EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES TRETTER

August 8, 2005
Boston, Massachusetts

Interviewer

Stephen F. Knott

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TRANSCRIPT

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Knott: Charlie, let me begin by saying that the way this works is we've got five and a half years left on this Kennedy project. The transcript of what you say today will not be open to the public until five and a half years from now, approximately. You have control over that transcript. What's going to happen is after we do the interview today, in about three or four months down the road, you'll get this transcript back and you can make any changes you want at that time. You can put something in if you forgot to mention something that you'd like to have in, or you can pull stuff out if you prefer to do that, if you have second thoughts about anything that you say. It will not be open until you clear it, until you approve it, and not until approximately five and a half years from now. Now fifty years from now, down the road, the raw transcript will be released, so long after we're all gone it'll see the light of day.

Tretter: Okay.

Knott: Okay?

Tretter: Sure.

Knott: We're with Charles Tretter today in his office in Boston. It's Steve Knott and—Go ahead, Beatriz.

Swerdlow: Beatriz Swerdlow.

Knott: Charlie, I think the best place to start would be if you could just tell us a little bit about your background, how you first became involved in political life, and how you first met, in particular, Senator Kennedy.

Tretter: It is an interesting little story. I wasn't living with my parents, I was living with my grandmother. My grandmother was my mother's mother, and my mother's brother—it was a family of, I think, eight altogether—was a priest here in Boston. His name was Christopher Patrick Griffin, who was an exceptional person. I'll later show you a photograph of him.

Knott: What was exceptional about him?

Tretter: What was exceptional about him was he was movie star handsome and he was very much into political and civic activity. In his original parish at St. Catherine's in Norwood [St. Catherine of Siena], he seemed to run everything, including the town. I lived in Westwood with his mother, the next town over, and I went to St. Catherine's grammar school. When I would walk down Washington Street in Norwood with my uncle, it was like being with the person who ran the town. He ran the drum and bugle corps, he ran the ladies' sodality, he ran the Knights of Columbus, he had the CYO youth group, and he was a phenomenal orator. And he had a speakers program. From a very young age, as a little kid under my uncle's wing, I met Hildegarde, Carlos Romulo, Arthur Fiedler, Bishop Sheen, the Von Trapp family. I had this whole sense of my uncle being a priest and a star.

He was transferred into Boston; he was a favorite of [Richard Cardinal] Cushing, who was an extremely political and powerful figure. He was put in charge of the chapel at the old South Station; it had been an old movie theater that ran 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during the Second world war. The space became available because the Japanese wife of the then president of the New Haven Railroad, Patrick McGuiness, had converted to Catholicism through Bishop [Fulton J.] Sheen, with whom my uncle was also very friendly.

So I grew up with this idea, *Well, maybe I'll be a priest, because if I'm going to be a priest, that's the kind of priest I want to be*. He never encouraged me, so I never got very far with the priesthood, but I had this sense of, *I'm going to do something like him. I'm going to be in the theater, show business, movies, whatever*. My mother happened to be in the movie business, the movie distribution business. This is when small towns would have two theaters and they'd have three changes in a week. It was kind of a hectic rough business; the movie business was then located in what's now called Bay Village, but then it was actually known as Kerry Village, because most of the Irish immigrants who lived there were from County Kerry. It was part of the St. James Parish on Harrison Avenue and was very Irish, very urban. I lived with my grandmother, but I was under his aegis, so I went to school where he told me: BC High [Boston College High School], BC, BC Law.

Knott: I didn't know that. You're a triple Eagle then?

Tretter: I am, yes. I did exactly what I was told, and in return I was treated like an adult. I went all places like an adult. I have a sister; we are close, but she didn't live with me. I had kind of a sense of *I'm going to be in the movie business or in show business, that's what I'm going to do*. He didn't seem to discourage me at all. I worked for him while I was in school, so I was in town after school, every weekend. I had use of a car, and I was kind of going along that I'm going to be something like him.

Now in my second year of law school—I didn't want to go to law school at all. He made me go. I tried to quit; he wouldn't let me quit—I'm in law school and he said, "I want you to have dinner with me tonight at Jimmy's with a judge."

Knott: Jimmy's Harborside?

Tretter: Jimmy's Harborside, with a judge—Judge Riordan, I think. At the end of the meal, Riordan said to me, "If you practice law, you're going to spend all your life in an office. Why don't you do something different, get a different kind of job for the summer. Do anything, I don't know, whatever suits your fancy." Well, for the previous summers, since I'd been in high school, a sophomore or a junior in high school, when I could drive, my summers were taken up at the chapel. My uncle had—the chapel was open seven days a week, masses from early morning until late at night, something like the Arch Street Franciscan shrine [St. Anthony Shrine], on Sundays the place was hectic—he had masses every half hour. I think he had something like 21 masses. There were very many priests coming in to say mass, people were flowing through the place, so it had to be maintained, and he had a large raffle to raise funds for Cardinal Cushing's work.

He was a very big fundraiser for Cushing. He became Chaplain of the Boston City Council. Parallel with that he became Chaplain of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. When it switched to Democrat, he became Chaplain of the Senate, State Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus. It was almost like Norwood again. He was the chaplain of everything, and he seemed to be everywhere.

Knott: What was his name? Did you give us his name?

Tretter: Griffin, Monsignor Patrick Griffin. Through him I met an incredible range of people. There was a nightclub in South Boston called Blinstrub's and my uncle loved show business. He was a friend of Stanley Blinstrub's and he would go there often. He'd bring back autographed pictures of every performer there, Johnny Mathis, Bobby Darin. It was just—I was in this world that was very strange to some. To me it was ordinary because I'd grown up with it.

After the dinner with Judge Riordan, we later had another dinner with Garrett Byrne, who was then the District Attorney of Suffolk County. I didn't realize that this was arranged to give me the opportunity that my uncle thought I should take, which I did not want. At the end of the meal it was, "You're going to work in the Kennedy campaign for Senate." In '62. "You're going to be a volunteer; it's going to be a great experience for you." This is what I was told. And I didn't want any part of it.

Knott: How come?

Tretter: I had no interest in politics, really. I knew very little about it except the personalities. I knew my uncle knew John Kennedy; I knew he knew the Speaker, the Mayor, the Governor—everybody it seemed. But what I'd seen of it, it wasn't as glamorous—they say it's like show business, maybe, but it's not as glamorous—the people aren't as good looking, there isn't as much money, the food isn't as good, the environment isn't as good. Frankly, to me the people weren't that interesting. Everybody was just an ordinary guy. So I didn't really want any part of it. But I had no choice, because he was determined I was going to do this.

So I don't know where to start. It's left in Garrett Byrne's hands, "I'll get you into the campaign." Now I finish my second year of law school and nothing happens. I'm at a wedding reception for a good friend of mine, John Mahoney, at the Hampshire House, and he introduces me to this woman, I can't think of her name, she's with her husband, and she hears my name and

she says, “Oh, the lawyer that I work for, I think I’ve heard your name before. Are you going to work in the Kennedy campaign?” I say, “Oh, yes, sure.” “Yes, I work for Joe Gargan in this law firm and, gee, I think I’ve heard your name and you’re going to be in the campaign.” “Fine.”

Two or three weeks go by, nothing’s happening, nothing. I’m back at the chapel working for my uncle and that’s collecting money, sweeping the floors, candles, dusting the benches—it’s work. You keep a suit to put on for your public appearance, but then you take the suit off and you go to work. The place was very active, very busy. I’m behind the altar with my uncle. I go down—it’s a hot June day—I go down behind the altar and he has a phone back there—he was really a phenomenal guy—phone rings, “South Station Chapel. Charlie Tretter? Hold on. For you.” He gives me the phone. It’s Joe Gargan. I won’t imitate the voice, but it was just like talking to John Kennedy on the phone, you could cut it [his accent] with a knife. He says, “If you can get up here. . . .” And I say, “Fine.” So I tell my uncle, “Time to go.” He says, “Well, go upstairs and get dressed and go.”

I had told Gargan I’d be there in 15 minutes, because all I had to walk was from the South Station up to the campaign on Tremont Street, campaign headquarters. I later learned that Joe had said to somebody, “If this son-of-a-bitch is here in 15 minutes, we’re going to take him. I don’t care whether he can do anything or what he looks like, we’re going to take him.” So I showed up. The first thing I noticed, very candidly, was this was not like any political campaign or political people I’d seen with my uncle. All the women were attractive, all the guys were well dressed and young, there was not a lot of cigar smoke, the place seemed organized, and there was a vitality, a real spirit. I stepped back, emotionally and mentally, I stepped back and I said, *Well, maybe this is going to be different.*

I meet Joe Gargan and Eddie Moss, who died in the plane crash, and I’m introducing myself to Joe Gargan. I’m saying, “I’m Monsignor Griffin’s nephew and I came—Garrett Byrne—” whatever. There’s a guy who walks into the room kind of nonchalantly, sort of an irreverent persona, he just kind of walks in. He says, “Are you new?” or something like that. I say, “Yes, I’m Charlie Tretter.” “My name is Jack Crimmins.” “Oh, hi, Jack. How are you?” He says, “Jeez, you look familiar.” “Oh?” “The chapel! The chapel!” I say, “Yes.” “You’re Monsignor Griffin’s nephew.” “Right.” Well, my uncle had known Jack when Jack drove for Governor [Paul Andrew] Dever. The first two or three days I was there—which was, “Get a piece of paper and let’s see what we can do with you,” and, “Here’s some material to read”—I’m getting introduced to everybody as Monsignor Griffin’s nephew. That sort of made a difference between being a total stranger, because I was a stranger, them to me and vice versa.

The second or third day there, they said to me, “You’re going to go to Fall River, New Bedford, an advance trip.” I didn’t know where New Bedford was. “Do you have a car?” I had a car. Right away, that was an asset; I had a car. And I was a volunteer, I wasn’t going to get paid. My uncle had made it plain. He said, “Don’t take any money from the campaign. I’ll take care of your living expenses.” So I had a car, I had a suit, I wasn’t costing anybody any money. I had this schedule that had already been made up in advance, but I was going to go down and advance it. I went down to meet the state senator, Tony Silva, who was the Kennedy coordinator for New Bedford. The first thing I did was introduce myself, “Hi, I’m Charlie Tretter. You might know

my uncle, Monsignor Griffin." I didn't have to do much. I didn't have to do much at all. They knew what they were doing, he and a guy name Syl Silvia. The whole thing was just laid out.

Eddie Moss and I went down; we did the trip with Kennedy. I don't even remember much the first time I met Kennedy, I really don't.

Knott: You really don't?

Tretter: Yes, I really don't remember the first time I met.

Knott: It was not on that particular trip?

Tretter: It might have been, but I'm not sure. The guy who was in charge of the advance team was Larry Laughlin—some of these names I wanted to—

Knott: Yes, we've heard almost all these names—

Tretter: Sort of took me under his wing. Larry was a very patient teacher, a very smart guy, extremely smart. There was a lot of competition inside the campaign office. It broke down into camps: the Gerry Doherty camp, the Gargan camp, the Bobby Fitzgerald camp, the Larry Laughlin camp. The thing that was interesting about Jack, and I loved his personality—

Knott: Jack Crimmins?

Tretter: Jack Crimmins, yes—He thought everybody was full of shit. He would tell that to the candidate, which would bring gales of laughter but recognition, *I've got to listen to this guy*. Of course, they had been together a long time before.

I met Barbara Souliotis and I met Eddie Moss. Larry was a great teacher. You could learn from Joe if you *watched* him; you couldn't learn too much if you *listened*, because most of the time he was really roaring, he was in high dudgeon, so to speak. Larry was very patient; he had a very gravelly voice and it was distinctive, so you had to focus on what he was saying. It was not unattractive or unpleasant either; he could have made a lot of money as a radio announcer.

It turns out, there were going to be three advance men. Now, a lot of this advance stuff was kind of made up as you went along. As I surveyed the office, there was one office that was a no-go, that was where Steve Smith was. I cannot remember formally meeting Steve—

Knott: Sorry, what did you mean by "no-go?" Just stay away?

Tretter: Nobody went into that office who wasn't—I mean, of the mass of people working in the office, when you came up the stairs or the elevator and took a right, that was where everybody was. If you took a left there were a few offices, there was Steve's office; that's where the candidate would be when he came in. Not very many people went in and out of there. Steve, for all that is said about him as being hard, I never saw it. I heard about it, but I never saw it. He

never asked anybody for anything. I mean, he asked me for a ride a few times, but he wasn't one of these people yelling out the office door.

I was kind of watching this thing develop, not really sure what it was all about, trying to catch up. I hadn't been at the convention, so I didn't know an awful lot of the delegates or the campaign people. I would talk to my uncle and he'd say, "Look, you don't have anything to say, so don't say it, just listen. Keep your opinions to yourself unless you're asked." For me it was a very familiar role, the little fat nephew just sitting there watching, trying to absorb all this stuff.

There were three advance men designated for the campaign. I was on law school vacation. Andy Vitale, Jimmy King, and myself. Andy and Jimmy were from western Massachusetts: South Hadley, Andy; and Ludlow for Jimmy. They didn't know that much about Boston. I knew Boston like the back of my hand, and the suburbs. One day every week, or two days every week, were Boston days. I got them. It was so much fun and so easy, because all I was doing was being around where I'd been. I didn't make up the schedule; the schedule was made up based upon where they knew the votes were and where their strengths and weaknesses were. I'd get a piece of paper and I could make suggestions, but basically, I would just advance it.

I learned very early that if you didn't physically go where he was going to go, you had a problem, because he had already been there so many times in his past career. I slowly began to get a sense of him, which was—I wouldn't say he was like my uncle in that sense, but—he was a bigger-than-life figure. He was in control and everybody knew him; he was in command, and this was what it was all about, being there to be able to assist. Slowly but surely it began to—I was absorbing it. The thing about having great advance days—particularly if you're close to Boston—at the end of the day, you get a chance to, if things were okay, sit down and have a drink with him or go to the house and have a drink. There was nothing wild about it, nothing wild about it at all; it was just like a bunch of guys sitting around after some sports event or some meeting. I really cannot remember the first time I met him. But it was clear that he knew who I was. We were having great days, and he would compliment me on them, which I really loved.

