EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH NANCE LYONS

March 9, 2008
Boston, Massachusetts

Interviewer

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TRANSCRIPT

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May 9, 2008

Heininger: This is an interview with Nance Lyons on May 9, 2008, in Boston, Massachusetts, at the JFK [John F. Kennedy] Library. Tell me how you met Edward Kennedy.

Lyons: I met him in Boston during the '62 Senatorial campaign when I was in college. My family was very supportive of Jack Kennedy. I think we started as kids handing out Congressional pamphlets for the President. The President's cousins lived on our street in Milton, so there was that connection too. We went to the Inauguration and Inaugural Ball for the President. So to get the opportunity to work for Senator Ted was a fabulous opportunity—who would have thought that would happen? Except that the way it happened, I think, was rather interesting, given the times.

I was looking for a job, and I went to an employment agency called Snelling & Snelling in Boston. This probably would have been in 1966. In those days, there was a line for women to go in and look for jobs and a line for men to go in. That's how absolutely segregated it was. I was shocked, because I hadn't run into any of that growing up, because our family was very egalitarian. We had six girls and three boys, but the girls and the boys did the same chores and had the same academic expectations. My father, I later learned, was unique in that way.

In any event I met with a lady at Snelling & Snelling who asked, "What do you want to do? What are you thinking of?" We talked about some things, and she was starting to talk about jobs that I considered to not be appropriate for a college graduate. I didn't understand, and I told her things like, "I don't know how to type." I kept saying, "I went to college." Anyway, after we talked for a while she said, "Well, I have a job available, but I'm not doing the interviewing. It's a political job." I said, "That's interesting because I'm interested in politics." She said, "It's in the Democratic Party," and I said, "Well, I'm a Kennedy Democrat." She said, "You probably would have to move," and I said, "That's fine." So she said, "Well, I will discuss your qualifications, and if they're interested, you'll receive a phone call."

I got a phone call from a gentleman named Norman Knight. Norman had worked for Joseph P. Kennedy at RKO [Radio-Keith-Orpheum] in New York. He, at that time, owned a series of radio stations, Knight Quality Stations. I received a call from Snelling & Snelling, telling me that Mr. Knight would interview me and that the job involved the Kennedys. Of course I was thrilled, so I met with Mr. Knight, and we talked for a long time. He said, "I think you would be terrific. Let me tell you what the job is." The job was to be Rose Kennedy's majordomo or factotum or gofer, and I said, "I'm sorry. I wouldn't be the least bit interested in that job." The same thing: "I went

to college. Doesn't she have somebody to help her? My mother does." I thought that would be the end of it. I said, "I'm terribly sorry, but no, I'm not interested."

I got a call from him later on, and he said, "Why don't you come back in?" I did and he offered me a job with his radio network. He had a radio station up near Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, so my mother and I drove up there to see the place, and it was a trailer, and the job was to sell radio advertising. I think it cost 20 cents for a 30-second ad or something. Anyway, that didn't appeal to me, which was a mistake because it was a very successful company and he was very good to women. He already had a female vice president in his system.

Anyway, he called again a couple of weeks later and said, "Look, I think there's something available for you in Washington with the Senator." I thought he meant Senator Bob [Kennedy], because of course the President had died. Senator Bob went in, I think, in '64. But it turned out that it was with Senator Ted, and I thought, *Oh, he's not going anywhere. Everybody says he's not as smart as the other two*, and all of that, but I said, "I can get down there, and then if things develop, maybe I'll get over with the next Kennedy President." [*laughs*] Anyway, I went down and that's how I got there.

Heininger: You obviously made quite an impression on him, if having rejected one job, he came back to you a second time, and after you rejected a job a second time, he came back to you a third time.

Lyons: When I finally accepted the job that was offered, I got a call from David Burke, and we had a phone conversation. David's voice was so impressive, and he sounded so brilliant, so I was quite excited. When I talked to Norman he said, "I have worked harder at getting you this job than I've worked on anything else in the last three years." I said, "Thank you very much. I appreciate it." I packed my car about two days later and drove to Washington. My sister said, "Where are you going to live? What are you going to do?" I said, "It will all work out," and it did. So I started with the Senator.

Heininger: What did he tell you you'd be doing?

Lyons: Mr. Burke described the situation, and he wasn't very specific. I got there and the job was described to me as, "You will work 'in case.'" I didn't know what that was, but anyway, they brought me in, they gave me a desk, and there were, I think, four women doing casework. Casework turned out to be dealing with constituents and federal agencies, to assist them in their need for support.

Heininger: Had Margaret [Stalcup] left at that point?

Lyons: The older woman? No. She was, I think, handling veterans issues. She was "a caution," as you might say in those days. She may have been the oldest member of the staff. I would assume she was. She was over here in her own little area. At the end of the office was Dick Drayne, the Senator's press secretary, and his secretary. Because I came from Massachusetts and most of the staff did not, I knew the cities and towns, I knew the mayors, and I knew who was who in the legislature to a certain extent. So I worked on requests from the cities and towns. If the city of Quincy wanted a HUD [Housing and Urban Development] grant, I would contact HUD and work with both to reach a result.

Heininger: So you got project work?

Lyons: Yes. Not right at the beginning. This was 1967. I started there in January of '67. In the beginning, I was responding to constituents' requests, but the way they did it, I thought, was ineffective. They had these slips that were called buck slips, and they all had the Senator's signature stamped at the bottom of the slip. It was a little memo pad, and it would say, "To: Congressional Liaison, Department of Agriculture. We received this letter. Please give it your attention and respond so that we may respond to the constituent." So I read the letters, and after doing that I said, "This is not particularly effective. The agencies would send back a letter saying, 'We'll look into this,' or something and we would send it to the constituent." So I started writing letters to whoever was in that particular area of the federal agency. I would look it up in the Federal Directory. If it was HUD and urban planning, I'd look around and find a Deputy in that area, and then I'd write a letter from the Senator. I felt that that was a better way to handle it. I never asked anybody. I just did it.

Heininger: Did anybody notice you were doing it?

Lyons: Well, in the beginning, of course, I had to have the letters approved. They went in for approval. I think they might have gone to Andy Vitali, who was the "political" Massachusetts liaison. I knew Andy because he and my sister had worked together in Massachusetts for the Democratic state committee when Gerry Doherty was the state chair and Maryellen [Lyons] worked for him. So I said to Andy, "I think this is a better way to handle if Mayor [James] McIntyre writes in from Quincy," and all of that. He said, "I don't see anything wrong with it either." So after a while, I gave myself a new title: project administrator.

Now, we were girls, and I couldn't understand that when a receptionist went to lunch, the girls took over reception. The men were not asked to do it. I didn't think that was something I wanted to do, so I didn't do it. We were on the cusp of the women's movement. My class in college, maybe only 30 percent got married in June, so it was a little different that many of my classmates wanted careers. My upbringing was one of equality in careers. My mother got married at 30 and had nine children, so I didn't want to do that, and there wasn't any birth control, so I didn't think marriage was a particularly good idea. Nobody ever asked me to sit at reception either. I just didn't do it. The office wasn't very hospitable, however, to women at that age being independent. I was surprised at the number of college graduate women who were there from the Seven Sisters, working as secretaries, and I thought that maybe they were at the bottom of the class or something. I was a snob. I didn't hang around with them. I didn't think they could be helpful.

