

Arthur A. Chapin, Jr. Oral History Interview—JFK#1, 2/24/1967
Administrative Information

Creator: Arthur A. Chapin, Jr.
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Biographical Note

Chapin was a staff member on the Democratic National Committee (1958-1961) and Assistant to the Secretary of the U.S. Employment Service in the Department of Labor. In this interview he discusses his work on behalf of the Democratic National Committee for the 1960 Democratic National Convention, the 1960 Kennedy-for-President campaign's voter registration drive, and campaign efforts towards African American voters, among other issues.

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Arthur A. Chapin—JFK #1

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First of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Arthur A. Chapin, Jr.

February 24, 1967
Washington, D.C.

By John Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Let me ask you first, Mr. Chapin, how did you become involved originally in the 1960 campaign?

CHAPIN: In 1958, I worked with Mr. Paul M. Butler who was at that time Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Mr. Butler, during those years from '58 through 1960, being the Chairman until the Convention. I was involved in bringing about political organization solely within the framework of state chairmen and state and national committeemen and women to increase the Negro vote in the United States. As you will recall, as a result of the Eisenhower Administration [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and the defection on the part of Congressman Powell [Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.] in 1956, in rather strategic areas of the country, we, the Democratic Party, had lost, in some of these areas, as high as 20 percent of the Negro vote. I had done an analysis which appeared in the *New York Times* and Mr. Butler asked me if I would come and work for the Committee. During 1958 to '60, I worked directly with the Committee to an extent, right up to the Convention. At the end of the Convention and prior to the Convention, there was a series of meetings held with possible candidates and persons representing candidates, persons who had an interest in the candidate prior to the Convention. I worked with those individuals. This was not to the extent of supporting a given candidate at that time.

STEWART: Primarily on what types of matters?

CHAPIN: What I did for all candidates was to keep them informed precisely on the political organization as it related to Negroes in the United States, so that each candidate had an idea of the problems in each of the areas that he was going into. The then-Senator Kennedy [John F. Kennedy], when he was campaigning in Wisconsin, I had prepared for him and for his staff people material to give as to who were the leading Negroes in that community—we had at that time a national committeewoman who was a Negro and also a Negro member of the city council—who were the important Negro Democrats in that area. I supplied this kind of information to all of the Democratic candidates who had requested it. Senator Kennedy did request it; his staff requested it; other candidates did as well, including that of then-Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey].

STEWART: It's frequently been charged, of course, that Mr. Butler in all of his pre-Convention activities was somewhat favorable to President Kennedy. Did you have any indication of that? Did you feel the charges were substantiated at all?

CHAPIN: No, to the contrary. I can tell you that I suppose Drex Sprecher [Drexel A. Sprecher] and myself were as close to Paul Butler as any two persons were in this country during that period. In fact, our offices, both our offices, abutted the Chairman's office, and there was a swinging door between the offices. So there was a daily communication between the Chairman and ourselves. At no time did I get a feeling that Mr. Butler was supporting, at that time, Senator Kennedy. In fact, the Chairman on a number of occasions, evenings and other times including leisure hours, would make it crystal clear that he was not supporting any particular candidate. And I recall particularly one meeting where the then Mr. Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy]—in fact, my first meeting with Mr. Robert Kennedy was in the office of Mr. Butler. At the end of that meeting, Mr. Butler made it a point to come out, to come to our office and say that he met with Mr. Kennedy, but he wanted us to know that this was just a series of meetings and did not reflect either his desires or the desires of the Committee in the support of any particular candidate. He instructed both Mr. Sprecher and myself, who dealt, by and

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large, with political operations, that he wanted us to give full support to each candidate of the Democratic Party who had either announced or were prospective candidates in this area.

STEWART: What was your function at the Convention in Los Angeles?

CHAPIN: My functions at the Convention in Los Angeles were two: one, before the Convention, of course, was to help the delegates and, particularly, to help the state chairmen who had very special problems in making that Convention run smoothly, working with that Convention. There just were so many things

that you do at a Convention. Let me give you an illustration of what some of them were. We made sure that the platform people who were going to address the Convention, governors and members of the National Committee and senators, that there was an orderly procession of those who wanted to see the Chairman, then Paul Butler; that there was going to be, one might say—an appointment secretary. That is what I acted as at that Convention so that people weren't running over each other in that kind of a situation. That was really my role in the beginning of the Convention. Aside from the fact, there were certain important people that the Chairman wanted to see from the floor, people who had business with the Committee, people who had concern about the resolutions, people who had concern about resolutions before the platform committee, matters which they had questions about. I acted as that kind of a floor liaison individual.

STEWART: And you would conclude, then, that Mr. Butler's neutrality lasted right up through the Convention?

CHAPIN: I can only conclude that. I can say that from all that I had, all references that were made either to me or all I could observe, was complete neutrality on the part of the Chairman. The Chairman did say many times, and I think he said so publicly, if I recall, that he felt Mr. Kennedy, before the Convention, was—or Senator Kennedy—was far ahead of any other candidate, he thought, in the field at that time. But, of course,

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that was before the Convention. So in terms of that kind of a statement, he made this clear on a number of occasions.

STEWART: Who in the Kennedy staff did you have any contact with at the Convention, do you recall, of any substance or significance?

CHAPIN: I had contact with Mr. Kennedy's brother on a number of occasions during the Convention, and I would say that the contact was largely between Mr. Kennedy's brother and Mr. Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger].

STEWART: On what types of matters, do you recall?

