EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH DAN H. FENN, JR.

November 4, 2004
Charlottesville, Virginia

Interviewer

Stephen Knott

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TRANSCRIPT

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November 4, 2004

Knott: We are speaking with Dan Fenn, Jr., who has graciously agreed to give us some time on a November evening in 2004. For the record, let me get our ground rules on tape. Dan and I have agreed that these interviews are conducted in strict confidentiality and that until you have had the opportunity to edit your remarks that they will remain in confidence, so any stipulations you put on this transcript we will abide by. No one is going to see this transcript; anything you say will remain in this room until you have cleared the transcript.

A clean, raw transcript will be sent to you probably in about three or four months and you can take as much time as you need to make any corrections that you wish. When the project is completed in six or seven years, a copy of this transcript will be furnished to the Edward M. Kennedy Center for the Study of the United States Senate, which is the likely repository for his papers, for his archives, and here to the Miller Center, the Scripps Library. So that will be the ultimate destination for this transcript. It is conceivable at some point down the road, way down the road, that the transcript will be put on line.

Fenn: Sounds both good and familiar.

Knott: Dan, I was wondering if I could ask you to begin by just giving us a brief biography of your life. If you could tell us a little bit about your background in Massachusetts, Massachusetts politics, and government service, that would be terrific.

Fenn: I was born and pretty much brought up in Massachusetts and got interested in politics when I was about 12 I guess, 11 or 12, when my father was the chaplain in the Massachusetts House when [Leverett Saltonstall was Speaker and Leverett Saltonstall was a member of my father's parish in Chestnut Hill. I used to go in with father from time to time and sit on the dais with the Speaker and I thought this all looked like pretty interesting stuff. I remember having a big sunflower on my bedroom door when [Alfred] Landon was running against [Franklin D.] Roosevelt in 1936. I also remember watching a torchlight parade for Al Smith in Taunton, Mass., in the '28 campaign. So I was sort of young then.

I guess my own active personal involvement started when I ran for state representative in 1952 in I think it was the fifth Middlesex district, and never really stopped after that. I was involved in the campaign for Governor in 1954, helped run part of that. The state convention in 1954, and the 1958 re-election campaign, John Kennedy's reelection campaign. All this, Steve, was

pretty—well, the gubernatorial campaign, I was a major player in that—the other stuff was all pretty peripheral.

I was in Wisconsin 1960, in that primary, in Los Angeles.

Knott: You were at the convention.

Fenn: Yes, alternate delegate. There was a lot of political stuff over the years, part of an effort called the Commonwealth Club, I think, at McGuire's. Dick McGuire, [W.] Arthur Garrity, Freddie [Frederick] Roche, with a view to doing something about the state of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts. In 1961 I would say probably March or April of '61, Ken O'Donnell called and asked me if I would take over Ben Smith's Boston's office, which of course had been John Kennedy's Boston office, Ben Smith being the mayor of Gloucester, an old friend and roommate at Harvard of John Kennedy's, as I recall.

The idea was that Judge James Mellen, a great fellow from Charlestown, would become collector of the Port of Boston and Pat [Patrick J.] Lynch, former mayor of Somerville, had been installed as chair of the Democratic State Committee several years before, and the three of us would work together to do something with this project. So I took half time off from Harvard Business School, where I was editing a couple of magazines and doing some teaching, and did that.

Then I would say late June, early July, Ralph Dungan called and asked me to come down to the White House and set up a continuing talent search for presidential appointees. So I did that until early fall I guess, October '63, when Kennedy, in the next to last appointment he made, appointed me to the U.S. Tariff Commission, now called the International Trade Commission. I served there for four years, a couple of years working with Dan Yankelovich on a business-government project enterprise and then came back to the Harvard Business School for a couple of years, became founding director of the Kennedy Library in 1971, left there in '86 and have been teaching around and about ever since.

Knott: You left in 1986 because you couldn't take the fact that Steve Knott had left in 1985.

Fenn: Yes, yes, the thing had no purpose any more then, all the fun drained out of it.

Knott: Dan, you mentioned at one point you became involved in an effort to reform the Massachusetts state Democratic Party. I was wondering if you could give us some sense of the state of the Massachusetts Democratic Party in the late '50s and early 1960s.

Fenn: It was dominated by remnants of the old David I. Walsh machine in the cities and towns. I ran for the Democratic town committee in Lexington in, it would have been '52. I had three write-in votes and my closest competitor got five write-in votes. He beat me. He had more friends than I did. I remember Henry Russell and George somebody whose name I've now forgotten and Gene Buckley, but they were elderly and not very creative, and certainly were not in any sense socially or any other way liberal. They were good traditional, lunch-bucket, Irish-Catholic Democrats, and had been brought up in that whole tradition. I liked them and I worked well with them.

