



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH MARY FRACKLETON

July 8, 2005
Hampton, New Hampshire

Interviewer

Stephen F. Knott

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To cite an interview, please use the following general format: [name of interviewee] Interview, [date of interview], Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia.

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TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH MARY FRACKLETON

July 8, 2005

Knott: Let me just explain what will happen. In about three or four months you'll receive a transcript of what we say here today. You can make any changes at that time that you want. You can cut things out if you have second thoughts. You can add material. If there's something that you forget today that you remember in a few months, you can write that right into the transcript, and then you send that back to us. In about five-and-a-half years, this entire project will be over and all the materials will be opened. And what will be opened will be the transcript that you edited and cleared. You're going to sign a formal release so anything that you say today is going to stay in this room.

Frackleton: Okay, so if I change my mind about saying things I shouldn't—

Knott: Right, you have complete control over the transcript. In fact, we don't encourage this, but you can even close the transcript if you wish. Or you can set a release date ten years, twenty years, thirty years down the road, whatever. We prefer the people don't do that, but you do have that option.

Frackleton: Fine.

Knott: Right, and we try to encourage people to speak to history, that this is not going to end up in the newspapers. This is an attempt to try to talk to generations who aren't even necessarily around now about what you did and about Senator Kennedy.

Perhaps the best place to start would be if you could just tell us how you came to work for Senator Kennedy. Your background, if you would.

Frackleton: It was 1961. My five children were ages three on up to 13. My husband's work schedule with the Boston Fire Department was unique in that days off were never the same from week to week. I had been retired since the birth of my first child and the prospect of getting out of the house and back to the business world a couple of days a week was enticing.

I registered with a temporary placement agency, the plan being to work on my husband's days off, during which time he would care for the children. On my third day of placement, I was instructed to report to 122 Bowdoin Street, Beacon Hill, Boston. I recognized that as being the

Boston address of President and Mrs. Kennedy and I knew he was in Washington. The recruiter indicated that I was to report to Mr. Edward Kennedy and inquired as to whether I knew of him. I replied that I certainly did, and that's how it all began! As the years went on with my children reaching an age where they were cared for by my parents and babysitters during the day, I was able to work full-time. And 24 years later I retired as Executive Assistant to United States Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

At that particular time, there were Mr. Kennedy, as we called him, Judge [Frank] Morrissey, and Norman Knight and Mary Jane Weires and two clerical helpers. Normy was sort of public relations, and had a number of radio stations throughout the Northeast. That was about who was there in the early days of February, 1961, and then as the days progressed Eddie Martin, Gerry [Gerard] Doherty, Ed King, along with Don Dowd. Also John Culver and Jack Crimmins. Charlie Tretter wasn't on the scene quite yet.

Knott: This was 1962?

Frackleton: It was February, 1961. We were preparing for the 1962 Senatorial campaign, and shortly thereafter opened a campaign headquarters down on Tremont Street.

Knott: Could you describe your initial duties as secretary?

Frackleton: I handled Mr. Kennedy's correspondence and phone calls, and also worked from Milton Gwirtzman, who did his speeches. After he was elected and went to Washington, we moved to his Boston U.S. Senate office. I worked mostly for Larry Laughlin and Bill Evans. Bill eventually went down to the Washington Senate office as Administrative Assistant. I worked mostly for Larry and Bill when the Senator was in Washington. I'd be Mr. Kennedy's secretary when he came to the Boston office.

Knott: Where was the Boston office?

Frackleton: The Boston office—we had the same office JFK had when he was first elected to Congress, and Kennedy's office when he was a Congressman. It was down in Post Office Square, which is called the Courthouse Building and Post Office. We moved to the 24th floor of the newly built JFK Building in Government Center. That's where I spent a great deal of time. Between the office and my five children I was very busy.

Knott: Was Barbara Souliotis—?

Frackleton: Barbara came to 122 Bowdoin around September 1961. She went to Washington when the Senator was elected, and I, of course, stayed in Boston and had plenty of duties and interesting work in the Senator's office at the JFK Building. We did mostly case work, which entailed assisting people with their problems.

Knott: Could you tell us how your job evolved over the long period that you were with the Senator?

Frackleton: I was the Senator's secretary when he was in Massachusetts. After Larry Laughlin left, I was in charge until new male managers were assigned. They didn't work out. Finally the Senator said, "Mary, you run this office and you're the boss, and what you say goes!" So I was the boss.

Knott: Would you have a lot of contact with the folks in the Washington Senate office?

Frackleton: Oh, yes.

Knott: That was fairly routine?

Frackleton: Absolutely. Joe McIntyre was the AA down there. He had been JFK's AA. Joe and I got along very well. Never met him, but we were great friends.

Knott: And David Burke, was this somebody that you would—?

Frackleton: Dave is great. I had heard about this new AA for the Washington office who went to Tufts and had quite a reputation and activity at college. He was a wiz, I heard. Anyway, one day I'm at my desk just outside the Senator's office. I heard this voice introducing himself to the receptionist, and even before he got his name out, I knew, I just felt it was Dave Burke. Loved him on sight. He had this great magnetism and was the new AA in Washington. We could always rely on his advice.

Knott: I wonder if I could ask you about when President Kennedy was assassinated. Could you tell us where you were when you heard this news?

Frackleton: At that time our office was in Post Office Square. Mrs. [Rose] Kennedy called, asking to speak to the Senator (it seemed everyone in the Kennedy organization imitated someone in the family; well, I did a good job of imitating Rose). She said, "Mrs. Frackleton, is Teddy there?"

Knott: You do a good job.

Frackleton: I said, "No, he's in the Washington office today." She said, "Well, thank you. You're very helpful." She was playing golf. Not long after that the phone rang. It was one of the Secret Service agents from Texas. He told me what happened. I'm not even sure which agent it was, but we did know each other at the time, and he told me, and we were absolutely devastated. He kept a line open from the hospital to my desk so that I could get through. I had to get—Larry Laughlin was the boss then—I had to get Larry. He was at lunch. Oh, good grief, when some of the staff came back from lunch, they were crying and screaming. I held my composure. If I'm going to cry, I'm going to go home and cry. But that's how we learned about it and it was pretty tough.

Knott: Do you recall seeing Senator Edward Kennedy at any time in the immediate aftermath?

Frackleton: No, because he was in Washington.

Knott: If you had to give an overall assessment of Senator Kennedy for somebody listening 50 to 100 years from now, what would you want them to know?

Frackleton: He was the greatest. He was so polite. Not demanding, but if he asked you to do something, you'd better do it right. He never raised his voice to me.

Knott: I was going to ask you if he ever got short.

Frackleton: Once he did.

Knott: Could you tell us what that was?