CHAPIN: I'm frank to say I don't recall at the moment. They were just questions that, as I remember, were procedural matters having to do with the procedures of the Convention itself. In other words, when is it likely that the Resolutions Committee will be reporting? What's it look like in terms of unanimity in the Resolutions Committee? Is there likely to be a minority report? These are the kinds of questions which the Senator—or, sorry—Mr. Robert Kennedy would ask.

STEWART: You are from New Jersey, aren't you?

CHAPIN: Yes, I am.

STEWART: Did you have any direct contact with the New Jersey delegation at the...

CHAPIN: I did, yes.

STEWART: Do you have any further reasoning of your own as to exactly why Mr. Meyner [Robert B. Meyner] held out until the end as he did? Or what is your understanding of the situation?

CHAPIN: I really don't have any reasoning. I've thought about this on a number of occasions. Politically, I think there was rather peculiar infighting taking place in New Jersey between two county chairmen in the state. One was from the northern end of the state; Mr. Dennis Carey [Dennis F. Carey]

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from Essex County and Mr. Kenny [John V. Kenny] of Hudson County. And Mr. Meyner was in the... [Interruption]

STEWART: You were discussing the situation in the New Jersey delegation.

CHAPIN: Yes. You had the two northern chairmen, which are called county chairmen in New Jersey, and I think Mr. Meyner had had some feeling that, if he had hoped to go on to any national prominence, he may not have these two chairmen with him, and his only hope was that he had to make his efforts felt and national focus on his name and himself in the hope that in the event there was a deadlock in the Convention that Mr. Meyner would be the vice presidential candidate on the ticket of Mr. Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. This is as I visualize this, and I have some feeling that with those aspirations, should there be the deadlock, it would have been likely that Mr. Johnson, or a good possibility that Mr. Johnson would have been the candidate, then looking around for a northern governor. And Mr. Meyner, I think, thought he might be that individual.

STEWART: Okay, moving on, unless there's anything more in the Convention that you feel is especially significant. You were involved in the registration drive right after, weren't you?

CHAPIN: Yes, I was.

STEWART: Well, let me ask you, first, is there anything else as far as the Convention that you feel is...

CHAPIN: Yes, I think there was another significant part of that Convention. Right after the Senator was nominated by the Democratic Convention as the

candidate and Mr. Johnson was nominated as a candidate.... Well, before Mr. Johnson was nominated as a candidate, of course, the rumor, as I recall, if my memory's right, that following morning, rumors were on the floor of who was going to be the nominee. And the Michigan delegation, in particular, as I recall, was quite disturbed about this. One of my jobs was to get some soundings from

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the floor. The Chairman, obviously, was concerned about what the soundings were, and what delegations, or who in those delegations, were disturbed. I recall quite vividly that the Michigan delegation was very much disturbed; both the labor people in the delegation were disturbed.

I recall that the California delegation was extremely disturbed about this matter. The chairman of that delegation was Governor Brown [Edmund G. "Pat" Brown]. There had been, previous to the selection of the candidate, Senator Kennedy as the candidate, a very strong feeling from California for Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson]. And there were a number of very angry situations between the very gracious and fine lady, Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt], and some other delegations in that direction. So these are some of the things that are off side.

But there was a meeting held with Negro leaders and Negro delegates right after the close of the Convention where I was asked, through Congressman Dawson [William L. Dawson], who was a vice chairman of the National Committee, if I would help arrange such a meeting. I did bring together all of the Negro delegates at the National Convention, and they met at the Biltmore Hotel. They met in the suite which was diagonally across from where Mr. Johnson's suite was; that is, headquarters suite. And these delegates met along with some other people who were interested, by this time, in the Party, party individuals who were visiting the Convention. But 90 percent of the people in that room were delegates at the Convention from the various states. It was at this meeting that Senator Kennedy, for the first time, introduced himself and spoke off-the-cuff to these delegates concerning the matter of civil rights. In addition to that, it was the first time that Senator Johnson, now the vice presidential candidate, made his first speech at this meeting.

And at this meeting, which became historic although very few people talk about it, it was at that time that the vice presidential nominee made that statement that, "If we are elected"—we, in this case meaning the Kennedy ticket—"to the president and vice president, respectively, that we will make more progress in four years than we've made in the last forty years." As a result of that statement, and as a result of a speech that Mr. Kennedy made, which was, by in large, having to do with civil rights, Senator Kennedy set forth his goals and his ideas at that meeting in the area of civil rights. He had this picture taken with a number of the delegates.

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The focus on civil rights had been a major issue within the Democratic Party since 1958. It was Mr. Paul Butler who had very early in the Party disagreed with a number of Party leaders by making civil rights one of the focal points. One of those persons with whom

he disagreed, as you well know, was the then-Senator Johnson, and also the late Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Rayburn [Sam Rayburn]. So I think that would suffice.

STEWART: In your talks after this meeting with other delegates, were they a hundred percent enthused with, at first, Mr. Kennedy because of his...

CHAPIN: There was great enthusiasm with Mr. Kennedy from all of the delegates. There was a great deal of fear, on the part of those same delegates, of Mr. Johnson. There was a great fear of Mr. Johnson. I don't know of a single delegate who didn't say they were very happy about the ticket, but then they would also wind up, "But I'm afraid about the Vice President." So there was great fear on that part, and great concern, on the part of the delegates, Negro delegates, at that Convention. And I'd be less than honest if I didn't say that was also true with a number of white delegates at the Convention.

STEWART: Let me ask you one further question about Mr. Butler. Did you have any further contact with him during the campaign at all?

