

William C. Battle, Oral History Interview – JFK#3, 3/23/1970
Administrative Information

Creator: William C. Battle

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Biographical Note

Battle was Presidential campaign coordinator for Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky for John F. Kennedy (JFK) in 1960 and Ambassador to Australia from 1962-1964. In this interview, Battle discusses the effect of racism and JFK's Catholicism on the 1960 primary and presidential elections in West Virginia and Virginia; JFK's presidential campaigns in those states; Howard W. Smith's control of the House Rules Committee; and Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign, among other issues.

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William C. Battle – JFK#3

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Third of Four Oral History Interviews

with

William C. Battle

March 23, 1970
Charlottesville, Virginia

By Dennis O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: If you'd like to go ahead, we're on tape.

BATTLE: In that paper you have, you'll see a delightful little story that is not too complete. It deals with the religious issue during the West Virginia primary with Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], and, of course, religious problems were amongst our toughest problems in that primary. There was one

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man in West Virginia who probably above all others were revered as a churchman, and that was Bishop Strider, Robert E. Lee Strider. Did we go into this the last time?

O'BRIEN: No, we didn't. This sounds interesting.

BATTLE: Bishop Strider was retired, but he'd been Episcopal bishop of the diocese of West Virginia and was particularly loved in the southern West Virginia coal fields, which was a tough area for us from a religion point of view. It was just happenstance that Bishop Strider's daughter was a secretary in this law office. Her husband had been killed in the war and she'd come to

Charlottesville, and at that point was engaged or just married a very close friend of mine here. She was a secretary in this law office. And, of course, we

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chatted about this. We set up a meeting between John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] and Bishop Strider.

I was working out of Huntington at the time with Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] and flew over to Charleston to the race track where Jack was going to make an address, a big rally there that evening. Just after the address and before we returned to the plane, we detoured and went off to Bishop Strider's. It was prearranged that the Bishop would be glad to talk to Jack Kennedy. We ducked the press, I think. It wasn't by design but it turned out all right.

We went in. He ushered us into this very nice place he had up there, near Charleston, as opposed to Charles Town, you know, Charles Town's up in the panhandle—and a most cordial old gentlemen, just what you would picture, and his wife was delightful.

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We all sat down. He looked Jack Kennedy right in the eye and he said, "Young man, before we start, you should know one thing. I've never voted Republican but once in my life and that was when Al Smith [Alfred E. Smith] was the Democratic nominee." Of course, my heart sank. I thought we had this thing all set up, you know. And he went on, he said, "And I did it strictly because of the religious issue." He said, "Al Smith would not talk about his religion. He would not tell us how he felt. He said that was his business. His religion was his business." And he said, in effect, "I don't think that that can be the case with any public servant. He'd got to be public property." And then he knew he'd set us back pretty much, and he got a big grin on his face. He said, "But you're different. You have discussed this thing openly. I have no question about where you stand. I have

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believed implicitly what you have said to reflect your honest intention of how you'll conduct the office, and I'm ready, willing, and able to do anything I can for you in this election."

We had a press release all ready, a statement for the old bishop all ready. His new son-in-law or son-in-law-to-be had prepared it. He read it over and said, "First rate." He signed it and it was headlines in all the papers the next day and, of course, had tremendous impact in breaking the back of the religious opposition in southern West Virginia.

O'BRIEN: Well, you had responsibility for West Virginia as well as Virginia in the campaign of 1960, didn't you?

BATTLE: Well, this was during the primary.

O'BRIEN: This was for the primary.

BATTLE: This was during the Humphrey primary. I had some responsibility. I was not the coordinator at the Convention for West Virginia.

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As I remember, my states started off: Virginia, Kentucky, and North Carolina.

O'BRIEN: Well, in terms of that West Virginia primary, it's been suggested by a few people who have written about Jack Kennedy, as well as a lot of people who were around him, that he was really quite affected by what he saw in terms of the problems of poverty in the state.

BATTLE: Well, I think he was.

O'BRIEN: Did you see any evidence of this?

BATTLE: Well, sure. We traveled together very much in southern West Virginia and, you know, he would just continuously wonder and—marvel isn't the right word—but, "How can people live in circumstances like this?" I mean, here we are in the greatest nation in the world, the wealthiest nation in the world, and we are letting something like this south of the

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Kanawha River exist in the midst of plenty. You didn't have to go far from Charleston, right across the river, until you got into it. I think he was visibly affected by it. As I recall—and gosh, it's a long ago now—Huntley-Brinkley [Chester Robert Huntley; David Brinkley], just at the beginning of their prominence, did a bit on this as a result of this campaign. There was an old bridge just before you got into Wayne, West Virginia, Wayne County.... I remember that that was the emphasis of one of their news programs. None of them had ever seen anything like it either. It was an education.

O'BRIEN: Well in that primary, how did people respond to a person like Senator Kennedy coming into these small communities? Were they really aware that there was a presidential primary going on?

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BATTLE: Yeah. They were. It's not a large state and, of course, there are a lot of hamlets in the southern areas. Not all of that land is habitable; it's so rugged and rough up the hollows and on the ridges. Maybe people are easier to get to there. Maybe just something exciting, something different, something new brought them out from a drab existence. Of course, many of the leaders and the affluent

people took great exception to his characterizing their state as an undeveloped, poverty-stricken state. But they couldn't do this long, once these things began to be known. You know, obviously there was a proud resentment of anybody putting it on national television, but the facts were there.

O'BRIEN: What do you remember about Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] during this?

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BATTLE: Well, right after the Wisconsin primary, Bob came down. I met him in Washington, we flew to Bluefield. We took a car from Bluefield. I drove him right on through southern West Virginia, just Bob and myself, generally through Logan, Williamson, on up to Huntington—all those coal-mining towns, through the toughest part of the area.

At that point, that was the first Kennedy to go into West Virginia for the purpose of the primary was that trip that Bob and I took through southern West Virginia. I think he realized right then and there what the issue would be. And it was: Get moving. It was: Why? Why this poverty? Why can't we do something about this? It did begin to form on that trip, which was a very long trip. If you just take the towns from Bluefield to Huntington,

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we hit every one of them.

One interesting thing happened, we came to Williamson, which is in Mingo County. I had an old lawyer friend there who is Republican. I called him up—I didn't know anybody else in Williamson—and asked him if he'd have dinner with us when we came through.

O'BRIEN: Who was that? Do you remember?

BATTLE: Bill Hogg [William B. Hogg], H-o-g-g. Bill said he was delighted and he would bring the sheriff down to meet with us and we went to the Elks Club. It was Sheriff Chambers [Howard Chambers], Bill Hogg and myself. The sheriff controlled the country, as so often was the case in those.... He was a Democrat and Hogg was a Republican. I'd talk to Hogg for quite a while about John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and their movement, and he became quite fascinated with it. He

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pitched in. And through his efforts, we gained the support of Sheriff Chambers. It turned out that Hogg was the family attorney and had done a lot of work for Chambers and his family who'd had a lot of trouble. Apparently they were very close friends. From that dinner meeting on, we had the support of one of the leading Republicans and the sheriff of Mingo County, which again was one of the tough areas.

The religion question came up then, and I thought, “Well, this is going to really be tough,” because I didn’t know the Sheriff. We talked about it a little bit, and the Sheriff didn’t say any words, he just sat back and listened. Then he looked at Bob and he said, “Mr. Kennedy, you don’t have to be concerned about the religious issue with me. I’m not a Catholic, and I didn’t know much about them until my mother

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died in a Catholic hospital, and no person has ever gotten the treatment that she got, even though she was not a Catholic. And I feel very strongly about it.” Just a little incident. But still, in bloody Mingo, you know, one of the real.... That’s where the coal mine wars used to take place down there. That’s the way it got’s it name.

O’BRIEN: Did Bob, and the President as well, did they ever really understand the kind of politics that goes in rural Virginia and in West Virginia?

BATTLE: It’s a lot different in rural Virginia and West Virginia. I expect Bob did. I expect Bob did. He was down into it. Of course, Jack was at a much different level. He was having to do things that just didn’t bring him in touch with the day-to-day organization effort and the wherewithal. When we started up there, it was very tenuous.

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That was the primary in which Wally Barron [William W. Barron], who has recently fallen on bad times—all of his people have been indicted—was running for governor. I’ve forgotten what his opposition was. At the end, all of them were putting out their sample ballots ticketed with Kennedy. This was a very definite switch. We had been trying to get ticketed with them because of their control of the local machinery. But later, right at the end, on election day, both candidates for governor were coming out with their sample ballots ticketing them with Kennedy.

O’BRIEN: Did Bob have any special likes or dislikes for any of the organization people in West Virginia during that primary? Anyone that he reacted to, you know, right away that you recall?

BATTLE: Oh, yeah. There were quite a few. And, of course, there were quite a few that had not played part in politics before.

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I’d have to really go back through letters and things to pick up those names. I mean the lines were drawn really. The strong opposition was engendered by Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson]. His friends and Earle Clements [Earle C. Clements] from over in Kentucky were in West Virginia and were working hard for Humphrey. I don’t know

whether there's any secret about that. I've never seen that written too much about, but it would be something that some person interested ought to explore because...