Frackleton: The kids, Robert Kennedy's sons, Joe [Joseph Kennedy II] and Bobby Jr. [Robert Kennedy Jr.] and a few of their friends were going down to the compound to their summer home on a Saturday or Sunday evening, and they had to have a chaperone, so they asked me. I said no and the Senator asked why. I said, "I'm going to ask Louella [Hennessey]." Louella was the family nurse. He asked, "Why wouldn't you want to?" And I said, "Because they get a little wild when they're down there." I don't know how he put it, but he said, "Well, after all, Mary, it is their home." That's the only time he raised his voice to me.

So Louella went down and I was right. Louella had a pretty hard time with the group there. That's the only time he raised his voice. No, he was a wonderful boss.

Knott: Any other stories that you might be able to share that give us a window on the kind of person he is? I'm less concerned about the politician, the Senator, but any particular acts of generosity or—?

Frackleton: The Senator had been in the hospital with his back. My husband was injured at a fire and was hospitalized. He called wanting to know how Joe [Frackleton] was. I was so touched. Not only that, but Bobby had just died too and I just couldn't imagine that he called to see how Joe was doing. I'll never forget that. It was very touching.

Knott: Regarding the plane accident that Edward Kennedy had, it was a pretty serious situation.

Frackleton: Sixty-four, yes.

Knott: Did you work with him at all during this period when he was convalescing in Roxbury at the New England Baptist?

Frackleton: He'd call or Louella would call with things that needed to be done and I would send work over to him so he could sign it; I'd send it with one of the office staff. Once in a while, I'd go over myself.

This is memorable. President [Lyndon] Johnson was going to visit him so he said, "Bring my staff over to meet him." So I did. We arrived there maybe at 9:00, 10:00 in the evening. President

Johnson didn't show up until 2:00 a.m., and we were absolutely exhausted. But what a charmer he was.

Knott: Really?

Frackleton: He went around kissing all the girls. He picked out the prettiest and said, "Hey, I like you." We got a big kick out of that. It was very nice of the Senator to invite the staff to meet President Johnson and we were thrilled.

Knott: Did you know Eddie Moss by any chance?

Frackleton: Yes, I knew Ed very well and, in fact, his daughter came to work for us. She was with us in the '70s. I was in constant touch with Kate, his wife. Ed and I were good friends. We had a great deal in common. We were both about the same age and both had children—we compared notes and that sort of thing. Everybody was fond of him.

Knott: Clearly, Senator Kennedy has gone through a tremendous number of tragedies in his life, more than most mortals have to experience by far. Did you ever get the sense that this sort of weighed on him? How did he deal with that?

Frackleton: After the President was assassinated, the Senator went off on his boat for awhile. He came back eventually and I had to go down to the compound. He was very quiet, subdued. But he kept going. He had responsibilities. We weren't in touch with him during the time he was off on his boat. I forget how long he was gone, but it was quite a while. He loved the Maine coast and the islands and inlets up there. So that's the only time he was really withdrawn. He's usually calm. I've seen him lose his temper, but never with me. He was a perfect gentleman.

Knott: Did you get to know his family at all?

Frackleton: Oh, yes.

Knott: His first wife, Joan [Bennett Kennedy] and the children?

Frackleton: I'm very fond of Joan. I'm so sorry about what happened. I knew her problems, but she was special to me and I helped her as much as I could. I used to send my secretary over to help out too, but we all knew. I would never let the staff say anything against her. "She *is* the Senator's wife," I kept saying. It seemed that the Washington staff talked down to her. She didn't like to speak with them. She preferred the Boston staff. She had her own secretary.

Knott: That became part of your responsibility?

Frackleton: I helped Joan as much as I could and if she had to go someplace, my husband would drive her. She had to go away now and then and he'd take her. It's very sad. Back in '61 or so she'd come into the office at 122 Bowdoin Street. He'd look at her and he'd say, "Joansy!" They were such a cute couple. It's very sad.

Knott: She seemed to be a very sensitive person and I just can't imagine what it would be like to have dealt with all the tragedies and the setbacks.

Frackleton: I was good friends with Joan.

Knott: Did you get to know Ethel fairly well?

Frackleton: Yes. I got to know Ethel and her whole family.

Knott: That's a big family. That's 11 children and after the father—

Frackleton: Joe was my pet, and then Bobby came next. There was just this little bit of enmity between the two boys as to how much I would do for one. "You did it for Joe. Why can't you do it for me?" And I would say, "Lay off. I've got five children at home also." I would spend many evenings and weekends typing papers for my kids and Joe and Bobby. Joe and Bobby were the ages of some of my kids. I had my hands full there for awhile. Ethel, I liked her very much, but she expected a lot from the Senator, too. And the sisters, all of them depended on him. I never met the Ambassador [Joseph Kennedy] except on the telephone—this was before his stroke—I'd talk with him.

Knott: You mentioned that phone call earlier from Rose Kennedy. Was that typical for you to deal with her?

Frackleton: It was mostly passing info along to the Senator.

Knott: Any impressions of her?

Frackleton: [*Impersonating Rose*] She was a lovely lady and she liked to play golf [*laughs*]. No, I liked Rose. She was demanding, but I liked her.

Knott: Can the Kennedys be difficult to work with?

Frackleton: Sure, but I got along fine with them.

Knott: What was so rewarding about the job that you held for quite a long period of time?

Frackleton: I was part of history. No, really. Being affiliated with the Kennedy family was a reward in itself, and I loved politics.

Knott: Had you had any family members or any other sort of political connections prior to—?

Frackleton: No. Just my father and I were very interested in politics. My father said that the happiest day of his life was when John F. Kennedy was elected President. That's the feeling in my family.

Knott: Was it because of breaking the religious barrier?

Frackleton: Yes. Irish Catholic and, of course, we were Catholic and my father was an immigrant. Oh, yes. Kennedys to him were pretty special. I couldn't believe it when they said, "Go to 122 Bowdoin Street," and I knew immediately where I was going without telling me who it was.

Knott: So this all happened pretty much by chance?

Frackleton: Yes.

Knott: It was this neutral employment agency; it wasn't any Kennedy connection that you had?

Frackleton: None, no. And when we went to 122 Bowdoin Street, it had been JFK's and his wife's. His naval uniform was hanging in the closet. All their stuff was around there and a lot of the furniture happened to be Rose's.

It was so funny, during the early days of the campaign, she'd had a bureau and we were moving it around. We had to get desks in there and someone on the staff broke the leg. I said, "Oh, my God, don't tell Rose." She was looking for all that furniture to move to the JFK birthplace in Brookline. And the bureau with the broken leg, I think she commented that the movers must have broken it. Most of that stuff went out of there then because we had to get all sorts of desks in.

Knott: I'm sure you got to know Senator Kennedy's children fairly well.

Frackleton: Of course. Patrick [Kennedy], I bought him teddy bears, and Joan would tell me what she wanted, and to bring them home this kind of a teddy bear. Oh sure, I knew the kids very well.

Knott: One of the uncomfortable periods for Senator Kennedy was during the busing in Boston when they started busing students in Charlestown, and South Boston, and Roxbury, and elsewhere.

Frackleton: Were you around then?