The Party—so you had these people and you had a state committee of 40 men and 40 women who were similar, not very active. The state was, since the Paul Dever era, pretty solidly Democratic. In Lexington, as in the state, these people didn't welcome newcomers very warmly; in fact John Kennedy got booed in 1954 at the state convention. He'd been a Senator for two years and he was booed as best I recall by a combination of these hardcore old-line Democrats who resented the fact that he'd come along and established his own statewide organization and by the ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] liberals, who never liked him either because of his father and because of the Joe McCarthy thing.

It's not that the old-line Democrats were thieves or anything like that, it's just that they had passed the stages in their life and involvement where they were particularly zesty. And the state headquarters was a very closed operation run by John Carr, the former mayor of Medford, and Helen Sullivan, just two or three of them up there in the old Bellevue Hotel. They really seemed to be more interested in maintaining their control, such as it was, over the Party's organization, such as it was. So then came the famous state committee fight in 1956, which I think Ken O'Donnell and a couple of other people kind of pushed on John Kennedy, and they were right to do so.

Knott: Was it an attempted purge?

Fenn: It was an attempt to take over the state committee. You see, the '56 state committee picked the 1960 slate of delegates to wherever the national convention was going to be. So I don't think Kenny and some of the other people, it was Jim Mellon, Larry probably—

Knott: Larry O'Brien?

Fenn: O'Brien, and Ken O'Donnell, pushing Kennedy into this street fight, which is what it was. The candidate of the old guard, including the McCormacks, was a guy named Burke, Onions Burke, from Hatfield and there's stuff on this in the library I'm sure, Betty Taymor and some other people, and it was a really down and dirty battle, which the Kennedy people won but not overwhelmingly. Pat Lynch wasn't exactly what they had in mind, but he was fine and he was a very decent, loyal guy and he was a good bridge to the old timers so that he was to be part of this triumvirate to bring new blood into the Party, new activity. It was sort of the Soapy Williams thing in Michigan and the George McGovern thing in South Dakota. That was kind of the model that people had in mind, reconstitute those sitting on town committees and the state committee, and develop some program and some activities and so on.

Knott: Can I ask you a question, you came from a family that was fairly entrenched in Massachusetts, is that a fair—the reason I'm asking is to get some sense of the ethnic—the Democratic Party in Massachusetts at this time I imagine is essentially dominated by the Irish?

Fenn: Oh yes, oh yes.

Knott: You don't come out of that milieu.

Fenn: No, and it was always a little strange to people, my father being a Unitarian minister, what was I doing there?

Knott: Yes.

Fenn: I can't think of anybody, Steve, in Bob Murphy's campaign for Governor or in the Commonwealth Club, not sure that was the name of it, something like that—who was anything but an Irish Catholic, either of those activities.

Knott: So it was somewhat unusual for—I don't like to stereotype here but a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant to be so heavily involved in Democratic politics.

Fenn: Oh, very, very, very unusual, unheard of. When I was running for state rep I took a lot of flack for it from the Yankees in Lexington.

Knott: The Kennedys, at least I've been told, John F. Kennedy, and you've already alluded to this with the reference to McCarthyism, the fact that the ADA-types, the Harvard faculty types who may have been somewhat active in politics in Massachusetts, it's fair to say did not take well to the Kennedys early on?

Fenn: I guess so. Not even early on. I think, well some, Ken Galbraith was there and Arthur Schlesinger was there, but there were a whole lot of people, Sam Beer, Jim Burns, Vicki [Victoria] Shuck at Wellesley, Mark Howe, Harvard Law School, that whole crowd that had formed the ADA, Helen [Mrs. Arthur G.] Roche, and had made common cause with the unions, they were fighting—that was a dramatic alliance. They were fighting—the unions were fighting anti-union legislation, the Barnes bills that were—were they on the ballot? I can't remember now. The ADA was fighting birth control and I think teachers' oath legislation. So these two very disparate groups in any—boy, I knew a lot of those union leaders because of my work with the World Affairs Council and Foreign Policy Association, and that connection was one that you'd never imagine would work, but it did and it lasted for a long time. The unions were very comfortable with John Kennedy, but ADA certainly was not.

Knott: Do you have a recollection of your first encounter with Edward Kennedy, by any chance?

Fenn: I certainly do. I can see him now. It was in the '58 campaign for reelection to the Senate, and he would have been what, 26? I don't know if he was in Virginia then or where he was. I remember him loping into campaign headquarters much to everybody's delight and amusement. He was all excited because he had been out on the streets at stoplights with the drivers' permission putting Kennedy stickers on their bumpers. I remember that very well, I have that image in my mind.