O'BRIEN: Well, if you were going to explore it, how would you start? Is there any particular people that you recall outside of Clements?

BATTLE: Oh, yeah. Well, let's see, the...

O'BRIEN: Or ever told you that they were doing that for Humphrey?

BATTLE: Oh, well I knew it. I knew it because I knew the people. Milton Ferguson [Milton J. Ferguson] in Huntington was one of them that we had a very diffi-

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cult time with. He ultimately was one of the.... All you had to do was look to see the people that were Johnson delegates at the National Convention [Democratic National Convention] and relate it back, you see. Milt Ferguson was a friend of mine, had been a friend of mine. Actually his law partner had been in the PT boats with us, a boy named Phil Baer [Philip A. Baer], in Huntington. Phil was all with us. We never could get Milt. Milt's brother was judge of Wayne and Lincoln Counties and a very powerful judge, Judge Ferguson [Charles W. Ferguson]. He was quite taken with Bob, and I think he gave us some quiet help. I remember that Bob's book, *The Enemy Within*, Bob gave him a personal copy of it and it made quite an impression on him. His son [Charles W. Ferguson III] is now judge. Judge Ferguson's son was a big supporter up in Wayne County and in Lincoln County.

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O'BRIEN: Well, I want to ask you something very, very different and that's to go back in some of the personal as well as political kinds of contacts you might have had with Jack Kennedy or Bob Kennedy starting at the end of World War II, during World War II. You know, we talked about, very briefly, some of the initial contacts. But some of these other contacts that you make leading up to the Convention of '56 and on up to the Convention of 1960, if you can...

BATTLE: I don't believe I can pull much prior to '56 other than just dropping in on John Kennedy as congressman. I don't even remember the years that he was in Congress, do you?

O'BRIEN: Well, it was '46 to '52, when he beat Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge]. Do you ever recall anything he said or anything from those contacts in his office? What were you going to see

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him for?

BATTLE: Oh, nothing, just popping in if I happened to be in Washington. You see, from '47 to '51, I was working in West Virginia, I was in Charleston. I didn't have a whole lot of occasion to be in Washington. I didn't come back here until '51, I guess, after Dad [John S. Battle] had been elected governor. I'm sure that that event accelerated our contacts. But I just can't, you know, drag out anything. When was Jack's wedding? Well, it was the same time as mine because I was getting ready for mine when he had his—that's the reason I couldn't go. I guess, I could trace that back. Well, we've been married sixteen years last fall.

O'BRIEN: 1954.

BATTLE: So he would have been married sixteen years last fall. I think he was married in September, maybe late August.

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O'BRIEN: Well, do you recall any contacts then, personal political contacts?

BATTLE: Nothing political. No, no.

O'BRIEN: Any social contacts where you got a chance to talk to him?

BATTLE: I don't recall the gist of any. I recall going by his office. I recall that we were close enough friends and had maintained a friendship so that when they were married—they were married just before I was—I was invited to all of the events up there and so on but couldn't go. Well, the first vivid recollection that I can pull on right now is when he made the move to achieve the vice presidential....

O'BRIEN: Okay.

BATTLE: And, of course, I wasn't there. I wasn't in Chicago at that time.

O'BRIEN: Okay. How about after '56, from 1956 on until 1960? When's the next time that you see

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him, oh, either talking about politics or on a social occasion?

BATTLE: Well, I don't know the timing of it. Now it's in that paper. A group of us got together at Hickory Hill. He had his people from West Virginia

in to talk about—Bob had them in, Jack appeared, of course—the situation in West Virginia. He had Bob McDonough [Robert P. McDonough] and people like that over. Actually one of the interesting things about that West Virginia primary was, there still was the magnetism of FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt].

O'BRIEN: Is that right?

BATTLE: Young Franklin [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.] could go down through that coal field country and they'd come from everywhere—fantastic—just because it was FDR, junior.

O'BRIEN: And his support then made a lot of difference?

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BATTLE: It's got to have made a lot of difference. He didn't do all that much. You may recall that he broke a bit of bad news on Humphrey's background, reflected that he might have dodged the draft or used means to avoid going in the service, such as teaching or influence. This was very distasteful. It was something that Kennedy had made up his mind not to use although somebody had pretty well documented the background on the thing.

O'BRIEN: In that West Virginia primary do you ever recall the question of anything involving race, or at any time in which perhaps the Kennedys got involved in anything concerning civil rights? Maybe the direction of the Democratic Party in those years?

BATTLE: No. I don't recall that in the West Virginia primary. It would not have been an issue there between Kennedy and Humphrey

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anyhow. And it wasn't much of an issue ever in West Virginia.

O'BRIEN: Yeah. Well, how about your own state here? Of course, you didn't have a primary, but you did have, of course...

BATTLE: A convention.

O'BRIEN: ...a convention. Was there any thinking about moving into the mass meetings in an attempt to get Kennedy people to the Convention prior to the Virginia Beach Convention that year?

BATTLE: It is such a pertinent question, I ought to have a vivid answer for it, but I don't. The only thing I can say—and this is not fact, it's just

instinct—is that the reins were so tightly controlled, we figured that it probably wouldn't do any good and maybe.... Because I don't remember any concerted effort at the local level. Now there was a lot of activity at the state convention, and Kennedy was popular in Virginia at that point. I remember I

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had some difficulty actually becoming a delegate to the state convention as well as to the national convention. This is even after Dad had been governor. My congressman at that time was Smith [Howard W. Smith] and it was Howard Smith who made it possible for me to go to both of these things. He did it knowing full well that I was committed to the Kennedy cause.

I think probably the judgment was that there were enough young people who would be sympathetic to Kennedy—and we knew that Johnson would be the number one choice, no matter what you did at that point, of Virginia. That maybe if you just do the best you can looking to the election—this was the philosophy all the way through. I know that if we can get Jack Kennedy—and Jack agreed with this and this will reflect in some of the writings there—

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in the position that, sure Virginia would like to go for Lyndon Johnson.... Nobody knew Lyndon Johnson, but he was from the South, he was from Texas. In those days in Virginia that's what counted. If we could get Jack in a position where he would be an acceptable number two choice then we would fight it out elsewhere, hoping, of course, to pick up a few delegate votes in Virginia. I told you last time we met about taking Harry Byrd, junior [Harry F. Byrd, Jr.] around to Jack's apartment for lunch and that's also in there.

This was the atmosphere. I told you about the division at the state convention when Almond [J. Lindsay Almond, Jr.] and Byrd factions really got into a hassle. Now until the delegation was instructed, we had a very respectable number of people who would support Kennedy that were going to California.

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O'BRIEN: How did Harry Byrd, Jr. feel about all this? Did you ever really take it with him?

BATTLE: Yeah. Well, you see, I took Harry Byrd, junior—it's junior that I'm talking about—to lunch with Jack earlier. Harry Byrd, junior, because he and Jack were very decent social friends, had been the man that I was talking to more on the Byrd side than any of the rest. He had told me that his judgment so much would depend on Jack's proving his ability to gain votes. And as we talked the last time, the Oregon primary was the same day. But the fact that there had been a total misunderstanding or a deliberate move—I don't know which it was—on the part of Almond and Byrd vis-à-vis the instruction to the delegation....

O'BRIEN: Did you ever see any differences between father [Harry F. Byrd, Sr.] and son on the issue of Kennedy?

BATTLE: No.

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O'BRIEN: You mean Harry Byrd, junior, was his father's son at that point?

BATTLE: Yeah. Always has been. I don't think that if there had been differences, they would have let it appear. Now, of course, Harry was one of the real coordinators of Johnson's effort at Los Angeles. He was at Johnson headquarters most of the time, I was at Kennedy headquarters most of the time. I met all of the caucuses of the Virginia delegation. But after the nomination, Byrd left immediately. Senator Byrd, senior did not attend the convention. He was exploring caves in Switzerland with Henry J. Taylor [laughter]. Senator Byrd, junior, was there.

The night of the nomination, Bob called me and asked me if I could come to Jack's suite first thing the next morning to discuss the vice presidential candidate. And I told him that of course I could, but that I was not a

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political leader in Virginia and would it be all right if I brought one or two people along with me. Certainly it would. Well, what I wanted to do was to bring the titular head of the party, who was the Governor, and Harry, junior, who probably represented much more political power at that time than the Governor did because of this tough situation of first time of integration and the rift between Byrd and Almond on the integration question.

I couldn't find Harry, I mean he'd left. He was not available to go to that meeting. Of course, again, not knowing Johnson, knowing how the Byrds felt and how strong Virginia had been for Johnson, it seemed to me that from the little spyglass I was looking through, the best thing we could do was get Johnson as vice president. I'd talked to Kennedy about that

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many times in the past.

So we went to the meeting. That's all been reported, some accurately and some inaccurately. That's the meeting that Ribicoff [Abraham Alexander Ribicoff] really swung the day, I think. Liberals were there, some conservative people there, some moderate people there. And that's another one of John Kennedy's performances of just going right around the room and listening to everybody.

O'BRIEN: Well in terms of the Convention in Los Angeles, you had those contacts. Did you have any contacts with Bob that stick out in memory

or any other Kennedy people? Let's take people like, well, O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] or O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien]. And Sarge.