CHAPIN: Yes, on a number of occasions since. Right after the campaign, I came back to Washington. As you know, the new Chairman was Senator Jackson [Henry M. Jackson] of the state of Washington. And Senator Jackson asked me if I would stay on during the campaign, as he asked all the others to do the same thing. We all agreed to do so. Two days later, Senator Kennedy announced from Hyannis Port that he was appointing Frank Thompson [Frank Thompson, Jr.] of New Jersey as the chairman for the registration in the United States. And at that same time, also, the late President Kennedy made the same announcement for me as being the vice chairman for registration.

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Right after he this was done, we set up offices in the Esso Standard Oil Building here in Washington and proceeded to pull all the stops out in terms of a gigantic registration campaign. We made selected areas of the country; we mapped out the areas we thought I would be most fruitful. We consulted with the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations] and its political action organization at that time. It was a Mr. James McDevitt, I think, who was a PAC [Political Action Committee] chairman, along with Mr. Al Barkan [Alexander Elias Barkan], and Mr. Roy Reuther of the AFL-CIO was also selected. He took a leave of absence to work in this direction. The three of us ran that operation until Mr. Robert Burkhardt [Robert J. Burkhardt] from New Jersey was asked to join the staff. He had a good deal of experience in this direction.

STEWART: What were the major criteria that you used to determine the areas that you were going to concentrate on?

CHAPIN: The major criteria was that, first, we decided that if we were going to win

the election, the election would probably be won in heavily concentrated states. We were going to stay out of the South in this kind of situation. We were going to concentrate largely in the East Coast. The Middle West States, such as Michigan, Illinois... [Interruption]

STEWART: You were mentioning the states that you would concentrate on.

CHAPIN: The states of Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois. Denver, Colorado was another state in the western part of the country, and California was another state which we concentrated our efforts in this direction. That was one of the criteria. Another criteria was the percentage of labor vote that was in the area because we needed to have soldiers in addition Democratic leadership. Another criteria was that the percentage of Negro leaders in the community that we could depend on as being actively engaged, the Negro leaders that we would not have any problems with that might be in some way influenced by the opposition party.

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In other words, what we were doing was trying to marshal Democrats in this kind of a “nonpartisan” registration campaign because in many states you do have nonpartisan registration. Along the eastern seaboard, the states we were concentrating on were Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, which, of course, was John Bailey’s [John Moran Bailey] bailiwick, and Massachusetts, which at that time had a deputy attorney general and also the deputy attorney general was head of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] in that area.

STEWART: Tucker [Herbert E. Tucker, Jr.]?

CHAPIN: Tucker. So we concentrated on those states along with the eastern seaboard. We did, as I said, we did not involve ourselves in the South. The only place in the South with which we were concerned happened this time to be the District of Columbia, and this was in the hands of the then-national committeeman Frank Reeves [Frank D. Reeves].

Moving in to the interior, Ohio, we were all very skeptical of Ohio, and we usually let the labor people work out in Ohio in terms of developing their registration campaign. We developed most of the material for the registration. Senator Claiborne Pell was also a person who was very much involved with the registration aspects because he had worked on the Democratic committee for the political organization. So that might give you some....

STEWART: Was there an real suggestion, was there ever a real possibility that you would get into the South at all?

CHAPIN: No, there wasn’t. There was a very direct feeling on the part of most of us that the South would not be an area for which we would really have any

influence in the total picture. Two reasons, one is that we were hopeful at that time; there had not been a decision made as to how far we would go on the religious issue. This was obviously being thought of. There was concern on the part of—that we didn't know where Negroes were going on the religious issue. If we were in difficulty at all on the religious question, and the opposition party was going to make any inroads, they probably would make them just as easily

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among Negroes as they would among whites, if this was what they were going to do. So at the same time we felt that it would be useless to go into those states on a large scale.

I don't mean to imply we did not send material to certain Democratic leaders in this direction. Mr. Walden [A.T. Walden], for instance, of Atlanta, Georgia, was actually in charge of registration for the South. And Mr. Walden did a magnificent job in Atlanta, along with.... He was also in Alabama. He also went down to Florida for us. So there were areas like this. In Miami, Florida we had another man who was chairman of our committee there. What we did in this direction was to set up spots in cities like Jacksonville, Florida, where we thought we had a reasonably good Negro Democratic organization. Where we had Democratic organization, we did supply funds through various sources to be of assistance to help people to conduct registration campaigns. But the great effort and the great push was not, obviously, in those states, but it was in places like Denver, Colorado. We put a great push in Denver, Colorado, with Byron White [Byron R. White], who later became a member of the Supreme Court.

STEWART: In most cases, were the people conducting the drives in each state the people who eventually took over the campaign, the actual campaigns in these states?

CHAPIN: In most states, they did, yes. In most states they did. The reason for that is that the people that we selected, by and large, were knowledgeable individuals, and, more important, they had worked in this field either through the political organization or through labor organizations or through NAACP or some other organization like this, but had the knowledge of both community people and what had to be done and how it had to be done effectively. And we got reports back. We knew, almost to the closing dates—and, of course, as you know, registration closes in different cities at different times—what the new registrants were. We were getting daily reports on numbers of new people who were being registered, and what wards and what precincts—as of course, the “ward” is not—but what precincts—those registrations were taking place. We were getting this daily in terms of our reports. So we had a feedback of registration. We knew way before election day approximately the number of people who would probably vote in this campaign, solely on the basis.

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STEWART: Was anything else done with this information in terms of follow-ups of

literature or anything like that, or follow-ups during the campaign?

CHAPIN: All during this time, all during the registration efforts, Mr. Robert Kennedy was very deeply involved in getting information. He got all kinds of reports about all kinds of situations. I can recall, very vividly, we met in Chicago with Mayor Daley [Richard J. Daley] and Congresswomen Dawson and others in Chicago.