I didn't have any particular involvement with him, and my participation in the '60 campaign after Los Angeles was very minimal. I guess he was terrific. I always heard the story about the bucking bronco or whatever it was. Then he turned up, and this would be really interesting to find out, as the Assistant District Attorney in Suffolk County as I recall. Did that happen right out of law school and what did he do in that job, et cetera. I don't know. But I distinctly

remember, Steve, in the spring of ’61, might have been the winter of ’61, he gave a talk at Harvard Business School where I was working. I went; I’ve forgotten who asked him or anything else.

The talk was about a trip he’d just taken through Africa, and it was marvelous. He was so perceptive, so interesting, and so sophisticated and articulate about the people, the leaders to whom he’d talked, and what was going on there and so forth and so on. I never thought to ask why an Assistant DA of Suffolk County was taking a trip to Africa, but that would be very interesting to find out. What was that all about? That relates to another question that I’d be curious to ask if I were asking, and did he just do one or two speeches about this African thing or did he have a tour around Massachusetts doing this? Very interesting. But it was very impressive I must say.

So that sort of leads me into the question that I’d love to find out from him now, 45 years later, exactly when did he decide to run for the Senate in ’62, why did he decide to do that, and how did it all come about? I remember talking to O’Donnell in the White House, probably May, I’ll go back to why I was there. Probably May in ’61, saying, “Is Teddy going to run for the Senate?” and Kenny saying, “I don’t know.” I said, “Ken, what’s the decision-making mechanism in that family? How do they make decisions like this?” He said, “Dan, I’ve been around them for ten years and I don’t have the remotest idea how that works.”

Now you know, the glib thing, the Ambassador [Joseph Kennedy] said he should and told the President and the Attorney General, but I always thought that, obviously the Ambassador was hugely influential in their thinking, but this notion of the Ambassador as a puppeteer never had much—somehow that didn’t feel right to me. The reason why I asked, I guess, was partly curiosity and partly because of, in May, late April—

Knott: Of ’61?

Fenn: Of ’61, Ken had asked me to take over that Boston office, Senator [Benjamin II] Smith’s, which I did. That was fun.

Knott: Had you known Ben Smith prior?

Fenn: No, I’d never met him. So the story that gets repeated and repeated and repeated of course is that Ben Smith was a seat-warmer for Ted. I just don’t believe it. Obviously, the President was looking for some loyal friend, and if you think about the people in prominence in Massachusetts Democratic politics—not that Ben was, he was the mayor of Gloucester and ran a fishing company of his father’s up there—of course I’ve forgotten the names and faces now, but nobody immediately jumps to mind as an obvious person to take that seat.

I guess the two pieces of evidence about the seat-warmer thing and that Ted always had planned to run back when JFK became President and so forth and so on, the two pieces of evidence, one is that conversation with Ken, and this is, I think it’s May, the primary is in September. The other was when I was asked to go to the White House to develop this talent search operation and I told Ben they asked me to go, and I remember his face just fell, and it really crumpled. There was no

connection between the two events—my departure and Ted's decision to run— in fact, but the selection of me to run the talent search operation he took as a signal that Teddy was running, he could go do something else. I don't think that was it at all, I think the two things were separate in the President's mind, in Ken's mind. Ken had other reasons in his head I think.

At any rate, Ben was one surprised, disappointed man when I told him. So if he was a seat-warmer, nobody ever told him. He was having a fine time in the Senate, he would have loved to have stayed, and he was doing a good job from everything I could see. But going back to that question, I would be really fascinated to see what the Senator says about the story. I don't know how Bobby felt, but I had a sense just from gossip that JFK was not altogether pleased with the idea, it sort of looked dynastic to him. Also it was dicey, it was dicey. I guess, I don't know when Eddie McCormack, the Speaker John McCormack's nephew, Knocko's son I guess—remember Dave Powers' story about Knocko?

Knott: I certainly remember the name, I don't recall the story.

Fenn: Remember the story about the stallion?

Knott: It's coming back.

Fenn: Anyway, I think he was Knocko's son, Eddie, very bright, accomplished guy, Attorney General of his state. I don't know when he got in but I think he got in quite well before, and of course that McCormack-Kennedy thing had been going for a little while.

Knott: I'm sure.

Fenn: Back before the state committee fight. But at any rate, I just had the sense, and it would be interesting to hear what the Senator says about how JFK felt about this. But I had the sense that hey, it's a family and if Ted wants to do it, fine. I may not be crazy about the idea but—

Knott: Did you have the sense that people like Kenny O'Donnell around the President were probably not keen on this idea?

Fenn: Oh yes, that's a good point, I think not. I don't think they thought that that was going to be good for the administration, for the President, particularly after the RFK appointment.

Knott: I was going to ask if you ever heard, either directly or indirectly, what Robert Kennedy's attitude was.