BATTLE: Well, I guess Sarge and I were working much closer together. Sarge and I had become quite close and compatible in the West Virginia primary. We understood each other

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and we saw pretty much eye to eye. So I was working mostly with Sarge. He and Bob were my lines of communication from the floor to headquarters. You remember the command post they had set up out there and all their telephones. That's the first time that had ever been done. It was just a magnificent performance. Actually, other than, you know, watching those three delegations which had very little hope of too much Kennedy support, other than doing that—that was my main role I guess.

Then I did stay around for a long time the night of the vice presidential nomination, because it looked like that was going to erupt into a pretty tough fight. I'd been invited out to where Joe Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] was staying—at Miriam Hopkins' place, I guess it was, some estate in Beverly Hills—for dinner. I think Red Fay [Paul B. Fay, Jr.] and I were the

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only ones there that weren't members of the family. I remember I was quite late getting there because I'd stayed on the floor for whatever good it might do. In a move that was apparently not too usual in his character, I came in late to dinner and Mr. Kennedy, Ambassador Kennedy jumped up and came out to greet me and all this, obviously feeling that I had played some significant role in the Johnson nomination, and his point being that it was the smartest political move that Jack had ever made. Those were his words.

O'BRIEN: Do you recall anything else, any contacts or any other conversations you had with Ambassador Kennedy at that point?

BATTLE: No. Just from then on, a very cordial, you know, "appreciated your efforts." He felt that it was the smartest thing Jack could do. And

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there had been a lot of opposition to it, of course. Bob was not sold on it by any manner of means, although once a decision's made, you know, he was a team man.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever hear him question the smartness and judgment of Johnson, to you or....

BATTLE: Not at that time. I think they had difficulty from the beginning, just

personality-wise. They just did things so differently. One was a manipulator and another one was a direct attacker.

O'BRIEN: Well did you see any of that conflict in later years?

BATTLE: Oh, yeah. But, I mean, that's been so much written about and talked about that....

O'BRIEN: Any particular incidents that you remember that you were involved in at all, and you might have been talking to Bob or calling the President, either one?

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BATTLE: I don't believe I ever got any from Jack except his reaction to Johnson's recessing Senate to come back after the Convention, which apparently turned out to be a bad political move. And, you know, Jack was so light with a lot of these very serious problems—his comment to that, I remember very definitely as, "That was not Lyndon's finest hour," when he made that decision.

O'BRIEN: How about the father-son relationship between Ambassador Kennedy and President Kennedy in the years that you knew them?

BATTLE: I've got to say that I was just on the fringe of that, and the only thing I could add would be an impression which was of great mutual respect, great closeness, a desire to be and to remain independent on the part of the son; and also desire to say what he thought, but not to impose his will, on the

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part of the father.

O'BRIEN: Well, passing on to the election of 1960 in Virginia as well as the other areas that you worked in, you were responsible for the campaign. How did you organize the area?

BATTLE: Well, it was quite difficult. We had two campaigns going in Virginia which had to be a bit divisive. Let's go back to the Convention time. I knew that the liberal element of the Democratic Party would try to run the campaign in Virginia. I knew if they did do this that it would completely defeat any effort to gain the support of the Byrd faction or any part of it. I also felt that in order to win Virginia we had to have some of the moderate and more conservative Democrats which made up the Byrd fort. I mean that was just ABCs

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as far as I was concerned. I wasn't interested in promoting anybody's political future in Virginia. I was interested in John Kennedy beating Richard Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon] in Virginia.

With that in mind, I talked to Bob and explained to him in Los Angeles about this. So he asked me to set up a meeting for him with some Virginia people, which I did. Again, Byrd wasn't there, he'd left. But I had State Senator Tom Blanton [Thomas H. Blanton], who was the party chairman, Sidney Kellan [Sidney S. Kellam] who was national committeeman, Governor Almond who was governor, myself, meet with Bob and we explored this whole thing. All three of these party leaders committed in Los Angeles active aggressive support, which was good because Tom Blanton, more than either of the other two, would have been considered of the conservative Byrd type. Kellam was Byrd, yes, but he was also a national Democrat and always had been. So this was a good meeting.

What they did, by mutual

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agreement, Bob said that he would like me to serve as coordinator. Now that meant coordinator between the Kennedy forces at the national level and the campaign organization, whatever it might ultimately be, at the local level in Virginia. This was the first such post that was announced. The purpose was to keep it from fracturing in Virginia and to keep the liberal element and the Byrd element from going in diverse directions and one running the other out of the campaign.

Well, it didn't work. It's been told to me authoritatively, Senator Byrd, senior, felt that it was a move to turn the state over to me. In other words he said several times, "What's Kennedy trying to do? Give this state to Bill Battle?" Nothing was further from the purpose. The purpose was to see that his people had adequate leadership

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roles in the campaign.

The left set up what they call the straight-ticket Democrats in a separate headquarters that was supported by AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization] forces and whatever black leadership there was at that time politically. I suppose that I was suspect to them because Dad had been governor and things of that sort. But again, they completely misread what we were trying to do, either deliberately or not deliberately.

Throughout the whole thing you could see the race between Kennedy and Nixon being subverted to personal political ambitions and desire for leadership roles of certain factions in Virginia. It was just so apparent. This was a sickening thing, because we came close to carrying Virginia. The Lou Harris [Louis Harris] poll showed Virginia to be the worst

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state in the nation when we started, and we pretty near brought it off. We would have if there hadn't been this division.

Well then, the next step was, I've got to think that the organization, the dominant organization said, "Okay, we'll show them," and without consulting me, without asking me, through the Byrd control of the central committee I was named campaign chairman in Virginia for the Democratic campaign. I found this was going to happen about two days before it happened and I did have time to appear at the central committee meeting and say thank you, and "I hope you'll help me," you know, which was about the last that was done. They did not provide one penny for the campaign fund. They gave me a steering committee that was made up of one representative from each congressional district, which met one time. And

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the reason I didn't call it anymore was that the minute we'd concluded our first meeting, quite a few of them went across the street to the Democrats for Ike [Dwight D. Eisenhower] organization meeting. This was a fact. I mean, this is what I was faced with.

The only person that put any official Democratic Party funds in our hands was, believe it or not, Howard W. Smith. And he sent, I think, five thousand dollars from the eighth congressional district coffers to be used in the campaign.

O'BRIEN: Is that right. Well, a point I'm curious on, talking about the left and the liberal element, let's get down to specifics. Did Governor Almond see this as an opportunity to build an antiestablishment kind of game?

BATTLE: No. No. The left at that time was led by Pickens Miller [Francis Pickens Miller].

O'BRIEN: Pickens Miller?

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BATTLE: And, of course, he couldn't see it in his interest that I have any success. See, he'd been Dad's opponent in the primary for governor. He'd also run against Byrd several times and certain labor people. Now the one break that I got in this whole thing, which maybe they don't know about to this day, is that the fellow that they selected as coordinator or chairman for their effort, Ray Niblack, was a very close friend of mine. He was the man who married Bishop Strider's daughter, you see. So what could have been completely ruptured came together. We worked together very closely. Through the efforts of Ray and myself, we were able to keep the official Democratic campaign and the straight-ticket campaign coordinated together. Now I don't know that anybody to this day knows how closely we were working together at that point.

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O'BRIEN: Well, where are you getting your money to finance the campaign in Virginia?

BATTLE: From two sources mainly—Richard Reynolds [Richard S. Reynolds] and Claude Jessup [Claude A. Jessup]. I don't think we had but less than a hundred thousand dollars. In those days that was right much.

O'BRIEN: Where was Reynolds getting it?

BATTLE: Well, he was just raising it from his family and his contacts. Reynolds is one of those fine fellows who says, "Look, I'm a businessman. My company was made under the Democratic administration and with the help of the Democratic programs. I'm not turning my back." He said that more often than not. He stuck with us, and he was treasurer of the campaign. I'm sure he's still got some money owed to him that people promised if he'd put it up that they'd come through with it.

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O'BRIEN: Well, is there any labor money at all coming in for the campaign?

BATTLE: I couldn't see it. Now of course, you had the benefit of everything that was being done nationally. The television was national. There was some locally raised money, of course, used at the local level for television spots and things like that. But we were hard pressed to keep a headquarters and staff going really.

O'BRIEN: Well, turning to just a couple of issues in that campaign and we just barely touched on it last time, but you do have the incident where race does come up. Now as I understand it, that's the letter of Blackie Moore [E. Blackburn Moore]. Now, before that came up, was there ever any discussion between you and let's say, Bob Kennedy or anyone in the campaign about how to handle the issue of race if it did come up or civil rights if it did come up?

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In other words, Bob made a rather politically astute kind of answer, as I understand it, to that. Maybe you're confused. Was it you? What'd you say? "Take the most qualified guy and..."

BATTLE: Yeah, that was the only answer we could give and that's the one that I suggested to Jack and he approved it, see. That came up just before he was due into Virginia; it was timed that way. I showed him the letter on the plane, either in Norfolk or Roanoke. His reaction was not "tapeable." [Laughter] And I told him what I thought we ought to say. I had written it out, and he didn't change a thing in it. Now, there is one....