While we met in one of the presidential suites, I believe, in the Conrad Hilton Hotel, the word came to us that we were having very serious problems in Wisconsin. With Mr. Kennedy at that time, Mr. Robert Kennedy, I was getting on the plane, and he turned around and said, "Art, I just heard, we've got problems in Milwaukee. Would you be good enough to go to Milwaukee right away? I'll talk to you when I get to Denver, and we'll follow through on where we go." Of course, we were going across the country at that time to talk to leaders to see where the soft spots were. And we heard this, and I went on to Wisconsin and met with Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey] and others in Milwaukee and some of the other people who were involved in our registration campaign, in particular, and also in Mr. Kennedy's original campaign primary there, and we did find that there were some problems. My job at that point was to see what could be done, the problems largely on misunderstanding of who was supposed to do what. And, obviously, one important fact is to put out a fire and prevent situations.

STEWART: In terms of financing, I've heard it said that there was absolutely no problem and that the whole registration effort eventually cost something seven hundred and some odd thousand dollars. Did you have anything directly to do with the financing on the thing?

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CHAPIN: I had nothing to do directly with the finance, I suppose, any more than a number of other people. We did raise some money for special effort situations. I recall I was in Colorado once and called George Weaver [George L-P Weaver] and said we needed some money for some registration situations. In Maryland, I worked with the—in fact, the registration chairman there was Mrs. Irma Dixon [Irma Muse Dixon] who later became a member of the state legislature, and also the now-Senator Welcome [Verda Freeman Welcome]. And there was a real serious problem.

I talked long distance to Mr. Murphy [Carl Murphy], who owned the *Afro-American*, who we were able to convince that Senator Kennedy was the better of the two candidates. Mr. Murphy was at the time not openly supporting us but had given every indication he would support, and also helped to map out a registration campaign for Maryland. If you'll check, you'll find his whole paper came out in this direction, to help us in this direction. But he did say he couldn't do it without some money, and I forget now what it was. It seemed like it was somewhere in the neighborhood of six or eight thousand dollars that he needed for some precinct workers to do doorbell ringing and take people down and also get.... There was evening hour registration and that sort of thing, and there needed to be that kind of money. He was able to get the people who could do it if I could supply the money. I think I

got some of the money, as I recall, from the IUE [International Union of Electrical Radio and Machine Workers (AFL-CIO)] in the registration campaign. So that's in terms of money. It didn't come easy, as I've heard many times, somebody says, "All you had to do was ring the Kennedy money bell, and it all just flowed from somewhere." Well, I didn't find that to be the situation.

STEWART: You very often had to do some scraping for....

CHAPIN: Well, a good deal of scraping was done from many sources. I would be less than honest in saying that much of the scraping that I did came from labor organizations. This was the source from which in turn from time to time, I did get money: from the Steelworkers Union, the IUE, which is the electrical workers union, certain city councils, certain people in the UAW [International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America]. These were contacts which we had built up over a period of years, and we were able to get them to

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contribute to special efforts in this direction.

STEWART: In terms of the objectives, the original objectives, I believe, was something like ten million voters. It fell a little bit below that. Were you quite disappointed? Did you think the whole effort was a success in terms of what had been done in previous campaigns?

CHAPIN: No, I didn't think it had been a poor effort. In fact, although we set our sights at, I think, better than ten million voters at that time, these sights we were talking about was ten million *new* voters, as you recall. We set those sights because all of us felt that if we were going to win the election, we were going to win the election in major cities, namely, the East. We felt this was where it was going to be. And if we were going to get the new voters, they were going to come from Negro voters, by and large, and from working class people. That's where we were going to get the vote.

We concentrated heavily in the working class districts of this country. I would say all of our efforts, better than 90 percent of our efforts, were actually in those areas. We worked the working class districts in Hudson County, and we worked in Essex County, the working class areas, because what we found was that in the suburban areas we didn't think we were going to get the vote at all. We thought that Mr. Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] was going to get that vote. We thought that Senator Kennedy would only get the vote out of the major cities, and we made great efforts in this direction.

I can recall meeting on two occasions with the then-state chairman, Mr. Green [William J. Green, Jr.]—or city chairman Mr. Green, out of Philadelphia, where we met with him almost for some eight hours, going precinct by precinct in the working class areas. And if you were to look at the voting and registration statistics, you'll find that's where it came from, the new voters came in these areas. We were looking for people on relief, for instance, who hadn't voted. We were looking for people, who, maybe Aid to Dependent Children,

these kinds of individuals. We were looking really at the lower economic wards and districts and this direction.

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STEWART: What would you say were the biggest mistakes, if any, that were made in the registration drive?

CHAPIN: Well, I would say the biggest mistake—and I suppose you make that mistake in almost every campaign—is, really, the lack of organization. Although it has often been said, and I've heard it said many times, that the Kennedys had the best organization of any campaign in the United States, I would say it was the worst organization.

STEWART: Is that right? As far as the registration drive or in general?

CHAPIN: Well, I would say the registration drive was—I might be prejudiced about this—but I think the registration drive was better organized than the campaign was. I think the registration drive was much better organized. But even there, there was great confusion in both our roles and the roles of the state chairmen and the roles of the city chairmen because you did have—I suppose that's what makes the Democratic Party great, the fact that there's room for very wide differences of opinion. For instance, in Philadelphia you had Mr. Green, who was not only on our side but was out there really plugging, working hard. But I'm not so sure that there were other city chairmen in Pennsylvania doing the same thing. In New York, you had Mr. Carmine DeSapio [Carmine G. DeSapio] having one kind of a situation, I think—there was just so much confusion in the states that we were working in, a great deal of confusion. From that standpoint, I'd say that there really was not good political organization.