Fenn: No, I don't. Now, the way Bobbie got into the thing was, you probably have all this stuff too. Bobbie, I remember, convened a meeting, I think in the Justice Department, of a group of us, I'm pretty sure Dick Donohue was there, I'm pretty sure that Dick McGuire was there, I know Billy Hartigan was there. I was there obviously, two or three others. I'm not at all sure Kenny was there—to block out what was going to get done. Hartigan was interesting—he'd started off in the White House and was responsible for transportation, logistics and stuff, been appointed

Assistant Postmaster General in charge of transportation. He was a podiatrist from Revere and a wonderful guy, just very good, smart and quick.

I remember Bobby saying that Billy is going to resign and go up there and run the campaign. There was a little dust-up when after the campaign was over Bill came back and was reappointed Assistant Postmaster General, which is what happened. But JFK, and this was not a publicized meeting, JFK really was trying to stay away from that thing. I remember a press conference, I think I do, when he was asked, "What's your involvement in your brother's campaign in Massachusetts?" He picked up the phrase he used on the struggles in Laos and said, "Well, no direct involvement, technical assistance and logistical support." You know how he'd do it, and that seemed to satisfy people, except for the story that I told you about Doug Cater. It was a tough—I can't remember how the election, what the spread was, I think it was the primary—

Knott: The primary was the big thing.

Fenn: Yes, but I can't remember how much he beat McCormack by. I do remember listening to the debate in Kenny's living room and that great line of McCormack's, "If your name was Edward Moore, your candidacy would be a joke." It wasn't on television, we didn't see it. I'm just wondering if there's a tape of that, because—

Knott: There is, I think there is. Would you care to share the Doug Cater story?

Fenn: Sure. One of the problems that Ted had was the—I don't know, I never was comfortable with that crowd either, so I always used pejorative terms and they always seemed to be very predictable and knee-jerk to me—that group that we talked about before was very much off Ted. They were fond of Eddie McCormack.

Knott: The ADA people?

Fenn: Yes. They were fond of Eddie McCormack. He'd been doing a good job as Attorney General and he'd been really pushing civil rights and the kinds of things in which they were interested, good causes from my standpoint. I think that group—other than Ken Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger, a few others—that group as a whole really weren't reconciled to JFK until the missile crisis, the great success of the missile crisis, and then they said, "This guy really has something." This was of course before that.

So the problem—and they ran around the state. They are really talking. They were cutting into what should be Teddy's constituency. So I guess, I think I volunteered, maybe it all happened at the meeting that Bobby conducted when I said I'd go up, I knew those people, Sam Beer, Bob Wood and those guys, and I'd go up and talk to them about this. Sam was a key figure in all this. So I did. I spent two or three days, maybe more, traveling around, talking to them. What I was getting back was, oh, they were complaining about the state of the Democratic Party and that JFK hadn't done anything about this and so forth and so on. Which was only partly true, given the state committee fight. So I talked to Ted. Anyway, there was a letter that I drafted to several people, I'm sure I don't have it anymore but Sam may, from him to them saying that he was

really concerned about the state of the Democratic Party in the state and he would pledge himself to do something about this. And in fact he did.

When you talk to Gerry Doherty, a hilarious story about Gerry's wife complaining about this strange guy who's calling Gerry all the time and mispronouncing his name, of course it was Ted. So he worked with Gerry and Gerry became Speaker of the House, and he really carried through on the pledge. It of course took a lot more than just two or three changes in personnel, anything like that is a two, three-, or four-year project. You've got to get somebody working on it and stuff like that, which he did not do. But he helped out. There wasn't any question, he did what he promised to do. That support came along.

The Doug Cater story, I really got burned. Doug Cater, who was then with *The Reporter* magazine, Max Ascoli's magazine, a great little publication, liberal Democratic publication. Doug and I were in college together and we were in the *Harvard Crimson* together. As a matter of fact I was the president of *Crimson*, welcomed him onto the board. I'd arranged for him to go to some youth festival in Prague. We had a pretty good relationship. When I went down there, I went over to his house and we'd talk fairly regularly. One time he called and asked about Teddy's campaign. I told him I was just up there working on the thing and then it occurred to me, he's wearing two hats here. So I called him back right away and I said, "Doug, that stuff about my being in Massachusetts was just between us old *Crimson* editors, right? You understand that?"

"Oh yes," he said, "oh yes." So I'm watching the press conference a few days later. Cater stands up and says, "Mr. President, what's the involvement of the White House in your brother's campaign for the Senate in Massachusetts?" Kennedy gave him that technical assistance stuff. Then Doug asked a follow up question, which you didn't do in those days. He said, "I understand that a member of your White House staff was in Massachusetts working on the campaign in the last week or two." The President was quite taken aback. I didn't think he knew I was there. I've forgotten how he worked his way out of that one. But I think it's just a piece of evidence, it was sort of like the Bay of Pigs. I mean, this is our enterprise but we don't want our fingerprints on it. I never gave Cater the time of day or the weather after that.