Knott: Oh, I remember it, yes. I wonder if you could recall for us—there was one particularly public incident where Senator Kennedy tried to speak to a crowd. I believe it was in Government Center near the JFK Building.

Frackleton: I was looking out the window right down on the demonstration.

Knott: I wonder if you could tell us about that day, but also in a general sense just about how people who were loyal to the Kennedys up until that busing situation turned against him in some instances. What was that like? What was that atmosphere like?

Frackleton: I was dead against busing. I had three boys at Latin school at the time and my daughter was at Mount Saint Joseph Academy. So they weren't involved. My oldest son was in college by then and I was very much against busing. We lived in West Roxbury, which was—you knew it was not Roxbury. There was a march against busing. Actually, I don't know if Louise Day Hicks was there that day or not, but I didn't want the Senator to go down there. We were on the 24th floor looking down.

Knott: You thought the crowd would be hostile?

Frackleton: Yes, and it was, and he got booed and they threw eggs at him. I think Eddie Martin must have been with him that day. It was awful. He came in, he was splattered. There was [Albert L.] "Dapper" O'Neil—

Knott: Boston City Council, I think.

Frackleton: Yes, exactly. Well, after the Senator came back up and things had quieted down a bit, Dapper called and said that he wanted me to tell the Senator that he was very sorry what had happened and he escorted him through the crowd. I said, "Don't you dare lie to me!" I blew my stack and I said, "I saw you." He said, "I escorted him through the crowd." I said, "Yes, but you stirred up the crowd to begin with!" I'm talking to him just like this. He said, "I want you to know that I helped the Senator." I said, probably said, "Baloney." I was so angry and he said, "Young lady, what is your name?" I said, "Mary, Mary Haley." My girlfriend was named Haley and I always used that last name when some obnoxious person was bothering me. [laughs] He said, "Young lady, I'm going right to the Senator." I said, "Do that!" and I slammed the phone down.

When the Senator came out of his office, I said that was Dapper O'Neil and I told him what I had done. He said, "You did that?" I said, "Yes, I did." He said, "He's an important person." I said, "I don't care." I watched. The Senator was so brave to go into that mob. We didn't want him to.

Knott: Did you ever express your opinions to him about busing?

Frackleton: Absolutely. He knew where I stood. I was against busing.

Knott: How did he react?

Frackleton: Well, here's an example. We were out on his boat. He'd take the staff out every summer. The boat was called the *Kara* then and he was having Joe, my husband, be the bartender. He had this concoction that was absolutely horrible that he had a big bowl of. They kept sending Joe to bring up some more for everybody. I got it and it went over the side.

Knott: You threw yours over the side?

Frackleton: Oh, yes. I wouldn't drink on a boat anyway because I was afraid I'd get seasick. I didn't want to be prissy so there it goes. The Senator kept handing more glasses to Joe. Joe liked to drink, but he was pouring his over too. So he said to Eddie Martin later, "My God, that Joe

Frackleton's got a hollow leg. You should see all he had to drink." Of course, Eddie knew downright well what we were doing. Marge [Martin] was sitting next to me and sometimes, if I couldn't get it, I'd pass it to her and she'd drop it over the side.

So anyway, he figured that I had had a few too, and so when we docked and we were heading back to Squaw Island, I was walking with him and he said, "Now, Mary, tell me what you think of busing," and, "What do you say to people when they call?" So I went through my rigmarole. I really laid it on and he got the biggest kick out of it. He said, "You should have heard Mary, what she had to say about it." It was a lot of baloney. I was putting on an act for him.

When they did call, for the most part, I would say, "I'm sorry. I have children in public schools too." I didn't say it was the Latin school. They weren't that affected and I said, "As a mother, I understand what you're going through." This is what I would say.

Knott: These would be people calling complaining about busing?

Frackleton: Yes, I wouldn't let them know that I was *really* against it. I would empathize with them. Oh, we had meeting after meeting with people concerned with busing. A lot of times when people called complaining, I'd say, "But you never heard him say that he was for busing," because he hadn't said it publicly. Well, I was sitting there one day and he did. After the meeting I said, "You didn't!" It was the first time he said it, and of course, he had some of the real rabble rousers there, including Louise.

Knott: Louise Day Hicks?

Frackleton: Yes. Louise and I were great friends. I was friendly with everybody. Louise was so happy that my boys were at Latin, and the Senator was gracious to them all. The only time I ever lost my cool was with Dapper O'Neil.

Knott: It sounds like you had friends in West Roxbury and elsewhere. Would they talk to you about their concerns about busing and ask you if you could help somehow?

Frackleton: No, they never asked for my help. They knew where I stood on account of all my kids. Most of their friends went to Latin or the academy with my daughter. Some of those who were really vehement about it, no they didn't, but they didn't take it out on me. They were thrilled that I was working for him to begin with. I had a school at the end of my street and all the kids were bused into Roxbury and the Roxbury kids were bused down to us, but no one argued with me. They knew me. We all got along.

Knott: It was a very difficult time, to say the least.

Frackleton: Oh, yes. My kids were attacked on the bus coming home because they had to take public transportation. The English High was right opposite Latin and the kids at English got a big plank or something and they rammed the doors of Latin school. Some of the kids got hurt when they tried to push them away. I was just thankful my kids weren't involved.

But no, he knew where I stood, and Louise knew.

Knott: Do you ever recall him specifically trying to make the case to you as to why he differed with you on this issue?

Frackleton: Yes, but I just said, “Ah huh, ah huh.”

Knott: Did he have a lot of respect for Judge [Wendell Arthur Jr.] Garrity?

Frackleton: Oh, yes.

Knott: Thought he was a courageous judge, is that accurate?

Frackleton: I was the go-between there too. In fact, after this was over, one of Judge Garrity’s sons interned at the Washington office. He knew that I wasn’t that keen on him, only because of the busing. I was friendly with the judge before that and after that, but I wasn’t happy with him during the busing.

Knott: What were your general impressions of Judge Garrity as a person?

Frackleton: I don’t know. I didn’t think that he was a very strong person as a judge. Judge Garrity thought we were great friends. He used to call me a lot and I pretended, but I didn’t love him. But I didn’t hate him. I don’t think I liked him.

Knott: Did Senator Kennedy put him on the bench?

Frackleton: No. The Senator’s first appointment was Dave Mazzone. I used to go back and forth from my Senate office to visit Judge Garrity with messages because I don’t think the Senator wanted him to come to our office.

Knott: During your time with the Senator, was that the most difficult period?

Frackleton: Yes.

Knott: Could I ask you for your reaction to the news about the Chappaquiddick accident that Senator Kennedy had, and whether you ever said anything to him or he ever said anything to you where he talked about his feelings regarding that incident?

Frackleton: No, he never did. However, if I heard the staff saying anything about it, anything derogatory about the Senator, I would jump down their throats.

Knott: Did that ever happen?