I learned, to my chagrin, that because he had done this himself, that you really had to know what you were doing or tell him you didn't. One day, I don't know where we were, but I didn't know where I was going, and I was sort of making it up. Dougie Whalen was driving, Kennedy was in the right front seat, Eddie Moss was in the back with me. Eddie or I were giving directions to Dougie Whalen, and in terms of going right or going left, we were just using the word "right." "Okay, no, right." After about six or seven minutes of this, he just blew his top. You have to forgive the profanity, we can take it out, but he said, "Will you get the [redacted] up here and tell us where we're going?" So I had to come up sheepishly out of the backseat and face him.

The precursor to that was we had stopped at a VA hospital where somebody said, "You've got to see this person who is dying of cancer." Well, he went in not buoyed up, and he came out just terrible, deflated. That was one thing that struck me early on, the emotion, not mood swings, but emotion, very empathetic. He related to and liked people.

The irony is, he would make mistakes himself, which was interesting for me. I figured he knew everything about it, he was in his brother's campaign in '58, '60, and he didn't make any

mistakes. But he did, he made a lot of mistakes. If the circle was small enough he'd acknowledge it and there'd sort of be this laughter. He and Eddie Moss and Jack Crimmins had a relationship and a language that was just all their own and it was just the three of them. Steve would be on one dimension of it, Joe would be on another, and then, as the circle got a little wider, his mood would always be, or his demeanor would be, a little more—would be different, to fit who he was dealing with. With the issues guys, [John] Culver and Evan Berlack and Lee Trevor, that was one thing. Gerry Doherty was sort of another. So there were different moods; the same person but different moods.

The advantage of being in Boston, of course, is that I had access to my uncle any time I needed something, a bathroom, a telephone, whatever. One day we were at a feast in the north end and everything was fine, I was even early. This was one of the things he used to really be on my ass about, being late, because I was late all the time, all the time. I would really get roasted forever.

Knott: He'd chew you out?

Tretter: Oh, yes, in a good way, because I think he was trying to teach me some lessons.

So we were getting ready for the feast and the parade and he said to Eddie Moss, to the effect, "I don't have any money. Who's got any money?" Well, five dollars, seven dollars, twelve dollars. He said, "I've got to pin a hundred dollars on the statue." It's Sunday morning about 9:30.

Knott: No ATMs [automatic teller machines] at that time.

Tretter: No. "We've got to get some money!" I said, "I can get you some. What do you want?" He said, "Get me five twenties." So I jumped in my car, down to the chapel, which was typical Sunday hectic, people, mass, out, in, mass, out, in. I ran upstairs and said to my uncle, "We need $100 in $20 bills." "Mike!" The guy who worked for him, Mike, came over. I got five twenties, back I go, catch up to him, and—he always really wanted to be—what's the word? I think maybe his ambition was to be the very best at what he was doing. That even meant physical movements. If you were ever going to give him anything, like money in his hand, or a note, or say something to him, you had to be discreet. You had to have a certain amount of—you had to work on trying to be graceful about it. So I got the money.

Knott: Well, how did you give it to him?

Tretter: I can't remember exactly. I think I said to Eddie Moss, "I've got the money." I think Moss went over and said to him, "He's got the money." I think he said to Moss, "Well, have him come up and shake hands with me," something like that. It was something that we did. You didn't walk up, "Senator, I've got something I want to give you." It was discreet.

Now all this time I was seeing Jack Crimmins at the chapel on Sundays if we weren't on the campaign. I was getting the sense that I was getting along with people and people were getting along with me, so I really began to absorb the campaign. It was very hard work, very hard work though. As young as I was, I marveled, I really did, at his energy, because I was a bit lazy then and I'm a bit lazy now. But he has phenomenal energy. I just could not believe some of these

days. The advance men would do a day and then be off two. We didn't work every day. He did. It was extraordinary. I would be tired, and looking forward to not having to do it for a couple more days, but found that I was going into the campaign headquarters earlier and staying late, both for the camaraderie and also for the lessons: Jack Crimmins, Eddie Moss, Joe Gargan. Because Gargan had grown up in the family, I was beginning to get a sense of the family.

There were three people that I met with whom I stayed friendly after the campaign ended. Bob Morey, who drove for John Kennedy and who was quite an interesting character in his own right, was both a boxer and a painter; a guy named Billy Sutton, who had been John Kennedy's first administrative assistant; and Anne Creehan.

Knott: Creehan?

Tretter: Creehan, C-R-E-E-H-A-N, I think. Anne was a beautiful woman then and she must have been a very beautiful young woman. She had known John Kennedy socially for many years.

Slowly but surely I began to absorb, almost like context. Now my uncle would talk to me, not at great length, but in sort of small bursts, and there was a point in time, I don't even really know what it was, when in my mind I really flipped from thinking *I don't like politics* to *I do*; *I don't like politicians* to *I do*. I never thought of it as show business or as entertainment, but I thought of it as glamour, excitement. I later learned that I was right; this was an exceptional political situation. When you get into the political pits and deal with the average guy, which I later did, I used to think, *Oh, this isn't what I'm used to*. In any event, the campaign became extraordinary. I enjoyed it, and I worked basically seven days a week. I didn't have to go to the chapel anymore on Sundays, unless I went down to see my uncle. And I became friends with Joey and Jack Crimmins and Eddie Moss, and other people who were in the campaign.

Funny thing, there was always a tension between Larry Laughlin and Gerry Doherty. So I sort of fell into the Larry Laughlin camp by virtue of being an advance man. Andy Vitale and Jimmy King and I would commiserate a lot. For reasons that I think were just my advantage and not theirs, I thought they used to catch it a lot, just really catch it, and I never caught it. I remember one day in Brockton. I was late, and he and Eddie Moss were—I was walking toward them—I happened to put on a pair of shoes, Italian loafers that I'd bought in Italy—and I got about two or three feet away from them, and he pointed at my feet, "Where did you get those shoes?" I said, "In Italy." He said, "For Christ's sake, we're in Brockton. This is the shoe capital of Massachusetts. They're going to spot those shoes a mile away. Go home and change your shoes." "What about the rest of the schedule?" "We'll take care of that. Go home and change your shoes and catch up to us."

So I went home. I had to phone in to Larry Laughlin. I told him, and he said, "Well, why don't you pick up so-and-so." I think it was a guy named Stan Tretick, a photographer. I picked up Stan Tretick, and he said, "So what's going on today?" I told him the little story. He said, "You're kidding me." I said, "No." Later in the day I find out that Tretick said to him, "Did you really send that guy home because he—" and Ted said, "Yes, I did. I was a little rough on him. I probably shouldn't have been." Later that night, Kennedy said to me, "You know, I didn't mean

to be too tough, but after all it's the shoe capital of Massachusetts." I said, "I know." And he said, "Like the photographer, Christ, I had to tell him, he's shooting me with this Nikon camera. And I said to him, 'Hey, Don, can it. We've got to get an American camera.'"

Knott: Wow. That shows a political awareness that's unbelievable.

Tretter: Oh, he was phenomenal. We would be in cities and towns that I had never been in but for that advance team trip, and he could tell me how many times he'd been there. He had a particular affection and reverence for Jimmy King's father, Eddie King. Eddie King really taught him to be a political advance man in the President's '58 Senate campaign, which Joey Gargan had also been in.

Slowly but surely I thought, *This is pretty good*. But I knew it was going to end, I knew the campaign was going to end. I never had any doubt about the outcome. In fact, I went to the South Boston debate with [Eddie] McCormack.

Knott: I was going to ask you about that.

Tretter: Yes, it was as bad as it's written about. If you took it out of context, and just said that's Eddie McCormack the candidate versus Ted Kennedy the candidate, McCormack wiped the floor. From the standpoint of debate and scoring points, he really delivered a lot of body blows. The difficulty he had was, none of it showed. That is, Kennedy's reaction was just perfect gentleman, perfect gentleman. Didn't lose his temper, never responded in kind, kind of rose above it. The audience was South Boston. The tickets were supposed to be evenly divided, but I think Eddie McCormack had the bulk of the crowd. I wasn't feeling that well about this thing; I don't think a lot of us were. But we went back to the house—

Knott: "The house" being—

Tretter: Charles River Square. Having a car made it possible for, "Can you go get Joan [Kennedy]?" "Can you take so-and-so?" "Can you pick up my mother at the Ritz?" and what have you. The more exposure I got, I guess, the more exposure I was going to get. You try not to make any mistakes. So I never ran out of gas. The Italian shoe incident was—what can you do about that?—and then in the car, the yelling.

But then you had the balance; we didn't have a bad day. I never had a bad advance day with him. Poor Andy and Jimmy. They would have some bad days, where he was unhappy with what happened and so forth. I used feel a little bit self-conscious, because if the day started off at Forest Hills at 7:30 and ended at some place in Mattapan at 9:30 and you saw all these spots in between, I knew exactly where they were. I did them. That was one lesson Larry Laughlin—Larry Laughlin said, "Never, ever, ever, come in here with someone else's schedule," or, "I talked to so-and-so and he said you've got to be here, you've got to be there." You've got to put your foot down."

As the campaign got roaring, it was fun. I really had a lot of fun, and I really liked all the people I dealt with. I didn't meet anybody in the campaign who was unpleasant. It was fun. Andy,

Jimmy, and I got along very well, and I tried to get along with Kennedy well. There were times when I thought, *I'm not really cut out for this. I'm having fun and I like this, and I do like politics, but I'm not really sure I'm cut out for this*, because to me it was like never-ending school, like never-ending getting ready for an exam. This was just not going to end.

Knott: Meaning every day there's a new test?

Tretter: Yes, exactly. He was—I suppose he was—treating younger people around him the way he was treated when he was younger, that would be my guess. He was not—he wasn't cruel, but he wasn't soft, either. If he had something constructive to say, he would say it. If he had something profane in anger to say, he would say it, but not a lot of it, not a lot of it. He was careful about that.

Even though I was sort of looking forward to the campaign ending, I had no idea what I was going to do, so when the campaign ended I was relieved, because I had to get back to school. I can remember talking to him one day in the van. He said, "Now, you're going to stay through the campaign, aren't you?" And I said, "I've got to go back to school." He said, "Nah! You're in your last year." I was at the University of Virginia when Bob—my brother—was running the '58 Senate campaign and I helped. "Don't worry about that, there's no problem." I said, "I flunked constitutional law, I'm already in trouble." "Ah, no, it's going to be okay, don't worry about it." I think the difference was, he had the motivation to work hard. I was thinking, *Ah, I don't really want to*….

I'll never forget this on myself, when the campaign was over, the day after the campaign ended, they were breaking down the headquarters and I was back at school. Just for no reason I decided to go into the campaign headquarters and was shocked to find that it was closed. I'd come in after class; it was like five o'clock in the afternoon. His picture was still in the big window, this big blow-up picture; it was like this huge face staring out from the window. I was really sad. I was sad it was over, I was back to school. I really didn't know what to do about it. I was always in phone contact with Gargan and Eddie Moss. Moss was a great friend in the sense that he said, "Well, why don't you come into the office and volunteer?"

Knott: The Boston office?

Tretter: Yes, which was being set up, which was really—so many people, a wonderful older woman, Grace Burke, she had been there with John Kennedy. The panoply of characters that had been manifest through all of this, I had impressions of. I had met Judge Morrissey; I had met the people who had been in John Kennedy's past.

There was an undertaker from Lynn named [Pasquale] Caggiano who was in one of the primaries, and he was causing real problems. The question was, What are we going to do with this guy? They found what to do with him; he wanted his campaign expenses taken care of.

On this hot summer Saturday afternoon, somebody said to me, "Will you be around tomorrow?" I said yes. The campaign office was not as busy on Saturdays and Sundays, although it was busy. There were two switchboards, there were two telephone operators, with those plug-in things, and

they were there from dawn into the night. One would come in early, there'd be an overlap, then one would stay. They were phenomenal. The campaign was, for its time, it was just extraordinary. I had no sense of it, except in retrospect, how much money and organization and time and—

Anyway, I was in the office and Steve Smith came out and said, "Tell me when Caggiano gets here." I said, "Okay." So this guy came struggling up the stairs; he was really obese, sweat pouring out of him, but he had dressed up for the occasion. I knocked on the door and said, "Mr. Smith, Caggiano is here." "Okay, send him in." Caggiano goes in, the door closed, and I didn't hear anything. All of a sudden, I heard these two voices, kind of like high, some kind of a discussion going on. The door opened, Caggiano came out, and I could hear Steve saying behind him words to the effect, "Now that you got what you want, you get out of here." The guy left and struggled down the stairs, sweat pouring out of him, and Steve—who was imperturbable usually, it was kind of a surprise—just came out and said something like, "Could you hear what was going on in there?" "Well, no, just the voices." "Oh, okay, fine."

So I went back to law school, but I came in as a volunteer. Soon the issue of going to work in Washington came up. Interestingly enough, Ted more or less said to me, "You can come down if you want, but I don't really think you should. I think you ought to stay in the law and get by the bar and go into a law firm." Of course, I didn't want to hear that. It almost reminded me of my uncle saying, "You're going to go into the campaign." I didn't want to hear that at all, because the night he told me that, we were on the *Honey Fitz*, the Presidential yacht, on the Potomac River. The President was the President, the Attorney General was the Attorney General, he was the Senator, and we were in Washington. I was on the Presidential yacht, and he was telling me, "No, I don't think is for you. You ought to go back, pass the bar, go to a law firm," and so forth. I thought, *I've got to get around him*, so I said to Ed Moss, "Tell him I want to do it, I want to do it."

I did go to Washington. It was a fascinating experience, because Bill Evans was there from the '62 campaign and Barbara Souliotis was. I'm trying to think of who else might be. But I met a new cast of characters.

Knott: Was John Culver there by any chance?