Knott: While you were staff assistant to the President, you said you were involved in the talent search. Do you recall ever hearing from Edward Kennedy in terms of "this is a guy we need to take care of" or "this is somebody you might want to consider"?

Fenn: No, never, and we weren't the "take-care-of" office anyway. When I went down there I said we're not going to do Schedule C's because they're departmental appointments anyway. Luther Hodges can't run the Commerce Department if we're controlling the handful of appointments he has to make, and we're not going to be an employment office. Somebody told me later Louis XIV said, "Every time I make an appointment I make 99 enemies and one ingrate." I said, "What do you want to wrap that around the President of the United States for?" This isn't a job shop. The White House isn't an employment office. That changed under [Lyndon B.] Johnson and later Presidents dramatically. But at any rate, that's the way it started.

We did a little of that—Homer Thornbury's campaign manager when Thornbury was the number two on the Rules Committee, a little bit, but very little—and I certainly never heard from Ted about it. My impression was that he got on very well, as his brother had, with Senator Leverett Saltonstall, who was the senior Senator, my old friend from Chestnut Hill days. They really did like each other.

Knott: I don't want to jump or leave the early years just yet, I want to make sure I haven't missed anything as far as Senator Kennedy first getting involved in politics and running for the Senate in '62. Is there anything we've left out that you can recall from this early period?

Fenn: I don't think so, Steve. I wasn't back in Massachusetts, living in Massachusetts, until he was running for his second term. I went back in '69 and I don't remember anything about that first term. I suppose we must have run across each other somewhere from time to time at the end of it. Between '63 to '67 I did have a little bit to do with Bobby, and I must have run into him because of Bobby's campaign, but nothing drops into place.

Knott: Then I'm wondering if we could jump to, if you could tell us about your appointment to be Director of the Kennedy Library in 1971, how that came about.

Fenn: One other thing before we get to that. The next time I had anything to do with him, and this is pretty good stuff, when I got back home in '69 there was a slump in the high-tech industry in Massachusetts and he got very interested, or somebody interested him, in the problems of technology transfer and how could you take what we picked up in the space program, in the military program, and apply it to the commercial sector. So a guy named Ellis Mottur, who must be on your list. He was Ted's science advisor and was deputy director of the Office of Technology Assessment, of which the Senator was chair for a while; it now no longer exists. But Ellis and I put together a series of hearings in Boston to highlight this issue and its importance. I think he filed some legislation on it, actually. This would have been '69-'70. There was a guy named Arthur Obermayer, who also should be on the list if you need a few more people. Arthur was one of the people who testified and had been involved with him since, I think. Great fellow, a friend of Ellis'. So that was an interesting experience and I think Jim King who worked on that thing with us—

Then I thought he was in danger of getting typed. So I set up a luncheon for him with some faculty at the business school, because I thought some of them and what they were talking about might interest him.

Knott: Do you recall that particular meeting at all?

Fenn: Yes, I just remember it was not a connection that took particularly. Of course, they were over-awed and all that kind of stuff. But I don't think that they interested him, or what they were talking about interested him especially. He had a speech to do at Bentley—

Knott: Bentley College?

Fenn: Yes, which I wrote for him. It was sort of the new businessman kind of speech. It was a pretty good speech. He told me afterwards, "First time I ever got more applause when I sat down then when I stood up." But that didn't, as I say, it didn't connect particularly. So then, I can't remember, I'd just sort of run into him periodically. I'm going to see him next week or the week after next. So, the Kennedy Library?

Knott: If you could talk with us about your appointment as director and especially any recollections you may have about Senator Kennedy's involvement in this process.

Fenn: Ted, obviously what Ted wanted, if he wanted something to happen during that whole library business it usually happened—I mean, in the days when the building and the first museum was still in the family's hands. He was very involved, he pretty much stayed out of it once the government took it over, except for the tapes. John Stewart first raised the idea of being Director with me.

Knott: John Stewart at the time was?

Fenn: He was doing the oral history program, he was at the Kennedy Library and he'd done one with me, and I remember it was in Washington and he raised it with me. I didn't have any particular interest. I remember thinking, *Who wants to take care of a bunch of old papers and coconut shells?* But then I got to thinking about it and I thought, *Boy, you could take this and make it into a real outgoing and educational center in politics and government and stimulating people, young people, old people and informing them, nurturing and interest in the business. That would be fun.*

I don't remember talking to Ted about it. I talked to Steve [Smith], his brother-in-law, who was the person who was basically handling the whole library thing. Ted and I did have some conversations about it because I remember him saying, "Dan, what you do in this place the first few years will shape the next hundred." So we had some kind of conversation, but it seems the operative conversations were with Steve and then briefly with Jackie [Kennedy Onassis] and then the archivist.

Knott: The Archivist of the United States.