So I did that and I handled all of the relationships, then, with the cities and towns and their elected officials, so when they came to Washington, there was somebody they could come see who knew who they were and who could either say, "The Senator will meet with you," or, "The Senator won't—" because I had asked, through Andy Vitali, whether the Senator would have time to see mayor this or mayor that. They appreciated it. I can remember when Mayor McIntyre came down. He said, "It's the first time I've ever come here when anybody has heard of me." I had known him, too, from Massachusetts, through Maryellen.

Heininger: What was the response when you gave yourself a new title?

Lyons: I don't think they knew that. Well, they would have known after a certain period of time, because there were still letters that had to be reviewed, but nobody mentioned it.

Heininger: New title, no increase in pay.

Lyons: Yes. There were—and I don't know if it was the same when you were there—titles that were approved by the Senate: administrative assistant, secretary, legislative assistant. Everybody else on the Senate payroll was listed as a clerk. There weren't official titles in the office. We had two legislative aides, I think, at that time, and we had David Burke as administrative assistant and Andy Vitali as assistant administrative assistant for Congressional relations, I think.

I then met the Senator. I had been there for probably 10 days. I was working and somebody was behind me and tapped me on the shoulder. Dave Burke was there, and I said, "Just a minute," because I was finishing something, and I was introduced to the Senator. He said, "Welcome. How do you like it?" It was some time before I saw him again. He had a very protective secretary, and you couldn't get into the office, not that I had any reason at that time to be in the office anyway.

Heininger: Was that Barbara [Souliotis], or was she doing the scheduling?

Lyons: No, Barbara was doing the scheduling. The Senator's secretary was Angelique Voutselas, who was there all through the time I was there. She had been there since '62, I believe, and as I said, she was very protective, even with male staff. She controlled who went in to see the Senator.

Heininger: She was a gatekeeper.

Lyons: Yes. There were back doors into the office too, so I learned pretty quickly how to get in without going through the gate.

I quickly became impressed with the Senator. I had not had high expectations, and I was amazed, number one, at how hardworking he was. The Kennedys had a reputation for that, and I still see it today. I don't know where he gets the energy to run the kind of day he does. Every night he took home a bag of memos from the whole staff. Every morning they were passed out. It had to have taken hours. Even when he was in Boston, the bag had to be on the plane by a certain time. If you needed him to do something over the weekend, it had to get in the bag, because of course there weren't faxes or anything.

Heininger: The bag still exists.

Lyons: Of course. There are only so many hours in the day, and he's out a lot, and I don't know where he got the energy. I would say it was six months before I was putting anything in the bag. If a Massachusetts event was coming up, such as Thanksgiving, and there was a Plymouth Rock celebration, I would talk to the mayor in Plymouth and ask, "Is there anything we can do to help celebrate the anniversary this year?" or whatever. Then I would drop the Senator a memo saying, "There's this opportunity to do this, that, and the other thing in Plymouth, and the mayor would love it," whatever. Then I would get an answer back. In the beginning, he sent all of mine back

through David or through Andy, and I think I had to send them that way too, as I looked at some of them from 1967. It would say "EMK via DB."

I was amazed at his recollection of what he had done the last time he was in Plymouth: I would write up a speech and he would say, "Don't say that. I talked about that before." I came to believe that he had a photographic memory, because later on when I would work on legislation, he'd say, "You'd better call Senator Alan Bible on that, because we had a discussion three years ago where he didn't want to handle it, and he said he wouldn't put it on the committee schedule. So let's see if he will advance this." Senator Bible's committee had Cape Cod National Seashore, Plymouth Rock, and other "park" legislation. It must have been the Committee on Interior or something like that. So I was amazed at the Senator's work ethic, and I was amazed at his recall.

He seemed a hell of a lot more concerned about Massachusetts than other people in the office. I think other people in the office were very Washington oriented. I think that many were hoping to advance to national politics, with the Senator or Senator Bob, whatever, everybody knew there would be another attempt at the Presidency and the restoration of Camelot. I think that was a motivating factor in terms of legislation. If there had to be national issues that were properly addressed, he would support Senator Bob. If Bobby couldn't go on as a cosponsor, maybe Teddy would go on, that kind of thing. That was interesting.

I loved Senator Bob, Bobby. He was very personable with staff, and he would chat. I don't think Senator Ted Kennedy has ever asked anybody in the office, "How are you?" I don't think he's ever asked anybody that. He's not as comfortable one on one as he is in a crowd or when he's addressing a crowd or when he's the center of attention at a gathering, that kind of thing. But one on one, I don't think he was as comfortable. He had friends from college and friends from his life, some of whom I would wonder why they were friends, but then again, it was interesting.

In that regard, in those days they had something called a Watts line. That was free long distance. We didn't have one in our office, but Bobby had one in his office, so I used to go over there to call home. He would see me there and he would say, "Oh, there you are from Ted's office again. Say hello to your mother." If he wanted to use the phone, he'd pick up and he'd say, "Nance, may I use my phone?" And he'd say, "Mrs. Lyons, how are you?" He was so nice. If you went in to his office, sometimes he'd be sitting on the receptionist's desk, talking to the receptionist and he'd ask, "What did you do over the weekend?" that kind of thing. It was very interesting to me that he was that way, compared to Senator Ted.

I grew, of course, to have a great deal of respect for my boss, and I was thrilled to be there. I started to work on the legislation that affected Massachusetts, such as trying to get the appropriations for the National Seashore or for the Lexington Concord National Park and other local projects. I would help plan his trips to Massachusetts. I might give him a briefing on what the issue was, for example, in Leominster, if anything. It was terrific for me. I would go with him to Massachusetts on the trip. We had loose-leaf books with information on every city and town in Massachusetts. There would be a cover sheet on each one with the elected officials, Kennedy "friends," etc. Then pages on local issues. He would take the profile with him.

I was totally ignored by the male staff. I don't think they had a clue what I was doing, or cared. The women knew I was different. Somebody did ask me to take reception one day, I think it was

an intern, and I said, "I don't do that." I assumed that I was a professional, so that's how I worked.

Heininger: Do you think that was different from how other women viewed themselves in the office?

Lyons: Definitely.

Heininger: How do you explain the difference?

Lyons: I had, as I said, an upbringing where I was the equal of my brothers. Our goals were the same. There was never a question, and I was surprised when I got to college that there were fathers who didn't know whether it was worth sending their daughters to college. I would say to them, "My mother always said, 'Educate a man, you educate an individual; educate a woman, you educate a family.'" I just had that perception of myself. I couldn't see why anybody would want to waste my talents, such as they were.

Heininger: So you got in there and you very quickly started carving out a role for yourself that was different from what the other women were able to do.

Lyons: Or were interested, perhaps, in doing.

Heininger: It sounds like there were some who might have been interested too but who didn't do the same.

Lyons: I didn't know for a long time that persons like Anne Strauss and Barbara LaHage were college graduates. I think they're Mount Holyoke. I don't even know if I knew that while I was there. I knew they were college graduates, but I didn't know that they had gone to the Ivies.

Heininger: They had very fine educations.

Lyons: Yes, and I saw them last summer. It was interesting. Frankly, that's when this oral history thing came up, because I ran into these men who were being interviewed, and Anne Strauss was in town visiting Barbara, and I was called to see if I wanted to have dinner with them. We went out to dinner and I asked, "Have you been called about the oral history?" Because of course they were there forever, from the beginning, right through the '80s. They knew the progression of the Senator developing his skills and all of that. they had not been called. I was furious. I was surprised and I said, "I'm going to call the Miller Center because I don't like this. All I see are the guys who have been interviewed." So I did and really demanded that more women be interviewed and that's why I'm here, and that's why I'm happy that they have been contacted too. It was clear to me that the men recommending interviewees still didn't think women were important. I mean David Burke, etc. I had given some other names, so we'll see.