STEWART: How did your work tie in with the civil rights division of the regular part of the campaign, or wasn't this really organized in a going concern in the early stages when the registration drive was very active?

CHAPIN: Well, it was organized, and I would say it was organized, by and large, by Mr. Harris Wofford [Harris L. Wofford, Jr.] who was, by and large, the guiding force. He'd

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taken along with him Mrs. Belford Lawson [Marjorie M. Lawson]. This emerged, I think, as much as anything I know of, because it was again felt the success that we'd had in Negro leaders in the registration campaign—you had to do something with them after you mobilized them for registration. And the obvious way to get them better involved into the day-to-day activities of the campaign would be through civil rights activities. This was being done by Mr. Harris Wofford and also by, of course, Congressman Dawson, but from an

operational standpoint, it was being done by Mr. Louis Martin [Louis E. Martin] in a different direction. Mr. Martin at that time had the role of keeping the newspapers widely informed and getting stories in the newspapers that were important to the campaign.

STEWART: There were some problems along those areas then.

CHAPIN: Yes, there were.

STEWART: Were you involved in any of them?

CHAPIN: Well, I was involved in some of them. As I said...

STEWART: Wasn't it a matter of some people not having been paid from a previous campaign?

CHAPIN: Yes, there were, and this goes back to Mr. John Sengstacke [John H. Sengstacke] of Chicago. I was involved in, I think, working out the negotiations with Mr. Sengstacke. I had promised Mr. Sengstacke that—well, I didn't have all the details of the situation as I remember—I promised Mr. Sengstacke I'd do everything I could to see that he was paid, and I think I did help to raise some money for Mr. Sengstacke for it to be paid. I didn't do it alone. I did it with such people as Congressman Dawson, who was at that time completely opposed to paying Mr. Sengstacke the money. He didn't think it had been properly presented, and he thought that the bill really wasn't as large as Mr. Sengstacke had presented it. But we were able to get over that hurdle.

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I think I had something to do with Mr. Dawson, who did help to raise the money in that direction. The money allegedly—as I remember now, it's been some time—had been a carryover from the Stevenson campaign which there'd been a large number of throwaway papers. The National Committee was saddled with it, I think, somewhere close to two million dollars in debt as a result of that campaign. They spent a good many years trying to pay it off. I don't believe it was paid off until after the Kennedy election. And Mr. Sengstacke was part of that group who was not very happy with that situation. But I think we, as I recall, I was able to get—I don't remember the dollar amount now—I was able to get some money through working with Mayor Daley and some other Democratic leaders in Illinois on that subject. In fact, they called a meeting of a number of Democratic leaders as a result of a suggestion of Congressman Dawson. Some of this was wiped out on that basis.

STEWART: There was a certain amount of confusion, and, I assume, dispute and possibly even bitterness over the role of Congressman Dawson in the campaign organization. To what extent were you involved in any of this?

CHAPIN: Well, Congressman Dawson did not voluntarily come down to the Democratic National Committee at the time right after the campaign

started. He had felt that he had done his job well in past campaigns and that if the Kennedys didn't want him, he was not going to ask them. I was able to communicate this to some people, as one of my roles, obviously, had been in the National Committee to try to help smooth out situations. And we got Mr. Elmer Henderson [Elmer W. Henderson] to first come down. And I was able to get Mrs. Katie Louchheim [Kathleen Louchheim] to take on Mrs. Davis [Christine Ray Davis] who was working, as you know, on Congressman Dawson's committee; Mrs. Christine Davis, we got her on.

And once we were able to get those people, through the efforts and suggestions that they'd made, much was worked out with Mr. Robert Kennedy and Mr. Sarge Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.]. In fact, I believe it was Mr. Sarge Shriver who actually made the approach to Congressman Dawson to get him to come down, also to set him an office up at 15th and K Street, as I recall. On several occasions when I talked with Congressman Dawson, he made it crystal clear that he'd been a supporter of the party for, lo, these many years, but

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he was not going to ask to be invited into the campaign. And he felt very strongly about this. He would not hand-tie anybody, but he felt he had made a tremendous contribution to the Party over the years, and he wanted to continue to do so, but he was not going to—the Kennedys, he thought, should ask him, and he shouldn't ask them.

STEWART: What was their reluctance?

CHAPIN: Well, I think it really stems to this question of organization. I don't think the Kennedys understood political organization as such, that you had to touch base with certain political leaders even though you thought they were unimportant, and that the image that Mr. Dawson had was not the vivacious, young, youthful image that the Kennedys were looking for. They were much more awed or impressed with people like Mrs. Marjorie Lawson. But Mr. Dawson, who really had a political organization, and his organization was just that. The Kennedys were looking for new, vivacious, youthful leadership, and I think that was all. It wasn't, I never found it to be, the desire to dislike Mr. Dawson or anything of this sort. It was just the fact they wanted this youthful campaign, and Mr. Dawson didn't fit into that kind of a mold.

STEWART: Did you ever see any other indications of this type of thing as far as their approach to the whole problem of Negro voters? It's often been said that, in certain respects, many people around the candidate were somewhat naïve about the importance of the Negro vote, or the way it operated, and just exactly what had to be done in order to corral this vote, so to speak.