Tretter: I think Culver might have been. Milt Gwirtzman. I had a new job. I met a new cast of characters. I had a function. The advance work was sort of out; I didn't do that any more. I thought, *This is great. This is really great*. But I had had trouble with the bar; I didn't pass the bar. I knew he disapproved of—he wasn't mad at my choice, but he was beginning to see the confirmation of it. In the meantime, I had gotten married, and he and Joan came to the wedding, Eddie Moss came, Larry Laughlin. In Washington it was—I actually got an awful lot closer to him on a daily basis, because it wasn't every third day or every fourth day. Like a lot of people who worked for him, I began to imitate him, try to get the same suits, same shirt, same tie, shoes—

Knott: Why do you think that happens? What is it?

Tretter: I don't know, I think, in psychological terms, I think you see the reaction that he gets from people, the approval—so you want that, you want that. I didn't like Scotch, I drank Scotch. I had never smoked in my life, I was smoking cigars. I never wore cuff links, cuff links. No monogrammed shirts, monogrammed shirts. It was getting to be a little bit that way. You find yourself talking—You just—I can see it later with Dave Powers, Bob Morey, not Billy Sutton so much, but Bob Morey and Dave Powers, wow, the accent was so on.

But the Senate was really, that was a very enjoyable time. My wife didn't like it because we had small children. It was kind of a back and forth; we weren't sure if we were going to stay. But I liked the work. Working for Evans was not the greatest thing in the world. Bill Evans was a little bit of a—what's the word? He was a manipulator; he was predatory in the sense that you did the work but he took the credit. I think Kennedy saw through that, but I also think he was reliant on Bill's sense of organization.

Knott: What was Bill's title?

Tretter: He was not administrative assistant, which he wanted to be. Joe McIntyre was, and he'd been Ben Smith's administrative assistant. I think they made it up to Evans by giving him—See, I was paid out of New York for a while, because the Senate budget wasn't that big. He never really got along with McIntyre.

One afternoon, it was a Friday afternoon, Joe McIntyre called me into his office—and this is literally true. He said, "What size suit do you wear?" I said, "I'm not sure." "Try that suit on." There was a suit hanging on a hanger. I tried the suit on and it basically fit if I had it altered. I said, "Oh, okay." He said, "You drink Scotch?" I said yes. He said, "I drink rye." He opened the desk and gave me a bottle of Scotch and the suit, and he said, "Some guy left them here." Or whatever. For some reason or other, I was hanging around waiting for him; I was going to drive him home. There was an awful lot of that, "Drive me home, pick me up in the morning," which I enjoyed, as a matter of fact, because he would just talk; he'd just talk about what he'd heard and so forth.

Knott: The Senator you mean?

Tretter: Yes. And the breakfasts were great. This used to turn out to be a bit of a game, where I would get there and Andre, the cook, would say, "Do you want something to eat?" I'd say yes. So I'd have some coffee and something to eat, then he'd come down and say, "Come on, let's have breakfast." "Well, I already ate." "Come on, come on, sit down and eat some breakfast." As I would start into my second plate of pancakes, he'd say, "Is that your second plate of pancakes?" "Yes." "God almighty!" Then if Joan were there, he'd say, "Joan, look at this. Look at this. This is his second plate of pancakes. Andre, don't give him any more food!" We had all this banter back and forth, and it was pleasant.

But getting back to the Senate, the old Senate, which was entirely different from now—I liked it, it reminded me of the church. It reminded me of the ecclesiastical atmosphere that I was familiar with from my uncle. Anyway, we were walking to the car and I had the suit and the bottle of Scotch, and he said to me, "What's that?" I naively told him, "I guess some guy came in, gave

this to Joe McIntyre and he doesn't want them, so he gave them to me." "Jesus Christ! He's giving them to you? Why isn't he giving them to me?" I said, "I don't know! God, what's going on here?" He just teased me about that forever. I said, "Look, I don't want to get Joe in trouble now, I just—"

We had a lot of these—If you drive with him, for him, and you're driving, you really don't know what you're doing, you know. You've never driven in your life, because you can't start the car that he doesn't tell you how to start the car. Put the car in reverse, and the corner, and the traffic light, and whatever. It's a nonstop kind of exhortation. I didn't know my way around Washington very well and I used to use landmarks. He knew the city better than I did. That was another thing, being late. Going to the house, I had some incentive for breakfast, which was good.

The job took on an interesting dimension because I sat at a little desk, a desk really no bigger than that tabletop; it was a table actually, it was no bigger than that surface. I had a phone on it, one of those old-fashioned phones where the phone went out this way because all the buttons—it was more horizontal. I was doing a lot, all constituent work basically: contracts, cities and towns, that sort of thing. The work was a little bit boring and he knew it. I wanted to get on the legislative side, but I think instead what he wanted to do was give Evans some staff help so that Evans—Evans would complain a lot about everything, the money. I think he was trying to keep Evans on an even keel. Joe McIntyre had his work load; Evans had his. But the thing was, he could just borrow me, if you will, from Evans.

Frequently the day would start when Mary Jane [Dorsey], his first secretary, was there, and then Angelique [Voutselas Lee] later, of course, with whom I became very friendly. He would start off the day by calling me in and saying, "What's Evans got you doing today?" I'd say Whatever it was. "Tell him at 12 o'clock you're going to be with me." "Okay." What that developed into was there were things he wanted to get done. A lot of people, in retrospect, say to me, "Well, you were just a manservant, you were just—" But I didn't look on it that way: "Take Joan to the doctor," "Take the kids to the doctor," "Take the governess, Teresa Fitzpatrick, she needs to go here, she needs to go there," or "Pick up this guy who is a friend of mine." So I met this panoply of characters: Hy [Hyman] Raskin, a lawyer; Jerry Finkelstein; these guys that—I didn't know who they were, but I'd pick them up and invariably I'd have something to say, chat with them.

Then there was kind of the maître d' function. Kennedy's schedule was always so fouled up that he'd keep people waiting in the reception room. He'd be running behind, so he would send me out to be kind of like, "Your table will be ready in a few minutes," or one of those acts. Sometimes you'd have three people who would come down from Boston to see him, all of whom knew each other, and didn't realize they were down there to see Kennedy, didn't realize the other two were there. I'd be bantering, "Bah, bah, bah," and again, the Monsignor Griffin thing came in. He'd say, "So-and-so's out there." I'd say, "Oh, my uncle knows him." "Well, go out there, go out there, Christ, I'm running—" So I'd go out and talk to the guy and we'd get into these conversations.

Pretty soon I began to develop a role and I could see it. The thing I liked about it was it was spending a lot of time with him, so I could see him in a lot of different situations, a lot of

different people. I liked the exposure and the recognition, but it was a killer in terms of my family life. We were living in a rented apartment, which was nice; it was a building in Foggy Bottom. A lot of people from the office were there, the Senate. But we were having a baby, it was a rented apartment.

Washington would clear out on the weekends. Bill Evans would have a stack of invitations from embassies that Kennedy had regretted, and he'd say, "Well, where are we going to go tonight?" You know, a goodbye to Prince Habib, go to the consulate, the British Embassy, the French, Russian, whatever. It wasn't all bad with Evans, I don't want to leave the—Kennedy took a trip to Hong Kong and sent back a postcard of the two fighting dragons; the message was "To Staff, It looks like Bill and Charlie at the office." And there's two dragons. I began to like the work to the point where I decided, *I made up my mind. I'm going to stay as long as I can and I'm going to make a career out of this. This is going to be interesting.*

Knott: So it's something really seductive about that Washington scene that you were—

Tretter: Oh, yes. I realized that a lot of the serious work was being done on the legislative side, but given his age and his seniority, it wasn't enormous. I enjoyed his company and I assume he enjoyed mine, because I was spending a lot of time with him. I would go to the house when Joan was away for the summer, go to the house. He had Anna [Tretter] and me over for dinner.

I remember one night was really extraordinary. He said, "Are you and Anna free tonight?" I said yes. He was always conscientious about her, always very concerned about her, because he knew she was away from home. He said, "Come on over and have dinner tonight. I'm having a few people in." We went over and Ted and Joan, the bell rang—I got there on time, which was uncharacteristic—[*bell ring sound*], the door opened, it was Dave Burke and his wife, Trixie. The door opened again, in came Anne Creehan and her husband, John. Doorbell rang, in came this woman, and he said, "Oh, say hello to Pat Newcomb." I didn't know who Pat Newcomb was. A few minutes go by, we're having a few drinks and chatting, the doorbell rang, the door opened, in came Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy said, "Pat, how are you?" "Oh, Bob, how are you?" "Fine." So we sat down and they have this conversation. I still didn't know who Pat Newcomb was. Then he said, "I'm going to go," and she said, "Okay, well, it's awfully good to see you again," and so forth. And he left.

We went to the dinner table, and I was sitting next to her, for no particular reason. There was something on the floor, I thought it was something under the rug and I was trying to move it; what would happen was, I was hitting the service button, and Andre, or somebody, would keep coming out. It got to the point where it was like he was bewildered. He finally realized, he said, "Charlie, are you hitting that button? Is that—" I said, "Well, I didn't know what it was. I was trying to move it." He said, "Get your foot away from there." Well, I didn't find out until the next day that Pat Newcomb was Marilyn Monroe's secretary. She was a very charming woman.

There were these little slices, I came up here for—flew up in the *Caroline*, Bill Evans and I flew up in the *Caroline*—for primary-day vote, 1963. He said to me, he knew it was Anna's birthday, so he said, "Why don't you go up with Evans, and go see Anna and vote." I said, "Okay, fine." I went up to the office and—Evans was very clever, he always called ahead so that people he

knew would know he was in town, then Bill used to love to sort out his invitations—I called Anna and told her I was there. Evans said, "We've got an invitation for lunch from somebody at Locke-Ober's," so I went to Locke-Ober's with Evans. I was a little uneasy about it, but I said, "Well—" The maître d', Freddy Hamill, came over and said, "There's a phone call for you." I went over to the phone and, I'm sort of paraphrasing it now, but it was Kennedy and he said, "I didn't bring you up here, for Christ's sake, so you could sit on your ass and have lunch with Evans at Locke-Ober's. Get over here."

So I went back to the office and was really chastened, I was really chastened, because this was almost right up there with that event in the van where he was just, you know. I got there and Eddie Moss said, "Whew"—and Moss used to tease a lot—"Whew, I've never seen him so mad." I was really now beside myself. The door opened and he said, "Charlie, are you out there?" "Yeah." "Let's go." So we marched out—Moss, Crimmins, Ted, me—and we marched out. We got in the elevator, we go down the elevator, and we walked across Post Office Square. There was a Brigham's; we went over to Brigham's. He ordered a hot dog, I ordered a hot dog, everybody ordered a hot dog. There had been all this seriousness in the air and, as frequently was the case, it turned out it was a big joke. I had made a faux pas, so just as I bit into the hot dog, he said, "Now, Charlie, isn't that better than eating at Locke-Ober's?" So I kind of felt better.

The old trick that he did at Brigham's all the time was—because the waitresses, the older women waitresses, were just all over him with attention—he'd say, "Could I have a hot fudge sundae, and could you put a little extra hot fudge on?" He would purposely eat all the hot fudge and the whipped cream off the ice cream, still leaving the ice cream there, then he'd say, "Do you think I could have more hot fudge?" "Oh, of course." Dollop of hot fudge.

So anyway, I figured this day is great. He said to me, "Where's Anna?" I said, "Well, she's—her mother knows I'm here, but she's teaching school in Boston." "Well, go get her. Bring her in." So I drove—I took his car and I drove—from downtown Boston to Dorchester, about 15 minutes, slightly beyond the library on the right-hand side. I got her, and I said, "Come on in town." We drove in town, we went into the office, went upstairs, and he said hello and chatted and so forth. He said, "Come on, drive over, let's go over to the airport, I'll show you the *Caroline*." We drove over and the *Caroline* was there, Howard Beard, the captain. I'd just flown up that morning on the plane. He said, "Anna, I understand this is your birthday." She said yes, and he said, "Well, I've got a little birthday present for you. Tonight is the opening of a Cary Grant movie with Audrey Hepburn called *Charade*, in Washington. I want you and Charlie to come with me." She said, "Well, I can't possibly." "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah." He just literally took her by the hand, on the plane, and she said, "Where are we going?" He said, "We're going to Washington." "I have school." "Ah, don't worry about that."

So that was it. The engines fired up, and of course, it was a propeller plane, and as it took off—we're going south over the city—I said, "Anna, look down, that's Dorchester Avenue." We literally flew over our house. We got to Washington; she had no clothes, so Terry Robinson outfitted her. We stayed in Terry's efficiency apartment on a pullout couch. We literally, working backward, estimate that it was that night that our first son, our first child, was conceived. For her it was a fabulous exposure. She sat next to Lady Bird [Johnson]. These things

would happen; they weren't adrenaline rushes, but they were these events where life was just punctuated by something that you knew wouldn't happen ordinarily.

In Washington, in no particular order, Jack Benny—Jack Benny was doing some concert performance, some benefit performance, for Joan, I can't think of the name of the street, maybe 34th Street, it was the house they had. I drove him in from the airport, but the thing I noticed, was surprised about, was how profane he was for a comedian. He swore the entire way in. When he got to the house, of course, he was apple pie and he was nice.

Princess Margaret came—I found that a very interesting scenario because this whole thing was set up with protocol and all the rest of it, but the question came, Who's going to go out to meet Princess Margaret? He and Joan were in the house, they were the hosts. It was [Lord] Snowden and she, and they're going to come to the front of the house, security, coming from the embassy. Well, who's going to go out and meet Princess Margaret? He looked around and he said, "Charlie, go out and meet her." I said, "What?" "Go out and meet her." She had this protocol guy there, and I said, "What do I do?" He said, "Just go out and say, 'Good afternoon, ma'am.' Don't extend your hand. She'll extend hers, and you just shake her hand gently. Her husband will come around the back of the car and he'll introduce himself. You can shake his hand, and then just bring her in." So in we came.