So I saw myself that way. I might have even gotten to the point where I was signing things "administrative aide," as opposed to "assistant." Working on the legislation was another thing that women didn't do. When you did that, you would go to committee meetings. You'll see on television that staff members sit behind the Senators, and when I would go into the committee

room and try to do that, I would be asked, "Who are you? You can't go up there." I would say, "I'm from the Senator's staff, and I'm the staff person on this bill." "You are?" Don't misunderstand, there were women from other offices, not many, who were in that position, but it was still a surprise to the Senate officers.

I can remember the first time I went on the floor. Fred Harris, who was the Senator from Oklahoma—I think I had met him somewhere—he stuck his foot out and tripped me. I think he thought it was humorous. I didn't fall or anything, but women in the cloakroom were not customary, so it was very embarrassing for me. Then even coming out of the cloakroom to try to go on the floor, somebody would say, "Whose secretary are you?" kind of thing, before I could get anywhere. So that was interesting. Let's put it this way: in '67, or certainly in '68, the Equal Rights Amendment was around.

Heininger: Had it come out at that point?

Lyons: Oh, no, it hadn't come out of the Senate.

Heininger: Was the idea around that early?

Lyons: Oh, sure. I have my memos on it. I brought them because the—

Heininger: It wasn't until the '70s that it actually was proposed, though.

Lyons: No. It had been co-sponsored for years, and at the time I first wrote anything on it to the Senator, there were 82 co-sponsors, and he wasn't one of them. He was one of the last co-sponsors of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Heininger: Interesting.

Lyons: I think it ended up that there were 98 and he still wasn't a co-sponsor. Was there a House member named Emanuel Celler?

Heininger: Emanuel Celler.

Lyons: Yes, was he a Rep? I think they were the last. Anyway, the first time I talked to him about it, he said, "If that passes, wouldn't women have to go into the military?" I said, "I hadn't thought it through that far. I don't know, but I suppose if they wanted to they could," and he said, "Well, they'd be in the same foxholes, and they would use the same bathrooms." I said, "Do you and your sisters use different bathrooms at home? I mean, what does that have to do with anything?" That was the full discussion that we had.

I was going through my records before this interview, and this is funny. The first thing I found was a statement I wrote on December 22, 1969, commemorating Susan B. Anthony and talking about her working for 50 years for equal rights for women. The Senator was not a cosponsor, and I wrote this, and I frankly don't know if he gave it or if it was for immediate release. December 22, 1969. So it could have been a press release, or he could have read it into the record.

Heininger: Do you remember whether you were tasked to write that?

Lyons: I don't know, but then, December 29th, I wrote him a memo on cosponsorship. I think you'll find it interesting. It shows the reactions and the positions of the men and the women. [gave a copy of memo]

Heininger: [reading from memo] You don't mince any words in here, do you?

Lyons: Well, I was never very good at that. I looked at some of the stuff I dealt with him on, and what I was suggesting he do.

Heininger: [reading from memo] "The male advisors maintain that it would be gutsy to stay off the amendment." There were actually people in the office arguing to stay off it?

Lyons: Totally. You see the bottom line? David Burke was a total misogynist. He had little or no respect for women. Later in life, after I was no longer on the staff in the Senate, he had a baby daughter after two boys. I ran into him in New York. I said, "David, I think that perhaps now you would support the Equal Rights Amendment," and he said, "Damn right!" [*laughter*]

I don't think there was any response to this memo. So the next year I wrote EMK another one. [giving memo]

Heininger: Can we keep this?

Lyons: Sure. I made copies because I think this was so interesting for the time, and his lateness on this issue. Isn't it interesting who opposed it: the labor unions, Esther Peterson.

Heininger: Jim Flug opposed it?

Lyons: Oh, yes. His position was, you don't tamper with the Constitution for something this frivolous.

Heininger: Which is interesting, because he has a very—

Lyons: Accomplished daughter.

Heininger: And a very outspoken wife too. Read me this comment: "After I vote for it in the Senate Committee—"

Lyons: Yes. I think it says, "Get a statement out." Oh, maybe "you and Jim," meaning Flug.

Heininger: "Work out a statement."

Lyons: And something. I think that's cloture, or as I say, I can't read, and I don't know if he—

Heininger: "Unless" something, something.

Lyons: Can you see "unless?" Okay.

Heininger: I can see "unless," but that's probably not "unless."

Lyons: "After I vote for it in the Senate Committee, let's do a statement. You and Jim work out, or maybe, do a release." Note EMK's involvement of Jim.

Heininger: That could easily be "release."

Lyons: And whatever.

Heininger: "Convince me."

Lyons: Right. Is that dated?

Heininger: July 21, 1970. This previous one was six months earlier: December 29, 1969.

Lyons: Then this one, I didn't date it, but I think it was after this, and this was perhaps outlining things that he maybe should have talked about in committee.

Heininger: Who was CM? It says up here, "CM, make sure I get this Tuesday, before Judiciary. Jim Flug, see me."

Lyons: It might have been an aide on the Judiciary. CM, that's not—

Heininger: Did anybody besides Jim handle Judiciary?

Lyons: I don't know. CM. It isn't a secretary, because Angelique—I don't know. "Make sure I get this."

Heininger: The initials aren't ringing a bell for me.

Lyons: Right. But see, again, it's, "Flug, see me," not Nance.

Heininger: But this may be, "Flug, see me. I'm changing my position."

Lyons: Hopefully. It certainly came back to me, so I don't know why. Are we in 1970 yet?

Heininger: Yes, this is in '70.

Lyons: Okay.

Heininger: So he basically had the men on the staff arguing against it, and you, the lone voice, arguing for it, very carefully laying out the arguments for and against, laying out changes in positions by other people. You're quite fair on this. You get 10 to 20 letters a week from Massachusetts in support of the amendment. Most are from organizations rather than from individuals. Seventy-eight cosponsors already. Who on Judiciary is not? You and Sam Ervin. Then you get Labor reversing position, Citizens Advisory Committee on the Status of Women reversing position. I mean, you're doing exactly what a staffer is supposed to do, and then you make your case at the end. And he did change his position.

Lyons: I don't know when he signed on. I have no recollection. I went online to see if I could find anything about when he in fact cosponsored.

Heininger: This timeframe strikes me as about right, because from about early ’70s forward, he becomes the lead sponsor.

Lyons: Well, good for him. I had left.

Heininger: He has been the lead sponsor ever since. He introduces it every year.

Lyons: Yes. Well, if only he’d work a little harder on it, it might have passed Congress much earlier. And I don’t recall him leading the charge for abortion. This was probably about my last month in the office. I think I left in the summer of ’70.

Heininger: Let’s go back to the beginning. You come in and you’re hired to do casework, and you begin to shift into working on Massachusetts project work, which is, as far as I can tell, viewed by others as a step above doing casework.

Lyons: I learned subsequently that it was looked at that way by the women in the office.

Heininger: And you didn’t see it that way? You saw it as the logical extension?

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: You assign yourself a new title.

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: How did the other women react to this?