And I think that resulted from a phrase that I'd given Bob at the Convention when we were meeting with some people from Georgia; maybe South Carolina, too. You see, these were two states that we had good friends in—Bob Troutman [Robert A. Troutman] in

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Georgia and Fritz Hollings [Ernest F. Hollings] in South Carolina. We'd get a chance to meet with some of the delegates from time from those states. The question always came up as to how you're going to handle appointments, race-wise. And I think, as I recall it, one night in Los Angeles, I just took it onto myself. Bob was sitting there pondering it, and I said the best qualified man for the position after consultation with the local leaders whether it be a judge or whatever it might be. And I think it's documented in the.... But I recall it came up twice and apparently Bob accepted what I said the first time because the second time it came up, he just turned to me and said, "Bill tell them how you think we ought to handle that." Of course, it got him.... That was me talking, not him, but, also, I don't think

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he would have done it that way if he hadn't approved. That was pretty much what we said in Virginia in answer to this letter of Mr. Moore.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever huddle on the religious question in Virginia before it really became a national issue, a major issue?

BATTLE: Well, of course, it already had been because there was so much publicity given to these primaries, and particularly the West Virginia primary. Sure we did. I don't remember.... When was that Houston ministerial.... Was that before the...

O'BRIEN: Yeah. I've listened to that and I believe it was after the Convention, wasn't it?

BATTLE: I think it was, but it might not have been. I know that during the.... You know, Strider had kept up enough to know that he could support Kennedy, a Catholic without any qualms at all about

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secrecy or who he was beholden to, how he would handle his office, any of these charges that were always made. We talked about it constantly.

I remember that Jack's first appearance was in northern Virginia, over at that football field in Alexandria. I met with him that afternoon and he asked me what he should talk about. I told him that I thought he ought to hit again foursquare this religious thing and put it to rest before it became raised by his opponents. His judgment was different, and he was right. Again, that's documented in there and a much clearer recollection than I have as to what he

said; in effect, that he was not going to be the one to raise it. He thought it would be wrong if in his first address he did raise it. It would look as though he were making religion an issue, and he didn't want to do that.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever make any attempts, in your direction of the campaign, to get to the bottom of some of the

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sort of fringe opposition, particularly on this issue of religion, and sort of trace it down to where it was coming from?

BATTLE: My best recollection of that is that the hate stuff was being mailed somewhere out of Texas. Is that right?

O'BRIEN: Well, I was in Nebraska in those years. And some of it was coming out of Denver and some out of California.

BATTLE: As a matter of fact, Denver, yes. That's right.

O'BRIEN: There's quite a few, as I recall.

BATTLE: We were flooded with hate literature. There's no doubt about that.

O'BRIEN: Did the Republicans ever get associated with that sort of thing during the campaign here in Virginia?

BATTLE: You now, I don't even know who the campaign manager was. The situation was such

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in Virginia that the silence and the obvious but quiet opposition of the Byrd organization was sufficient in those days to turn the election. I don't know if the Nixon headquarters—they're bound to have had Nixon headquarters in Richmond—I don't know who was running them or what about them.

O'BRIEN: Well, I'm curious about area...

BATTLE: Democrats for Nixon were really running the show, and these were old Byrd people, the Democrats for Nixon. I don't recall any of those people—most of whom were pretty responsible business people and they're good people; you may disagree with them politically—I don't recall any of them raising the Catholic issue. There were ministers who did, of course, and one of them was

probably the most influential minister in Virginia, Dr. Adams [Theodore F. Adams] of the Baptist Church, I think it's the First Baptist Church in Richmond,

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who said that he would not support a Catholic and then supported Nixon.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever feel any pressures—I should ask you this before the campaign as well—did you ever have any pressures or any strong attempts to get your support for, first of all, other candidates before the Convention in Los Angeles?

BATTLE: No pressures, but Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] was active. Bill Blair [William McCormack Blair, Jr.] had been a friend of mine in law school, and, of course, we had worked for Stevenson when he was the nominee, and so on. But it never materialized, and I think that was so characteristic of Stevenson's national political life, you know—it just never materialized. Oh, a little bit for Symington [Stuart Symington II]. Pat Jennings [William Pat Jennings], who was congressman from the Ninth District in Virginia, was a Symington man to begin with.

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O'BRIEN: Well, in reflecting back on the actual vote on election day, as well as the kind of support that you got before that, taking some geographic areas of the state—first of all, the tidewater, or it's sometimes called the black belt, I guess, the so-called black belt area?

BATTLE: That's not tidewater.

O'BRIEN: Well, it's the southern part.

BATTLE: Southside of Virginia.

O'BRIEN: What was the campaign like here? I guess is the question. Do you recall?

BATTLE: Of course, southside is pretty traditionally Democratic and I believe Jack carried the Fourth District, which is Wat Abbitt's [Watkins M. Abbitt] district. He did well in tidewater. As I recall, we were hard pressed. I was almost a candidate; I mean, I was making the speeches, I was going everywhere, I was trying to run the headquarters and do all of this and

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all of that and contact the people. We had some good help but nothing in the way of an organization. Goodness, we just didn't have it.

O'BRIEN: This is something that I've asked you—well, I think we have touched on very briefly, and I just don't know how deep it is in here—did you have any moments with Harry Byrd, senior, in that fall, leading up to the campaign, in which you talked the candidacy of Kennedy over and...

BATTLE: Oh, I called on him several times to ask for his help. Always cordially treated and always noncommittal. Most of my contact with him was after the election.

O'BRIEN: How about some of the others here in the state? I'm sure you had some conversations with Governor Almond.

BATTLE: Yeah, well, of course...

O'BRIEN: What was he telling you to do?

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BATTLE: Oh, he didn't offer advice. He's the type that is a very, very powerful speaker, flamboyant political speaker, phrasemaker. Of course, he was busy working as hard as he could, but for the ticket, which again had an awful lot to do with Byrd not doing anything. I mean the rift was that bad. Byrd just wasn't going to see anything that Lindsay Almond was heading up be successful. That is what happened in Virginia Beach, that is one of the things that happened in the campaign, and it shows up later on when Almond comes up for the judgeship. That's in there.

O'BRIEN: There's one thing I have here. It's a note I took and I can't remember why, but the names Frank Bond and Virgil Goode [Virgil H. Goode] are associated with it, and somehow or another the Kennedys get associated with the two.

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Is that...

BATTLE: Frank Bond?

O'BRIEN: Bond and Virgil Goode. Does that have any meaning to you?

BATTLE: Virgil Goode was one of the leaders of the straight-ticket operation. He was always an anti-Byrd Democrat from out in Franklin County,

southwestern part of the state. But I don't know anything more than the fact that he was a—he and Pickens Miller were probably the cochairman of the straight-ticket.

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

O'BRIEN: You were talking about Lyndon Johnson's campaign swing through the state and the dinner for the...

BATTLE: Yeah, well, he came in to campaign and what should have been a very convincing and telling blow for us sort of turned into a dud.

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It started off quite well. I met him at the airport and had the motorcade—Richmond Airport—went on down through Hopewell where we had a big rally. It's an industrial town southeast of Richmond in the Fourth District, which was not a good district. We had a fine rally on the courthouse green there, and a big turnout—very successful, very enthusiastic. Motorcade came on back into Richmond and the crowd turnout along the way was extremely good. Senator Johnson was exceptionally good. He would stop the motorcade and get out and talk to groups of people, and he was going over big. It took us a long time to make the run because of this.

Now, we got back to Richmond and took him to the John Marshall [John Marshall Hotel] for a little rest. This was middle of the afternoon, I guess, or late afternoon. I had arranged what I thought was going to be a most significant thing, and that was to have the

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leaders of the General Assembly in Virginia, who were the local Democratic leaders, meet with Senator Johnson for a little socializing and intimate conversation so they'd get to know him, and with his ability as a politician and a leader, he could really bring them around to aggressive campaigning. We were then going to have dinner and go to where he had to make a speech. Well he didn't show the informal get-together. He stayed up in his room, and in spite of all my protestations to his staff, he didn't come down. He didn't get to the dinner. It was very embarrassing actually. It turned a lot of people who were very significant against us really who could have been had for us, because they came there to talk to the vice presidential nominee, a senator from Texas, a majority leader, and

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they knew he was up in his hotel room and wouldn't come down.

So he showed up—it was being held at a different place from the John Marshall. He arrived there very, very late and spent about fifteen minutes talking to a group of nurses who were rooming right across the street from where we were having the dinner. He got there in time for coffee after dessert, and I recall, with this group—maybe fifteen minutes with

them—when they'd come from all over the state and they were political leaders in the state, for a real honest to goodness get-together. He talked to them and he pacified them to some extent. But we were never able to crank that crowd up again. Then we went on to his speech and he did a good job, had a good reception, big crowd. But where we could have scored heavily with people that we needed,

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we fizzled.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever relate this to Bob or, say, Kenny O'Donnell or Larry O'Brien or any of these people in the campaign? Or Shriver?

