then he came back later in the evening. And we all went out to the airport to meet him. Maybe five or six cars full of people. And he came back to [inaudible] Hotel and came around and talked with each of us. And it was a very intimate moment and I think all of us

felt that it would never be this way again. This was a victory in which we could share in a very personal way whereas later on when it was the presidential campaign there'd

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be so many thousands and thousands of people that it would never be quite this personal again.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. You almost felt that you of Massachusetts were losing Jack Kennedy in a way? Weren't you?

FITZGERALD: Well yes, this is true, of course. And yet, we never did. That was the thing about him that was so wonderful. You never lost him and he never forgot...

[END OF TAPE ONE]

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FITZGERALD: This is Polly Fitzgerald continuing.

INTERVIEWER: Well, Polly, we've come a long way in our chat. We're now toward the end or at the end of the road in West Virginia, and you were telling us about election victory in West Virginia that night.

FITZGERALD: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall what happened?

FITZGERALD: I can't recall anything beyond what I have just said. The fact that it was such a personal thing to all of us. And it was, in a way, we felt it was the end of the road for us in campaigning because at least for the, I think maybe I can speak of the women who were there – it was different for the men because of course they would go on – but we just felt we would never

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play any part in the presidential campaign. We couldn't imagine how we could fit into such a vast operation as that. So it seemed to us like rather the end of a little part that we had played in his life.

INTERVIEWER: As it turned out that wasn't really true though, because in 1960 you were again involved in the political activities of John Kennedy. Could

you tell us about that? Did you get involved prior to the Los Angeles convention? Or did you come in after the convention when the campaign actually got started?

FITZGERALD: Well, my husband and I went to the convention in July in Los Angeles, but actually as guests. I can't say that I did much work out there, but I kept feeling that I should be working. I kept going around trying to help, but I think we, we just were thrilled with the whole thing. And went to all the events, and participated and basked in his glory. I remember wanting to demonstrate at the convention and my husband wouldn't let me. [laughter] Anyway I didn't work again then until in the summer. In August we went to the beach with our children. And we were moving into the little house that we rented the first day. We had no telephone because my

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husband was anxious to cut me off from the world, I think. And the people next door came running and said there was a telephone call for Polly Fitzgerald, and it was Bobby calling to ask me if I would come to Washington. I went for two or three days and we made some plans. And then I went back to the beach. And then the week after Labor Day I went to Washington to help in the role that the women in the family would play in the presidential campaign. In the beginning it wasn't clear just what type of appearances they would make, but they were in great demand, everywhere, invitations were pouring in from all over the country, and letters were piled high in the desk asking the women in the Kennedy family to appear. So we arrived at the decision that we might best have them help the candidate by having receptions for them in different cities throughout the country. And that if we followed the same type of pattern, since it had been successful before, perhaps it would be again for them. I do remember that Bobby thought it wouldn't work. He said, "Who will come to see the president's sisters and his sisters-in-law? Perhaps his mother, yes." But he couldn't believe that anyone would

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come to meet the other women in the family. Maybe he wouldn't like me to tell that. Anyway I persuaded him that they would, and they did.

INTERVIEWER: He was proven wrong in this case?

FITZGERALD: Yes. I think they were a great asset to him.

INTERVIEWER: Actually throughout his political life they were a great asset to him?

FITZGERALD: Yes. All the women in his family, I think have been, and especially his mother.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yeah. I understand that she would be a tremendous crowd drawer and crowd pleaser no matter where she would appear?

FITZGERALD: Oh yes, she is a wonderful woman, and people just love to meet her.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do? Did you schedule, have schedules for each feminine member of the family? And then have a coordinator go with that member of the family to a given affair throughout the country?

FITZGERALD: That's right, yes. I remember Bobby said to me, "Why don't you stay in Washington this time and get six friends of yours who worked for the president before to come and help in the campaign and have them do the traveling? So I did. I called on six girls who had helped before and they came and traveled throughout the country

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with the women in the family. And we set up, I think, something like a hundred and twenty receptions in September, October...

INTERVIEWER: Early November.

FITZGERALD: ...and the girls traveled all over the country, Mrs. Kennedy [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] and the girls and the family meeting people everywhere and talking, of course, about the candidate.

INTERVIEWER: Yours was more or less a great master control center then for all these...

FITZGERALD: That's right. We worked out of the ...