Lyons: I don’t think I thought it was of any moment. For some reason I had the sense that I was hired to advance the interests of Massachusetts on grants and projects. The Cape Cod National Seashore had not yet been funded. There was not one dime. It had passed, I think, in ’63, after the President died, but it was another one of those, “It’s passed but we’re not funding it.” He and I worked on that, I think, for three years. We had a great trip up with Senator Alan Bible, because, again, it was his committee—and with Hastings Keith, who was a Republican from Plymouth. We had a big clambake at WPLM, because we were also, I think, maybe working on having Plymouth Rock declared a national historic site, which it was not. I don’t know if it ever became one. But the Seashore was funded.

Heininger: I think it is.

Lyons: I have no idea, but I’ll tell you, it was a long time after I worked on it.

So we had a big clambake, and then we helicoptered down to the seashore. Senator Bible was from Nevada, where he talked about how they drove 120 miles an hour because there’s nothing out there. See, I don’t have a good memory for where people are from. But he was charming and he was charmed. His staff and I worked on it, and we got an appropriation for it. I don’t recall if it was ’68 or ’69. It could have even been ’70. Those are the kinds of things I would do. I would work on appropriations for special Massachusetts projects, and then that morphed into doing more. I would do speechwriting for those, and I would do the hearing preparation and that kind

of stuff. Now, they were minor issues. I mean, this was not rocket science or the most important thing he was doing, but I loved it, so I continued to do that.

Then Senator Bob decided to run for President, and one of the first people the Senator called was my sister Maryellen, to come down to Washington. Then he sent Dun Gifford and me, David Burke and Andy Vitali to work on Bobby's campaign. I was, of course, nonplussed that somehow or other I got picked for that.

Heininger: Why do you think you were? Do you think you got picked by Kennedy, or were you asked for by Bobby?

Lyons: Oh, I wouldn't have been asked for. Bobby didn't know me that well. He just knew me as the girl from Boston. It was the Senator's staff. See, they were going to immediately get the JFK people in to tell us about the '63 campaign. So the Senator had only his Senate staff. It was interesting, though, what happened with that.

Is Barbara Souliotis going to talk to you?

Heininger: She's on the list. I mean, the list is this big.

Lyons: Well, she's been there since day one, and she was probably 18 in '62. She was doing scheduling, and she was a huge sports fan, and women weren't sports fans. She knew all of the averages of the Red Sox and that kind of stuff. She was interesting.

Anyhow, I was thrilled. Now I might have been chosen because of Massachusetts, although I don't know why. We in Massachusetts, through Gerry Doherty, staffed the early campaign. We staffed Indiana and the Dakotas, Missouri and Nebraska. Finally I think Bobby got some of his New York people out to Nebraska. First of all, we didn't announce until March. [Eugene] McCarthy had won the New Hampshire primary in February, Bob announced in March, and the President resigned—

Heininger: March 31st.

Lyons: Wow, that was quick. We had the 40th anniversary celebration of the campaign here at the library two or three weeks ago. The worst part is they called me and asked if I had the lists of the people who worked from Mass. I said to myself, "Why would I have those? Gerry has to have them," and all of that. Why didn't the Kennedys have the list? I was shocked. Well, I found them last night. I am so distressed because there were so many people who weren't remembered and invited to this. I have them, so I figure I ought to give them to somebody so they'll be around. I guess the staff, you were saying, loses everything.

Heininger: Well, it's 45 years worth of documents. It's huge.

Lyons: Oh, my God, yes. That isn't even like the Presidents. They weren't around that long.

Heininger: It's three years for the President.

Lyons: But I mean, I don't think anybody has served 45 years.

Heininger: No.

Lyons: I'll have to have David McCullough do it. I love his work, although I don't know how Doris Kearns Goodwin would feel about my saying that.

Anyway, so I went on that campaign, and then I came back. When that campaign was over, the Senator loaned me to the Hubert Humphrey campaign. EMK was awful after the assassination, awful, but Hubert Humphrey had called. EMK wanted to be able to demonstrate that he supported his candidacy. Larry O'Brien became the chair of the Democratic National Committee. He had met me in Indiana. So I went to the Humphrey campaign to run his boiler room. I did that until November, obviously, and we didn't win that either. I'll never get over the fact that Richard Nixon became President of the United States. When he got reelected, I went to Europe. I couldn't stand it. And I can't believe this guy (Bush) got elected twice either. I mean, it boggles the mind.

Heininger: Did any of the other women in the office go either to Bobby's campaign or to Humphrey's campaign?

Lyons: Not into the boiler room. Anne Strauss went as Dave Burke's secretary. Loretta Cubberly was Dun Gifford's secretary, and her husband got involved, but not independently. I was the only person from the Senator's staff in the boiler room. My sister, Maryellen, was called, and she came down, so it was Maryellen and I from Massachusetts. Then the rest were from Senator Bob's office, and the dichotomy was interesting.

Heininger: Were these all women?

Lyons: Yes. For some reason, which sounds bizarre, Senator Ted's people thought that the boiler room was more important—it must have been Dave Burke—than Joe Dolan did, who was Bobby's chief of staff. Esther Newberg was on Senator Bob's staff, and Joe Dolan thought she would come over and run the boiler room with secretaries, persons who were not on her level. She came over thinking she was going to run the boiler room, and then she ran into me and Maryellen, which was fine. The three of us worked well together, although I wasn't there that long because Indiana was one of my states. I was immediately out of there, off to Indiana, then Missouri and Ohio.

The first meeting on the Presidential campaign of the people going to the boiler room was down in a hotel at the end of the street, the end of Capitol Hill. A woman whose name escapes me, delightful woman, had the meeting with David Hackett, who was a friend of Senator Bob's from high school. I don't know if you know the book, *A Separate Peace*, by John Knowles, about prep school. Well, he's Phineas.

Heininger: Really?

Lyons: Yes, and one of the more fascinating men you will ever meet. Anyway, he was running the boiler room, and Dun Gifford was his assistant. We were in a locked room, and our job was delegate development and counting. We had all of JFK's delegates around the country, and they divided the states among the women. The other women from Bobby's rose to the occasion somewhat. Well, that's irrelevant. Gerry Doherty was assigned Indiana, so I ended up in Indiana,

and then I had Missouri and Ohio. My sister was living at my house. I had just returned to Washington, I think, three days before the assassination, so then it was over. There were stories about the Senator's funeral. I don't know whether I want to put it on tape or not.

Heininger: You can always take it out later if you want to put restrictions on it. It's better to say it and then take it out later.

Lyons: Okay. So Senator Bob died, and the funeral was going to be in New York, and that meant that New York was running who went where and with whom and on what. At that point, however, Massachusetts, through Gerry Doherty, had done most of the actual work, and the people he recruited were from Massachusetts. They went all over the country, including to California, Oregon, Nebraska, the Dakotas. Gerry got in touch with me and Maryellen. We went over to his hotel and he said—he was laughing—"They've sent me 50 tickets for the Mass people and only 10 for the train. I need more." They had everything over at Steve Smith's office. That's where the thing was being run. Again, it was all the guys: Joe Dolan and Dun Gifford and, I think, Jim Flug. Then there were girls scurrying around, making lists and that kind of stuff. There was a girl named [Pauline] Fluit—I think that was her name—who ran that office.

Mel and I wandered into the room, and we were looking around. They had boxes of color-coded invitations, and they dealt with where you sat in the church and whether you were on the train. I don't know if it designated what part of the train. I think it might have had just two color cards, and the best cards would be—it's so morose, but I guess it's like an Irish wake—closer up to the family. So we stole tickets. It was hysterical. We stole tickets for everything. They put, I think, two or three additional cars on the train, and nobody could figure out why.