Some things I will never forget about that afternoon was she had the most incredible skin, just think of a baby's behind. That's what her skin was like, not a pore, not a blemish, just creamy white, very small, very stiff, very stiff. Her husband at the time, Snowden, made it very plain right up front, "Call me Tony." The thing I noticed about her—which in retrospect turned out to be, I guess, one of her problems—was she smoked a lot and she drank a lot; considering it was the afternoon, she was—anyway, the event went okay.

One of the things—I can't remember the name of the woman, but—the press was let in and the press was supposed to be out. Counting heads on the way out, we were shy one press person. We found her; she was a social affairs reporter for the *Washington Post*; I can't think of her name. Because she knew the house, she was out where Diane Luce worked, on this porch that was off the house; she was out there kind of hiding. He said to me, "You've got to get rid of her." I said, "What am I going to do?" "Get her out." I went out and said, "Look, we've got to do this. You've got to leave." She said, "Well, you're not going to make me leave, are you?" I said, "I'm not, but I'm going to tell security that you shouldn't be here."

Swerdlow: So she had to leave because she was—

Tretter: Well, the press rules were you can come in for a few minutes of observation and so forth. When they have their social time, you're supposed to withdraw. We kept count, who had come in from the press, and when they were going out we realized we were shy one. A lot of these things that I would get thrown into became fodder for the story: "Did you see Charlie kiss her hand?" I said, "No, I didn't kiss her hand." "I think you were giving her the once-over twice." He would weave me into these little stories, which were funny, but the thing is they became—and I didn't mind them really, because—but he would repeat them. I began to think, *Well, it must be okay, we're having fun.*

The work was kind of boring and dull at times, but it was highlighted by these events. I try to be a very gracious guy, this maître d' role I didn't mind at all, that part I enjoyed because it sort of kept me out from underneath Evans. When he gave his first big social—well, I should actually back up in time. The plane crash in '64 was really—

Knott: Yes, I wanted to ask you about that, because Eddie Moss died in that crash.

Tretter: That's right. It was very odd because the scenario—My wife was up here expecting our first son. The scenario was he was going to fly up here on the *Caroline* and I was going to come with him. For some reason or other—Bobby was Attorney General and he didn't have to stay in Washington, but Ted did, for a vote. It was on civil rights—it became plain that Bobby wanted the *Caroline* with his family. So he called Ed Moss, who got the plane that they'd used before, from this guy Dan Hogan.

When the *Caroline* was scratched, and the little plane was coming down, I knew the Bayhs [Senator Birch and Mrs. Marvella Bayh] were going with him, I knew Moss was going with him, then there was himself, and I figured there was a pilot and a co-pilot. I knew the plane didn't fit anybody [else], so I called this friend of mine, Paul, who went to law school with me and was in Washington. I said, "Are you going home this weekend?" He said, "No, I didn't plan on it, why, are you?" "Well, I will." "Okay, if you're going to keep me company I will go home this weekend." I said, "Okay, Paul." I commit myself to drive home with Paul, my law school classmate.

Moss came in kind of late in the afternoon, and said, "Why don't you sit with me in the plane. There's an extra seat. You're going to come up with us?" I said, "I can't, I've already made arrangements with Paul." Of course, Eddie Moss again also had a little bit of a prodding humor and he said, "You mean to tell me you're going to drive to Boston in a Volkswagen rather than take a plane ride?" I said, "Eddie, I committed myself. The guy would not go if I—I've got to go." What I had neglected to do was tell my wife that my plans had changed.

When I was just coming on the Massachusetts Turnpike out of Connecticut, I heard this report about the plane and they were talking about the *Caroline*, the Kennedy family plane. Then it dawned on me, I said, "Holy smokes!" I pulled into a gas station—I said, "Paul, we've got to stop"—and called my wife and reassured her that I was okay. But that—I don't know whether there's any fate involved or anything, but I often thought—

Knott: That was your seat.

Tretter: That was my seat, in a way, that was mine for the taking if I wanted it. I went to the hospital briefly, just to pay my respects, then spent a lot of time at the hospital up at the New England Baptist, which turned out to be, in itself, a great experience.

Knott: Why is that?

Tretter: Well, I don't know whose sense of organization—Frequently I used to say, it was a joke around the office, that if the Senator was in charge of anything, you could be assured it was going to be screwed up. His sense of being able to organize something and get it executed, forget it. He can talk about it, conceptualize it, but if he's in charge, if he's going to do it, forget it. Or if there were any organizational issues in the office, and he would say, "I'm going to straighten them out," he was not going to straighten them out; it was going to be worse by the time he got through.

But the hospital became something surreal. He had one room for himself, and across the hall was Angelique, a working office, then there was a frame built with these two double doors, and outside of that there was a room for the two corpsmen, a guy named Boothie and another guy. They were corpsmen from Walter Reed. [Lyndon B.] Johnson had detailed them. Their specialty was spinal injury. Then there was another room, just sort of kept. And there was a balcony, so he would go out on the balcony.

This Stryker frame thing was really almost like a torture. If you envision yourself being in it, it's like being a hot dog and you're just—this canvas thing. Every time I would be in the room and they would flip him, my stomach would just—because every so often he'd go from his stomach—they were just two identical pieces of whatever. They'd put him in it, they'd put the top down, screw it down, put on some things. One, two, three, over he'd go.

Knott: How did he take it? How did he seem to react?

Tretter: To me it was a marvel of discipline, because he seemed to be determined to get out of there as fast as he could, but to keep working. He didn't lose his sense of humor at all. Some of the things that happened were funny because—Of course, we had a refrigerator up there; we may have had two before it was over. Peter Lawford sent him what was called a Scopitone, which was a version of a jukebox where you didn't have to put any money in, but there were these little music videos, like the precursors of MTV. They were all sort of like the twist. He had that in the corner of the room, then he had a television set. He had these prism glasses, so he could lie on his back and see it or he could be—I don't know whether he could see it if he was face down, but he could lie on his back and see this thing.

I was doing all kinds of duty. I was campaigning with Joan, and she was superb, tremendous. Then I'd go up there. The banter between him and Jack Crimmins was just something to behold. Jack Crimmins was just so irreverent and profane. Kennedy would provoke, like purposely saying, "Jack, don't you think so-and-so is a great guy?" "That miserable son-of-a-bitch." He would start telling anecdotes about this guy. Of course, working for the district attorney, he'd say, "If you knew what I knew about this guy." So Ted would tease him and the humor would just get crazy.

Angelique's across the hall; Eddie Martin was there. There were some days when you went up there and, but for the fact that he was in there in this thing, he could have been in there behind a desk. The place was going like crazy. Soon there were two desks, then more phone lines. I think we even took more rooms. It was extraordinary.

One of the things—on weekends, because I was back here in Boston with my wife and family, Crimmins was a bachelor, so he'd be alone. I'd go up there on Saturdays or Sundays just to keep Jack company, but also to see him, because Angelique wouldn't necessarily be there. Of course, there were telephones, and he was getting calls from all around the world, all kinds of people, Senators, whatever. We used to have a lot of fun; it was just three guys having fun. In fact, I was there the night [Ronald] Reagan gave his speech—

Knott: Oh, '64, [Barry] Goldwater?

Tretter: For Barry Goldwater. It was Jack Crimmins, myself, and Ted, and when that speech was over, he said, "Jesus, I'd hate to run against that guy."

Knott: Really?

Tretter: Yes, he really made a positive comment about Reagan's political skills. The thing about being up there was the food variety, it got to be a routine, ordering food from Locke-Ober's. Andy Vitale was around, I was around, I think Jimmy King was around, or maybe not as much as Andy. The question would be food at Locke-Ober's. For some reason or another, Andy got the duty, so Andy would drive in from the hospital, go to Locke-Ober's, get the food to take out. They'd give it to him on these silver-plate containers. You could drive up Winter Street then and drive down a little alleyway.

Well, Andy wasn't taking the stuff back, the silver plate, the knives and the forks; he was leaving it in the trunk of the car. Locke-Ober's called up one day and said, "The stuff is disappearing, it's got to be returned." So Jack Crimmins said in his inestimable way, "God dangit, that—" Anyway, we collected all the stuff and we took it down to Andy's car, an old Pontiac coupe, with a long hood, a long trunk. We loaded the trunk with all the silver plate. The car was going like this [*motions on an incline*]. The car was definitely sloping backward. I don't know how much all this stuff weighed. Andy said, "You'd better come with me. I can't carry all this stuff into the restaurant by myself." I said, "Okay."

We came in town, and drove up Winter Street, then Andy made the classic mistake: he didn't drive in, he pulled up, put the car in reverse, put on the blinker, and we started to back into the alleyway. Well, the way the street and the alleyway are [*makes scraping sound*], we were stuck there. He said, "What are we going to do?" I said, "Well, let's get some of these guys." So we went into Locke's. Freddie Hamill was the maître d'. We said, "Freddie, we brought it all back, it's all here. But we need some help." They gave us some busboys. I don't know how much stuff was in the trunk; it was really incredible.

As he got better, he had more visitors, his family was visiting, [William J.] Vanden Heuvel came up, Johnson came. We were all there that night.

Knott: You were there when President Johnson came?

Tretter: Right. He used to get a lot of—he got a fair amount of—attention from Johnson. I don't think he ever really was crazy about it, but he was okay.

Knott: Could I ask you about Joan? You mentioned Joan a minute or two ago and you said that you campaigned with her in '64. She picked up the slack after the Senator was injured in the plane crash. Could you talk a little bit about her and what you saw, especially during that campaign?

Tretter: She was really terrific. Through the prism of all that's happened, I'd have to say she was trying very hard to be a Kennedy wife, a Kennedy mother, and a Kennedy campaigner. She was soft-spoken, she was shy—great sense of humor, kind of an impish sense of humor. I think she was intimidated by it all; I think she was overwhelmed.

Knott: I've heard that there was a shyness about her. Is that—?

Tretter: Yes, yes. There were some intimations that there was a problem without putting a name on it. I never saw it. I can remember campaigning with her one day. We were out in Hyde Park and they gave her a big box of brownies. We had one more stop to make. The brownies were for the Senator and we were going up to the hospital. We were driving along and she said, "Charlie, let's see what's in there." So we opened the box of brownies. She said, "Let's have one." "Okay." She ate one and I ate one. Well, we didn't rearrange the box; we just closed the box. We got up to the hospital, gave him the box. He opened the box, and spotted right away that there were two brownies missing. He didn't pick on—you know, "Charlie, get in here. You ate my brownies." I said, "Well, I had some help." So that was a bit.

But all of the campaigning with her, I think she was afraid at times, because there was a tremendous emotional adulation and outpouring. I mean, parenthetically, I have only been afraid campaigning once, and that was when I did an advance trip with Bobby Kennedy in 1968 in New Mexico and Arizona. I was frightened to death. The crowds were just enormous and the emotional content of the crowd was extraordinary. On this one particular trip, I got my cufflink and shirt ripped, the top of my shoes ripped, got scratches.

Knott: You were around him as this was happening?

Tretter: Yes, exactly. I was really concerned, I was really afraid. I thought he had insufficient security and no sufficient—I mean, maybe there was a fatalism in it.

When he came into the Senate, there was a clear—it's papered over, but there was a clear hierarchy. "Kennedy is a freshman Senator," we were told. "You can't use your influence, you can't show off." You were sort of put on your best behavior. I'd say it reminded me of my uncle's situation. In the Senate then the staffs were very small. If you walked from the Senate side of the Capitol to the House side, you knew you were approaching the House side because you could hear the noise level rise. And the reverse: when you walked from the House side over to the Senate in the Capitol you could just hear the noise level drop. There was a subordination. Bobby became first in the line. There was not an overt competition, but I think Ted was going to defer to Bob Kennedy.

Knott: How'd the staffs get along?

Tretter: I didn't particularly care for his staff. I liked Angie Novello very much, but there were a lot of young people around him, young guys, who were obviously ambitious, and they had the tactical advantage, I guess, or the strategic advantage. I think Ted was a little bit mystified at times. I don't think Bobby's behavior in the Senate was always what he would have thought was in Bob's best interest.

Ted was very gracious. I can remember some of the things that he would put up with in terms of the older Southern Senators who would just go on and on. He'd be very gracious and he'd be listening to them, then he'd say, "Well, Charlie will come back and get that, Senator." Then the guy would say, "Well, now, you know…." I didn't appreciate the Southern political skills. In time, I think in retrospect, they were pretty good.

He gave one little reception—Senator [Leverett] Saltonstall and his wife very rarely ever took any social invitations, but this time they did—again I was in this sort of maître d' role and was just sort of standing one step behind him or so. Saltonstall and his wife came very early. Saltonstall was wearing this very old-fashioned big pearl-gray hat and took it off, and took off his coat. His wife was named Alice [Saltonstall], I think. She took off her coat. He said, "Charlie, put this some place where we can get them." I went upstairs and put the coats and the hat on the bed. All of a sudden there was a rush of people; more people came in. There was staff there and so forth, but that was my task, the Senator's coat, hat, upstairs.

A rush of people came in and the Saltonstalls, they stayed later than was expected. He said to me, "Senator Saltonstall and his wife are going to leave." I went upstairs; I couldn't find the hat. I could find the coats, but I couldn't find the hat. I came downstairs. I said to him, "I can't find the hat." "Find the hat." I said, "Sir, you'll get your hat in a minute, Senator." "Find the hat." I went back upstairs, and somebody had moved it. I couldn't find it. I was under the bed and was panic stricken because I knew—I came downstairs and he was just very unhappy, and said to me, "Well, it looks like Charlie lost your hat, Senator, but we'll make sure we'll get it over to you first thing in the morning."

Saltonstall went out, and he said, "You know what he told me about the hat? You know what he told me about the hat?" I said, "No." "He's had that hat for so many years. He bought it at Brooks Brothers years ago. Find the hat!" I went upstairs and I could not find it. Now I knew I had to wait. I waited until the thing was over. I said, "We've got to find that hat." He said, "*We* don't have to find the hat, *you* have to find the hat." Somebody had just moved it, prudently had taken it from the bed, where it might get crushed, and put it up on a shelf and so forth.