Fenn: The Archivist of the United States. He asked me, did I want to take the job, and it was just a pro forma offer at this point. Apparently he'd asked Schlesinger and Arthur had said what a great idea that was, which surprised me, but pleased me. So then I said to James Rhodes that "If you see this place as a lively center"—blah, blah, blah—and he said, "Oh, yes." Oh sure, he had no realization of what he was getting himself into. But then Ted and I saw each other because he'd come to things that we'd invite him to, so he was there fairly often and I'd see him in Washington periodically.

I remember one time I went down to try to get him interested in some civil service reform things, which didn't catch his eye. I remember one time talking to him on the Cape about—who was that Florida Senator who was beating up on us all the time? The guy who walked across the state, do you remember? He was beating up on presidential libraries. Teddy said, "What do you want me

to do about it?" It was sort of naïve on my part to try to get him to lay off because it was pretty stupid, destructive stuff he was saying. So in the course of business, and certainly around the whole business with the tapes.

Knott: I was going to ask you about that. It's revealed that Richard Nixon has a taping system and then it slowly comes out—

Fenn: No, it comes out right quick. The [Alexander] Butterfield testimony and then the Nixon people, somebody said, "Kennedy had a taping system." Yes. So Arthur Schlesinger and [McGeorge] Mac Bundy and Ted Sorenson are saying, "No, no, no question, it's absolutely ridiculous, he'd never do anything like that." I had to get on the horn and say, "Look, you guys, I've got a walk-in safe full of these things." I talked to Ted right away about that and he said, "We always intended, of course, that they be included in the Deed of Gift." It was a formal addendum that came along later, but no question in his mind that they belonged to the Library.

Knott: Did you get the sense that he was concerned about what might be on these tapes?

Fenn: Yes, we had [George] Dalton on it; I know Dalton had listened to some and made transcriptions, and Frank Harrington? I think Frank got into it later, yes, I suspect so. But you know, the screening committee had been established and they would fall under the purview of the screening committee. So whatever was on them, I think he had confidence in me and in the screening committee. But there was some kind of ragtime around how we're going to handle that thing. Then of course it all blew up again when Bob Woodward came by. That was hilarious too.

Knott: There was a fairly heated battle over the siting of the Kennedy Library, Harvard Square being the initial preference, I believe, of the Kennedy family, some fairly heated resistance on the part of some Harvard faculty and perhaps some Cambridge residents. Do you have any recollections of Senator Kennedy's involvement in that site battle?

Fenn: The original site was on the other side of the river next to the business school, and the dean of the business school told me he was a little irked because nobody ever asked him and it was his land, but that was where it was going to go. Then after the assassination, Harvard had had its eye on the MBTA [Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority] marshalling yards on what is now called JFK Street for a long time. So Bob Kennedy and Nathan Pusey made this deal, it was a wonderful idea, that this precinct in Cambridge would be devoted to politics and government for kids and scholars and students and so on and it would be the library and the Kennedy School Institute of Politics on that site before I became director in 1971.

The first opposition, some of the people had begun to emerge and they were complaining that nobody had ever told them. That the family had hidden the fact that this involved a museum. This was awful, deceitful, and blah, blah, blah. So it was a nasty fight, which went on until 1975 when the family, before Thanksgiving, decided on Columbia Point. The alternative was to split it up. The people in Cambridge, I shouldn't say that, some Harvard faculty, as you say, Tony Lewis of the *New York Times*, Pebble Gifford, Dun Gifford, who worked for Ted for a while—Muffy Lawrence, the Harvard Square Task Force, the good Tories on Brattle Street—the majority of Cambridge of course wanted it there, 70% or something. But these people, I

remember Pebble Gifford writing to the Senator saying, "The point is, Senator, that when, on a crisp October afternoon, we walk across the bridge to the Dartmouth game, we don't want to be interfered with by a lot of tourists." So that was really what it was about. Incidentally, the former archivist Frank Burke has a manuscript covering the story.

Ted was, I talked to him about it, wrote him. He came to the conclusion that splitting, that what those people wanted to do is to split it, leave the archives in Cambridge and stick the museum someplace else. So that was the issue. It's funny, I don't remember details, but I remember that he ultimately agreed that was not a good idea.

Then there was that hilarious story, I thought it was hilarious. This was in the spring of '75, late spring, and—I don't know if you want this whole story—but Steve Smith had just, these people were going to sue them and take them to the Supreme Court over the validity of the EIS which he had volunteered, the government volunteered to make.

Knott: Environmental Impact Study.

Fenn: So they said it was a phony document, blah, blah, blah, and in a time of high inflation, Steve's running out of money. So he called me to a meeting and he said, "Dan, I'm going to announce tomorrow that I'm dropping this idea of building the museum and the archives in Cambridge. I'm going to say that I'm looking for another site for the two, but I'm not really. I'll just find another place for the museum." I said, "Steve," this is at 122 Bowdoin Street, I said, "Steve, you can't do that, you just can't do that, you'd just destroy the institution. There won't be a Kennedy Library."