Don't misunderstand. I'm sure friends were taking care of friends as well, but we probably picked up 100 or so for the Mass, up fronts and personals, and in the back and all that. Everybody from Massachusetts knew to go to Gerry's suite for their tickets, and people who knew us from the states too, such as people I worked with. Tommy Eagleton, from Missouri, called. I don't know how he found me, but he did. Please, they can find anybody they want. He had some Missouri people who were coming. We've never told that story. Nobody knows that story.

Heininger: It's a great story.

Lyons: It is a great story, but by the time it comes out, Gerard's 83 or 84. No, he just turned 80. What was good about it was that it was like an Irish wake. It took the focus, for us, off of the tragedy and onto, "Hey, who do you guys think you are?" kind of thing, because the New Yorkers and the Boston people didn't get along too well, the advance men and all in the various states. The Massachusetts people were more subtle, and the New Yorkers were more aggressive, very—

Heininger: Stereotypical.

Lyons: Stereotypes are there for a reason. Of course not all of the Massachusetts people were calm, cool, and collected either.

In the beginning of the campaign, David Burke and others did not want Gerry involved. He ran Teddy's first campaign. The President chose him, and the way the President chose Gerard was the President had several Massachusetts politicians down to say, "My brother Ted's going to run, and Eddie McCormack's running, and I want my brother to win. What do you guys think about the campaign?" Everybody was there. This is the story I heard. Obviously I wasn't there. But Gerard had taken all of the voting records precinct by precinct and ward by ward and all of that, and he had the whole thing laid out in terms of, "We have to focus here because this is where our voters are in this town," and so on. So the President said, "You're the guy." So Gerard ran Teddy's '62 campaign. I don't know if you've met Gerard. He looks like an unmade bed. The guys in Washington didn't seem to think he was that important. But he won Indiana for Bobby.

In Bob's campaign, the first thing was where are we going to go? The next primary was Indiana, and the primary, I think, was probably five weeks away. They had to get so many signatures to get on the ballot. Everybody in Washington said, "We can't do it," and Gerard said, "Yeah, mm hmm." He had already looked up the Indiana voting profile and all of that, and he said, "I think I can do it." He had to get the signatures, statewide, over that weekend, or within five days, something like that. Anyway, he did it, and that was wonderful, and he did it with Massachusetts people.

Gerard ran Indiana, and Senator Ted was responsible for Indiana, and there were people from New York who didn't think he knew what he was doing either. He had an office and headquarters in the campaign building. The Senator's name was on the door, tagged up, and the Senator wasn't always there. He would be in another state or somewhere else. Dick Goodwin, if he were in town, would take the Senator's name off the door and put his own on the door. I had no idea who he was. I used to take his sign down anyway. Then Larry O'Brien came out to Indiana, and Larry thought he would take over from Gerard. He didn't. But that's where I met Larry. Meeting these people was amazing, because Ted Sorensen and Ken O'Donnell were in headquarters in D.C.

After the Humphrey campaign, I quit. I mean, what was I going to do? Oh, and Nixon had been elected, and I didn't see any future for me in government, because he was going to be there for four years, and what the hell would we be doing except losing on every issue? So I left. It was probably just before the holidays. It had to be, because there are memos there from December of '68. So I was going to go to Europe.

Heininger: But that's a year later.

Lyons: Well, no, one of them is '69. See, December.

Heininger: But the election was over in '68.

Lyons: Well, I left after the election in '68 and came back in January '69. I left the office, and I was in Boston, preparing to go to Europe. I was shopping in Filene's Basement, and over the loudspeaker came, "If Nance Lyons is still shopping in the store, will she please—" So I thought, *Did I lose my pocketbook or something?* I think it was the Senator's office on the line, because I said, "How did you know where I was?" "Oh, your mother told us. Could you meet with the Senator tonight around 6:30?" I said okay. So I went over to meet with him and he asked if I

would please work on a series of dinners, raising the money for Bobby's deficit. Bobby Fitzgerald, his cousin, with whom I grew up, was going to be the lead person. The first dinner was in Boston, and the next was in Washington and then in California. Well, at that time in the Senator's life, was I going to say no? I did do a little bargaining. I said, "I'll come back if I can have a legislative assistant job, because I'm doing the work anyway." He said fine, and that's how I became a legislative assistant. I did that until June of 1970.

Heininger: The dinners?

Lyons: No, they were over in April of '69. The fun part was in California, because I worked out of Lou Wasserman's office at Universal Studios—another dumb move in my life. He offered me a job, and I couldn't imagine the value of working in Hollywood. You know, we were put on this earth to help people, as my parents repeatedly told us. I have eight brothers and sisters who are all do-gooders. Anyway, I came back and went back to the office and was working as a legislative assistant.

Heininger: And what did that mean at the time?

Lyons: It meant that you wrote the legislation on the national issues and did the committee work and did the hearings.

Heininger: For what area?

Lyons: I had Social Security, Health and Human Services.

Heininger: The Labor Committee then.

Lyons: No, Health and Human Services Agency.

Heininger: HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare].

Lyons: Yes, if it was that then. At that time—oh, I found a memo that's fascinating—there was a bill in to increase the Social Security payment by 15 percent. That would have brought the monthly payment to $64 a month, $74 for people over 70 or something like that. The Senator had sponsored an amendment to make the minimum Social Security payment $100. It passed. Can you imagine!

The two big things I worked on were—we thought that Nixon was going to end the war—and the Senator believed, "We have this defense industrial complex that is making all these bombs and war materials, and we have to do something because we're going to lose all those jobs. We have to do something to convert those industries into industries that build other kinds of things."

Heininger: Consumer products.

Lyons: It was called "economic conversion," and I was assigned that bill, and it was fascinating. There was also a national transportation trust fund that I worked on. And there was another one to create the National Science Foundation, I think—the economic conversion thing became so big that I don't think I worked on any other issues until I left. This would have been 1970.

Heininger: Did Ellis Mottur come when you were there?

Lyons: Yes. It got introduced August 14, as I saw in my notes, and I left probably in the middle of July. He came in, yes, and he was working on it with me because I was leaving.

Heininger: Did he, in essence, replace you?

Lyons: Three people replaced me.

Heininger: Who else besides Ellis Mottur?

Lyons: Bob Bates, whom I loved. Some came during the campaign, because I remember that when I came back, Carey Parker was new and was at my desk and I was a little aggravated. Of course when I found out who Carey Parker was, he certainly wasn't replacing me. He had been a clerk to one of the Justices, and he had become chief legislative assistant.

Heininger: And Dun Gifford was gone by this point.

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: Jim Flug was still there.

Lyons: Yes, but I don't think he was in the office. Jim left and went into other public service: defense funds and legal services. He was committed to social reform. I saw him recently because he's up here now. I think it was at Deval Patrick's victory party, and we ended up sitting next to each other, and of course we were going to get together, and we haven't—and his wife and daughter, of whom he's quite proud.

Heininger: He's had the baby by now, I assume.

Lyons: I don't know about that. She got married?

Heininger: Yes. When I interviewed him in December, she was pregnant and due to deliver shortly.