BATTLE: I expect so, but I don't recall it. I think I would have. Probably under the guise of telling them how not to run a campaign. [Laughter]

O'BRIEN: Yeah, or lessons to be learned. Did Vice President Johnson, or Senator Johnson I should say at that point, ever make any attempt to get the support of the Byrd machine by going to, let's say, Senator Robertson [Absalom Willis Robertson] or Senator Byrd at that time?

BATTLE: I don't think he did. I don't know of it if he did. Certainly if he did, it was not effective. And yet he and Byrd professed to be such bosom buddies, you know, in every

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way.

O'BRIEN: Well then, in terms of the President and his appearances in Virginia in the election of 1960, how was the response of Virginians to the President?

BATTLE: It was fantastic. That's pretty well covered on that tape you've got in your pocket. He must have had twenty thousand upwards in Norfolk and equally that many in Roanoke, outdoor rallies.

O'BRIEN: Did this leave any impression on the Byrd machine and people in the Byrd machine, political leaders in the state at all, the ability of a man to...

BATTLE: Well, of course, this was right at the end of the campaign, you see. That was the last week of the campaign. It made an impression on him because he spent a great deal more time both at Norfolk and Roanoke than had been

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scheduled simply because of the enthusiasm and the numbers that turned out.

O'BRIEN: Last time we covered the appointment of some of the judges and some of the patronage appointments in the state. I guess we did that pretty well unless there's something that you might recall.

BATTLE: Well, of course, we didn't get into the Almond bit, I don't believe, but that's on the tape.

O'BRIEN: Oh, that is on the tape? Right. Okay.

BATTLE: And it can be amplified if you need amplification once you get to it.

O'BRIEN: Okay. Fine. Gee, I have a number of questions here, but I think in some of the things that we've talked about today, we've gone through them.

Let's pass on to the House [House of Representatives] Rules thing. We just barely got into it last time. You related the story

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about Judge Smith's willingness to go along. I've heard it suggested... Well, let's put it this way: What is the influence of Judge Smith on Senator Byrd at this point in the early sixties?

BATTLE: I expect that in the early sixties Judge Smith would have been effective with Senator Byrd had he cared to use his effectiveness. They had not been close over the years. Judge Smith had wanted very badly to go to the Senate when Robertson went to the Senate, and Byrd threw it to Robertson rather than to Howard Smith. But in the closing days of their careers, it's perfectly apparent that they were becoming quite close again. But I don't think there was that much communication between them.

O'BRIEN: Well, I noticed in one recent piece of literature, in fact that the Wilkinson [J. Harvie Wilkinson III] book on the Byrd machine [*Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics, 1945-66*] recently put out, he makes the sug-

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gestion that Judge Smith was Byrd's brains. Do you think that's a fair comment at all?

BATTLE: No. I don't. No, I don't. I think that doesn't go into the personal

relations that the two men had. Judge Smith was a brilliant tactician on the floor. I think that if anyone ever studied his career, they would find that a lot of his effectiveness came from the fact that he was doing the job that a lot of liberals wanted done but couldn't afford to do themselves and he was taking the heat for it. A lot of them were very much obligated to Judge Smith. He was a powerful man, there's no doubt about that, in the House.

O'BRIEN: Well, now, you play a rather important role in attempting to bring the two together, bringing the sides together on this thing.

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Who do you talk to about the House Rules problem, in a sense, within the Administration?

BATTLE: Larry O'Brien.

O'BRIEN: What do you recall in those conversations with him?

BATTLE: Well, basically the purpose for expanding the committee, which was to make it possible for legislation to get on the floor. Secondly, the most vividly recollection I have, of course, is relaying to him Judge Smith's offer. The only thing I can give you is, Larry's then reaction was, "That seems eminently fair. Let's see what we can do."

But it got shot down somewhere along the line, and the only thing I have is hearsay as to how it got shot down. I believe that that hearsay comes from Ken O'Donnell who wanted Judge Smith's scalp—there's no doubt about

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that; I'm sure that shows up in your research—and who apparently was convinced, as ultimately was the White House, by Sam Rayburn [Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn] that you could not rely on Judge Smith's word. This wasn't so.

Had the agreement been reached much of the Administration, back legislation would have come on the floor that ultimately didn't come on the floor. When the agreement wasn't reached, you had a very severe breach of two of the oldest friends in the House—Smith and Rayburn—and you had a man that was, by George, determined then for more reasons than one to be unavailable to the Administration and that was Judge Smith.

O'BRIEN: Did you talk to Judge Smith about it afterwards?

BATTLE: Do you have the timing of that? My recollection is that...

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O'BRIEN: It is in early 1961.

BATTLE: Is it?

O'BRIEN: Yeah. And it sort of drags on.

BATTLE: It drags on because it seemed to me that right at the time I was.... No, I guess the Peace Corps bit was just when I was getting ready to go to Australia.

Judge Smith figures right prominently in a lot of interesting things. One is his relationship with Bob Kennedy. You know Bob had a garment workers' union hall, planning hall meeting in New York about two or three o'clock in the morning. During the violence of the campaign, speaking off the cuff said that there were some guys they were going to get rid of that had been forestalling progressive legislation. He named Judge Smith, specifically, as one of those guys they were going to get rid of—

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not calculated to win the old Judge's favor.

O'BRIEN: The Judge knew about it?

BATTLE: Oh, it was headline news. It shouldn't have happened. I talked to Bob and Jack Kennedy about it. Jack called up Judge Smith and apologized and so did Bob. And I told the Judge, I said, "Judge, you and Bob don't agree on a lot of things political, but you are very much alike. You are very direct. You are very honest. You are very hard hitting and you don't back down in front of pressure. I'd like you fellows to get to know each other." I remember telling him this. And I told Bob the same thing—that with the proper approach, he could certainly understand Judge Smith a lot better than he was understanding him.

This was just about the time I went to Australia. I'll never forget coming back on a visit after one of those SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization]

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conferences, dropping in on the old Judge and saying to him, "Judge, how are you and Bob getting along these days?" And he sat back with his big cigar and his bushy eyebrows, put on a stern look and he said to me, "That little polecat." He says, "You know, you can't help but like him." With that used in a very endearing way, I knew that he and Bob had opened communications and although they would disagree on many things, there were many things they'd agree on. I think if you'd talk to Judge Smith, you'd find today that he feels had Bob not been shot, he would have won the nomination and the election.

O'BRIEN: Is that right? How did he stand in '68? Was he at all willing to support Bob Kennedy?

BATTLE: Oh, I would probably doubt it. I don't know what he would have done.

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O'BRIEN: You mentioned the Peace Corps thing. Was there something about the Peace Corps?

BATTLE: Yeah. Judge Smith led the debate on the floor to increase their appropriations the second time around. I was working with Sarge on this and got him to do it; not got him to do it, but urged him to do it and discussed it with him and all that. It was quite a debate. You'll find in the *Congressional Record* the text of it which is entertaining. When Colmer [William Meyers Colmer] of Mississippi, who had been the Judge's old sidekick got up and castigated him for his joining with the bad guys and giving away all the money, the Judge's reply was just terrific. It's in the *Congressional Record*.

O'BRIEN: I wasn't aware of it.

BATTLE: And, of course, the Judge and Sarge became very good friends. When Sarge was up

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there working on Peace Corps legislation, the Judge saw him wandering around the halls one day and found out he didn't have any place to hang his hat or office, and he made the Rules Committee [House Rules Committee] office available to him.

O'BRIEN: Is that right.

BATTLE: He said, "Now this doesn't mean I'm going to vote for your legislation, but use any of these facilities you want."

O'BRIEN: He must be a very kind man in many ways.

BATTLE: Well, you know if things had worked a little differently.... He was not the negative type; he could have done a lot of positive things. He was worried about the direction the country was going in, yeah; all of those things. But if he had been on the inside, he could have had tremendous influence. Of course, Byrd

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could have, too. I mean at the outset, John Kennedy was very anxious to have Senator Byrd's support. But it seemed it was easier to be against than it was to go in and be constructively for something, whether it was for what the Administration was or for something else.

O'BRIEN: Sure. I was wondering about the election of 1961. Did the White House, did the President, or did Bob Kennedy or anyone on the staff take a concern or get involved in that election of 1961, the governor's race?

BATTLE: Here?

O'BRIEN: Yeah. Harrison [Albertis S. Harrison, Jr.] was elected in 1961?

BATTLE: Yeah. No, I don't think so.

O'BRIEN: You had a pretty good friendship with Army Boothe [Armistead L. Boothe] over the years, haven't you?

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BATTLE: Yeah.

O'BRIEN: He ran, was it for lieutenant governor that year?

BATTLE: Yeah.

O'BRIEN: Was there any involvement of White House people or interest in his campaign in Washington?

BATTLE: No, I don't think so. I don't think they got involved in it too much.

O'BRIEN: Were there any other legislative issues that you can recall on the national scene, or even state issues, before you went to Australia as ambassador? Is there anything that you might have become concerned with or attempted to communicate with Judge Smith or Senator Byrd?

BATTLE: No. I don't reckon there is that I could recall.

O'BRIEN: Well, we did mention the appointment of Almond. Did you go into that on the...