So he said, "Where can I put it?" I said, "You can put it at UMass, Boston." And that has a history too. And he said, "No, I can't, I can't build out there." I said, "Yes, where I'm thinking about you can." So then he brightened and he said, "Go talk to Bob Wood." I went on out to see Bob that night and that's where the whole Columbia Point thing really got started. (Bob had suggested the idea to me a year or so before.) Ted became convinced that the splitting it up thing didn't make sense. We looked at a whole lot of other sites. Steve did, Ted did as I recall.

Anyway, then there's talk about putting the museum in the Charlestown Navy Yard. I had a plan B anyway. If the archives were in Cambridge, I was going to leave nothing but stuff nobody would look at there and move the good stuff to the Charlestown Navy Yard and run a program in Cambridge. But anyhow, Jackie had never seen either the Navy Yard or the Columbia Point, so she came to town, I think it was a Friday. Bob Burke—this was all in the hands of the family at this point, these decisions, because they hadn't built the building and given it to us yet. So Bob Burke, my friend, and the Director of the Kennedy Library Corporation that was going to build the building. A great guy, works for Morty Zuckerman now, who felt very strongly that this was a crazy idea, this split thing.

So he picked out the raunchiest part of the Navy Yard to show Jackie. Her plane was late from New York, the traffic jam getting to the Navy Yard was appalling. She was not a happy camper when she got there. She sort of took a look around at the rubble—but then, Ted knew the way over, the back way, to Columbia Point, through Southie. So Ted gets in the driver's seat, John

Culver, Senator Culver, his friend is in the seat with him and Bob Burke, Jackie and I are in the back seat. So Teddy is taking us over, no problem. On the way over he said, "Dan, tell Jackie why Columbia Point would be a good site."

Well, I should have known that was coming and had some nice crisp lines, which I didn't. So I'm stumbling and bumbling around and Jackie interrupts me and I can see her now, she leans forward in the back seat and she says—never mind that wispy voice—with great firmness, "Teddy, there are three stages of maturity if you're Irish. The first is when you get off the boat you want to go to Harvard. The second is when you go to Harvard. The third is when you say poo on Harvard." She was having a fight over the Institute of Politics with them at the time. Then Teddy burst out laughing and he said, "Yes, Jackie, I know, I've been cleaning up after you over there for months."

So we get to Columbia Point, lights are just coming up on the spars of the boats in the harbor, it's twilight, that brutish building is kind of fading. Jackie says, "It's the most beautiful place I've ever seen." I say, "Somebody up there loves me," and we think it's a done deal. But then it falls apart and doesn't come back together again until the fall. Ted and Jackie were convinced that that was the thing to do. The formal family vote was much closer, but I always figured if it had been going the other way the two of them would have made sure it was Columbia Point. So a lot to do with them during that whole time, a lot to do—well, the announcement of my appointment was at his house, a lot of publicity.

Knott: At Senator Kennedy's house?

Fenn: Yes. Yes, just off Storrow Drive. Lot of meetings, discussions about the museum, a lot of conversation. Big mistake on my part that, both with Ted and with Steve, I never sat down with them and said, "Hey listen, this is what I'm thinking, this is what I'm doing. We've got all these exhibits going, we've got—what do you guys think?" But he never resented it. He came to the meeting of the Library Foundation when I was in the process of leaving just expressly to make a wonderful little talk about what I'd done and how I'd just gone ahead and done it and hadn't asked for guidance or advice or anything.

But the story about the dedication was interesting. This was just 25 years ago.

Knott: October '79.

Fenn: Yes, and what a big party that was, huh? And [Jimmy] Carter was coming. A very stressful experience for Carter, right, because the story is that Ted is going to run against him. Carter couldn't make a speech, Ted was very articulate. It's Kennedy's home for all intents and purposes. Carter is kind of an interloper with his campaign looming. People said we'd picked October 29th because it was just before Ted might announce his candidacy, which was absolute nonsense. We took the soonest date we could get to get it open.

But the thing that was strange was, I thought was very interesting, Ted standing there, waiting for Carter's car to pull up, was more nervous than I've ever seen, I mean really, really jumpy. Carter got out of the car cool as a cucumber, you'd think he owned the damn place from the way

he walked around that day. He made a wonderful speech, Carter did, and Ted's was good but not one of his best ones. I always thought, if I were interviewing him, a question I'd ask him, I always wondered whether he didn't feel very uncomfortable, as a good Democrat running against a Democratic President, if he felt unsure about it. The Roger Mudd interview. So I wonder if he didn't feel kind of guilty about this.

Knott: When you took the two, you went through the museum with the two men, anything that stands out?