CHAPIN: Well, I think there was. I think he had a lot of young people in the Kennedy camp who, one, took for granted that the Negro vote was going to be a Democratic vote; number two, I think that there were a lot of people in the Kennedy camp who thought if you said the right thing, the Negroes were automatically for you. They had felt that Mr. Nixon's image was so bad among the Negroes

that they would never vote for Mr. Nixon anyhow, so you really didn't have to make the real special effort and real pitch for the Negro vote.

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Plus, I think there's another part of the campaign which the Kennedys didn't quite understand, that there's certain people within the campaign you've got to get on your side, certain ministers, and the method which must be used to get them on your side. Later, much later on in the campaign, the Kennedys got to understand this quite directly. And I would say that people like Mrs. Marjorie Lawson were responsible for helping in this direction; I think people like Mr. Howard Bennett were responsible for helping in this direction; I think Louie Martin was helpful in this direction; I think Frank Reeves was helpful. People who had worked with the Kennedys I think were very helpful, and I would say that Andy Hatcher [Andrew T. Hatcher], in his way, was very helpful in getting across to Pierre what had to be done, and Andy would constantly use his experiences in California. So it was pretty late in the campaign before things began to fall into place, but there was a great deal of fear among Negroes, political leaders, of—you had to do more than just have dinner in Boston where you had the right people there, and you thought everything was going to fall in line. It just didn't work that way. The Kennedys, later on, did find this out, certainly before the campaign was over. But there was this problem.

STEWART: After the registration drive—well, when the registration drive was over, which would have been what, the middle of October or early in October....

CHAPIN: In the middle of October, toward the latter part of October. I think there's several states where the 25th of October is their last registration, as I recall it. I think it is; I'm not sure now.

STEWART: What did you concentrate your efforts on then? What other activities did you....

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CHAPIN: My concentration of efforts at that time was to close up our offices there—well, we didn't close the offices up; we concentrated largely on certain chairmen. I was given the assignment of working with four states, namely, Colorado, Pennsylvania, with Mr. Green, New Jersey with certain city chairmen there, and Massachusetts and Connecticut. Those were the states which I had, with partially throwing in Maryland in this direction.

STEWART: You were working under whom at that time?

CHAPIN: I suppose I wasn't working under anybody, and I suppose this is why I say we were pretty much a hodge-podge of an organization. There weren't any

strict and direct lines of communication. I would touch base with Howard Hart and with Harris Wofford. I would touch base with a number of labor people: George Weaver, being one, was in the Symington [Stuart Symington II] campaign; Ed Sylvester [Edward C. Sylvester, Jr.] being another—he lives right next door here—was in the Symington campaign. Touched base with a fellow now in the Post Office, Postmaster General...

STEWART: O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien].

CHAPIN: Mr. O'Brien at that time. People like that, we would kind of exchange what we were doing and what we ought to be doing. But I had pretty much a free role. I was pretty much freelancing as to what had to be done, and I'd get playbacks, even from Robert Kennedy, as to some special effort in this direction.

STEWART: Could you give a few examples of some of the problems in some of those states that you had to resolve and did resolve?

CHAPIN: Well, I suppose the problem in—starting with Colorado, which probably was the easiest of all states—we had a problem of religion in Colorado, both in Pueblo and in Denver. There was an underlying religious fervor which we couldn't put our fingers on which did show on election day that it really was there.

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I worked with the state chairman there and also a man who was running for United States Senate, and I can't recall his name now. His campaign manager was at the White House. He's just been appointed now as the regional director of the Post Office in that general region. He was the campaign manager and also Citizens for Kennedy with Byron White. We could feel that there was a problem. It was suggested by the Negro leaders that they ought to have somebody like Congressman Powell come out. Congressman Powell did get to Denver, and he made a speech in Denver which was most helpful, but it did not overcome what we later found out was a religious problem. The farmers and ranchmen—there's a lot of ranchmen in the Colorado area, or particularly in the Pueblo area—were quite apprehensive even though they didn't say so. We always got the feeling that that's what it was. We were never able to put our finger on it.

And that was one of my roles. That's why the *Afro-American* newspaper came out, and Mr. Murphy, my relationship with him paid off on that basis. So that's the kind of behind-the-scene situation which I can give you example of. Now, to give you specifics, I would just rather not because I don't

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recall all the day-to-day situations.

In Philadelphia we had almost no problems. We just wanted to be sure that the Negro press was going to be on our side because we knew that certain monies were likely to be

passed to the *Philadelphia Tribune*, which was a Negro paper in Philadelphia, and we wanted to be sure that we were going to at least get a fair shake for what we were paying for. And I was kind of shepherding to see what I could pick up, what you can find out in various sources and various communities, who's doing what.

And more important, I was really trying to find out what the Republicans might be up to on election day or two days before election day. We'd had some experience, my own past background had given me experiences, that they always did something a couple days before election day to try to get the Negro vote. As you well know, this was done, too, in this campaign. And it came from a fellow in New Jersey who attempted to get it, to tell people not to vote, as you remember, but to vote for Dr. Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.]. A stupid thing in the past campaign when President Johnson.... Because I knew these things we were looking for, you see, in the campaign with President Kennedy. Because of our past knowledge in this direction, we were constantly alerted to that. So that gives you some idea of the kind of things we were involved in, I suppose.

STEWART: Unless you think there's anything else that you think is important regarding the campaign, why don't we move on to your appointment to the Department of Labor. Is there anything else as far as the campaign is concerned?