INTERVIEWER: ...requests?

FITZGERALD: You see, we received so many requests that it was impossible, there was no time to analyze each one and make a decision. Well this would be one we could accept or one we couldn't accept. So the only way we could handle it would be to say, "Well all right, we'll have a reception in your area, and ask people from several organizations or several cities and town to participate in it."

INTERVIEWER: Because of the massiveness of this national campaign I imagine any personal contact with the candidate himself was quite limited during that three or four month period?

FITZGERALD: That's right, it was.

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INTERVIEWER: You didn't see him too often?

FITZGERALD: No, we didn't see him too often at all, you see, because he was, of course, going out in different directions from the rest of his family. So that we had to be content with seeing him on television and knowing that we were working for him and he knew we were. That was one thing about working in the primaries. No matter how hard it seemed, and it did seem hard, and no matter how lonesome you were – you'd be discouraged and homesick – but then when the reception would come and he'd come that night, and it would be a success and he'd give you that wonderful smile of his and tell you how marvelous you were then you'd be lost again and you'd go on. It just was the thing that you needed to revive you and keep you going.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it's very obvious in our chat today, Polly, that you per se were a kind of natural resource to Jack Kennedy and his political campaigns and career. And one can't help believe that in having had such a long association and having had so many wonderful experiences and having been so close to him, that your life had to be enriched from the experience in many ways. And we have

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to believe that not only did you give to John Kennedy and quite loyally through the years, but that in some ways he must have given to you. Can you think of some of the things that, some of the riches that Jack Kennedy may have given to you over the years?

FITZGERALD: These are the kind of things that are so hard to put into words, but, oh, definitely our lives were so enriched by our association with him. Through knowing him and having the experiences that I had, I think, too, all my values fell into the right places. I used to say – when I was away in the campaign – that if all the frustrated housewives could go away in campaigns, they'd learn what comes first in life. It might seem like a strange thing to say, but going away and leaving your family makes you realize that your family is the most important thing there is. To have been identified closely with a person such as he was who rose to the heights of the presidency but never forgot the people that he knew in those early years. It was just the most tremendous experience. Actually I might tell you this little story, at least in part. The last night that I ever saw him was when he came

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to Boston for a Democratic dinner at which he as the guest of honor. And my husband and I attended as guests of Senator Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] and we were sitting with other people at one of the tables right in front of the head table. And he looked down and saw Pat Twohig [Patricia Twohig] and myself and my husband. And he beckoned to us. Well, I'll try to make a long story short, but the Secret Service men had to move all the palms aside and everything so that we could go up to the head table to talk to him. And Pat and I went up and he chatted with us. And then just as we were about to leave him, he asked me a question

about someone who had worked in all the campaigns for him over the years. And it was a person whom he often inquired for. I told him that.... I'm not going to say this the way I wanted to.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry.

FITZGERALD: Could we scratch this?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

FITZGERALD: I don't want to make it too personal, but I want to, I want to show how this conversation showed the essence of the person that he was. Well, I tell you what, let me say it this way.

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We discussed someone whom he inquired for, and I told him and I don't know why I told him, except that he seemed to be interested in what had happened to this person, and how he was. And I was in this room with seven thousand people and he was behind this table sitting and I'm standing in front of him. And he leaned across the table and made this inquiry about this individual. And I said I tried to help this person to get a position with the federal government and I wasn't successful. And I don't know why I told him this except that somehow it came out of me. And he said to me, "Who did you talk to about it?" And I said different people because then I became frightened that I shouldn't have said this to him. And he said, "Why didn't you talk to me about it?" And I looked at him and I said, "I can't talk you about those things, you're the president." And he said, "You can talk to me any time about anything." And these are the last words he ever spoke to me except that he added, "The others sometimes forget, but I never forget." And for my whole life I will remember that I knew so well this man who rose to the place of being the president but never did forget

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the people who worked for him. And it was just such a revelation of what he was that he could come this point, that he could be in this room with thousands of people paying him this tribute, and that he could just ask about one person and be this interested. And this was so typical of what he was. And it was what made him so different from any other person I've ever known.

INTERVIEWER: That's a beautiful story Polly.

FITZGERALD: I don't think I told it right.

INTERVIEWER: No, you told it very, very beautifully. The point is well made. Very well made.

FITZGERALD: But I'm so happy that I have the ...

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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