Fenn: Yes, well, I'm with Carter, Billy Bulger comes up. Carter and Bulger look at Castle Island and talk about the "Cask of Amontillado" and Edgar Allen Poe and stuff. Eunice [Kennedy Shriver], as we get into the pavilion, Eunice rushes up and grabs Carter's arm. So I sort of fall back and I hear Ted saying, "Got to be mental retardation or teenage pregnancy." But there was a lot of communication, conversation back and forth with him—

Knott: Telling Carter stories about—

Fenn: No, this was during the fashioning of the museum and meetings, his house, on the Cape, and he and I had conversations about it too.

Knott: So you were director of the Kennedy Library from 1971 until 1986. Can you recall any events during the '80s where you might have had a certain amount of interaction with the Senator?

Fenn: Not on what he was doing. There was a marvelous party at his house on Chain Bridge Road to raise money—we finally got Steve going on the foundation. So Ted had his party, Reagan was there, deaf as a post, couldn't hear, six inches away. Made a spectacular speech. Jackie said it was one of the best speeches about her husband she'd ever heard, just wonderful. That was a good party, that was a good evening.

Knott: Then you said, you've already referred to this, but when it came time for your retirement that he paid tribute to your—

Fenn: Yes, he was very generous. He couldn't come, he was in Latin America I think, at the retirement party, but he came to this other meeting at the Kennedy Library Foundation. I always wondered about that majority whip, majority leader thing, whatever that was. I wondered whether he really wanted that or whether he thought, well, it's time for me to sort of move up. He had won it a couple of years and then [Robert] Byrd won it. I wonder whether that's really his thing.

Knott: A formal leadership role.

Fenn: Somebody said something worth checking. One of the reasons he is so effective is because he really believes in this stuff, and so in caucuses and stuff he is the de facto leader—and of course he's so well informed. I have great admiration for him.

Knott: Do you think, the run for President in 1980, you're suggesting perhaps that his heart was not quite in it, or certainly there's some guilt perhaps.

Fenn: Well, I wondered, you know. Again, if I were talking to him about it now, I'd say—I never was sure that he himself knew why he wanted to do it except it was there, and that's not an uncommon trait in the family. You make sure you are sitting on the outside of the carousel so when the brass ring comes around you can make a grab for it. It looked as though he had a real good shot. Carter was in trouble and I remember Richard Burke coming up to him one time, some hot new story about Hamilton Jordan getting involved with drugs or something, and Burke was quite excited about this, thought that this would be helpful. And that Roger Mudd interview was dreadful. I just wondered whether it was that he hadn't—except for its apparent availability—he hadn't ever decided why he really wanted this at this time.

Of course, then there was the Joe Kennedy speech at the dedication, and Carter never would come to the Kennedy Library. We asked him—he ultimately did—but when I was there, to come and do a speech and stuff like that. He thought that Ted had put Joe up to that—scathing, inhospitable, rude. It was just dreadful. I figured Ted was as surprised as everybody else in the crowd at that point.

Knott: Would you think—there's a tendency from the outside to assume that the Kennedys operate en masse when in fact there are some of these separate entities. There's the Bobby people and Bobby's family and Ted's people and Ted's family.

Fenn: Oh yes.

Knott: So for Carter to assume that Joe was sort of acting at Senator Kennedy's behest—

Fenn: They see a vast conspiracy, I see a group of individuals. We always think that somebody is pulling the strings, but it's much more complex, of course. Funny, I'd forgotten all that involvement during the library years. We saw a fair amount of him comparatively speaking. I haven't seen him for a year or two now, I guess.

Knott: You said you're seeing him in a couple of weeks?

Fenn: Yes, there's an award thing that they're starting. I remember one time I saw him when there was a reunion of the Kennedy staff people at the library. When would that have been?

Knott: There was one when I was there, which would have been early '80s.

Fenn: This was a later one. Stu Udall was there, Ken Galbraith was there, Ralph Dungan was there, Sorensen was there, a lot of the old crowd, Bill Josephson from the Peace Corps. Teddy says, "Well, we could start the New Frontier all over again. I can hear my brother now, the torch has been passed to an *old* generation of Americans." It was a great line.

Knott: Any other recollections, Dan, before we—

Fenn: I don't think so, Steve. One thing, I don't know if it's in [Adam] Clymer's book, but Ellis Mottur, whom I mentioned, he was very involved for quite a while with the whole science business and the Office of Technology Assessment. Ted was head of it or head of the controlling committee or something. It was the equivalent of GAO [General Accounting Office] in a sense. It was an arm of the Congress that they wiped out, too bad, to evaluate the scientific feasibility and technological feasibility of legislation. He was deeply into that for quite a while, a chapter that shouldn't get lost.

Knott: That's good to know. Thank you very much. This is the inaugural interview for the Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project.

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