I took it over the next day to Saltonstall's office. His son, Bill [Saltonstall], worked for him, and he was a very nice guy. The real power in the office was a guy named Charlie Clapp, he was the administrative assistant. But Bill was there, so I told him the anecdote about the hat and Kennedy and so forth, and he kind of chuckled. I liked Bill, he had a very nice disposition. He said, "You know, my father still has, and still wears, the tuxedo and the tails that he had made for himself at Brooks Brothers when he went over and rowed for Harvard in the Henley Regatta in 1911." This was in 1964. His father hadn't changed an ounce; he still was wearing garments that he had bought, had made for him, in 1911.

Kennedy gave a big party—Of course, the thing is the assassination set a whole thing—All the genuine, unadorned, kind of natural fun, from the ’62 campaign, never came back.

Knott: Is that right?

Tretter: Never, no.

Knott: Too many sad events.

Trotter: I think so, I think so. If you look at a whole range of photographs about him, one of the things that I think is frequent is the tightness through the eyes, the sort of like a pain. Some people say, “Well, he’s hung over. It’s his back,” or whatever. I don’t think so. I think he just has this burden. The President’s assassination, which was tough—I wasn’t in Washington, I was here—it was tough for him, and the office was different afterward. Then the plane crash.

Knott: How was it different, Charlie?

Trotter: People were saddened, and people were very circumspect around him. I told some crazy joke one day, I don’t remember the content of it, but the joke had sort of a backhanded compliment in it to Texans. His look was so disapproving. He wasn’t happy with that at all. Sort of parallel with my experience there, of course, the relationship with Gargan and Bob Morey and Billy Sutton—once I’d been there and sort of was in the life, all these colors were coming in. I knew stories from Gargan; there was sort of a tableau, a context.

The Morrissey nomination, that was a hilarity. Somebody’s written a book, in the book after Kennedy withdrew Morrissey’s nomination, he went to Vietnam. That’s true. He used to let me have the car when he was away, which I really valued. He’d always say to me, “Take good care of it now.” I’d say, “Okay.” Invariably something would happen, and he’d say, “Jesus! What h—” I’d say, “Well, it’s—” Anyway, we’re driving out to Dulles; he has to get this plane to go to Vietnam. Dave Burke was already there at Dulles and he said to me, “Can’t you get this car to go any faster?” I said to him—I didn’t want to say this in front of Joan—I said [*whispers*], “We’re doing 100 miles an hour.”

It was a big old blue Chrysler, but it was in good shape, which is a funny story about this Chrysler. He used to lease these Chryslers, through a guy named Ray LaRosa, from a Clark Motors in Lawrence. Ray got this car; he didn’t order it with air conditioning. Ray drove the car down and took the old car back. For some reason or other, he tried to get this thing done before Kennedy—but anyway, Kennedy saw the car and got in the car before Ray could do anything about the fact that there’s no built-in air conditioner. He was saying, “Ray, for Christ’s sake, it’s Washington. There’s no built-in air.” “Don’t worry about it. I’m going to take the car over to the Chrysler dealer here. We’re going to put one under the dashboard.”

Over it went, it was gone for two or three days, it came back. Now Ray has left. I don’t know whether I was driving him in my car or not, but Ray has left, so I got the car. He said, “Look, let’s go.” I said, “Okay.” We got in the car and he said, “Oh, Jesus, how could Ray—” and he

turned on all the buttons—high, fan, and the air was blowing out. He said, "Gee, this isn't bad." Then, "Whoa!" Well, the thing was leaking; it was leaking all over his shoe, his left pant leg, a sock, the shoe. Now he started ranting and raving and screaming. He said—I don't want to make up the profanity, but there was probably some profanity in it. Anyway, I got home that night, I called Ray, "Ray, you go over and see Clark Motors tomorrow and you get an identical car with a built-in air conditioner and get it down here. He's on my ass about you, the car, the built-in air conditioner, the shoe, the sock," whatever. We got that squared away.

He gave a party in '65. This is where Evans—I always thank Bill Evans for taking advantage of me in one way, because in taking advantage of me, he sort of had to let me into his little circle. He wasn't the AA [administrative assistant], but he was first in the office; there was no question about it. Kennedy I think had some ambivalence about Evans, but it always seemed the nature of the work, he was doing a job very well. In fact at one point he did the job so well he came out to me and said, "Just temporarily, we have to reduce your salary $25 a month. Your paycheck from New York will be smaller by $12.50." I thought, *Gee, this is ridiculous*. Years later I brought this up with Kennedy and he swore up and down he didn't know about it. I said, "You know, you cut my salary once." "I never cut your salary. I never cut anybody's salary." We went through this mock, "Yes, you did, $12.50, cheap, $12.50." "I never did it!"

Anyway, he gave this huge party, his first big social event. Perle Mesta the same night gave a competing party in Washington. These were the two big social events of the season. It was in the spring of '65, and she had Johnson as her guest. He'd invited Johnson; Johnson declined. But he'd invited [Hubert] Humphrey, and Humphrey had accepted. The party became a nightmare. As we got closer to the party, more and more things had to be done by people who had never done them before. It was like planning a wedding. Ray LaRosa came down from Boston. Ted had this little thing, "TMBS," too many blue suits. He never wanted to be crowded. You had to be there, but you had to be discreet. Evans, of course, wanted to go for the glamour, so Evans said, "Well, I'll be there, you'll be there, and Ray will be there." So we wore tuxedos.

The whole thing became the stuff of just a joke. First of all, the party was going to start late, so the police were advised. The caterers came. Somebody who was kind of overseeing the thing said, "The first thing you have to do with the caterers is you have to say to the manager, 'Take a case of booze for the waiters.' Give it to them, because if you don't give it to them they're going to steal it." I told him what I'd done. "What! You're giving a case of my—you're giving it *away*! I'm paying these guys." I said, "They told me if you don't give it to them, they'll steal more." That was like a big joke.

Now his mother came down to the house, the tent was set up, the dance floor was put in, the lights were strung, Lester Lanin's orchestra, and the Spanish dancers from the Spanish Pavilion at the World's Fair in 1965, this was Evans' idea. Ted was very skeptical, "The Spanish dancers?" "Oh, yeah, they're—" Okay, we were there and it was about five o'clock in the afternoon. Everything was set up. We're in tux. He was wandering around and got kind of nervous, which is fine.

His mother was in the house. She was upstairs resting and getting dressed, and Joan was. His mother came downstairs all ready except she had some sort of a dressing gown on. But she had

on her high shoes and so forth. She said, "Are you the men who work for Ted?" "Yes." She went out walking around. She was walking around on the dance floor and scraping the dance floor with her shoe. She said, "Where's Ted? Where's Ted? Where's the Senator? This is not—this will never do, this will never do." I went inside and said, "Your mother wants to see you." "What's wrong?" I said, "Something about the dance floor." "What do you mean?"

We went outside, and she said, "This will never do, this dance floor is too smooth. People are going to fall; they can't dance." So he said, "Well, what'll I do?" She said, "You've got to get some sand and sprinkle the sand on the dance floor, then sweep the sand off the floor. It'll give the floor just enough texture." It was about 5:30 on a Friday night, I think. He said, "Get some sand." I went out in the car with Ray and I said, "What are we going to do?" "Let's find a hardware store." We went to a hardware store in Georgetown, found the sand, brought it back, sprinkled it on the floor. She was supervising. She waited for us to come back, we got the sand, and he was there now because he was watching us while she was watching us. She was watching him. We swept the floor and the floor was fine.

A couple of hours later people started arriving. He had somebody who worked for him at the house—I won't use her name—but she had a tippling problem. As the night was going on, she was getting more—whatever. We had the men's room and the ladies' room designated "hombres," and I don't know how you say "women" in Spanish.

Knott: Beatriz?

Swerdlow: Mujers.

Tretter: Mujers? Okay, "hombres," and "mujers" on the women's room. He said to me, "Are you watching her?" I said, "What do you mean?" "She's following guys into the men's room." I said, "No." He said, "Yes, she's pretending it's an accident. We've got to do something about her. She's going to be a problem." Now she lived in the house; she worked there.

The Spanish dancers arrived and they're *wild*, they're *wild*. They drove down from New York because they couldn't get a flight and they drove down in these big Cadillac limousines. I don't know whether they were just wild, but they came into the house chattering and whatever. We took them downstairs where they had their dressers. They need those, the ironing boards, the dressers; they've got all kinds of flamenco guitarists and they just sort of took over.

There was one principal dancer, she was *the* principal dancer and she really fixed on him right away; just coming into the house, she fixed on him. I went downstairs and sort of checked on them. I came back upstairs and the next thing I know, behind me came the principal dancer who wanted to—she was saying something in Spanish, "Eduardo." We got to the top of the stairs and she wanted to say something to him; he was being polite, but—

The door was open—in came the Spanish Ambassador and his wife, aristocrats. The Spanish Ambassador's wife said something to Kennedy about the Spanish dancer. I think it had something to do with, "Oh, you're a brave man for allowing gypsy dancers into your house." Well, the principal dancer heard this and sort of spat back in Spanish what probably was—you

know [*laughs*]. Now these two women were glaring at each other, just *glaring* at each other. He was standing there hapless, I was hapless, and the Ambassador was trying to move his wife away.

Anyway, the party went on and was a great party, but by this time this poor creature—the newsman, Frank McGee, who is now dead, apparently said something to Kennedy about it. I went into the men's room and the next thing I knew, she's—He said to me, "Take her downstairs and put her to bed." I said, "Come on." He said, "You've got to get her out of here or we're going to have trouble." I convinced her it was time to go to bed. She took me literally. I took her downstairs to her room and she had her arms around my neck and I couldn't get her arms away from my neck. I had to take her into her bedroom and I sort of put her down on her bed, but I really couldn't because she—The next thing you know, she pulled me down. I was on top of her, and she was talking about, oh, making love, and oh—I finally got her hands from around my neck, sort of comported myself, and went upstairs. I was greeted with "Where the hell have you been?" "I've been downstairs." "Well, you know—" I said, "You're not going to believe what happened to me." "Later, later, later!"

The night was going swimmingly, and all of a sudden, motorcycles, what have you—Humphrey, who was invited, came to the party. It's about two o'clock in the morning and the Spanish dancers had not gone on yet, but they've been downstairs on the "vino" and up they came. It was a fantastic performance, fantastic. The premiere dancer, the woman dancer, was going to accomplish two things: one, she was going to smite the Spanish Ambassador's wife, and two, she was going to get her attention from "Eduardo." He was still using a cane and a brace from the plane crash, because this would have been April of '65, May; he'd only been out of the hospital since December. The Spanish dancer went over to his table and insisted that he dance with her. He got up good-naturedly and he tried to sort of go through the motions. Slowly but surely, the woman dancer steered him over to the table, the Spanish Ambassador's table. I don't think any words passed between them but there was clearly—She had her night.

So the party got over—the police finally came, twice—the party got over about five or 5:30 in the morning.

Knott: The police came because of noise?

Tretter: Yes, yes. They were right. At 5:30 in the morning, the sun was coming up. Ray LaRosa and I and Kennedy were sitting there, and Joan had gone to bed. He said, "Well, thanks for everything, it was great," and so forth. "You're not going to believe what I have to do today. I have to take the kids to the circus," and I said, "Oh, have fun." I asked him on Monday how the circus went, and he said, "God, what a nightmare. I was tired, the place smelled. I got about three hours' sleep."

It took us about a week to clean up. You had to send everything back: the floor, the tents, what have you. But it was kind of a bonding experience in the sense that thereafter I found myself doing a lot of this stuff.

One experience that I had with him was very telling, I think. I was spending an awful lot of time with him, which I enjoyed, but it was a problem at home, because the job had no beginning and it had no end. I got my bar results—not good. It was a Sunday afternoon and I drove over to the airport and I had, as it would happen, not to pick on him, I had a Gerry Doherty list. He got in the car. I don't know where he'd been; he'd gone somewhere, Europe I think. We got in the car. I said, "By the way, I got my bar results. They weren't good." "Oh." I said, "Now—" and I started to go through this litany of things about Gerry Doherty this, and this guy that, and Gerry said this, and this guy that—

Knott: Are these complaints?

Tretter: No, favors. This guy needs this, and so on. He listened to all this and we were maybe about ten minutes from the house and he said, "Charlie, I think it's about time you start concentrating on yourself." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "This isn't going to work. You've got to leave the office." I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "You didn't pass the bar. You're not going to concentrate—Maybe it's my fault, but we're going to get you something up there. You've got to get up there. You've got to study." I was really heartbroken. I knew the bar was a problem and I knew I should get by it, but I really took it as, you know—

Swerdlow: Rejection.

Tretter: Rejection, yes. *I must have done something wrong and this is just an excuse*. I talked to him about it later and he said, "No, no, no." I said, "Did I—" He said, "No, no, no. Look, it's *here*. It's—your being here is the problem. I'll be happy to have you here. It's good for me, but it's not good for you." So I came back up here and—

Knott: Interesting. What year was that, Charlie?

Tretter: I think I came back up at the end of '65 and stayed in the Boston office until I went over to NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] with Eddie Martin. NASA was busy, but I did have time to take a bar review and study, and passed it. I'll always be grateful for him, because if he had left the choice up to me, I would have made the wrong choice. I would have said, *Ah, well, it's meant to be. I'm not going to be a lawyer*.

It's funny, talking about Eddie Martin and the seat on the plane, the Chappaquiddick situation almost had a similar circumstance. I didn't want to go.

Knott: To the party?

Tretter: Yes. Because I'm not interested in sailing. I've got Irish skin; I burn in the sun. I knew all the girls. I didn't know Mary Jo [Kopechne] well, but I knew Maryellen [Lyons] and Nancy [Lyons]. They were friends. I worked with Maryellen in the State House. I just thought, *Oh, I don't want to do this*. Eddie Martin said to me, "Well, I can't go; I've got to go to Houston," or Florida, or something to do with NASA—It was the moon shot, actually. He said, "You've got to do it. You'll like it, it's fun." I said, "Aww…." Again, it's like fated. I went. It was a nightmare; it was just a ridiculous scenario. But—

Knott: Do you feel comfortable talking about that at all?