Lyons: Oh, how nice. What I loved about doing the big legislation was you could call anybody in the world. If you were doing research and you read that Professor Smith at Berkeley had been working on this, you would call up and say, "I'm from Senator Kennedy's office," and they would share all their knowledge with you. "How can I help?" They couldn't do enough to help to educate me. It was incredible, as far as I was concerned. Most of my material from that period is about that bill and a national transportation trust fund. They had an omnibus social-welfare bill, but I didn't offer much on that.

Heininger: Were you the first woman to have professional responsibilities like this?

Lyons: As far as I know, yes.

Heininger: What was the response in the office to it?

Lyons: I don't know. When I talked to Barbara and Anne this summer, they said, "You were different." They didn't say they envied me or they resented me or anything like that, and I didn't explore it. It didn't enter my mind what other people thought, because I still wasn't equal—all of the male legislative assistants had secretaries. I not only had to write everything, I had to type it, and then I had to go mimeograph it. I would be there until midnight, because once something got approved by the Senator or whatever—a speech or a hearing—I then had to stay there and type it all up and run the mimeograph machine to have enough copies. It was horrific.

Heininger: Did you have the title?

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: Did you have the money?

Lyons: No.

Heininger: Did you have more money than you had had before?

Lyons: I think I got a raise when I returned. The men made substantially more than I did, I am sure. I think I might have started at $6,500 a year, and when I left I was making $9,500 because the job I got in New York paid twice that much. But I had a car, I had an apartment, and I shared a townhouse. When you're young, you think you're rich.

Heininger: You had no secretary.

Lyons: No, and no real appreciation. I don't think anybody understood the significance of the economic conversion bill.

Then Ellis came. Ellis might have started first on the National Science Foundation issue. Anne told me this summer that he got her the position as a legislative aide, and I thought that was terrific. But again, neither the Senator nor any of the other men did anything to recognize her talents. She, I guess, wasn't aggressive enough to change that. I was surprised. I didn't know Ellis stayed that long either. When I left, I left, so I didn't follow things too much after that.

Heininger: Why did you leave?

Lyons: I had stayed after Chappaquiddick, because one didn't want to jump off a sinking boat, or look like that. I wasn't as comfortable as I had been previously. There was a lot of tension in the office, I felt the staff thought I was responsible—Camelot was gone. Leaving probably wasn't a wise decision. I thought it was, so I stepped along.

Heininger: What was Kennedy's response when you left?

Lyons: Oh, unremarkable. They had a party for me, and I'm sure he must have come, but I don't know that his reaction was any different than it would have been for anyone else who left.

Heininger: Did you see other people coming and going through the years?

Lyons: Not that many people left.

Heininger: Dun Gifford left.

Lyons: Yes, after the campaign, but he was still there in '69, because he zipped right into Martha's Vineyard. I remember so well, because we were both looking for a job at the same time, that he went to Cabot & Cabot and I was offered a job to be the receptionist at Northeast Airlines. Of course Boston was Neanderthal. New York was where it was at for equality, so there was the difference, you see. Dun was a Harvard graduate, and he had done remarkable things. He was a lawyer. I was not a lawyer. He certainly was more qualified than I, but the disparity between our positions was more emblematic of the times than of the qualifications.

Heininger: When did you decide to go to law school?

Lyons: Several years later. I worked in New York until 1973 and went to Europe for a year. When I came back, I wanted to work for myself. I didn't want my life to be dependent on other people's success or lack thereof. Maryellen had gone to law school. She was in law school when Bobby announced, and she resumed after the campaign and she became a lawyer. I don't know, it looked good to me—again, not the best decision I ever made.

When I was in New York, I worked for a company called Daniel Yankelovich, which was a survey-research, marketing-research firm. They were doing something new that wasn't consumer or commercial. They were investigating "corporate responsibility." That was a '70s concept corporations should become more involved in their communities. So they were doing a survey and conducting research to put together the views of the executives of the top corporations in America. I was hired to do some of the interviews and I was helpful because of my contacts. After we completed the interviewing process, I was frozen out. All of a sudden there was nothing for me to do, and it became "Read these newspapers." I learned that the firm was a user firm. They would bring you in, use you for what they needed you for, and then you were gone.

Then John Lindsay became a Democrat, so I got a job working for the city of New York, as Assistant Commissioner for Drug-Free Rehabilitation, in Manhattan. Then I decided that I had worked long enough. I was going to go to law school, but before I went to law school I was going to take that trip to Europe. So for my 30th birthday I gave myself a year in Europe. Then I came back and went to law school, and here I am, 30 years later, a lawyer.

Heininger: So the discrepancies you saw between how you were treated in Kennedy's office and how other women were treated was not a compelling factor in sending you off to get a graduate degree, in this case in law school. That was a later progression in your career.

Lyons: Yes, it was. I started law school in '74. I worked in those two jobs in NYC, I did a year in Europe, and then I started law school. It wasn't that long a timeframe. When I think of it, I can't believe it was that short a time after I left EMK.

Heininger: It sounds like you had a somewhat anomalous position for the women in Kennedy's office.

Lyons: Best job I ever had. It's unfortunate when your best job comes when you're in your first working years. It was incredible.

Heininger: Yes, but we had more fun when we were young.

Lyons: We certainly did.

Heininger: We could work longer hours too.

Lyons: It was incredible. It was such an opportunity. I tell every young person to go to Washington. It gives you such confidence in yourself, because every day there are 20 issues that come across your desk that you don't know anything about, and you figure it out. You learn so much, and you watch other Senators come in, and you learn too that even the stupidest Senator, if they're there long enough, learns more by osmosis than they probably ever thought they could. It's a wonderful place. It was terrific, and he, of course, now is probably the best Senator ever, and it fascinates me that he can keep that commitment and that schedule. My God, he is nonpareil. He's a total success in his career, which is wonderful.

Heininger: Did you have to answer the mail?

Lyons: No.

Heininger: Was it considered a step up for women to be able to answer the mail?

Lyons: Answer mail? No. That's what I started doing.

Heininger: So you started doing that and then moved up.

Lyons: Yes, and that's casework.

Heininger: There's a difference, though. The casework is dealing with individual people's problems. You solved Massachusetts constituents' problems, the legislative mail in particular, when the letters would come in asking for Kennedy's position on such and such an issue.

Lyons: Maybe if it was your area. I think the committee staff responded to those letters. So he had staff.

Heininger: Were there other women writing memos to Kennedy?

Lyons: Yes. I think press assistants to Dick Drayne would do that—certainly Angelique, certainly Barbara.

Heininger: But those were scheduling and administrative things.

Lyons: How would I know? I don't think so.

Heininger: It strikes me that what you were doing was somewhat anomalous from what some of the other women were doing.

Lyons: There's no question. There was nobody there doing professional work, and there wouldn't have been, in my opinion, unless I had decided to. I know that sounds very self-aggrandizing.

Heininger: No, but it sounds like you took it upon yourself, and basically nobody stopped you.

Lyons: Exactly. If you were contributing, why would they stop you, especially if you were working until midnight? [*laughs*]

Heininger: But you also said that there were men in the office who didn't think you should go on the Equal Rights Amendment.

Lyons: Right.

Heininger: Assumed that women had a certain function to fill in Senate offices that it doesn't sound like you were fulfilling.

Lyons: But a few of the other Senate offices had women working on a professional level, I think.

Heininger: Did you know any?