CHAPIN: I would think that there ought to be some mention of what I consider to be a kind of an introduction to this whole matter of civil rights. I had mentioned earlier that there had been a rather reluctance on the part of certain congressional leaders to get into the civil rights picture with both feet. Mr. Paul Butler made a speech at the Ford Theater in Cambridge. This speech was the first time, I think, a major political party not just came out for civil rights but said that the party would have to fight completely on the side of rights and that side being that of civil rights. And he criticized the

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Eisenhower Administration, in terms of, at that time an FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Commission] being proposed, and that Mr. Eisenhower had said in a statement that he didn't know that was in the bill. You'll remember that Mr. Butler then took off and as a result of the back behind-the-scenes situation—I think that that ought to be said—that Mr. Butler did really focus the National Committee and force the Democratic Party in this direction.

And here's another something that I think that you ought to know that goes back to the Convention. We had planned something at which Mr. Kennedy takes full credit, and I'm delighted that he does take full credit for it. In 1956, at the Convention in '56, the civil rights platform was not all that many civil rights leaders desired. And Mr. Butler and Mr. Sprecher and myself, I suppose the three of us, decided that in 1960 we were going to have a strong platform.

This is how it was done. There was a Midwest conference called in Detroit of Midwest leaders, and we felt if we were able to get the civil rights platform adopted at the Midwest conference as their platform, we would have the votes before we went into the

Convention. Pat Lucey and a lady by the name of Johnson from Minnesota, she was a national committeewoman from Minnesota, and the national committeeman from Michigan actually spearheaded this kind of a situation. And the actual convention resolution was written at that time, was adopted at that time—Mrs. Joseph [Geraldine R. Joseph] was her name—was actually written and adopted at that conference, and it was that strategy that actually got us the strong civil rights platform. That's the facts on the thing.

STEWART: I've heard it said that the 1960 platform went much farther than the Kennedy people intended it to.

CHAPIN: Well, we had the votes.

STEWART: That's a true statement?

CHAPIN: This is true. Well, I can't say the Kennedy people, what they wanted, but I can tell you that, to the best of my knowledge, this was

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done largely before the Convention, and I did have a great deal to do with that kind of situation.

STEWART: I asked you before about your further relationship with Paul Butler. He, of course, had little or no role in the campaign as such which....

CHAPIN: That's right.

STEWART: When did he pass away? Was it shortly after the....

CHAPIN: He lived, I guess, a year after...

STEWART: Oh, that long?

CHAPIN: ...a year after the President was elected.

STEWART: Did you have any contact with him during the campaign?

CHAPIN: No, the answer to that question is no. I did not have any direct contact with Paul, that is, on any official basis. I saw Paul at some affairs, but there was no direct contact with Paul. In fact, as I remember, Paul went back to South Bend for a good deal of that campaign. Right after the campaign, he opened offices in 1001 Connecticut Avenue, that is, after the election. But before that time, I believe Paul went back to South Bend, and he was not a part of the campaign at all.

And I think the reason for that was, if you read a speech which Paul Butler made when he departed the National Committee, it is a very bitter speech. Paul Butler was very

bitter to such men, and he named, as I recall, the late Congressman Green, who he'd felt had withheld funds from the National Committee, and they had in Pennsylvania. He was very angry with the late David Lawrence [David Leo Lawrence], who was at that time state chairman, and he was quite angry at people like that. He felt that Carmine DeSapio had not been fair, that there were people who had withheld—in fact, all of the big, big cities in the United States had withheld money. Arvey [Jacob M. Arvey] of Illinois had withheld funds from the National Committee. And they tried their best to

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stymie the National Committee.

In addition to that, Matt McCloskey [Matthew H. McCloskey, Jr.] did not get along well with Paul. Matt was the hundred-dollar-a-plate dinner man, and Paul Butler was the Dollars for Democrats fellow. So these were the ideological difference between these two men, and the fat cat situation was not what Paul Butler felt the Party stood for. It ought to be along the lines of people. And I think that may have been one of the differences between Mr. Butler and the Kennedy people. The Kennedy people felt you had to have money, and you had to have it at the time. I think that was the fundamental difference in why Mr. Butler, although he offered his services to the campaign, it wasn't used to the same extent after the nomination that, in fact, I know, he felt it was used.

STEWART: There never was a reconciliation of any sorts between he and the Kennedys, was there?

CHAPIN: I'm not prepared to say there wasn't. I know that there were several meetings at the White House with Mr. Butler. In fact, one meeting Mr. Butler called me and told me he had been invited to the White House. And I think that the President, the problem with the President—well, I don't think it was the President. I think there were people around the President that didn't particularly like Mr. Butler. I don't think it was the President. In fact, I had no reason to believe that it was any of the Kennedys that disliked Mr. Butler. I think it was some of the people around Mr. Kennedy who prevented Mr. Kennedy from seeing Mr. Butler. I could be wrong about this, but that's the impression I got. [BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

Just mentioning the vice chairman of the Committee, Mrs. Katie Louchheim, who played a very important role with women in the United States both before the campaign and during the campaign. Mrs. Katie Loucheim was very well known in many Negro circles where Negro women had organization or their organizations were reasonably influential. She worked very closely with Congressman Dawson. It was Mrs. Katie Louchheim, I suppose, probably more than anyone else on the Committee staff, that

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had a very close relationship to many, many members on the Hill. In spite of, sometimes, a coolness between the Hill and the National Committee, Mrs. Katie Louchheim was, kind of,

a liaison between the Hill and the.... And she'd done this on her own rather than as a direction from the Chairman. I just thought I'd....

STEWART: This brings to mind, there was a dinner or a party of some sort during the campaign, a gathering of Negro women, and, I believe, it was one of the very few affairs that Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] actually attended. This, possibly, was set up by Mrs. Loucheim. I don't know if you have any knowledge of that or not. In fact, I think it was here in Washington, I'm sure, but it was a fairly successful affair and very unusual because Mrs. Kennedy did come to it, because she wasn't making public appearances at that time....