Tretter: Yes. It was so implausible. I can remember, I didn't hear—I had really no sense of what had happened because it was surreal. Joe [Gargan]'s explanation to the girls in front of me was obviously not the—He didn't tell any falsehoods, but he didn't tell the whole story, which didn't come out until the television statement. That's when I first learned the whole story. When you hear the whole story and then you look backward, it explains some of the things—missed the ferry, the boat, where is he, you know, why are we in this cottage?

People were trying to find room to sleep on the floor. Crimmins—I mean, it was comedic. Crimmins was saying, "Why don't you people all go home?" Well, we couldn't go home; we missed the ferry. "Well, why did you miss the ferry?" Well, there weren't any cars there; the cars would have been gone. So I was walking up and down the road with Cricket [Rosemary Keough]. "Let's walk to the ferry." "Well, there's no point to walk to the ferry; it's not there." "Well, let's go back." We went into the house, it was like an oven, it was too hot. We went outside, the mosquitoes. It was sort of nuts.

The next day I walked into the police station and asked for Cricket's bag. There was Jim Reston standing there and all these reporters, and I walked in and said, "Excuse me, I'm from Senator Kennedy's office. Do you have the handbag of Cricket Keough?" It was one of these, what do they call them, psychedelic painted, like a workman's thing. He said, "Is this it?" I said, "I guess so." He gives it to me and I walk out.

Knott: It had been in the car?

Tretter: Yes. I walked into that police station, nobody stopped me, nobody asked me who I was. I identified myself to the policeman. I got the bag. I walked out—imagine, I walked out—with this handbag in my hand, or this little lunch bucket, all psychedelic painted. Nobody said anything to me. I got outside and got in the car. I don't think they expected me to come out. I think Gargan sent me in half expecting that he wasn't going to see me again, that I wasn't going to leave the place.

Knott: Had you noticed the Senator and Mary Jo Kopechne leave the—

Tretter: No, I did not, no. The party was really a disaster because it was a sad—

Knott: I was going to say, what was the mood? What was *his* mood in particular?

Tretter: He was dutiful. He was not—

Knott: He didn't want to be there.

Tretter: He didn't want to be there, he didn't want to be there. I think he wanted to go sailing, but I don't think he wanted this whole burden, small "b," burden of putting on a party. He was very gracious.

But Jack and I—This is an interesting thing, all the news reports talk about Jack Crimmins met him at the airport and took him to the beach or something. The truth of the matter is Jack and I went to the airport early. For the first time in my life I had quahog chowder; it was delicious. Then Jack and I met him at the airport and we drove downtown, the three of us. He was hungry, so he wanted to get something to eat. I think we stopped the car and he got out and got something to eat. In all the recitation, they tell the story about what Jack Crimmins, and—well, there actually was me, and I can remember driving to the beach and I was in the backseat. That bridge, how somebody didn't do what happened before, and how somebody wasn't sued before—I mean, that bridge was ridiculous.

Knott: Right. I drove over it myself once. I could not believe it.

Tretter: It was ridiculous. I don't know what repairs they might have done to the bridge after the accident, but there were no side rails and it was basically just another beam laid on top of a basic beam. That constituted the side rails, if you will. The thing had a wicked hump. You approached the bridge from an angle, and then you had this hump, which was sort of like real sharp and then you sort of—it wasn't a big bridge.

I had the happy circumstance of working for a guy who was in politics at the time, a Republican appointee, and he called me into the office—this was at the New England Regional Commission, the Governor's Conference was part of it—a guy named Stu [Stewart] Lamprey—he called me in and he said, "I don't know what happened. I don't want to know what happened. It's got nothing to do with me or with your job here. Don't worry about it. Take whatever time you need to deal with it."

It was difficult. My family was upset. Everybody was upset; everybody who was there was upset. He was very kind through it all in the sense that he—none of us could have afforded our own lawyers, and he provided them. You were never told there's a story and this is what it's going to be. There was never any sense that you'd better tell—

Knott: So the notion of a planned cover-up is just—

Tretter: As Ray LaRosa used to say, jokingly, "Could anything have been so fucked up if it was planned?" So, no. I don't know what the relationship is between him and Joe Gargan now, but I've told Ted that Joe is a friend of mine and that I continue to stay in contact with him and he said fine. I'm not sure what their relationship is, but—I can't say that Joe Gargan ever said anything to me that deviated in any way from his testimony and from what he said happened. I think Kennedy was in a state of total disbelief, *It couldn't happen, it didn't happen, and if I survived then she had to survive, because I got out* and—No, I think there may have been the thought was father to the wish, or the wish was father to the thought, I'm not sure how it goes. I had some dealings with him the next morning and the whole thing for me was I didn't want to be there in the first place. It was hot, it was clammy, the sun, I'm not a sailor. It was like there was a crescendo of unpleasantness. But it was never defined; there was never any explanation.

My going into the room—I thought he was beckoning me into the room—that was a moment of high drama, of course, in retrospect, because that's when he was telling Joe and Paul [Markham], "I didn't go to the police," even after they had told him to do it, and he said he would. I think he's pretty much covered his own feelings about it then. He's never brought the subject up with me. And I've never brought it up with him.

Knott: It's never come up again?

Tretter: No, no. I think what happened was, a lot of people around him said, "It's the company you're keeping. It's not—It's the company you're keeping," so there was a sense that those people who were with you should no longer be part of your circumstance.

Knott: Is that what happened? Did he keep you at a distance?

Tretter: No, he did not. Nor Joey either. Paul Markham, I think, kept his own distance because he was a total stranger to this whole thing. He just was there because he was a good sailor and good company. He didn't know any of the people in the same way. No, Joe and Ray LaRosa and I, we didn't suffer any—He never treated us any differently, never. The only time it played any role with me, and it turned out to be ironic, was when the Federal Co-Chairmanship was open under [Jimmy] Carter—

It's a funny thing. I went to Johnny Powers's wedding reception with him the night of the New York convention where Carter was nominated, and he did not like Carter at all, not at all. Powers's wedding reception—it's the second marriage—was at Locke-Ober's upstairs. He said to me, "Take me over there and come upstairs to say hello to him and just wait for a few minutes, then we'll go." I asked him something about Carter and he was withering in his view—I guess I had a point to that. But I would be in his company. We had heard rumors that some family members and some other people had said, "Well, you've got to get rid of those guys, don't have them around," whatever—

Oh, I know what I was going to say. The one time it did play a role, the Federal Co-Chairmanship was open, so I became a candidate for it and so did Joe Grandmaison, a guy from New Hampshire. We were tearing the dickens out of each other. He had said to me very early, we were in Washington, and he said—we drove from the Senate side over to the House side. He was going over to see Mike Harrington. Chris Black, who wrote for the *Globe*, was there. I walked into the room, and he went in to talk to Harrington and I talked to Chris for a while.

We got back in the car and we were driving across from the House side to the Senate side. He said, "Look, I can't support you for that Federal Co-Chairmanship." And I said, "Well, I've known since November that you didn't want me to go for the job." He said, "What am I going to say? You know what's going to happen. I'm going to have to go to Carter. I'm going to have to put up with the *Globe*: 'This is just a pay-off.' If there's anything else you want that's not going to involve the White House, let me know." I said, "No, that's okay. I understand this. Do you mind if I make a fight of this thing?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, let me just say, I'll tell people you're not with me. You're not going to take sides between Grandmaison and me, and I don't expect you to." And he said, "Oh, yes, okay."

He's always relieved when you're not mad at him. A lot of people get mad at him. I think more so now than—well maybe not. I think he's used to having people mad at him and yell at him and criticize him and stuff, so I think he was always relieved, because he hates to deliver bad news. I mean, he just hates it.

Swerdlow: So this was the Senator telling you that he could not support you for this chairmanship?

Tretter: Right, yes, because it would have brought up the Chappaquiddick incident. The *Globe* would have said, "Well, here's one of the guys from Chappaquiddick getting a pay-off from Kennedy." I don't think Kennedy wanted to ask Carter for anything. I understood all that. He was relieved that I had no—I did make a fight out of it. It got to the point where the White House actually thought of me as the Kennedy candidate, and he didn't mind. It wasn't his fight; it was my fight, but I was wearing his silk, so he didn't mind.

The way it goes, it's really hilarious. It really turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I had known Al Hunt from the *Wall Street Journal* had dinner with Jimmy King right after Carter was elected, and Al Hunt said to Jimmy King, "I hope Charlie Tretter has a chance for that Federal Co-Chairmanship." Jimmy King said, "Never, never, not after what he did to me." You can remind me to come back to that, because it—Al called me and said, "Hey, you got a problem right away. Jimmy King is White House Personnel Director. You're not going to get that job. Whoever gets it, it's not going to be you."

I said to Joe Gargan, "Would you mention it to Ted?" He did. He came back and said, "He doesn't understand why you're interested in that job." The minute I heard that I said, "Okay, okay." I make a fight out of the thing and now we're coming up to the appointment time. I got this telephone call in the morning at the house. I was not distant from the office, or from the people: Mary Frackleton, Barbara, Angelique. I was constantly in communication. It was sort of like you were a part of some loose social group. And I would see them.

He called up and said, "Charlie!" I said, "Yes." He said, "Look—" and this was funny because it was as if nothing had happened, as if the other stuff hadn't happened—"Charlie, you're not going to get that job we're interested in." I said, "Well that's the way it goes." He said, "Let me tell you something. Dick Moe called me this morning. And Dick Moe said, 'Senator, I hate to tell you, but your guy is not going to get the job,' and I really ripped into him. I grabbed him by the neck and I said, 'Listen, you've got to take care of this guy, he's a friend of mine, bah, bah, bah. I know he supported the President.'" I was sort of almost laughing. I wasn't laughing, but he was going through this great performance. I said, "Well, thank you, I really appreciate that." He said, "So, you know, you're going to get a call from Dick Moe in about five minutes. I gave him your phone number, so you'd better think about this. You better think about what you want."

I put the phone down and told Anna the story quickly and I said, "Would you like to be an Assistant U.S. Attorney?" She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, you know, Kennedy's going to have a role in appointing the U.S. Attorney. The U.S. Attorney appoints the Assistant U.S. Attorneys." She was a lawyer and she was practicing. "Would you like to be one?" She

said, “Oh, I don’t think I could be.” I said, “Oh, okay. Let’s see.” The telephone rang; it was Dick Moe. He went through a long explanation about how he just got off the phone with a very unhappy Senator who bah, bah, bah. How much of this was burlesqued, I don’t know, but true to Ted’s word, Moe said to me, “What do you want?” I said, “I don’t really want anything. I want to just keep my job at the Regional Commission as General Counsel. I don’t want Joe to take my scalp.” He said, “That’s done. Is that it?” I said, “One other thing.” “What’s that?” I said, “It’s not for myself.” “What is it?” I said, “I’d like my wife to be considered for appointment as an Assistant U.S. Attorney.” He said, “Well, why not? I don’t see any problem with that.” I said, “Okay. Deal?” “Deal.” I hung up the phone. In retrospect I’ve often thought if I’d had that job I would have been out of it after four years, because Carter lost to Reagan. I don’t know what I would have done. But my wife took the job.

Knott: She did, yes?

Tretter: Yes, did a great job, enjoyed it, and moved on from that.

Swerdlow: When you were referring to Chappaquiddick and you referred to, I think it was the family that you mentioned saying that it’s the guys and you can’t associate with these guys. Were you one of these guys that they were referring to?

Tretter: I think so, yes. I think those of us who were there. It was almost understandable. I think he put it in perspective. I think he saw their reaction as something that was not a political reaction, but a personal and family reaction. There were a number of times I can remember—as Jack Crimmins got older, because he had some illnesses—I can remember one day, John C. Dowd, the advertising guru who was very close to his father, had died and we went to the funeral. At the funeral I think there were the two Lyons sisters, Maryellen and Nancy. As we pulled up to the cemetery—I had sort of advanced the thing so we went into the cemetery in a different way so we could just have easy access to the gravesite and so on—as we pulled in, he saw them. He said, “Oh, this is going to be tough. They’re really carrying a lot of this load.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Do you see them?” I said, “Yes, I see them occasionally.” He said, “What do they say?” I said, “I don’t know that they’re all that happy with you.” “Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, okay, let’s go.” We just got out of the car, and he went up there.

Between the two of them, I can’t say they were ever mean-spirited or vindictive or anything like that, but I think they weren’t particularly—I think part of it was the feeling by all of them, as best I can understand it, that it always falls on the woman. That is, the woman was the victim, the woman was in question, the other women were in question. In situations like this, if it’s political and dramatic, the men are always treated differently from the women. I think they’re probably right, I know they’re right in that sense. That said, it’s just one of those things that—

Knott: Sure. Have you had media people hounding you about this over the years? Or did they tend—

Tretter: Yes, there was a little bit of that, guys hiding in the bushes taking pictures. I can remember Dave Burke once saying to me—it was kind of like a spy thing. He said, “Have you met anybody new lately?” I said, “What do you mean?” “Well, have you met anybody that you

don't know, but you've become kind of friendly with quickly?" I said, "No, why?" He said, "Well, there's a memo inside *Newsweek* magazine that says that the person likely to talk about what really happened at Chappaquiddick is you." I said, "What do you mean? Me? What really happened is on the record." He said, "Well, I just want to let you know so, you know, if anybody approaches you, like somebody who wants to befriend you out of the blue—" I kind of chuckled. I said, "No, Dave, nobody has."

I think, just a little litany here, my years were '62, '64, '70, that campaign. From that time to this, I would say as his life has changed, my life has changed, but they intersect, just getting busy with your own business. I don't go to the office as much as I maybe should, just out of friendship with Barbara. I think Don [Dowd] has stayed much more involved, Don and Gene [Dellea]. Part of it is, I work for somebody, in the sense of, it's a political—it's not a partisan—operation, but it's political. At times the Governors would have been indifferent, "Well, so your picture's taken with Kennedy." Not that it was, but if it was, doesn't matter. With Governors of an opposite party or Governors who aren't so keen, it would be a problem.