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BATTLE: It's on that tape you've got.

O'BRIEN: It's in the tape.... Oh, that's right. Coming to the election all the way up to 1966, you manage Senator Spong's [William B. Spong, Jr.] campaign, don't you? Does Bobby Kennedy take a interest in this at all?

BATTLE: No.

O'BRIEN: How about your putting together...

BATTLE: They were interested and I think Johnson was interested—Johnson and Robertson were not particularly close—but there was no participation.

O'BRIEN: In working in that campaign, did you put together any of your old contacts from the election of 1960?

BATTLE: Oh, yeah. Yeah, sure. You know, I was the only one in there that had any statewide exposure and that's where it had come from. We did use

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many of the people, the young people. Of course it was quite a different situation. There you had Boothe running against Byrd in the same primary. See, you had two United States Senate seats being contested in the same primary. You had Boothe against Byrd and Spong against Robertson—Boothe with a much more liberal image than Spong, and Robertson being quite elderly and not a good campaigner. You also had George Rawlings [George C. Rawlings, Jr.] defeating Howard Smith in the primary in the Eighth District.

What happened, and it was a very nice political setup for Spong, was that Boothe and Rawlings between them brought out every liberal anti vote in the state and that anti vote, which always had been at about 40 to 43 percent of the vote, went to Spong, Spong inherited.

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We were able to pick up the balance from younger guys coming along—our types that had been in school together or had worked for Kennedy or the moderates that said, “Well, by George, Senator Robertson's been there long enough. It's a new day. Let's get some new blood up there.” We were able to squeak it out by six hundred and some votes.

O'BRIEN: Well, does Senator Kennedy or any of his staff contact any people in the state that they've had political associations with to urge them to get in the campaign?

BATTLE: No, but I don't think it was necessary. I think that my association with the Kennedys was so fresh at that time—just having come back from

Australia and things of that sort—that it was perfectly apparent. Plus the fact that most of their people or any of

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their people would have been for us anyhow.

O'BRIEN: Well, what I was leading up to now is the primary in 1968 which, of course, you cannot really get involved in. Did you feel much pressure to take over the delegate hunt in Virginia...

BATTLE: For Bob?

O'BRIEN: ...for Bob Kennedy in 1968?

BATTLE: No pressure. One of the great indices to Bob's motivation and personality comes into play here. I've always thought that Bob was one of the most misunderstood, misconstrued people in public life. Ruthless, I don't think so. I think that he was a violent opponent if he thought he was right and you were wrong. He was a tireless attacker against what he thought was wrong or illegal.

But when I started thinking of running—oh, and this was early '68, I guess—I talked to

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him, and he wasn't going to run for the nomination. Then one day in '68, it's got to be, probably in the spring, early spring maybe, my wife [Frances Barry Battle] and I were coming back—we'd been up to Washington to a northern Virginia Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner one Saturday night. We were just driving home. We were coming out 123 [Route 123] and I just said, "Let's stop in and see how Bob and Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] are." We hadn't seen them in a while. "Maybe they're home, maybe they're not." And they were.

Bob was meeting with Kaiser [Edgar F. Kaiser] and Louis Oberdorfer [Louis F. Oberdorfer]. They were putting together this concept of industry going into depressed areas, Bedford-Stuyvesant type thing, and creating jobs and so on. They continued their meeting. Then Mr. Kaiser and Louis came out, we had a pleasant chat, and

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they left.

Then Bob and Ethel and Barry and myself sat around the dining room table and had a cup of coffee and started talking, and I started listening. After Bob had talked for a little while, I said, "Bob, by George, you're going to run. You've made up your mind to run." I said, "Let me know these things because I'm still flexible and we both can't go. I mean it just can't be."

And he said, in effect, that he had. His reasoning was that he had decided previously not to run because he did not want to be charged with dividing the party, with handing it over to the Republicans, with attacking the chosen leader, the President, the Democratic Party. His judgment was that he wouldn't do it, that he would wait. But with the advent of McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy], he could see

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that the party had already been divided. He could see from a political point of view that his base of young people was being eroded by McCarthy, that McCarthy, in his judgment, did not have the substance to do the job, and really it was a very serious situation. Inasmuch as the issues had been raised and the party had been divided, he was going to get into it.

Now this was before the New Hampshire primary. I think that Bob would have come off better if, having made the decision, he'd made it public prior to that primary win by McCarthy. Because it then looked like he was really just coming in to capitalize on the progress that McCarthy had made. So we chatted along and that was the upshot of that little social gathering.

I didn't hear any more from Bob. I was busy, and he was busy. He made his announcement over at the Capitol. The he went on

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an eighteen-hour-a-day tour of the West Coast. I had a phone call in this office one morning from Bob in Portland, Oregon. It was ten o'clock here which means it was seven o'clock in the morning there. And he was sitting in his bathtub.

Now here's a guy that had been going eighteen hours a day—I don't know how long—running for the presidency of the United States, sitting in his bathtub, getting ready for another hard day and calling me back in Virginia to tell me that he was very anxious for me to be successful in what I was doing and to stay a million miles away from his campaign. He knew it would be death in Virginia to me. He said, "Just tell them that you were a friend of my brother's and he's gone and that was that and that you're not involved." I said, "Well, Bob, I'm not going to do that. Let's just watch it and see how she works."

But the point is that I've never seen a politician, ruthless or not ruthless, that would do a

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thing like that. I could have helped him. He couldn't have carried Virginia probably, but I could have been a significant help to him. Most of them will take all the help they can get without regard of what it does to the guy that's helping them. But here he is out there and thinking about this, which I wasn't even worried about, made a very definite impression on me.

Then I went forward with my plans. I talked to Ted about Bob's situation.

O'BRIEN: This is Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen]?

BATTLE: Ted Kennedy [Edward Moore Kennedy].

O'BRIEN: Oh, Ted Kennedy.

BATTLE: I told him that I thought the best man they could get who would do an aggressive job would be Armistead Boothe. And I asked Armistead if he would take it, and he said he'd be honored. I took Armistead over to meet with Ted at Ted's office, and there it was—Army had it and was running with it from then on.

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O'BRIEN: Let me bounce a few names off you. The thing I'm curious about is whether these people in a sense have some continuity in Virginia politics from 1960, or whether they're new people in '68. In the First District it was a guy by the name of McAvoy [James McAvoy] that was the Robert Kennedy coordinator in 1968.

BATTLE: He was a public relations type at Newport Shipbuilding [Newport Shipbuilding Company] that wanted to get active. He was restless in what he was doing. He was obviously strong for Kennedy. I think he called me and I put him again in touch with Army. I don't think that that has any real political significance.

O'BRIEN: How about John Fahey [John H. Fahey]? Was he active in 1960?

BATTLE: I don't believe he was.

O'BRIEN: In the Second District it was a fellow by the name of Breck Arrington.

BATTLE: Yeah. Breck would have been a very young guy in '60. He probably was active in the

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Young Democrats at that time. He's now moved to Texas.

O'BRIEN: How about in the Third District? There is a man by the name of Allen Wurtzell.

BATTLE: Allen was probably relatively new on the scene.

O'BRIEN: In the Fourth District there is a number of people. Milton Parsons?

BATTLE: I don't know.

O'BRIEN: How about John Kelly, Gilbert France [Gilbert Francis], James Harrison?

BATTLE: No. Well, Jimmy Harrison was active in '60. Francis probably was too. Francis it is, Gilbert Francis. Gilbert was a pretty liberal guy. He would have been strong Kennedy in '60 from southside—probably an antiorganization type. Jimmy Harrison, a lawyer in Hopewell, he has been very active in '60 and has set up the Johnson visit to Hopewell that was a success.

O'BRIEN: How about Paul Perkins, William Carter and Richard Railey [Richard E. Railey]? Do those names mean anything?

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BATTLE: Yeah. Not all that much, antiestablishments.

O'BRIEN: Were these people, let's say, with the....

BATTLE: Railey was a Kennedy man in '60. I doubt that Carter or Perkins took much part.

O'BRIEN: Did any of them work with that—what's the name of that group?

BATTLE: The straight-ticket?

O'BRIEN: The straight-ticket group?

BATTLE: Dick Railey might have, although as I recall it, he was very helpful in setting up some meeting for us in southside Virginia, which was a difficult time at that point.

O'BRIEN: How about Virginia Hall? Does that name...

BATTLE: Yes. She's in Martinsville. She's a newspaperwoman down there, active around at political gatherings. She was probably active in '60.

O'BRIEN: How about Leonard and I'm not sure of the spelling on this, Leonard Machtinger?

BATTLE: Whereabouts?

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O'BRIEN: In the Sixth District? It's handwritten out and there is no...

BATTLE: I don't know who that would be.

O'BRIEN: Lind, Mason [Mason Lind]?

BATTLE: Tom Mason [Thomas B. Mason].

O'BRIEN: Was he active in 1968, do you recall?

BATTLE: I don't know. He had been appointed U.S. Attorney for the western district of Virginia by John Kennedy. Is that who you are referring to?

O'BRIEN: In the Seventh District: Gerry Tremblay [Gerald Tremblay] and Frank O'Neill [Frank A. O'Neill].