Frackleton: Yes, and I just said, “Do you want to work here? You support the Senator. We don’t know what happened down there. I don’t want to hear another word.” So they didn’t say anything in front of me. I, of course, was upset that that happened. I didn’t know Mary Jo

[Kopechne], but from what I knew of her, she was a very nice girl. I did know the others and I don't know if you knew who everybody was there so I'm not going to mention any names.

Knott: I know that Charlie Tretter was there.

Frackleton: Okay, and Don wasn't. I don't think he was.

Knott: He was not.

Frackleton: I haven't told this to anyone before and I don't know if I want it to go down in history, but the Senator did try to reach me. I had his license. I handled his car. He and I always kept a duplicate in my desk. Angelique [Voutselas] wouldn't let me get through.

He called me I don't know how many times because I had been staying at a campground, but had gone up to a place we bought and I didn't have a phone yet. I went down to the campground and the owners came running. "The Senator called you at least three times!" I didn't know anything about what had happened at that point and when I tried to get through Angelique said, "No, no, no, I have everything under control." I was going to kill her. She botched that.

I had it. The people who were saying driving without a license—I handled his license all the time. I handled his keys. Anything to do with the Boston area, I handled it. She didn't know half of what I handled. So that's my feeling on that.

I was friendly with all sides there. When we went down there for the hearing, I had to make sure those girls got awakened every morning on time. I'd call them. It was like, good God, I'm being babysitter to them [*laughs*]. The judges, a whole league of people were in the house that we were in. We had two or three houses down there. So I'm getting all the information that's going on every day. We had a great time down there besides the fact that it was a very serious thing. Our house, as they say. The judges were a riot. Garrity was there, and we had a great time.

Knott: This is in Edgartown?

Frackleton: Yes. My husband and my brother-in-law, someone drove the cars down. We were loyal, loyal, loyal. I was afraid to even go out for a walk because all the reporters knew me. So I would try to take a walk when it was dark, but a couple of times they got to me. I just wouldn't talk to them. They were friends. Over the years, I had to deal with reporters. They asked, "Where are you staying?" I'd say, "Now go on, get lost," or something and make my way back to where we were staying because supposedly they didn't know that we had a lot of the bigwigs with us, some of the staff there. Barbara was there.

Knott: It was a tough time.

Frackleton: It was, and Joan came in. I felt so sorry for her, but she's looking for friends and we welcomed her.

Knott: Do you think he ever seriously considered resigning?

Frackleton: Oh, yes.

Knott: He made his televised speech to the people of Massachusetts, which seemed to turn things around, if I remember correctly.

Frackleton: Did you know Milty [Milton] Gwartzman?

Knott: We're actually working very closely with him on this project.

Frackleton: Good. I worked for Milty during the first campaign. I was his secretary and we got along great.

Knott: You mentioned earlier [that] you were loyal, loyal, loyal. That's something that I've noticed with the people who work for Senator Kennedy, and all of the Kennedys. What do you think that's rooted in? Not all politicians draw that same kind of loyalty out of the people who work for them.

Frackleton: I don't know. I think I inherited it from my father to begin with. I don't know. They are so interesting and, of course, with the Senator, he is such a kind person. I've never called him "Ted" unless accidentally. It was always either "Mr. Kennedy" or "Senator Kennedy." There was always that formality there. But with Senator Robert Kennedy, I always had Joe and Bobby under my wing and so I dealt with him a lot and with Ethel.

Even as to hiring and firing staff—I've never fired, but hiring staff for them—interviewing and recommending and all that. The Kennedy women, I didn't have an awful lot to do with them. But with Mrs. John F. Kennedy, I called her "Jackie" all the time, but not to her face. Did you ever meet Jackie?

Knott: A couple times. A few times at the Kennedy Library.

Frackleton: One time Joan couldn't get up to Boston and Jackie was going to go to Three Charles River Square. So she asked me to go and be hostess for Jackie. Well, it was a riot. Being hostess for Jackie was sneaking cigarettes to her. She said, "I can't smoke in front of the boys." She was really regular, and when you saw her without the makeup and everything, she looked just as good without the makeup as she did with. She did her makeup very well. She was a lovely person.

Knott: I have to say, it was the one time in my life that I could recall being sort of speechless. I was introduced to her by Dan Fenn at the Kennedy Library and I could barely get out a "hello" or "nice to meet you" or something.

Frackleton: Really?

Knott: Yes, only because that was the first time I'd ever met her. She was such a big figure, such an impressive figure.

Frackleton: Well, she's really a regular person.

Knott: Yes, I kept hearing this.

Frackleton: But I had to laugh. That day, Bobby and the Senator and Jack Crimmins were there, Secret Service. When I pulled up in my car, Secret Service said, "Who are you?" and I said, "I'm Mary Frackleton. The Senator sent me."

"Oh yeah, well," and he was really holding me back and Jack Crimmins, the chauffeur, who has since passed on, says, "Hey, this is Mary from the office."

"Oh, Okay," and he let me in. But that day, that was when Bobby was there and the Senator. They were both Senators and she had to go in the kitchen behind the screen to have her cigarette. She said, "I don't want the boys to see me." It was cute.

Knott: Who did she mean by "the boys"?

Frackleton: Bobby and my Senator.

Knott: I'm sorry, yes.

Frackleton: It was cute, but I always remember, and I cannot remember if it was "Toughie" or something like that. I forget what his name was, but Jack Crimmins said, "Hey, knock it off." Jack Crimmins and I were great friends.

Knott: We've heard that he was quite a colorful character. Is that correct?

Frackleton: People may call him a character, but yes, he was, I guess.

Knott: Although he was very proper we've also heard.

Frackleton: Oh, yes, very proper.

Knott: Yes, it's unfortunate. He would have been great to have included in this project.

Frackleton: Oh would he ever. I know because the Senator said to Joe Frackleton one time, "Watch that guy. He's constantly calling your wife." I mean, every time he turned around, he'd call me to tell me where they were and what they were doing. This is just when I was home or elsewhere, but just so I could keep track. I used to get a lot of information that way [laughs]. I think Jack was closer to me than anyone. Maybe it's because of our Irish background.

Knott: When the various campaigns would roll around—'62, '64, '70, '76, '82, not to mention '80, of course, the Presidential campaign—would you be involved in these activities as well?

Frackleton: Yes. I left at the end of the '82 campaign. That's when I retired. Oh, yes, I was there.

Knott: I wonder if you could tell us about the 1980 Presidential campaign against Jimmy Carter.

Frackleton: We were down in New York. Of course, we were gung ho. We had a big Kennedy crowd there, a lot of the college kids because we had loads of interns in the office and I said, "Go." They went on their own, but if they could afford to be an intern for the summer they were poor. So we had a big crowd there and a lot of people went down on their own and that was the Kennedy cheering section. In the family box, Jimmy Carter's mother was sitting up there and some of the kids wanted to boo her. I said, "No, no, no, you can't do that." They all got a chance to sit in the family box a little later after the Carters left. We anticipated the outcome down there, but it was interesting.