Knott: But in looking back on it, those years where you were particularly close to him, was this a very positive experience in your life?

Tretter: Oh, yes.

Knott: Do you have mixed feelings about it?

Tretter: No, no mixed feelings at all.

Knott: Was this the best time of your life, would you say, professionally?

Tretter: Perhaps not professionally, because I really hadn't gotten into the realm of the office work that I wanted. But on a personal basis it was very satisfying. The ambivalence that I have is, it's not about how I feel, it's that it created a conflict for me, with a wife and young children. In fact, I was leaving the office at the end of March 1966, going over to NASA. The St. Patrick's Day parade—we were standing in the kitchen of the house at Charles River Square. He'd gotten a pretty good reaction from the crowd and the busing thing hadn't taken root yet. He said to me in a kind of offhand way, "Do you really want to leave the Washington office? Do you really want to stay up here and work at NASA?" I looked at him and I said, "Are you kidding me? That's the reason I'm back here. If I pick up that phone and tell my wife I'm going to go back to Washington, she'll divorce me." He said, very innocently and I think heartfelt, "Well, maybe I should talk to her. Do you think if I talked to her it would make any difference?" which I took as a heartfelt expression of, Well, gee, I want you to come back, and if you want to come back, but that's an issue, I'll talk to her.

He was always very anxious to be—I can say this in all candor—I've never gotten a bad piece of advice from him. He never said to me, "Go out and drink as much as you can. Go out and chase as many women as you can." He's never given me anything but good advice, never. A lot of people say, "Wow, you must have had a crazy wild time." Well, it really wasn't a crazy wild time. My personal interactions with him were—I can't say it was an older brother, that would be

presumptuous—I more relate it to almost a relationship I had with my uncle. The ages were different, but clearly he was older, not that he was that much older, and I was younger. He was experienced, I wasn't. What he was doing I found exhilarating and exciting and fascinating, and I thought—because I made the transition: I didn't want to be in that campaign, I didn't want anything to do with politics. I'm not sorry I was; I'm not sorry I did it.

He had some interesting experiences. I can remember he said to me one day—I always knew I was in for a good day when he would say, "What's Evans got you doing today?" because he was getting ready for Evans to bitch about, "Well, jeez, Charlie's working on—" you know. He said to me, "I want you to go over to Butler Aviation. I want you to pick up [Thomas] Loel and Gloria Guinness." I said, "Okay." He said, "I want you to take them to the White House"—this is when Johnson was President—"then I want you to take them to lunch, and bring them back up here, but keep them away from here until early afternoon."

I went to the airport and picked up these two people. I had never heard of them in my life. I did not know who Loel or Gloria Guinness were. The guy was a typical English gentleman, very nice; the woman was very stiff, very stiff, Hispanic, high couture, but she was very formal and not very talkative. He was chatting and she was just asking a few questions about the sights. We went to the White House, and went in. We were going to wait to see Johnson. They were going to see Johnson. Mort Sahl was there, the comedian, so I said, "This is a very famous American comedian." I introduced them to Mort Sahl, a little banter and so forth. They went in and saw Johnson, then they came out and we went to the Jockey Club for lunch.

This used to be another tease. He would say to me, "Meet so-and-so, take them out, take them to lunch, whatever," so I would always go to the Jockey Club, which, of course, was outrageously expensive for those days and he'd—I'd always hear about it, "Can't you think of someplace else to take—" you know, "I'm paying for this!" There was always this sort of mock jibing about—in fact, I'll tell you a story, just remind me about Billy Martin.

Anyway, I did not know who Loel and Gloria Guinness were. We went to lunch at the Jockey Club, we had lunch, we came back to the office and they went in to see Kennedy. The door closed and Angelique said, "Well, how are they? How are they?" I said, "Well, I don't know." She said, "Don't you know who they are?" I said no. Well, he's from this British banking family. His daughter is married to one of the Khans, and one of the Khans had gone to Harvard with Ted, one of the, Aga Ali—

Knott: Yes, right.

Tretter: She was the queen of society. She and Merle Oberon, they were the haute couture of fashion—Acapulco, Paris, London. Gloria Guinness was just [*makes racy sound*]. I wasn't like numb-stupid, but I was like, "Oh, I didn't know." We got back into the car and we went to the airport. As we were driving into the airport, he said, "Well, you've been a really wonderful host," and so forth. He said, "If you're free, why don't you fly up to New York with us? We're having a party, we're sure you'll have a lot of fun. We're having a party for Liz [Taylor] and Dick [Richard Burton]." And I said, "Liz and Dick?" "Yes. Dick and Elizabeth, Elizabeth Taylor and D—" I said, "Oh. Gee, I really, I don't think I could, you know, I got—But now that we're

here, could you do me a favor? Could I see the plane?" This was a four-engine turbo-prop like Eastern used to fly. This was their aircraft. Wow. They had a pilot, co-pilot, a male steward, stewardess, in some kind of a uniform. The interior of the plane was unbelievable. It was just incredible.

So he said to me, "Listen, now that you're onboard the plane, why don't you just sit down and we'll just go up to New York, and you can come back in the morning." I said, "I really can't." She was doing something. I said, "I'll really have to tell you the truth. This would not go down well in the office." They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "The idea that you invited *me* to the party and I went, but you didn't invite *him* to the party. This would not go down well. He wouldn't be mad, but this would be—I'd hear about this for some time." When I went in the next day and I told him, he said, "You're nuts. You should have gone."

Knott: What was it about Billy Martin's?

Tretter: I guess it's an Irish male thing. That's what's important in life, your Irish male friendships. Married, children, your children—I frequently found myself being pleased to be invited into these little environment things. He said, "Let's go over and see—" It was either Culver or [John Varick] Tunney. On a Friday afternoon we walked from the Senate side to the House side and went in to see whichever one it was, and we had a drink. Whichever one's office it was called the opposite. So Tunney showed up. Now it was Tunney, Culver, Kennedy, and me. I would just—I would not be in the conversation as an equal, but I—They were talking and laughing and joking, whatever, and Kennedy said, "Well, why don't we have dinner? Let's have dinner." Tunney said, "I can't." Culver said, "I can."

We drove to Billy Martin's Carriage House on Wisconsin Avenue. We went in, and we had dinner and drinks, then it was time to leave. As we were leaving, the waiter had the bill in his hand, and he was looking for, you know. I said, "Well, why don't I take it?" "No, no, no, no, I'll take it. I'll take it." He put the bill up against the wall and signed his name to the bill. He didn't have a credit card or anything, just signed his name on the bill. I said, "Don't forget the tip," so he put the tip on, I didn't know what it was. We went home and that was the end of it.

About two weeks later, I came in and Angelique said, "The Senator wants to see you." I went in and he said, "Are you out of your mind? Are you out of your mind? Do you know what kind of a tip you gave that guy at Billy Martin's last week?" I said, "What do you mean '*I* gave?'" He said, "Well, you took the bill. You—" I said, "No, no, no. I didn't take the bill." He said, "I distinctly remember you saying, 'I'll take the bill.'" "I did say that, but then you took the bill, and you put the bill up against the wall, and you signed the thing, and I said, 'Don't forget the tip.'" "*I* gave that guy this tip?!" I said, "Yes." He said, "I can't believe it!"

Half of it was mock and half of it was serious, like, confirm for me what happened, did you, did I, what—because he sort of had this recollection. The funny thing was these stories got recycled; they would get recycled because I would tell Crimmins, then Crimmins would tell him that I told it, and he'd say, "Well, okay," then we'd have this banter in the car. It's almost impossible to recall; I just can't pull them all back.

Knott: Yes, I understand.

Tretter: There was this sort of, it was like nonstop humor. Now the humor sort of changed; things were more wry and sardonic after the President's assassination. And the Bobby situation, too. I only did one advance trip, which was—

Knott: The one you mentioned earlier.

Tretter: Yes, yes. It was wild; it was just incredible. When I came back, I started a different job. But the assassination, I can remember Eddie Martin called and said, "We've got to go to the Cape; there's been a—" It was obvious. It was in the newspaper. I saw him briefly down there. He was in tough shape; he really was hurting very badly. I think that summer, if memory serves me right, there was a baptism. I think one of his children was born that summer.

Knott: One of Ted's?

Tretter: I think so, yes.

Knott: It would have had to have been Patrick [Kennedy].

Tretter: Because I can remember his father was living and—we had the baptism at a church on the Cape—and he was living on Squaw Island at the time. It was one of these—I think the family as a group makes an effort to carry on. I think they try to be normal, or do the things they would have done if everybody was still there. But a lot of it's—I won't say it's phony, that's not fair—but a lot of it is duty. Some of the gaiety is forced. I find that the social events are always circumscribed, they begin and they end, very definitely, there's no—It's very rare that it's an open-ended thing, because I think it's—The thing I saw about it was that—I'm only laughing because I thought of two other stories that—

They are apart; there's no question. I've seen a lot of people politically make a mistake. If you're working for him and around him—and my uncle cautioned me about this. He said, "Remember now. You're not a Kennedy." You see people trying to—I don't know if it's deliberate. They just sort of forget. As I said about myself, I started to drink the Scotch that I didn't like, I smoked the cigars. I always wanted to be mindful of that, because they are sort of apart.

Two incidents involving my protocol role, I guess I'd call it: There was a family meeting in the office, and Eunice [Kennedy Shriver] came in. They were inside the office. I think it was Eunice, Pat, and Jean [Kennedy Smith]. We could hear these voices rising and the distinct voice that you could hear was Eunice's. All of a sudden, the door opened, and she came storming out of his office, then she opened the next door, and pulled the door and the door slammed off this filing cabinet. I stood up and turned around, because my back was to the office. He sort of came out of the office and said, "Charlie, go get her and bring her back." I said, "What?" "Go get her and bring her back." So I went hot-footing it down the corridor, "Eunice? Eunice? Eunice?" I turned the corner and she was waiting at the elevator. I said, "Eunice, the Senator would like you to come back." [*hmph sound*] Elevator came, on she got. [*closing sound*] Door closed. I walked back. I said, "Mission unsuccessful." I never knew what the argument was.

Another time the Japanese Ambassador was waiting. He called me in the office and he said, "I'm running way behind time. You've got to go out and keep this guy company." This was frequently what I would do. I would go out and sort of make some rapport and chitchat. I always knew what the schedule was. Well, the Japanese have a thing about punctuality. This is the Ambassador. He was waiting there and—Kennedy came out and I was standing at the door because I had seen the guy leave. The guy departed. I said, "It's too late; he's gone." "Go get him, bring him back. Bring him back." I went out in the corridor, down the corridor, "Mr. Ambassador, Mr. Ambassador, I'm so sorry, the Senator is ready—" Well, this time it worked; the guy did come back.

Knott: You averted a diplomatic incident.

Tretter: Of course, Kennedy bathed him in, "Oh, Mr. Ambassador, I'm so sorry—"

[BREAK]

Knott: Charlie, you were about to mention something about a 25th—

Tretter: Yes, I was recollecting in preparation. This would be his ninth election in 2006, but one event that he had, a 25th-anniversary party at the Cape, 1987. Angelique worked on it.

Knott: Twenty-fifth anniversary of his first election?

Tretter: Right, in '62, yes. Having been to enough parties, this one really had the hallmark of the personal. He paid a tremendous tribute, because I've never really heard him say it as well as he said it that night when he—He obviously wanted people to be comfortable. He had everything that you'd want for a Cape party: a heated tent, best food, best wines, fireworks, people shuttled back and forth with buses, the comfort level was very—I've been to some parties where he was talking about, "I can't wait for this thing to be over," before the first guest had even arrived, and he had announced that it's over.

I wish I took notes; I wish somebody had recorded it, but he paid tribute to his staff. He made no differentiation; he just talked about all the people who had worked *with* him, from '62 on. It was one of the few times when he was very explicit—and I think any political guy—very explicit about how it was the effort, and the words, and the work, and the thoughts, and the ideas of the people that he was lucky enough to have working with him, that made his career possible. His syntax and his speaking sometimes can be a little bit zany, and if he's tired or off his game, it really comes to be nuts, but it was simple, it was sincere, it was heartfelt. People were there I hadn't seen since the '62 campaign, thin people who'd become fat, fat people who'd become thin, handsome who had become ugly, ugly who had become handsome—

Knott: Really?

Tretter: Oh, yes, it was a phenomenal—some people hadn't changed at all, but then some people had and they had changed dramatically. It was really incredible. I can remember one night, too, I went over to Harvard to hear his apologia, I guess, after the Palm Beach thing.

Knott: In '91, yes.

Tretter: Yes. He was really—the thing that struck me was how badly disturbed he was. I think he was very disturbed. I think he was probably as disturbed—I think in some respects he thought his career was over. I think the accumulation of circumstances had brought him to a point where his career was over. Frankly, and I say this with affection for him, he was not always the most pleasant person to be around as that period was developing and building. There were times when I would try to be light and bantered with him, but it didn't work. There was a lot of anger. If he focused, if his anger just happened to fall on you, it was not pleasant. I can remember a couple of examples of just talking with him and him almost being belligerent.

Knott: What do you think was weighing on him?

Tretter: I think—I'm going to draw from what other people were saying, because I wasn't observing him that much. But the political gossip and the pundits and the wise guys—that's all they talked about—"Well, he's out of control." "He's working demonic hours, but he's impaired." "He's lonely." "His life is a wreck." "He's indiscreet." "He's self-destructive." "He's past it." "[William J.] Clinton is President and he's past it, it's all over for him." He really was in tough shape, he was in tough shape. The sense I had of it was that he was just willing himself to hold it together.

