

John M. Bailey, Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 4/27/1966
Administrative Information

Creator: John M. Bailey
Interviewer: Charles T. Morrissey
Date of Interview: April 27, 1966
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.
Length: 91 pages

Biographical Note

Bailey, 1960 presidential campaign worker and Chairman of the Democratic National Committee from 1961 to 1975, discusses the 1960 presidential primaries and election, the workings of the Democratic National Committee under his chairmanship, and patronage, among other issues.

Access

Open.

Usage Restrictions

Copyright of these materials have passed to the United States Government upon the death of the interviewee. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

John M. Bailey, recorded interview by Charles T. Morrissey, April 27, 1966, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Oral History Interview

Of

John M. Bailey

Although a legal agreement was not signed during the lifetime of John M. Bailey, upon his death, ownership of the recording and transcript of his interview for the Oral History Program passed to the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

The following terms and conditions apply:

1. The transcript is available for use by researchers.
2. The tape recording shall be made available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.
- 3; Copyright to the interview transcript and tape is assigned to the United States Government.
4. Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request for a fee.
5. Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library.

John M. Bailey – JFK#2

Table of Contents

| <u>Page</u> | <u>Topic</u> |
|-------------|---|
| 61, 75 | 1960 West Virginia primary |
| 69 | 1960 Wisconsin primary |
| 77 | Lining up support in the state delegations to the 1960 Democratic National Convention |
| 80 | 1960 Presidential election |
| 90 | 1960 John F. Kennedy (JFK) presidential campaign |
| 94 | National voter registration drives in 1960 |
| 100 | 1960 JFK-Richard Milhous Nixon debates |
| 105 | Abraham Alexander Ribicoff |
| 111 | National Chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee |
| 114, 117 | Mediating disputes within the Democratic Party |
| 116, 155 | JFK assassination |
| 118 | JFK's preparation for 1964 presidential election |
| 121 | 1962 elections |
| 126 | Patronage |
| 138 | Democratic National Committee expenditures and debts |
| 143 | Chester B. Bowles |
| 147 | Cuban Missile Crisis |
| 150 | Personal impressions of JFK |

Second of Two Oral History Interviews

with

John M. Bailey

April 27, 1966
Washington, D.C.

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Let's start with the West Virginia primary. I know you were down there, but I don't know what you were doing.

BAILEY: Well, some of it I won't tell you. [Laughter]

MORRISSEY: That's not a very promising way to begin. Well, how about the religious issue in West Virginia?

BAILEY: The religious issue in West Virginia was, I think.... There was one tale – whether it's true or not – when Harris [Louis Harris] took his first poll between Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]-

[-61-]

Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], it was supposed to be that Kennedy was 70 to 30. People didn't know Kennedy was a Catholic at the time. You heard that?

MORRISSEY: Yes.

BAILEY: When that was later discovered, the poll changed considerably. I think Jack was confined to the period there, but I think he himself with his courageous stands.... You could tell a couple of television shows right at the end there were very instrumental. I think it was dramatic when he raised a hand and said, "This is the oath that I take when I am President." I didn't think he was going to lose for the first time then.

MORRISSEY: Did you run into it much?

BAILEY: Oh yes. I mean, it was there. There was no question about it. I worked out of McDowell county. Of course, there wasn't a Catholic church in the area, but he carried

[-62-]

it thirteen to two. He was slated by the right people. He had some very interesting organization support – Judge Christie [Sidney L. Christie] in that county. Christie is now federal judge. So I don't know. I think the thing changed. I think he came up and came up – made the grade finally. But it was a hard struggle. Of course, you remember that he didn't stay in West Virginia that last night. He came up here to Washington and went back after he won.

MORRISSEY: Were you surprised by the results?

BAILEY: No, I thought we were going to edge it. I mean it was coming. And it depends to some extent on whether or not the people who said they would be for him, in the highly organized – if you know what I mean – areas could do what they had done in the past with the candidates they had on their slates. And they did.

[-63-]

MORRISSEY: Were you the one that lined up that organizational support in McDowell county?

BAILEY: I was there.

MORRISSEY: Well, I've heard a lot about the importance of slating, without really knowing much about it.