Knott: Senator Kennedy gave quite a speech at the convention.

Frackleton: Oh, yes. We had a big organization there and most of the staff went down.

Knott: Were you at Faneuil Hall? I was at the announcement at Faneuil Hall. I was out in the crowd outside. It was a big event.

Frackleton: Yes, that was interesting. The Faneuil Hall event, I went down and got it all started. I got to be quite chummy with another Irishman who was running the place and I told him to expect some people from Washington. They'd tell him what they wanted.

Anyway, they came in and more or less brushed him aside. It was a new crowd and it was a [Paul] Tsongas crowd. In fact, Tsongas' sister, I forget what her name was—they were twins. Anyway, Barbara and I were not keen on that crowd. I don't know how they ever got in the act, but they did and our people were just brushed aside. With all the historical figures there on the stage, someone insisted they be covered in black so there would be no one outstanding on that stage but the Senator. Steve Smith walked in and blew his stack and laid them out in lavender. "Take those things off! What the 'H' do you think we're announcing here?"

Knott: They covered up John Adams.

Frackleton: Yes. So they took a back seat when Steve arrived and we felt justified. The event was jammed, mobbed, and people couldn't get in, and of course there were fire rules. So no more coming in. The fire inspector called my husband, who worked for the fire department, and told him that someone was causing a big ruckus out front. Some guy said he's important. I said, "Let me go look." I looked—Ambassador [John Kenneth] Galbraith. Ambassador to France.

Knott: Right.

Frackleton: And I said, "Don't you know who that is? Of course he can." I said, "Come on," and the inspector said, "Wait a minute, wait."

“The Senator will have your heads if you don’t,” I said. “He’s a very important person.” They didn’t know him. So I escorted him in. It was jammed, but it was quite a day. Then coming out, the whole area was mobbed with Kennedy people. Of course, we had some advance people working to get the crowd together and that was very nice.

Knott: Did you have expectations that he probably was going to be the next President, or how did you assess the situation as 1980 approached?

Frackleton: I thought he had a fighting chance. We were gung ho. It was kind of sad, but we were gung ho. We believed in him.

Knott: And Joan really pitched in during that election.

Frackleton: Oh, yes.

Knott: Because there were some questions as to how active she would be.

Frackleton: Oh, yes. Again, I used to get so angry. I felt very protective of the whole family and when some of these hot shots would be talking about her, I would get absolutely furious. They were just pushing her aside and she knew it and she was hurt. That wouldn’t help any situation that might come up. But poor Joan. Sally Fitzgerald. Are you doing Bob Fitzgerald?

Knott: We hope to, yes.

Frackleton: Well, Sally, his wife, was Joan’s escort all the time. She was great. Sally could always handle any problems that came up. Sally was in charge of the teas that Joan was running.

Knott: Did you stay in the Boston office throughout most of that campaign?

Frackleton: Yes.

Knott: Did you venture out?

Frackleton: No.

Knott: Did you go to New Hampshire?

Frackleton: I was mostly in the office. Again, it was by choice. I had my family I had to go home to every night. So I held down the home front on everything. I didn’t get to do a lot of traveling. I would like to have, but hey, first of all, I’m a mother.

So Sally and I were very good friends. There was a Louise Stapleton too. That was who President Johnson liked at Senator Kennedy’s hospital room. Jim Stapleton—

Knott: Yes, I remember the name.

Frackleton: Louise and Sally were very helpful to Joan. I could always depend on them no matter what was going on. Jack Crimmins was calling me every day, every night. I knew everything that was going on.

Knott: On a slightly different note, there was quite a battle over whether to locate the Kennedy Library in Harvard Square. Ultimately, of course, it ended up at Columbia Point in Dorchester, but it was a fairly high profile conflict between Senator Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy, and some residents of Cambridge, some Harvard faculty who were opposed. Any recollections of that?

Frackleton: Just that we all figured it was going to be over in the Cambridge area on the other side of the Charles. We were all rather disappointed that it wasn't and very surprised that it was going to be at Columbia Point. University of Massachusetts was there too. Yes, there was a lot of opposition to the library going there. We settled on Columbia Point. And as far as UMass is concerned, I'm not anyone to talk. I had three boys who graduated from there and another one from grad school there so my family is well represented. I think there was a letdown feeling for everybody that he didn't get the Cambridge site because that's what he wanted, the President.

Knott: I'm sure you were at the dedication ceremony in October of '79.

Frackleton: Oh, yes.

Knott: President Carter was there.

Frackleton: Oh, yes. Do you remember Joe Kennedy insulting him?

Knott: I do.

Frackleton: Oh, God, that was awful.

Knott: It was very uncomfortable.

Frackleton: I had my whole family working there and we really got involved. They loved the Kennedys as much as I do—brothers, brothers in-law, everybody. There was a lot of planning on that and it was a great thing. That was really a mob scene.

Knott: It was quite an operation.

Frackleton: And then right after that was the Tall Ships.

Knott: And right after that was when he announced for President, so it was quite a fall.

Frackleton: It was a busy time, yes.

Knott: Were there any particular events that stand out as memorable experiences for you—visits, perhaps, guests who might have come to the Boston area when the Senator would greet them?

Frackleton: There were so many. We were all impressed with the Carters and we were all furious with Joe. I don't know. Do you have anyone in mind?

Knott: No, I'm just thinking there would be occasions where foreign leaders, for instance, would visit Boston and quite often they'd come over to the Kennedy Library.

Frackleton: We didn't see much of that in the office.

Knott: How often would Senator Kennedy, on average, spend time in the Boston office? Or would it vary widely?

Frackleton: It would vary. When Senate wasn't in session, he'd spend a lot of time in Boston because those were the times that he did his excursions out to Worcester, Springfield, and around Boston. We got as many appointments as we could in the local area. Not that we had to. We'd have lists and lists of people. Barbara did the scheduling. He spent a goodly amount of time, except maybe if they were going skiing or out on his boat. He wouldn't be around just once a week, but sometimes he'd be there every day if they weren't in session. He really catered to the constituents.

Knott: He has a reputation for having a great staff.

Frackleton: Yes, I think so. In Boston, it was casework, which is people with their problems, and that's what we handled there—no legislation or any of that. When he'd go out campaigning, the constituents would always tell him what great work we had done for them. That used to please him. Washington is the legislative end and we had no part of that.

Knott: So it's constituent services in Boston. It's taking care of a fairly steady stream of problems that people are trying to get addressed.

Frackleton: Oh, yes. We *tried* to stress Federal matters, but for crying out loud, they'd come in—somebody charging them too much rent, get their daughter into local school in Boston. It was everything and we tried to help as much as we could. Senator [Edward III] Brooke was right down the hall. There was no one there. No one ever went in there.

Knott: Right. Senator Kennedy got all the business?

Frackleton: Oh, sure. People would see him coming and word would spread. He's very popular.

Knott: Did you know Senator Brooke or his people?