CHAPIN: At that time, yes. I know of the affair that you speak, and this was done with the suggestion of Mrs. Louchheim and Mrs. Vel Phillips [Vel R. Phillips], who was....

And also—in fact, the guest list was put together by, largely, Mrs. Belford Lawson. Mrs. Belford Lawson played an active role in that situation.

Mrs. Lawson, as you probably know, was active in the Kennedy campaign during the time of the primaries in the several states. One of the states that she had under her wing was Wisconsin, and another state, of course, was Massachusetts. She had a dinner up there in Massachusetts which the Kennedys were very much involved in, and also Mr. Tucker. I don't recall the reason for the dinner, but there was a very outstanding dinner where they brought people in from all over the country to attend that dinner, that is, the Kennedys did, or at least they got there. I can't say who brought them in, but they were there.

STEWART: Well, this was earlier. In fact, this was in the 1958 campaign, I think.

CHAPIN: No. No, no.

STEWART: No? Oh, no.

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CHAPIN: No, no. No, no. I'm talking now about the dinner that was at the Statler Hotel, as I remember, because I don't believe there was a, I don't think there was a Sheraton Hotel there. If there were, I don't remember, but I think it was the Statler Hotel where the dinner was. And the dinner, this was an introduction, by and large, of many important Negro leaders of Senator Kennedy. But these were people that nobody knew whether they were going to be delegates or whatnot, but these were the....

STEWART: Yes, yes. I think I....

CHAPIN: I don't remember the....

STEWART: Because they did have some problems with Negro voters in 1958. There was some concern in Massachusetts—as small a population of Negro

people that are there—there was some concern, I think.

CHAPIN: Yes, well, I understood that. I'm trying to think of the fellow who was there who's a druggist, and he was also a delegate to the convention. His name is—I have it right here. He was very active in that, in both the Kennedy, in all the Kennedy campaigns, he'd been very active. Here's the name of all the coordinators in the United States, right here.

STEWART: All the what?

CHAPIN: All the coordinators. We put together a list of coordinators in every state which we call a civil rights section...

STEWART: Oh, is that right?

CHAPIN: ...state coordinators, yes. I can tell you every leader in the country we used during that period. In Massachusetts was Ruth M. Batson who was the coordinator.

STEWART: I've heard of her, yes.

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CHAPIN: And Herb Tucker was another coordinator up there. And we had a fellow by the name of Hickson, Joseph Hickson, in Springfield, Massachusetts. You probably know of him.

STEWART: Right.

CHAPIN: But, for instance, to give you an idea, in the South, Arthur Shores [Arthur D. Shores] in Alabama, and Oliver Hill [Oliver W. Hill] in Virginia were our coordinators for the South, almost the South as a whole. A lady by the name of Blanche McSmith in Alaska [Blanche Preston McSmith], she was a member of the state legislature. She's a Negro, incidentally, a member of the state legislature in Alaska. In every state we had, in addition to that, somebody who had that, responsible for that state, you see. Oliver Hill was responsible for Alabama, with Arthur Shores being on the spot. Frank Reeves was responsible for Alaska, with Mrs. McSmith being on the spot. So that's how it was done. Now, it didn't mean that Oliver Hill only had that one state. He had the whole South. He had Florida, Alabama, Georgia, states like that. Frank Reeves had these other states. But that will give you some idea of what I was talking about earlier in that direction.

STEWART: I'd like to get a copy of that list. It'd probably give us some suggestions for people we might like to talk to.

CHAPIN: Yes, sure. I see no reason why you can't have a copy of this list. A number

of things here you might like to have a copy of...

STEWART: Yes.

CHAPIN: ...the more and more I look at that. Why don't you cut your machine off just for a minute...

STEWART: Let me ask you the question, then, could you describe some of your activities, especially things that were new, as far as raising funds among Negro people?

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CHAPIN: Yes. We raised some substantial money among Negroes who had previously not contributed to the National Committee. That's not to say they didn't contribute to local candidates and that sort of thing. And we were able to get a thousand dollars from Mrs. Irma Dixon in Maryland who contributed a thousand dollars. Mr. Hobart Taylor contributed a thousand dollars from Houston, Texas. Mr. Simmons, Mr. Jake Simmons [Jake Simmons, Jr.] of Muskogee, Oklahoma, contributed a thousand dollars to the National Committee. Mr. Walden contributed a thousand dollars to the National Committee. And, I believe, one or two others whom I forget at the moment. But these were major contributors, and, you might say, it was a large, an unusual thing to have Negro leaders or Negroes not only supporting the Party but contributing funds to the Party in this direction.

STEWART: Such an effort had never really been made before?

CHAPIN: We'd never made that effort, to the best of my knowledge. No effort had been made, at least from the national Party; it had not made an effort to solicit Negroes. Now, many Negroes were members of what was called the sustaining fund in the Democratic National Committee. And we went out to get Negroes to join the National Committee and pay their way in this direction. I would say that that was another one of the accomplishments of which I'm reasonably proud, that Negroes did contribute to the Party. And they didn't attend just the hundred dollar dinners, or they weren't given tickets. The Negroes bought tickets, and they became part of the club operation.

As you know, there was a special box at the Convention, and there were special privileges for members of the thousand dollar club. And there were Negro members of that club. I went out of my way, largely, to make sure there were Negro members, because I did not want to opposition party to say that this was a segregation operation. So there was every effort made to make sure that there was a real contribution, that it was not paid for by somebody else.

STEWART: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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