Lyons: Well, it's so funny, Tip O'Neill, who was a family friend—well, kind of. We were in the same summer place, and our families are friends. When I was at the Cape, we'd go over to his house, and the guys would be sitting with Tip talking issues, and all the women would be over in the other side of the room. I used to go and sit at that table with the men, and Millie [O'Neill] looked askance. Now, Susan O'Neill, the daughter, wasn't shy either. My mother was that way. When they went to parties, she'd come back and say, "All the women were there showing baby pictures and all of that. What's interesting about that?" My mother was a very independent woman; she felt that you should have your career before you marry, that you were going to be married your whole life, that it was very demanding, and you wouldn't have time to do anything else. So no one in my family got married young, except one sister and one brother. Everybody else who got married did so in their thirties. It wasn't a major goal among my sisters.

Heininger: Which was a departure from the times.

Lyons: Yes it was, and up until that time you were a nurse, or you were a teacher. Boston College, at that time, only had women in nursing and education. I left college and decided I wanted to go to business school, so I went over to Harvard Business School, and I went in to get information about going there, and the women in the admissions office said, "Oh no, you go over to Radcliffe. They have a marvelous one-year program. Some of our girls are secretaries to the presidents of General Motors and the Monsanto Company." I don't know where I got it from, but I was thinking, *My father just paid a fortune for me to go to college.*

So I went to Ohio State. All the business schools were still pretty much male-dominated. The women who went, I learned later, would be like Ed Johnson's daughter—because he didn't have a son, if you know what I mean—the same with the law schools. There were very few women in the law schools or anywhere. I think Boston College had some women in the '60s. We were on

the cusp. It was the beginning of the change. I didn't know things had to change that much, frankly, so I presumed I was as qualified as anyone else.

Heininger: What did you see of Kennedy's attitude about women when you were in the office?

Lyons: I know he was not willing, pretty much, to communicate directly with me for a long time, not just because it was me, but with me, I felt, because I was a girl. As a matter of fact, a little later, on one of the bills I was working on, the Senator wanted to have one of his round tables, a dinner at his home, and when I got there, Joan [Bennett Kennedy] thought I was there to help serve the cocktails.

Heininger: Wait a minute. You were invited?

Lyons: Oh yes, or I invited myself. Who knows?

Heininger: But Joan thought you were there to serve the cocktails.

Lyons: And that's okay because women would go out and do that. You had these college graduates being nannies to Ethel Kennedy. I mean, you have to understand that that's the way it was then.

Heininger: But it's not entirely the way it was for you.

Lyons: No, but it wasn't for my other sisters either.

Heininger: It sounds like a lot has to do with personality.

Lyons: And upbringing. My sister was a legislative aide to a Senator in the Massachusetts General Court, and one day somebody came in the office and said, "Berle, could Maryellen type this up?" and Berle said, "Wait a minute. Maryellen doesn't type. Maryellen thinks." [laughs] Now, Maryellen wouldn't have gone to Washington, because the job did involve typing. You had to do your own typing. I was told that.

Heininger: But you noticed that there were lots of other people, men, who were not doing their own typing.

Lyons: Oh, I don't think any man typed at all.

Heininger: Did you reach a point where you didn't have to do your own typing?

Lyons: No.

Heininger: So there was, in that sense, a double standard. Even though they were willing to allow you to do some professional legislative work, and even gave you the title—

Lyons: They didn't acknowledge it.

Heininger: You think you probably weren't being paid the same.

Lyons: Oh, I know that.

Heininger: You weren't being paid the same, and you still had to do your own typing.

Lyons: Yes. And the reason three people replaced me was that they had to get a secretary for the two men who came in.

Heininger: Absolutely.

Lyons: So it was a joke.

Heininger: You left before he became whip and then chair of the Health Subcommittee and of the Labor Committee, where there was a major staff expansion.

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: All men, I might add.

Lyons: Oh yes. There weren't women. I don't know when women became involved on staff, do you?

Heininger: Well, Anne became the first female committee staffer.

Lyons: When was that?

Heininger: '72 or '73, I think.

Lyons: Oh good. That wasn't bad.

Heininger: That's when she took over for Ellis Mottur.

Lyons: I didn't know that.

Heininger: But I'm not sure there was another one. Then she stayed until 1980. I'm not sure there was another one. There was one who came in on the Judiciary Committee.

Lyons: Patti Saris, was she the first one?

Heininger: Yes. I think she was the first on the Judiciary Committee.

Lyons: I didn't know her. I never knew that she worked there until I met her as a lawyer.

Heininger: She's quite delightful.

Lyons: Delightful, absolutely. I didn't know her. There weren't any women in the Boston office either. Jim King ran the office, and Mary Frackleton administered the office, but that office was, at that time, secretarial and advance work.

Heininger: It sounds like much of the Massachusetts liaison with the Hill was you.

Lyons: Jim King took care of liaison with Massachusetts General Court. But if a state legislator wanted federal legislation, I worked with him. For example, Joe Moakley, who wasn't in Congress then, was chairman of a state committee in the Massachusetts General Court trying to make the Boston Harbor Islands a national historic site, or get funding to protect them. So I worked with Joe. But generally we weren't involved in Massachusetts legislation. What would happen there is, a legislator would call up about a federal amendment that was pending, that was going to remove eyeglasses from Medicaid or something like that, and then we would work the bill on the Washington end, that kind of thing.

Heininger: But you also said that you were working for Massachusetts project money.

Lyons: Yes, but that wasn't legislative. It was federal money.

Heininger: I know. I'm separating out the individual casework you did. Then you took on Massachusetts project work. And this is traditional for virtually all Senate offices, people who did the casework, people who do the project work, which by the late '70s, early '80s, I think Mary Jeka was doing all of that project work, and she was there for a long time. But then you did something that a lot of the other women, as far as I can tell, were not doing, and that is, you negotiated to take on a role as a legislative assistant and did social-welfare issues after you came back from Bobby's campaign.

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: I'm assuming that you dealt with Kennedy on those issues.

Lyons: Yes, the response on memos and that kind of stuff was much more extensive after that, although it was, "See me," much more frequently.

Heininger: We've heard the words, "See me."

Lyons: Much more frequently than certainly prior to that. On Massachusetts projects, there were "See me's" but not as often as when I was working on legislation.

Heininger: Did you sit behind him and staff him in committee hearings?

Lyons: Yes. That reminds me, the first year I was there, EMK was going to something over in another office building, and I wrote out directions for him, how to get to something in the [Samuel] Rayburn Building or something like that. He wrote back to me, "Oh, I never would have found it."

Heininger: That's true.

Lyons: Like I don't know where it is.

Heininger: No, but those tunnels are very confusing.

Lyons: What was great about that note was that he wrote it with a regular pen, and I could read it. Everything was in those blue felt pens, and they're too thick to read. I couldn't read anything when I was looking through my records this week.

Heininger: Did you write floor speeches for him?

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: And you wrote press releases.

Lyons: Oh yes. I had to do everything myself that was related to what I was doing.

Heininger: Which is a traditional legislative assistant job.

Lyons: Yes, by that point. But I still worked on Massachusetts projects.

Heininger: Did you get to go to the floor with him?

Lyons: Yes, but not that frequently.

Heininger: Did you sit on the back bench, or did you sit next to him?

Lyons: Well, I didn't sit with him. My purpose would be limited to discussing something for which maybe they called over and said, "This amendment has come up." I would go over and give him information on one position or the issue or answer questions they might have to get more information. No, I don't think the male legislative assistants thought I was a legislative assistant.

Heininger: Were they aware that you had the title?

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: But they didn't consider you to have the same status as them?