BATTLE: Gerry and Frank are right here in Charlottesville. Gerry was a classmate of Bob's in law school. Gerry's from Nashua, New Hampshire, and he was strong Kennedy all the way.

O'BRIEN: In the Eighth District: Henry Mackall [Henry C. Mackall] and Rawlings.

BATTLE: George Rawlings is the guy that beat Judge Smith in.... There developed a move in this thing early on in Bob's campaign by what you might call the Howell [Henry E. Howell, Jr.] wing of

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the Democratic Party to take over the campaign. They wanted a foot in the door with Johnson, they wanted a foot in the door with McCarthy, and one with Kennedy. And Army Boothe was by far the most responsible liberal in the crowd. They tried to muscle in around him too. That would have been George Rawlings.

O'BRIEN: How about Edgar Bacon in the Ninth District?

BATTLE: Edgar's a great Democrat. He was a great Kennedy man. He was a great Spong man. He supported me strongly. He's up in Lee County and he's a political power up there. He's in the House of Delegates from Lee County.

O'BRIEN: In the Tenth District, how about Joe Hart, Charles Gray, Frances Cox, and Jim Gibbons?

BATTLE: Oh, that's a pretty good group. Joe Hart, I think, was a friend of Bob's.

Frances Cox was the treasurer of Fairfax City, and a reliable Democrat with friends in the organization and the anti group. A good

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gal to have, particularly for Bob. Because it moves over into the other area. She'd been in there in '60. I don't know the others.

O'BRIEN: There's a fellow here in the law school at the University of Virginia by the name of Mason Willrich.

BATTLE: I don't think he was even here in '60. May be wrong, but I don't think he was.

O'BRIEN: How about Arundel [Nicholas Arundel]?

BATTLE: He's up in northern Virginia. Nick, I don't think was around, active in '60. He runs a couple of newspapers and a radio station up there. And he was very aggressively Robert Kennedy.

O'BRIEN: Well, in going over these, I was just wondering about the transition period in eight years, you know. And this sounds like it's for the most part a new group of people.

BATTLE: Well, it would be because, in the first place, we didn't have many in '60. And Jack, frankly, when he was running was very much more popular in Virginia than Bob. Bob had been the ice breaker for Jack and he had had to do a lot of tough jobs. He hadn't gained any popularity in

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Virginia at that time. So there've been a lot of people that would have been for Jack that you couldn't have gotten out front at that stage of the game for Bob.

O'BRIEN: Did the question ever come up in 1968 about what to do in terms of the mass meetings in Virginia, the selection of people for the state convention as to how to approach the...

BATTLE: Not to my knowledge, but I'm sure it did because there were very active McCarthy people and there were very active Kennedy people.

O'BRIEN: Well, the Kennedy and the McCarthy people get together in certain places, don't they?

BATTLE: Yeah, but not all that much really.

O'BRIEN: Did the question every come up, particularly in the counties that are more heavily black than others, do you ever recall anyone asking you whether it might or might not be a good idea to pack these meetings with blacks?

BATTLE: No.

O'BRIEN: At all?

BATTLE: No, you see. What happened to me, I had hoped that my race wouldn't get started

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until after the presidential thing was over. And then Howell announced and Pollard [Violet McDougall Pollard] announced. Or vice versa, Pollard announced and then Howell announced. And they started way back in June right when we should have been putting our attention on the presidential race. What was the date of Bob's death?

O'BRIEN: It's June second, isn't it?

BATTLE: Was it?

O'BRIEN: It's right there at the California primary. I think it's June second or June third. June second seems to stick in my mind. I wish I could remember dates.

Well, when this whole thing started, when the Robert Kennedy campaign started in Virginia, did you make any recommendations to Bob? Or did you make any recommendations to Army Boothe, and how it should be waged? What kind of strategy at all? Or did they tell you or did you talk to them? Did they give you any indication

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of what they were up to and the way they thought it should be run?

BATTLE: Well, I think that all agreed that it had to be done separately from the gubernatorial race. I think that certainly my recommendation to Ted, and that means to Bob, that they accept Army as their chairman in Virginia was based on the fact that he had the markings of a progressive liberal fellow. And yet he was a highly respected lawyer, highly respected lay worker in the Episcopal Church, and one who knew the kamikaze tactics of some of the left that would have been disastrous if Bob had gotten involved with. And he agreed with that. His effort was to get the people to know Bob Kennedy as Bob Kennedy, not as *Time* [*Time Magazine*] wrote about him or as the Richmond newspaper wrote about him or as anybody else wrote about him, but as Bob

Kennedy; and to appeal to the people rather than to let any particular group or particular faction

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take over. And Army had no political axe of his own to grind. He wasn't going anywhere himself which is always important, I think, in finding a campaign manager. You want the guy that's devoted to his candidate rather than using it as a stepping-stone for himself.

O'BRIEN: Well, you saw Bob Kennedy at this visit to Hickory Hill. Now, after coming back from Australia—or while you were in Australia, which is something we haven't really talked about—do you recall seeing Bob? Did Bob stop by while you were in Australia?

BATTLE: No. He didn't come to Australia. He went up through Southeast Asia. Left his mark there, but he didn't come down... [Laughter]

O'BRIEN As well as Sukarno. Well, did you see him after coming back from Australia, in between that time and Hickory Hill?

BATTLE: Oh, sure.

O'BRIEN: Is there anything that stands out in your memory? Did you notice any changes in the

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Bob Kennedy that you took through West Virginia in 1960 and the Bob Kennedy you saw when you came back?

BATTLE: Why sure. Of course, Bob had matured tremendously and he was very much more mellow. Of course, after I got back, it was after the assassination of John Kennedy. Well, it just wasn't much you enjoyed.... I dropped in on him at the office or at home and chat, but there was never.... You didn't have to say much. He was shattered and all of us were equally so. We went to the Army-Navy football game with him that fall. It must've been '64. And they had not had any entertainment at Hickory Hill since Jack's death. They asked us if we'd drop in for dinner on the way back to Charlottesville. We did. Maxwell Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor] was there, and Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon] and Mrs. Dillon [Phyllis Ellsworth Dillon], the young Jay Rockefeller [John Davison Rockefeller IV] and the McNamaras [Margaret Craig McNamara; Robert S. McNamara] and Barry and myself. And Bob—the only time I ever heard him give a toast in my life—after dinner proposed a toast to McNamara,

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Dillon, and Taylor as three men who had done the most for his brother during the Administration. I mean, that was just a personal toast. And we went in and talked a bit in the study. The girls went somewhere.

I got into a discussion with Maxwell Taylor about the charade in Vietnam. We didn't get far with that. We didn't see it the same way. One thing I remember was a little joshing between McNamara and Bob. Bob had made up his mind to run for the Senate in New York. He was just beginning to come out of his doldrums. And McNamara had just announced, among other navy yards that he was going to close up, the closing up Brooklyn Navy Yard. Bob Kennedy said to Bob McNamara, "For crying out loud. Here I go up there and tell them they ought to elect me because I can do more for them in Washington than anybody else, and you come along the next day and close the Brooklyn Navy Yard. What about it?" McNamara showed

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a sense of humor that I didn't realize he had at that time. Sort of grinned and he said, "Well, against my better judgment and probably a great expense to the country, I kept the one open in Massachusetts and I kept the one open in Virginia. How did I know you were going to run from New York?" [Laughter] I thought it was a pretty good comment.

O'BRIEN: Did Bob at all discuss at that point his views on Vietnam?

BATTLE: No, not at that point. I was trying to, and I'd made the point all along to whoever would listen, number one, that we weren't advisors, we were fighting the war. This is what I was trying to get across with General Taylor. And the sooner we recognize it, the better. I'd been up through there, and just to an uneducated eye it was perfectly apparent that this was large-scale war and that the United States was fighting it. And number two, that the military was not putting the emphasis on training the South Vietnamese that ought to

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be put. Not only to let them take the proper share of the fighting, but to have a viable defense force that could be left there when ultimately we left. It seemed to me that absent of this capability on their own part, the minute we left it would revert right back. And that to me it was rather unthinkable economically, politically, and morally that we stay there any longer than we absolutely had to. But that was just about the extent of it. I guess I did more talking than I should have, but I felt pretty strongly about it. Taylor didn't undertake to debate it.

O'BRIEN: What's Taylor saying at this point?

BATTLE: Nothing, I don't think.

O'BRIEN: Nothing? Just listening?

BATTLE: Oh, you mean when we would discuss it?

O'BRIEN: Yes.

BATTLE: Well, I think I used the wrong word with him. I think I either said that it was unpopular or bad politics to be doing it this way.

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What I meant was, it wasn't fair with the people and we were going to cop it later on if we didn't level with them and didn't see to it that we were training.... I was talking to him national politics; I wasn't talking politics in the sense of the word "vote." I think that turned him off a little bit at the time.

O'BRIEN: Well, do you see Bob again when he becomes Senator?

BATTLE: Oh, yeah. We go up to Hickory Hill for a lot of social dinners, pool dunkings and things of that sort.

O'BRIEN: Let's take that issue of the war. When does he first, or does he ever, really take up and discuss the issue of the war with you?