BAILEY: Well, apparently what it is is the leadership have what they call a so-called slate which they pass out to the voters, which is the list of whom the powers-that-be are interested in. And the people to a great extent vote along that slate. In other words, if there is a list handed out by the organization and your name is on it, you have the best chance of winning. He was slated in various areas,

which was important to him. He carried those areas. I would say that that was important. I think the fact that he spent considerable time there.... You see, they went in there the day after Wisconsin. We went from

[-64-]

Milwaukee down and dropped some people off there, and he came back up here. The organization headquarters was set up. They'd had an organization before that. Then it was set up.

I think the answer to West Virginia was the fact that Jack Kennedy sold himself to the people more than any single individual. One issue there was the fact that he was a Catholic. I think that was a detriment he had, and I think he overcame it through his own personality, his own courageous stand on the issues, and a willingness to face it up. I think that in many areas he sold himself especially to the women voters. As I remember, on election day I was in one town, and I went along a line pretending

[-65-]

to be a newspaper reporter from the *New York Times*.

MORRISSEY: You picked up a good paper.

BAILEY: And talking to people as to how they were going to vote. I remember particularly one man said he was a Baptist lay minister, and he wasn't going to vote for Jack Kennedy. And as I walked away, his wife tugged me by the coat and said, "I am." But I think that was it. He covered it; he had a good organization there; he had a lot of people devoted to him. Bob McDonough [Robert P. McDonough] did a good job in West Virginia; Matt Reese [Matthew A. Reese, Jr.] did a good job in West Virginia. And the regular Kennedy people were there. Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] was there heading it up. Kenny [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], of course, was in and out. Kenny traveled with the President. Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] was in the headquarters. And in

[-66-]

various areas he had different people who were devoting their time and energy. It was a workmanship job that was done, and I think this all added up. Of course, there's no question that this was a vital victory because it proved that he could go into a non-Catholic state and make a good showing, and come out, which many people didn't think he could do. I think this was the start of the breakthrough. I know once this happened there was a different feeling about his candidacy in other parts of this country.

It was a long primary day. We got results in from various little places quickly, and some of them showed overwhelmingly for Senator Kennedy. And I think one came in where Humphrey carried it 97 to 3, which didn't make us all feel too good.

[-67-]

But as the night progressed, it became apparent that he was going to carry more than 50 percent of the vote to 46. Yes, and I think it was very dramatic that night. Jack flew back, and Humphrey finally conceded and come over to the Kennedy headquarters. It was sort of pathetic. I mean, Hubert had given all out and really didn't have the organization or the manpower that was necessary to win the primary. It's a man-killing job, running in the primaries. And that made it difficult for him. He had some very ardent workers, but they weren't as adept, might I say, or had the experience. Of course, we had all been through Wisconsin and some of his people had, but many of his people from Minnesota who came over the Wisconsin border didn't get down into West Virginia and carry on. Now, what else?

[-68-]

MORRISSEY: How much time had you spent in Wisconsin?

BAILEY: I hadn't spent as much time in Wisconsin as I had in West Virginia. I had been in Wisconsin early. Abe Ribicoff [Abraham Alexander Ribicoff] and I had been up there in February and spoke in Milwaukee at some congressional district conventions at the time they were picking the delegates. I made several trips from Connecticut out to Wisconsin and spent – I don't know – in all, maybe two and a half weeks. But it wasn't two and a half weeks continuously. It was a different kind of a situation out there than it was in West Virginia, I believe. Of course, in West Virginia it was those roads. The curves. I remember one night I was driving, and it was about 11 or 12 o'clock. I tell you, I stopped the car and wondered what I was doing there running around those roads

[-69-]

at my age driving a hired rental car. But it was all worth it.

MORRISSEY: Had you expected the results in Wisconsin to be better than they were?