Frackleton: Yes, I was very friendly with them. We got along fine. That was something I stressed to the staff all the time: just because a person is a Republican doesn't mean they're not

good. You have to treat them just like the rest of us. I got along fine with all of them and I tried to make sure the staff did as well.

Knott: Do you know if Senator Kennedy had a good relationship with Senator Brooke?

Frackleton: Yes. If there was anything, it was below the surface. Everything looked good.

Knott: And with Senator Tsongas? Do you know if he had a good relationship with him?

Frackleton: Yes. We weren't that close. When I say we, I mean the Senator, but he got along with everybody. Do you have anyone particular in mind?

Knott: No. You had mentioned earlier that you weren't particularly fond of some of Tsongas' staffers.

Frackleton: Oh that's when the—that was the Presidential—

Knott: Just for that reason?

Frackleton: They were such big wheels, they thought, and they weren't our crowd. Barbara can tell you that. They just thought they could take over. Barbara and I were indignant, and frankly, it was not the time for [the Senator] to run. It wasn't the time and it's on account of them. That's why we didn't do better.

For instance, the advance man who put the covers on the historical people came from the Midwest. He didn't know his way around. He'd ask me, where was this? I tried to be helpful because I was doing it for the Senator, but I'm shaking my head thinking, where do they get these people? They were Tsongas people and they didn't know their way outside of Boston. Some of them didn't know how to get in to Boston. I think they were not a very good crew to try to run something for him. It was not the time. We had hoped, but we knew it wasn't the time. The antagonism was still out there.

Knott: You left in 1984?

Frackleton: Eighty-four, the end of the campaign, yes.

Knott: Why did you make that decision?

Frackleton: Because my husband had retired and I felt I should retire too. I really didn't want to, but Joe wanted to move to New Hampshire. We had a seasonal home for skiing.

Knott: In New Hampshire?

Frackleton: Yes, in North Conway that was. Then we moved up to Glen and that's where everybody came then, and everybody's there now, right near where we used to live. So we moved up there and our house—it's interesting, Barbara's father, Arthur, was a carpenter and he

built most of our house, he and my husband, but Arthur did most of it because he was the builder.

Knott: But it was sad for you to leave?

Frackleton: Yes, it was very hard. I loved my work and I didn't want to leave, but I didn't say that to Joe. I felt, hey, I'm a wife and mother too.

Knott: Was there a going away party for you?

Frackleton: Oh, yes. Pier 4 and it was funny. The Senator gave quite a speech and included my husband in his speech. Joe was anything but liberal. *[laughs]* He should have been a Republican. The Senator was imitating him and "this staunch liberal here," and Joe got a big kick out of it. He and the Senator got along great. But yes, it was Pier 4 and I forget what it was that they served. It might have been chicken, turkey, I don't know, but the Senator was indignant. "Why aren't they serving steak? This is the place for steak!"

I forget who was in charge of that. All the guys, Don and Charlie and everybody worked on it, but he wanted to know where his steak was. It was by invitation only. Judge Garrity might have been there, but I know Judge Dave Mazzone was. Dave—not only being the Senator's first judicial appointment but Dave was a personal friend of mine. We grew up in the same town. In fact, his back porch and my husband's back porch when they were kids lined up to each other. So I was so pleased for Dave. Dave had an inkling that he was being considered. He used to say, "Come on, Mary, tell me, tell me." I said, "He doesn't tell me."

Knott: He was being considered for—?

Frackleton: The Judgeship. That was the Senator's first appointment, Steve Breyer, and eventually a few more. But Dave would say, "Oh come on, tell me, tell me." So that morning I escorted him in to the Senator and the Senator says, "Yes, I'm nominating you," and he was so thrilled. He was, "And every time I mentioned it, she wouldn't tell me. She wouldn't tell me."

Knott: You mentioned judges again. I meant to ask you this earlier. Did you know Francis Morrissey?

Frackleton: Judge Morrissey was there when I went to work at 122 Bowdoin Street.

Knott: The Senator got into kind of a tangle over that in terms of his nomination to be a judge.

Frackleton: I remember that. The Ambassador [Joseph Kennedy] wanted it. Have you talked to anyone on that?

Knott: Not yet, no.

Frackleton: Whom are you going to talk to?

Knott: You're one of our earliest. So far we've talked to Eddie Martin, John Culver, whose eyesight is not great. He has macular degeneration so he has a very difficult time reading. But we interviewed John Kenneth Galbraith, who is 96. We interviewed Sam Beer, who is either 91 or 93. We've done five or six rounds of interviews with Senator Kennedy and many more to go. In the coming week we've got Barbara Souliotis and George Lodge, who ran against Kennedy in '62. Dun Gifford, whose wife is named Pebbles. A man named Charles Haar, who was a professor at Harvard and one of the first academics to come up.

We decided to start off with Kennedy's Massachusetts base, more or less, and so next month we'll be talking to Charlie Tretter, Don Dowd, Gene Dellea, Bob Healy from the *Boston Globe*, and Vicki Reggie's parents, who are summering at the Cape. So we're very much in the early phases here, but we have a list of names that is easily over 300 people now. It's unlikely we'll get to interview all of them, but hopefully half.

Frackleton: Is Judge Morrissey still alive?

Knott: I think he still is. Whether he will talk to us or not, we're not sure. We'll have to find out, but we will approach him.

Frackleton: I haven't seen Judge Morrissey for a long time, but he loved to talk. Okay, do you want to know what I—?

Knott: If you'd be willing, yes.

Frackleton: Well, poor Judge Morrissey. He's such a busy little bee. We were devastated that the Senator was trying to help with his nomination to be a federal judge. He was doing it for his father. When he thought he was going to be the big federal judge, he came into our office and started ordering people around. I'd tell the staff not to pay attention to him. But the poor guy, he just couldn't help it. He thought he was a big wheel.

Grace Burke, who handled our immigration coursework, was a carryover from the John F. Kennedy Senate staff—she was not fond of him. Grace is gone now but she felt that Judge Morrissey's chief assignment was to report back to the Ambassador everything that Senator John F. Kennedy was doing as well as what Senator Edward M. Kennedy was doing. We didn't trust him. He was pushy and often obnoxious. The Senator knew we couldn't stand him. He was not a favorite of anyone that I know.

Knott: I suppose it was a relief when the nomination died?

Frackleton: Yes.

Knott: Was there an aspect of your job that you particularly enjoyed and, perhaps, an aspect of your job that you did not particularly like?

Frackleton: I loved my job. I loved every part of it. If there was something I didn't like it was, perhaps, the expectations of the rest of the family. We had to cater to Judge Morrissey because of

the Ambassador. We never called him “Mr. Kennedy.” It was always “the Ambassador.” I finally said, “This is a Senate office and we cannot keep on doing this for the family.”

Knott: Did that change things?