Lyons: I don't think so.

Heininger: Was it gender, or was it also the issues you were working on?

Lyons: No, it wouldn't have been the issues.

Heininger: Gender.

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: Pay does matter.

Lyons: Oh, definitely. As I say, not one of them supported the Equal Rights Amendment, as far as I knew, even Dun, who seemed to be the most liberal one there, I would say. I never understood it, but I certainly never understood why it didn't pass in the country. What can I say?

Heininger: You said that Kennedy initially would run things back to you through men, but eventually he dealt directly with you?

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: Did you sense that he was comfortable dealing with you?

Lyons: Sometimes, and was I comfortable dealing with him? Not always. I was somewhat intimidated to be that close to a person with that kind of power. I knew it was unusual for me to be there, and I felt I had to be better, and I didn't think maybe I was better than the guys. I don't know. I had insecurities certainly. Of course after Chappaquiddick. After that he was anything but comfortable with me. and the men on the staff were too—not the new men.

Heininger: On the other hand, you were possibly being singled out by being sent to Bobby's campaign and then to Humphrey's campaign.

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: And there were no other women.

Lyons: But I don't know what the office staff thought.

Heininger: I understand that, but you were still singled out and others weren't sent.

Lyons: Yes I was, and they had been there longer than I. Yes, that's true. It seemed normal to me, and I was thrilled to go to the Bobby campaign. But if Bobby Kennedy had been elected President, I probably would have been offered the receptionist job in the White House. It wasn't a world of opportunity. Now, I don't know that, but he didn't have any women on his staff. Esther did New York for him, as I did Massachusetts.

Heininger: That's a big deal, a big job.

Lyons: Oh, huge.

Heininger: She was good too.

Lyons: You know where she is now.

Heininger: It's a very interesting look, and part of the reason that he has done this oral history is because the length of his career provides a window into how the Senate operates. If you haven't worked there, it's virtually impossible to understand it because it's not a transparent institution. So the oral history functions, in part, as a window into how it has changed over time. That's why going into so much detail about the nuances of these early years is, in many ways, a contribution to the oral history. It's very different from the years in which you get the Ranny Coopers running the show, and being brought in on the '94 campaign, and later a series of women Chiefs of Staff, something that obviously would have been incomprehensible in these early years.

Lyons: No question. And most women, in my experience, have no idea that it used to be that way. We still have the same disparity on pay, 70 percent less. We have professional women in law firms. They're not doing mergers and acquisitions. They're doing litigation, which is a loss leader in big firms. It hasn't happened, and we're going backward as well. My nieces haven't a clue, and it's all fine and good. They don't have to have the clue. They truly can be whatever they want to be, but they don't recognize the walls that are still there until they hit the glass ceiling, which is still more real than unreal, and women don't help each other. They never have. I've never understood that. There's still a lot to be done.

We have the fewest successful women politicians in the western world. I mean, we can't even elect a woman President this year, and it's *because* she's a woman. The people actually accept a black man rather than a woman. I was so amazed at the number of women who voted for Hillary [Clinton] for the sole reason that she is a woman, and it's our age group and a little bit younger. You didn't even have to like her, but there's a thrill of doing that, I'm sure, and for the black community as well. How unfortunate it is that it's both of them at the same time. It's amazing. So one's going to lose, and guess who?

Heininger: It's interesting because if we don't get the perspective of you women who worked in the Senate in these early years, I think that would be lacking in the oral history, because it illuminates not just how Ted Kennedy's office operated—because we'll be able to see the changes through the years in terms of personnel changes—but it's also how the Senate was. This was a very conservative institution.

Lyons: Yes.

Heininger: In many ways a very southern institution throughout the 1960s. As the social change was swirling, you can see the beginnings of changes, and your quintessential example of how you went in with a different attitude and said, "Why shouldn't I do this? I'm going to write this title down, and if you want me to come back, fine. I'll come back, but you have to give me this." So attitudes were changing, and they changed slowly.

Lyons: Yes. In '72, I think, when George McGovern and Tommy Eagleton were going be President, I was saying, "These guys call me 'Nance.' I mean, wow!" I was so excited until Tommy got sent down—and I love that hypocrisy, all those editorials, all those years about how mental illness is not to be denigrated, and "Be proud that you got help," unless you want to be Vice President. We still don't have that equality. We do not have the same benefits for mental illness. The progress has been almost nil on social issues, and I'm not a fan of where we are in the Congress today. I'm embarrassed about it. I think it's horrific.

Heininger: But you're still very grateful that you spent those years there.

Lyons: Oh, my God.

Heininger: A wonderful education, I assume.

Lyons: Yes. And I would still be there. The events in the aftermath of Bobby's campaign, and the relationship of the Senator with the boiler room girls, and then Chappaquiddick. It changed everything.

Heininger: Was it a factor in your decision to leave?

Lyons: Oh, it was the reason I left. That's what I meant about the discomfort after that. There was a special relationship between the boiler room girls and Teddy. It was a place that he was comfortable. I think it's the first time he cried in public, at a dinner they gave for us in Washington—Dave Hackett and Dun Gifford hosted a bachelors' ball to marry off the boiler room girls. There had to be two bachelors for every girl, and it was in January of '69, and the Senator came to say hello. He broke down, and I thought afterward that maybe that was good. Then we had another meeting in the spring, and then that one in July. It was tragic. Mary Jo [Kopechne] was my roommate. That was very difficult. It changed my life. Let's say I was not made to feel welcome.

Heininger: It must have made it tough for you to go back there.

Lyons: It was tough, because no one else from the group worked for the Senator. But you do what you have to do, and then you try to step along.

Heininger: And look where your career has gone since.

Lyons: Yes? Where would that be?

Heininger: You became a lawyer. Well, this has been fascinating.

Addendum by Nance Lyons:

I have never discussed the tragedy at Chappaquiddick. The events of that weekend were tragic. Mary Jo was my roommate. I knew her parents. Chappaquiddick changed my life. First, the women who had had significant responsibility in the national campaign for Bobby Kennedy were portrayed as "girls" of no significance—even as "party" girls. It was humiliating—but no one bothered to set the record straight. Then, for the next ten to twelve years on each anniversary, we were pursued by the press, subjected to hate mail, and demeaning descriptions of our work and those veiled accusations about our moral rectitude.

Even though I returned to work within ten feet of his office, he never, never, never asked how I was doing; or said how sorry he was that I and the other women were subjected to such scrutiny. And, I certainly didn't feel welcomed back by this staff. Still, he never mentioned Mary Jo to me. no call during each year's anniversary scrutiny. No thank you for supporting him during these "trying" times. To me this was unbelievable and I have not forgiven him for that insensitivity. The women from Chappaquiddick suffered greatly both personally and professionally. Some lost jobs, some didn't get jobs, no judgeships in Massachusetts for Maryellen or me, etc. Frankly, I believe he set my departure up. He knew I wanted to leave. I was offered a job in New York through one of his associates. It took me a while to understand the ploy, but I did move on to New York.

Many years later, Joey Gargan is quoted in a book accusing me of being the one who suggested that we come up with a story that someone else was driving the car. In fact, it was the women

who derailed that brilliant idea. We refused to go along—not that I think the Senator was aware of that proposal. It was Joey and some of the other men. I was outraged by the book.

And then, in his last and final words on the subject, in his book *True Compass*, the Senator says that he really didn't want to go to Chappaquiddick that weekend, but that I insisted. Who knew I had such power!