BAILEY: I think one of the mistakes we made in Wisconsin which we didn't make in West Virginia – at least we learned something from Wisconsin – was that you can always go up, but you never can go down. Some of our enthusiastic supporters were talking about carrying eight, nine, maybe all, and therefore, while we had a great victory – we won by over a hundred thousand in the vote, and we carried a majority, more than the majority of the delegates – Hubert was able to claim victory even in defeat because of the fact we didn't do what many people said we were going to. So in West Virginia, from the beginning, we talked poor mouth, that we had a hard

[-70-]

struggle; if we could get 40 percent of the vote, we'd be doing a tremendous job; and Kennedy would still be alive if he only received 40 percent of the vote; and if he received 45 percent, it would be not only a moral but a tactical victory. Then when we received over 50 percent, I mean, it was a tremendous victory. If we had been claiming 60 percent of the vote, and then you come up with 53, everybody says, "Gee, you didn't do so well." So as I said, it was one lesson we learned out of Wisconsin. I think, I know, the claims were too big in Wisconsin. It was some of the polling went wrong, I guess, or people were given, not misinformation, but Hubert had a great number of friends there – especially in those areas that were close to the Minnesota line where he had been campaigning back and

[-71-]

forth, and many people looked at him almost as their third senator, from the state of Wisconsin.

MORRISSEY: Were you with the candidate the night he flew into West Virginia when the returns were coming in?

BAILEY: No. I was in West Virginia.

MORRISSEY: Yes. Well, he flew up that night, as I recall.

BAILEY: No. He had campaigned that day in West Virginia, and then he and Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] came back to Washington. Then after the results were certain that he was going to win, he flew back to Charleston.

I remember – I don't know whether I told you this – the night of the Wisconsin primary Dave Powers [David F. Powers] and I were at the hotel, and the Senator had been down in Chicago for the day with Mrs. Kennedy. So Dave said, "Would you go out to the car

[-72-]

and go out and pick the Senator up? I'm going to get things in shape here. We're getting the returns and so forth." Some of the returns were already starting to come in. So I went out to the airport and got on the *Caroline*. The Senator was sitting there, and he was all smiles. And he said, "How is it? How are things?" I said, "It's going to be a long, hard night." He said, "What?" I said, "It's going to be a long, hard night like the night you had against Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.] for the Senate." I'm afraid he didn't take it in the spirit. I meant it. It was true because until that last district came in and gave us an extra congressional district.... I think it was the Seventh, I think.

MORRISSEY: That's right.

BAILEY: It was the Seventh that came in, the last one. His secretary was putting the stuff in his hair, and she later told me she could

[-73-]

feel the heat come up right through. I think he thought he was going to do better in Wisconsin than he did. But it was a long, hard pull. We got districts in Milwaukee; the district in Milwaukee came in, but it was the outcountry that was the problem. When the Seventh came in and we won that, I think that made the difference. It was six to four then.

MORRISSEY: Yes.

BAILEY: It was six to four. Otherwise it would have been five-five which would have been not only moral victory for Hubert, it would have been a major victory. Again it was there was too much talk of how much we were going to win by. I remember Charlie Bartlett [Charles Leffingwell Bartlett], a great friend of the President's. He and I had a bet that day – he bet we'd carry ten – which he had made

[-74-]

on election day. He had taken a trip from Milwaukee to Madison. He talked to some people. He came back, and he said, "What do you think?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Will you give me five to one on ten?" I said, "I'll be glad to give you five to one on ten." And he said, "I'll bet you fifty dollars to two hundred and fifty." I might say, he paid the bet, but he said, "I'm never going to bet again."

MORRISSEY: Did you find that a lot of your longtime friends in the party, after the West Virginia primary, thought that Senator Kennedy had a straight shot at the nomination?

BAILEY: Yes. And the reason I say this, a friend of mine, Benny Wixler who's secretary of the New York State committee, was over in Italy. He ran into Dave Lawrence [David Leo Lawrence], who had just heard the West Virginia results.

[-75-]

Of course, you know Dave always had felt that no Catholic could make it. So Ben dropped me a note and says, "You know, Lawrence is very impressed with the West Virginia." And I think it was people like him, other people across the country, who felt that this at least gave him a chance. And many of them wanted to support him, but felt that he had to have a chance because.... Take Lawrence who was worrying about his legislature. Being governor, he didn't want a candidate who would lose his legislature. The same thing happened to them that happened to a lot of Republicans with Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] when Goldwater ran. The Democrats carried legislatures they never carried before.

MORRISSEY: Yes. The other side of that question is, did you sense after West Virginia, that there might be a gang up movement against Senator Kennedy?