Frackleton: It slowed down a little, but got right back again. And Ethel, we loved her, but she could be demanding. As an example, she and the children used to spend a lot of time on ski vacations up north, near where I lived. She called me on a Sunday night and said, “Oh, I’m in an awful state here. I lost my diamond bracelet. I think when I was putting the coins into the meter at the tollgate coming down 93, it dropped off my wrist.” I said, “OK, let me see what I can do.” I immediately called the tollgate officials, and told them of Ethel’s plight. They took the machines apart, and no bracelet. That bracelet turned up again. She found it. It was probably in her pocket.

Of all the Kennedy kids, Joe, he was my pet. I would do just about everything I could for him. He was the same age as one of my sons. Then young Bobby came on the scene with Lem [K. LeMoyné] Billings. Lem is a character, and we got along fine. I liked him. He liked me. Joe would ask me to type all his admissions and college papers, which I would bring home with me and do on nights and weekends. I said, “I don’t know why I’m doing this for you. I don’t do them for my own kids. They do their own typing,” and he’d say, “Oh, it’s because you love me.” I’d say, “That’s right, Joe, I do, but—” So when Lem and Bobby came on the scene, Lem expected me to do the same for Bobby that I had done for Joe—I said, “Lem, I can’t do it,” and, “Oh, you can do this.” He’d give me some of Bobby’s things to type, and I said, “Lem, you wrote this. It wasn’t Bobby.” He swore up and down it was Bobby’s work. Bobby was brilliant, really brilliant and Joe was ordinary, but they were both loveable kids without a father.

But David [Anthony Kennedy], I felt so sorry for him. The last time I was with him (it was shortly before he decided to leave this world) I argued with him, told him I wasn’t going to help him. Andrew, one of our caseworkers, came in and said, “Mary, I’ll take care of it.” Andrew was a Kennedy family friend. David was definitely not himself. I called Gertrude Ball at the Kennedy family office in New York and told her David needed money and she said, “The best thing to do is to give it to him.” So Andrew took him home that day, and I felt just terrible because I was very fond of him when he was himself.

I loved all those kids. Little Max [Maxwell Taylor Kennedy], he was the cutest thing. He thought he could just win me over with a big smile—and he usually could. Tickets for this and tickets for that. They were nice kids.

I was at a press party at the Cape. Those were great times, by invitation only. I remember one time in particular, going over to Squaw Island. The parties were held right in the compound. So I went over to pick up something there and a group of girls were standing in the driveway—Caroline [Bouvier] Kennedy and the other Kennedy girls and women—and they said, “Oh, here comes Mary. She doesn’t do anything for girls, it’s just for boys.” *[laughs]*

And when Caroline was going to school—she went to Harvard—she called and said, “Mary, would you like to do a term paper for me?” I said, “Caroline, sorry, I can’t,” and she said, “Oh!”

[*laughs*] The President's daughter and I'm saying no. I couldn't. I just got through with the boys and I just couldn't take on any more. So I don't know who did her typing then. But imagine saying no to Caroline Kennedy. She was a really nice kid, really.

But those press parties were great. Don and Charlie can tell you all about those. Did I answer your question?

Knott: Yes, you did. I asked you aspects of your job that you enjoyed—.

Frackleton: I loved it all. Except the family got to be a bit much. They took up too much of my evenings and weekends.

Knott: I'm sort of amazed that you were able to juggle everything, raising five children and a full-time job. How did you do it?

Frackleton: I don't know. I loved my job and I loved my family. I had each of the kids do a short term as an intern, just to put it on their résumé. So they knew what I was up against and they knew how difficult casework could be. There was nothing glamorous about it, but they got to do some of the driving for the Kennedys and that kind of thing so they were able to appreciate it more—try to help me more at home.

But I did get a kick out of Caroline and some of Bobby's kids. "Oh, Mary doesn't do anything for the girls, just the boys." I had so many boys of my own I was used to them. I had four boys and one girl.

Knott: You said you'd made some notes. I'm wondering if it's anything that I haven't touched on that we should be sure we record.

Frackleton: Yes, let's see if I forgot anything. Chet Atkins, I see his name here. He was chairman of the Democratic State Committee at the time. Extremely helpful to us and he was very close to Senate President Bulger, Bill Bulger. Somehow we just weren't involved with state people. We tried not to be, but Chet said I really should get to know Bill Bulger, which I did, and to this day we're good friends. So we got him involved with the Senator. The Senator wasn't very keen, but I arranged for them to meet and they got along great.

Knott: Bill Bulger and Senator Kennedy?

Frackleton: Yes, and then, of course, Gerry Doherty. Gerry, when I came on board, was the chairman of the Democratic State Committee. Let's see. Oh, yes, Mayor [Kevin] White.

Knott: What kind of a relationship was that?

Frackleton: Ann Lewis, Barney Frank's sister, worked for Mayor White and we were doing something with delegates. I can't quite remember what, but she got herself into a position where she—Well, Jim King was the boss at that time and somehow she maneuvered to get all of our contacts across the state. This was because White was going to run for Governor. Then he got

sick and he just didn't do it. Anyway, I hit the roof. She was going to give us all their contacts—like we needed contacts from the city! We didn't! But she was going to get ours across the state. I got hold of Paul [Kirk], and he came up to our next meeting and told Ann Lewis off! No way was she getting our lists. She was so pushy. I never trusted her. I liked her brother, Barney.

Just about that time, White was preparing for a run for Governor and looking for delegates. Barney Frank was under the impression that the Senator was backing him for delegate, and the Senator wasn't. He'd be helpful if he could, but not to the extent that Barney expected—and somehow I got blamed for it. I took the blame for a lot of things. That didn't bother me. But Barney called me and he told me that every chance he got, he was going to stick a knife in Senator Kennedy's back. I said, "You've got the wrong person here." He was blaming Senator Kennedy for everything that was going wrong for him. Evidently, Barney was promised Senator Kennedy's support and that he would be a delegate. I'm not quite sure who promised that, but in this instance he never had Senator Kennedy's support.

Is Garrett Byrne still alive?

Knott: I don't think so.

Frackleton: Because that's where the Senator worked.

Knott: That's where he started, yes.

Frackleton: Let's see, Morrissey. [*shuffling paper*] Oh, here's an idea of what a kindhearted person Senator Kennedy is. At our first headquarters down on Tremont Street—we had a couple of them on Tremont Street, various campaigns—there was a pigeon nesting outside the window making a mess. So some of the guys—it was probably Charlie and somebody else—were going to get rid of the pigeon, and Senator Kennedy says, "No, no, no, that pigeon, that's her nest. No way!" So we kept a dirty pigeon nest outside on the windowsill. He had a soft heart.

Knott: Yes.

Frackleton: Chris Lawford, we saw a lot of him. When Sydney Lawford got married, Peter Lawford, her father, came to the wedding and had high sneakers on under his tuxedo. I couldn't believe it. He had problems with his feet at that time, but it was so funny because he was so handsome and well dressed except for the sneakers.

Judge [Robert] Clark was a colorful guy down at the Chappaquiddick hearing. He was retired.