BATTLE: No. I don't think we ever really got into it. I told him. I remember telling him that I would like very much to discuss it with him from the point of view that I had down there in Australia. And this was always quite receptive. But, as I say, things moved so fast there. And he was getting involved and I was getting involved, that I don't think we ever did really get around to talking about it. He talked

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at length to Barry and me on one or two occasions, of the corruptness of the government down there and the folly of millions of dollars being squandered, and this, that, and the other thing. He may have alluded to the fact that the poor information that we were getting out of there, particularly from the military, had a lot to do with McNamara's staying on, that he felt that he had gotten the wrong view, and maybe had made statements that were misleading to the people of the United States. He wanted to stay on until he could put things right or see it through, one or the other. I can't document that.

O'BRIEN: As far as time?

BATTLE: No. That's just an impression. I'm sure it's an accurate impression. Barry might be able to, because she's got a sharp memory on things like that.

O'BRIEN: That's an idea. Why don't you ask her? Perhaps we could do a short interview with her if you think she might be willing.

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BATTLE: Well, I'm sure she would. And, you know, the girls, if they're interested, and she is—Bob and Jack Kennedy, both, were very fond of her. She's smart and has got a very retentive mind. At the dinner parties and things like that, she's the one that's sitting talking to them. I'm off talking to some gal that, you know, you're seated socially. So all of that time that you could be discussing these things, you don't.

O'BRIEN: Does he ever get into the relationship with Lyndon Johnson? Well, this is going on—do you ever hear of the relationship with Lyndon Johnson discussed in those years?

BATTLE: Yes. But I couldn't put my finger on it again. I could refresh my memory by talking about it with Barry. It became very violent, as you know. There was just mutual distrust. Bob didn't trust him. He didn't think he was the type man that ought to be president. He thought he was demeaning the office.

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It was pretty tough.

O'BRIEN: What's the primary thing that's on his mind in those years from your discussions with him? What does he appear to be really thinking about, most concerned about from, let's say, the time he goes to the Senate to the time he begins...

BATTLE: Of course, he's probably got more honest compassion for the little guy than anybody I've ever seen. And I think practical compassion. I don't think Bob was a blind idealist in any manner of.... But he knew what could be accomplished and what couldn't be. He saw injustice and he wanted to do something about it, and he didn't care if he had to step on the toes of the establishment. On the other hand, he could see the folly of the riots and the violent demonstrations and things of that sort equally as quick.

The Freedom Ride is a case in point. I represented Trailways Bus Company [Continental Trailways Bus Company]. This is before I went to Australia. Bob had been very opposed to the Freedom Ride. He

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thought it was ill-timed, ill-conceived, and he wanted to do something about it, but couldn't stop it. And we were in constant contact. With his help and the cooperation of Trailways we were able to avoid any violence on Trailways. Now, Greyhound [Greyhound Corporation] had some problems. But on one occasion he called me to see if I wouldn't divert a particular bus on a particular run in Mississippi, to take it from Meridian into Jackson because the jail facilities and the police facilities in Meridian just were not capable of handling what was going to happen there. Now, we had been foresighted enough to have communications on the bus. We got in touch with the driver and arranged to have that bus met, take the legitimate Meridian passengers off, and then ran the thing into Jackson. Things of that sort that people never heard about, but that Bob Kennedy did do. I mean, his vigorous attack on the criminal element in the labor movement.

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During that time, I guess, hardly a week went by that he didn't get a violent threat to the welfare of his family, or his children, or himself. And yet, he never backed off.

O'BRIEN: Well, he's been described by people as being an extremely compassionate kind of person. He's also been described as being, the term...

BATTLE: Ruthless.

O'BRIEN: ...ruthless and tough. Do you see him, from the time that you've known him, becoming tougher? Do you see him becoming more compassionate?

BATTLE: No. I don't. I think that both elements develop. I don't think he would back off from what he thought was an undertaking that was his obligation. But his feeling were very sincere. He didn't have much time for small talk. I mean, he'd infinitely more enjoy being with his children or with somebody else's kids than he would at some cocktail party. I mean, this was work

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to him. But his work with children, his ability to relate to them, his interest in them, sincere interest, was a great part of his makeup. And he always had time for kids. He wasn't impressed by people, you know, because of who they were. He was very much interested in what they wanted to do, what they were able to do, what their motivations were.

O'BRIEN: We've covered a lot of ground here. Is there anything that...

BATTLE: No. Monday morning is a pretty tough time to be imaginative, isn't it?

O'BRIEN: Well, I think you've done a very good show of pulling back some

things that happened a long time ago. It's been very interesting. And if there is anything, some more things come out of this, and if your wife's memory...

BATTLE: You could probably get quite a bit from her, because they talked at length. You know, when I, for social reasons, would have to be at another table or in another part of

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the room. Probably put a lot of it together.

O'BRIEN: Well, thank you, Mr. Battle, for a very interesting interview.

BATTLE: Well, I appreciate your coming back down.

O'BRIEN: My pleasure.

[BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2]

BATTLE: ...that took place in the presidential election, that I'd like to reflect on, that shows the tremendous capacity that John Kennedy had for withstanding pressure, the confidence that he had in his ability and his knowledge of the job that he was undertaking. It was demonstrated by what happened the day of the first Nixon debate.

In Virginia, as I've told you, the legislature does represent pretty much the local political thinking around the state. And legislative leaders at that time were quite influential, much more so than they are now. I'd put together with Bill Spong and some other young men who

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were in the legislature at that time a group of most of the significant legislators in Virginia. We had set up a visit to Washington to visit with Senator Kennedy. This was done well in advance, and had been cleared, and we were to meet him on the outside of the Senate Office Building there. He was just going to chat briefly with us. Everybody was going to get a chance to say they'd met the nominee. This was going to have a big effect back home.

We got up there at the appointed time and place. All the television and news people were there. But no John Kennedy. I went into his office—Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln] wasn't there at that time; she was out in Georgetown. The secretary just said, "Well, now, there's a mistake, and it can't be." I said, "Well, it's going to be. Let's talk to him." And we got him on the phone and somebody had forgotten to tell him about this group, or remind him of it. I'd cleared it with him personally. He said, "Well, could

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you come out here?” And I said, “Well, no. I don’t think we could, Jack, because we’ve got fifty or sixty people down here. I think if you could come down, it would be worthwhile.” He said, “Well, I’ll be right down then.” And there he comes. Four o’clock in the afternoon, prior to the first debate, and he drives up with Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] in a convertible Oldsmobile with the top down just as casual as if he were going somewhere to fish, you know. Comes up, and both of them mix with the group. He makes a delightful statement for the purpose of the radio and television. They were all there and it was just a hundred percent successful.

He made a tremendous impression, as did Jackie. Then everybody went home and saw his performance on television that night, which emphasized all the more the bearing and the class that this guy had. I think it was a very significant thing. It showed the makings of a man who would have been able to really perform under any amount of

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pressure when you put it in context.

O’BRIEN: Do you think the Kennedys have had anything to do.... Of course, realizing their own national scene, what role have they played in some of the changes that have taken place in Virginia politics in the last ten years?

BATTLE: Oh, I think that they’ve brought into focus the activity of a lot of young people. The problem with the Virginia Democratic Party is that young people were not welcome—particularly if they were in the legislature, if they didn’t vote a hundred percent right all the time—their path was just blocked. It was a very shortsighted performance. Many young men that were elected quit. Many able young men quit the legislature because of the attitude and atmosphere of the elders. But I think that the Kennedy movement gave a lot of people a place that they could participate and be heard and express themselves. I think it was an exciting thing on the horizon in Virginia.

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O’BRIEN: Does your involvement in the Kennedy Administration and also the election of 1960, do you feel this has hurt your career at all? For example, did it affect you in the governor’s race?

BATTLE: Yeah. I think it might have hurt in the governor’s race simply because, for their own selfish motives, the people who should have stuck the closest because of my work in the Kennedy race were the ones that defected. The black and labor political action groups endorsing the Republican ostensibly and, as they said, just to put the final touch on the Byrd organization. Now, if any of them had thought back to the struggles that I’d had in my support of Jack Kennedy and so on, they

would have realized that they were shooting at the wrong target. But that's what happened. And certainly, I was counting heavily on all of that support in the general election. I think I was the first candidate that had come along in a long while that they should have supported or could have supported, first

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nominee. And then on the other side of the coin, many many people were offended by my closeness to the Kennedys. I mean, they were controversial. There's no doubt about that. I wouldn't have done it any differently. And I didn't duck it in the campaign. I said, of course they were close friends of mine. If you want to make political hay out of it, make the most of it. That's the only way I knew how to treat it.

O'BRIEN: Well, is there very little middle ground in Virginia politics?

BATTLE: Oh, there's great middle ground, I think. I think there's a great middle ground. I got a hundred and thirty thousand more votes than any candidate for governor ever got before. But Nixon came in the night before and had a tremendous impact. The vote was more than it had ever been anticipated. He brought it into a presidential type election.

Now, Bob was not as popular in Virginia as Jack was. And Ted was less

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popular at that time than either one of them because of his unfortunate accident up in Massachusetts.

[END OF INTERVIEW #3]

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