I think Clinton was a great source; I think Clinton was very good to him. I think Clinton probably recognized his own parallels there. I can remember Clinton was going to speak at a Democratic dinner and it was after the trial, after this—because Ted was on trial. He wasn't the defendant, but Ted Kennedy was on trial in that Palm Beach thing, I think, in the broadest sense of the word, legally, politically. Barbara said, "The Democratic State Committee is having a dinner," and it was at one of the big hotels, the Sheraton. "He's got a table and he wants to have some people with him at the table that he's comfortable with. So can you make it?" I think it was me, Don Dowd, Gene Dellea, Barbara, and some other people.

I just happened to be sitting next to him, I'm not sure which side. The thing that struck me, and I mentioned it to my wife when I got home, almost the entire night he either had the knife or the spoon or the fork in his hands, and he was just holding on to them. It was just—I don't know whether it was just a sense of something outside of himself or whether it was the coldness of the silver-plate, or the steel, whatever, but it was amazing. He was just—there was always something in his hand, or his hands, that he was holding on to. He wasn't just holding it; it was like he was clenching it. He was very uneasy that night, very uneasy.

In fact, there was a time when Clinton came by the table—now Clinton was just a candidate then—Clinton sought him out, Clinton came by the table, and it was stark. Clinton was Kennedy

25 years ago that night. I don't think Kennedy really knew what's—He knew he had to run for reelection and there was so much that he had to do. Because I had heard stories; people had come to him and said, "You've got to say you're an alcoholic. You've got to make a public declaration. You've got to go to [the] Betty Ford [Center]," the sort of advice that was dramatic advice, I'm sure, while well intended. I think he was really unsure.

There were all kinds of stories up here that [William F.] Weld was sensing his vulnerability and that Weld was going to go after him. I'm not sure that Weld wasn't thinking about it. There were a lot of people—then when the [Mitt] Romney thing became, when the Romney candidacy was a fact, as opposed to the Weld maybe-candidacy, a lot of Democrats were talking, "Well, that's it. Romney's going to really beat Kennedy, he's really going to beat him."

Knott: Yes, did you ever believe that?

Tretter: No.

Knott: I didn't either, but—

Tretter: No, and I can remember probably saying more than I should have, but I think what gave me comfort was that I was talking to a couple of Canadian political guys who were from the conservative party there—which is really a liberal Republican party. They were talking to me about the Romney-Kennedy contest. I said, "First of all, I think Kennedy has a record that, when it's put before the people, they have to consider it. I think Romney's untested as a political figure, where Kennedy's not. I also think that—I don't think he will, if he's going to lose—if the end result is a loss, it won't be because he didn't try. By that I mean he will do whatever he has to do; he will spend whatever he has to spend. And I think the family is going to be—all the divisions or whatever, it's all going to close. He's not going to get stabbed in the back by Joan; he's not going to have any—this will be a fight for survival. If I were Romney, as a novice, I wouldn't lightly assume that I'm going to take on Ted Kennedy when he's vulnerable and I might have a statistical chance of beating him, and think that I'm not going to be in for a fight I just will not forget." So I never really thought—I thought the margin would be actually closer than it was.

Knott: Yes, it actually turned out not to be that tight after all.

Tretter: Yes. I think he just really went to work. I haven't said anything to date about her, because I don't know her very well—but I think a lot of credit has to go to Vicki [Reggie Kennedy]. I think when you look at the family and the environment that she came from—now I met her father, but I mean—

Knott: We're going to see him on Friday.

Tretter: Well, I'll tell you a little anecdote that I told her the first day I met her. Bobby Kennedy's '68 campaign—Between '62, when I was an advance man and young and unmarried in law school, and 1968, I realized I'd gotten a little bit older and that I was married and had a house and a job, and being on the road was difficult. I was traveling with Lee Fentress; Lee is

great company, great company. Don was supposed to come with us, because they're great pals, but it didn't work out. I went to Washington and went over to the headquarters. Helen Keyes was in charge of giving out the pocket money to the advance men. You got a credit card and you got pocket money. I knew Helen; everybody got $100. And I said, "Helen, come on," so she said, "Well, okay," so she gave me $200 and the credit card.

Fentress and I got on the plane and we went to Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Democratic power structure there was absolutely death on Bobby Kennedy, absolutely death. But there were some young people around—ironically, the then dean of the University of New Mexico law school was a guy that I had as a professor at BC, Fred Hart—anyway, they did a phenomenal show, phenomenal. And Milty was reaching out to guys he'd gone to law school with—Harvard—so it was a fabulous trip, a fabulous trip, huge crowds, tremendous reaction.

We flew from Albuquerque over to either Phoenix or Tucson. We were on the candidate's plane, which was about as crazy as anything I've ever been on in my life. The Bobby Kennedy campaign plane, I don't know if it ever had any equal. The place was just a madhouse, the whole thing was so frantic. We got to Arizona, and the reaction was just as wild. Now we were supposed to fly from Arizona to Washington, check in with the headquarters, talk to Joe Gargan, but, "No, no, no. You guys have to go to New Orleans, you've got to go to New Orleans. You've got to meet a guy named Ed [Edmund] Reggie, a great Kennedy guy. We're going to be going down there in a couple of weeks. You've got to talk to him about the bah, bah, bah." "Okay, fine."

We had a terrible flight; it was just awful. The weather was lousy, they were going to land, they pulled up, they went around. We weren't going to go to New Orleans; we were going to land in Houston. So we landed in Houston, they put us in this lousy motel, and I said to Lee, "This is an awful trip." He said, "Yeah, this is really awful."

The next morning, all we knew was we were going to New Orleans and we were going to meet a guy named Edmund Reggie, but we didn't—things were missing. I said, "Well, let me call Helen Keyes." So I called Helen Keyes and I said, "Helen, I know we're going to meet Judge Reggie, but what's the story? Are we going to call him or is he going to call us?" "Oh, no, no, no. I'm glad you called. He's going to meet you in the lobby of the Holiday Inn on Canal Street," or some street. "He's not sure what time he'll be there, but you just watch for him. He'll know you guys." I said, "Well, how will he know us?" "Well, he'll just see two guys waiting around—" I said, "Helen, give me a clue, will you?" "Well," she said, "maybe you're not old enough—aw, you're old enough. Remember Tyrone Power?" I said, "Of course." "Well, when you see a guy, a well-dressed guy, who looks like Tyrone Power, that's Judge Reggie."

Lee and I got to the hotel—the flight got in early—we went to the desk, we said, "We need a room just for the day. We're having a meeting." We went upstairs; we tried to get some sleep. I went downstairs first because Lee was tired. I went down first and I was thinking to myself, *Okay, a good-looking guy who looks like Tyrone Power, well dressed*. The hotel lobby had one of these doors that opened when you stepped on the mat, so I was reading the newspaper and every time the door would open, I would look up. Well, it gets tiring, you look up, pretty soon you don't really look up, your eyes just go over the top of the newspaper or around the paper.

I don't know, we waited maybe an hour and a half. Now Lee came down and sat down next to me. He said, "This guy's not going to show up. This is a fool's errand. We ought to get on a flight and go back to Washington." I said, "They said wait for him." So he was reading part of the newspaper—and I told this story to Vicki, because it's true, absolutely true—the door opened, and I just looked fast enough to see a pair of alligator loafers, tassel alligator loafers. I said, "Lee, this is our man. Judge Reggie!" "Yes!" He couldn't have been nicer. He listened to our lament, "Where you guys been?" When we told him he said, "Oh, look, you've got to stay overnight. We have an apartment here in New Orleans. You can stay over."

We had some part of the trip, so he drove us around. We looked at the place, the site, whatever. He was a charming guy, a charming guy. I didn't know anything about him then, that I know in retrospect; I didn't know all of his political history. But the guy was telling some extraordinary stories about his own life. He knew something about Massachusetts, he was Lebanese, he had had family in Worcester and Springfield, and they moved down to Lake Charles and he'd become a judge; his wife was in a bakery I think. He was gracious and he couldn't have been nicer. He drove us to the airport to get the plane, tried to convince us to stay overnight, have dinner with him, relax. I remember very distinctly. I wrote him a note, a thank-you note, later. He wrote me back on his court stationery; I always remember his kindness. He was very nice, very gentle.

Knott: Interesting.

Tretter: The first time I met Vicki, I told her that story and she said, "Well, the part of the story I know he's going to love is the Tyrone Power part."

Knott: That's great. Well, maybe on Friday, Beatriz, you can tell him, "You know, you look like Tyrone Power."

Swerdlow: I can already tell you he's a charming man, because I've spoken to him on the phone various times. He is wonderful.

Tretter: Yes, he really is, he really is. There were a couple little things that happened that day, where he was telling us, "I know what they want to do when they get here, but I'm going to tell you what I think they should do—because this isn't really Bobby Kennedy country. I knew Jack Kennedy and he was in my home. That was not an easy fight, and this one isn't going to be easy either." He was critiquing without being critical of what was proposed and planned. I don't know if the trip ever came off. Lee and I flew back to Washington that afternoon, happy to get out of New Orleans because it was so hot.

Knott: Charlie, let me ask you. One of the questions I've tried to ask people who have known Senator Kennedy for some time, especially in his Massachusetts base, is how you might explain to somebody who's reading this or listening to this fifty years, a hundred years, from now, the loyalty that Senator Kennedy, and the Kennedy family at large, has in Massachusetts. What is your take on that? People like yourself who've been involved in some capacity for forty years

plus, and nine elections that you mentioned, where Massachusetts voters have stood by him. If you had to sum it up, how would you explain that loyalty?

Tretter: I think it's probably pride. I think people take pride in his representation. With all the warts and faults, which as he has said, are his own doing, he makes no excuses; he takes responsibility for them. I think people appreciate the effort, and I think they appreciate the concreteness of the things he's done. I don't think it's just all chatter. I also think he's a loyal person, and that just transcends personal loyalty. If you ask him, if you could keep a count on how many times he's gone to a city or a town as part of his job or as part of a promise, it would be stunning. I think he's loyal to his constituency, he's loyal to his friends, and he's loyal to the job.

How do you explain a career in the Senate that long, particularly with the difficulties? I think people appreciate it, and I think in the age of—In some ways I can sense, myself, that some of his techniques and some of his rhetoric don't go down necessarily with my own children or with people who are the age I was once, but I think there's an authenticity.

Then there's the star quality. He's imposing, in a different way, perhaps, than he was then. In fact, I should have brought it in with me, but I'll show you before you leave. When we used to have these parade events in South Boston, or any place in Massachusetts, I can't explain it. I can't explain the adulation, this emotional reaction, but it's real. When you see it, and it takes all—it comes out of all different kinds of people. The commonality is it's all affirmative, but it manifests itself in different ways. Some people joke, some people are really—appreciation—I used to wonder myself. I used to wonder in the dark days, *Will it break? Will the connection break?* I think it was tested and it was frayed at times, but it gets repaired. He puts the effort into repairing it. He doesn't count on them remembering what he did for them, he really works at it.

I think when the speech is well written, his delivery is really second to none. I think at times some of the rhetoric that he chooses to use is too hot, and I think some of the technique is too hot, but when he's on his game, he's really quite good. In fact, I think—this could be misunderstood—he'd probably take a bit of a sardonic joke out of it—I think in some respects, as a campaign technique, now his voice is almost more effective than the visual. Not because there's anything wrong with the way he looks, but he looks his age. The voice doesn't betray any age at all. I think the voice is very powerful. In fact, if they ever ask me, I'd make as many radio ads as I made TV ads. I think the radio ads are very effective— very effective.

The history part of it is all the building blocks, where they are the family, the immigrant, the Catholic, but he's built on that, built his own legacy on it. He's never disowned it; he's never tried to separate himself from it. I have a lot of friends who have gone off of him. It's a series of things—

Knott: You mean they've jumped ship in a sense?

Tretter: Yes, or if they weren't active politically, you know, "I wouldn't vote for that guy. I've had enough of that." You try to put your finger on it, and it doesn't come down to any one thing. They don't make an indictment, they don't list a lot of so-called "offenses," they just shrug. He

doesn't relate to them any more or they've got their own orientation. But he replaces those people. Not consciously, but those people are replaced with other voters, younger voters. The immigrant base, I think, is strong.

I think he just—He works. I don't think I could keep up. I don't think I could do a day with him now. Barbara just is amazing—and Barbara's my age. I could say it's a young man's game, but he's older than I am and Barbara's my age, but I know I couldn't do it. I just couldn't do it. But I do want to show you a picture.

Knott: Yes, please, that would be great.

[*pictures*]

Tretter: That's the St. Patrick's Day parade.

Knott: This would be South Boston.

Tretter: South Boston in 1964.

Knott: So that's '64?

Tretter: Yes, it is, I'll tell you why. That's Eddie Moss, Frank O'Connor, me.

Knott: That's you?

Tretter: Yes.

Knott: No kidding, that's great.

Tretter: That's me . I don't know where I was there. But it's an interesting—a lot of people have said this to me—if you look at her face, how do you describe it?

Swerdlow: [inaudible]

Knott: Yes, yes, very much so.

Tretter: There was one other piece that I wanted to show you, talking about my uncle so much.

Knott: Yes.

Tretter: This doesn't really do him justice. The picture was taken years ago. But I'll tell you who was in the picture, it was an extraordinary picture. It was a guy named Jimmy [Daniel] O'Dea, who'd been district attorney in Middlesex County; John Kennedy, right after he lost the nomination in '56; Johnny Powers from South Boston; a guy named John Thompson, who'd

been speaker of the House, the "Iron Duke"; and my uncle. You can only describe the picture, leaving my uncle aside, as a real "murderers' row" of politics. He [Monsignor Griffin] was an exceptionally handsome guy, and had a great speaking skill. In fact, when the obituary of Hildegarde was in the paper last week, I remember very clearly meeting her. He had this phenomenal speakers program; he brought people to Norwood. Oh, [Bishop Fulton J.] Sheen, [Carlos] Romulo, [Arthur] Fiedler, Hildegarde, the Von Trapp family; it was just amazing. That was my fascination with show business.

Knott: Sure. Well, Charlie, thank you so much.

Tretter: My pleasure.

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