Ed Hanify was there. We went to visit West Roxbury High School, which was fairly new. That was around the busing time and I lived fairly near the school. Anyway, I had suggested to the Senator that we should try to go to the school because it was fairly new and perhaps there wouldn't be too much animosity there. I had arranged it with the school principal. He was new and he was pleased the Senator was coming, but he was nervous. He said, "You know the situation?" I said, "Yes, I know what the situation is." The Roxbury students—mostly black—

were bused to West Roxbury, and the West Roxbury students—mostly white—were bused to Roxbury.

I got down there early. The school principal and police cars were there—two of the students were just arrested breaking into a nursing home across the street and the principal said, “You’ve got to hold the Senator off. Don’t let him in here yet.” It was pathetic. When the Senator did come, he wasn’t very impressed. I didn’t tell him that until later, but when we were leaving the school he said some of those kids sitting in the classroom were obviously on dope. It wasn’t a very good stop.

Knott: Doesn’t sound like it.

Frackleton: It was sad. The Senator had a meeting at my house in West Roxbury once with the anti-busing people. These were the ones who were most offensive. The Senator came and he charmed them.

Knott: He did?

Frackleton: Yes, practically every time he talked with them he did. There was a meeting in Senator Kennedy’s office where we had a disruptive person named [James] Kelly. He’s still around. He was a loudmouth. I didn’t know who he was. This was the first busing meeting we had in the office. The Senator got a little upset with me. He said, “You weren’t supposed to let anybody in but the busing people.” I said, “Yes, but I don’t know him.” He was new on the scene. He was mouthing off, and barged his way in. It was rather hard to keep control of the group. I didn’t like him and he didn’t like me.

George Lodge. We were rather lucky when we started on the ’62 campaign. I had a file of all the JFK secretaries across the state and that’s what our base was built on. Ed King was very helpful in the western part of the state. Jim King was his son. They all flocked to Senator Kennedy. The President’s card file was great. It was a big help. That’s how we got our organization started.

In the casework in the office we had many Vietnam veterans. It was so pathetic, some of them coming in. The staff didn’t want to deal with some of them and I had to reason with them. Each one is some mother’s baby. They were fine once, just like you and me. They came in and they’d be demanding and hard to handle.

Oh, something interesting. Human touch. The Senator said one day, “I need a haircut.” He was coming to my home and I said, “I’ll get Joe the barber. My boys and big Joe go to him and I’ll have Joe come to the house.” So Joe was a little Italian, from Italy, but he had his shop in West Roxbury, and I asked him if he’d come to my house to cut somebody’s hair. I said, “I’m not going to tell you who, but he’s a very important person.” Eventually, it ended up with Joe thinking the very important person was one of my sons coming back from Alaska. When the Senator walked in the door, Joe just about dropped dead. He couldn’t believe it. His hands were shaking.

Knott: Must have been quite a haircut if his hands were shaking.

Frackleton: Well, it wasn't a bad haircut, but it wasn't the best that Joe ever gave either. Later on, the Senator invited him to his apartment on Beacon Street to cut his hair. But it was funny because later on that day I went to the airport with the Senator where he was meeting Jacqueline Kennedy. She came out and we were walking back to the car with her and she said, "Oh Ted, that's a lovely haircut, who is your stylist?" and that was Joe the barber.

Knott: Wow, that's quite a compliment. I hoped you passed that on to Joe.

Frackleton: Oh, I did, but then he wanted her autograph and he wanted an autographed picture of the Senator. The Senator said, "Give him a picture and I'll autograph it." He put it up in his shop. Joe went back to Italy, and he was famous. He did the Kennedys' hair, Joe the barber.

Dick Goodwin. Are you going to interview him or Doris [Kearns Goodwin]?

Knott: Probably. We visited Doris a few months ago just to consult with her and we'll probably go back and tape her recollections, and possibly Dick Goodwin's as well.

Frackleton: Dick did a lot of the speechwriting. However, I got the impression that there was a little bit of competition between him and Milty Gwirtzman. Their speeches would be submitted sometimes to Ted Sorensen to go over, and each one resented any changes. I could just look at a speech and know which part was written by which person.

Knott: Have you kept in touch with the office over the years?

Frackleton: Oh, absolutely. Barbara and I are the best of friends. I go back to reunions and things like that, but it's not always easy. When I was way up north, it was a long haul. And now, this is the nearest I've been to Boston. The reason I'm here is my children. Three of them are off Route 495, which is right down the road.

But no way would big Joe Frackleton go back to Massachusetts. He had this thing against Massachusetts—taxes. We pay more up here than we ever paid in Massachusetts. He likes New Hampshire, so this is the nearest I got. In fact, I am moving back to Andover. I bought a house down there. I'll be gone in three or four months—and it's right next door to my daughter.

Knott: Oh, great. Good for you.

Frackleton: Well, it's good for them because they won't have to keep coming back and forth here. I love it here. I'm in no hurry to leave. The people around here are so nice. In fact, next door to me, that way, is the chairman of the Republican Party here.

Knott: Does he know your history?

Frackleton: Oh, sure.

Knott: And he still talks to you?

Frackleton: Yes, and I still talk to him. We have open minds. *[laughs]* I'll introduce John to someone. I'll say, "He's a Republican with an open mind." Across the street, he's Republican and she's Democrat. I'm known as the Democrat and John is known as the Republican.

Knott: Do you still hear from the Senator on occasion?

Frackleton: Oh, yes. After I go down to a party or something, I usually get a note afterwards, "You've got to come more often." I get invited all the time, but it's a little hard. Especially since Joe was sick for so long. He had Alzheimer's. It wasn't that easy, but my kids are around all the time. In fact, Aaron's *[sp?]* father and mother and sister are still up north in the North Conway area. Actually, it's Bartlett.

When we first moved up to the North Country, I was at Town Hall. Republicans are predominant in New Hampshire. Gene Chandler, the chairman of the local Republican Party who was also the President of the New Hampshire State Senate, asked me to come work at Town Hall. He said, "We know your background and we know you're a Democrat." I said I'd do it as a volunteer. Gene insisted that I be on the payroll. So I worked in this Republican empire and was introduced as the—

Knott: The token Democrat.

Frackleton: That's exactly how I was introduced. But I had spent years dealing with people and helping solve their problems. So I spent a lot of time at Town Hall, and I volunteered at the local hospital helping people with their Medicare and health insurance.

Knott: Well, Mary, is there anything else you'd like to say to generations who aren't even around yet about Senator Kennedy or your experiences with him?

Frackleton: Well, he was a superb boss and excellent Senator. I like him very much. I like his family. I'll be forever grateful for having had the opportunity to work with the Kennedys. I am not what you would call a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat because I have an open mind.

Knott: You made that clear when you were talking to us about busing.

Frackleton: In this neighborhood, there are mostly Republicans. That's fine. They like me. I like them.

Knott: Great. I think that's probably going to do it.

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