[-76-]

BAILEY: Well, I think there always was a gang up movement against Senator Kennedy. I think that – I think it, but I have no way of proving it – a number of them had got together, whether ever physically. It was sort of a mutual understanding that they would all stay in there feeling that Kennedy couldn't make all the hurdles of all the primaries, and if he didn't make it on the first ballot, that he would be in trouble. And then they could pick up the pieces. I always felt that was true. Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] still stayed in there; Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] stayed in there; and Symington [(William) Stuart Symington] stayed in there. With the result that we made it. We made it on the first ballot, but it had to go to Wyoming before we did. We had some secondary votes; I've often wondered how many because we might have lost some places.

[-77-]

Some of those delegations weren't too solidly knit. After the first ballot I don't think Indiana would have held. In Ohio, there was talk by some people in the delegation. While Ohio had to go along with the primary results, they might try to jump over if it went through a second ballot.

MORRISSEY: Had you gone into Indiana to line up some delegates?

BAILEY: No. I had never been in Indiana. I wasn't in Indiana. Of course, we had no opposition in Indiana. But the situation that showed up later on election day in Indiana, showed up in the primary when Lar Daly [Lawrence Joseph Sarsfield Daly], the man in the Uncle Sam suit, got seventy-eight thousand votes. I've often wondered what would have happened if somebody had gone into Indiana and made a contest of it.

MORRISSEY: I have read that Symington considered it, but backed away from it.

[-78-]

BAILEY: Well, they didn't think that Jack could make it all the way, I'm convinced. Sometimes I think that he wanted it more than anybody else – that's why he got it. He was willing to work at it harder. I think Symington would have liked it, but he wasn't going to devote six months day after day, grinding away from whistle-stop to whistle-stop.

MORRISSEY: Had you gone out to California to line up votes?

BAILEY: I was out in California. I was there for a while. The California situation was another confused situation. The big problem in the California thing was not about lining up votes. I mean, it was the selection of that delegate list that got so confused and involved – and because of the many situations in California in itself. That big list of delegates. People went on there, and after

[-79-]

they were on there, it was found that people had made wrong guesses as to how they stood. I don't think they checked them all out as carefully as they could have. And that was one of the problems. You had Jesse Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh] who was for Kennedy; you had Brown [Edmund G. "Pat" Brown] who was someplace or another. I think Pat had a lot of problems – I mean with the Stevenson people, with the California Democratic Association. With all these people I think Pat was on the level and tried to do the best he could, but he was also trying to keep things in harmony for the next election for himself. After all, first things come first.

MORRISSEY: Let's say, forty-eight hours or seventy-two hours before the election in November, 1960, did you have any fears that it might be as close as it turned out to be?

[-80-]

BAILEY: I didn't think it would be as close. I really didn't. Of course, in the area which I knew best, in New England, we were strong there – New York and Pennsylvania. However, I didn't realize that we were going to be as weak in the middle of the country as it turned out. When you think of the fact that out of the whole West, all we carried was Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico – that's quite a dip. Of course, some of those states haven't as many delegates. I think the fact that we carried Illinois by 8,000, which is less than one vote a precinct, was really a remarkable fact. I believe this is where organization paid off because the organization wins the close ones. The Chicago organization did a good job; Mayor Daley [Richard J. Daley] did a good job. And apparently the Republican party did a good

[-81-]

job in southern Illinois. One almost offset the other. And that's in the farm areas. Apparently the Democratic party wasn't in too good shape. I think the fact that the ticket was Kennedy and Johnson meant the difference between winning and losing. I don't think if you nominated anybody from the Midwest – whether it was Freeman [Orville L. Freeman] who wanted it or Symington who wanted it, or anybody else – that they could have made any effect on those Midwestern states. I do think that Johnson was effective in Texas. I think he made a difference between winning or losing in Texas, and I think he helped us in other Southern states. I think it was the only combination that could have won, looking back now.

MORRISSEY: What went wrong in a state like Wisconsin, where Kennedy had won so big against Humphrey,

[-82-]

and the Democrats outpolled the Republicans in the primary?

BAILEY: Well, the difference was, of course, that in the primary, apparently, a lot of people voted for Kennedy and then went back over to the Republican ticket on election day. Also, there was a spirited contest in the Democratic primary in which there was a lot of excitement. If you were going to vote, I mean, you'd just as soon vote in the Democratic primary. The Republican primary meant nothing. So, in those events I don't think the showing of how many voted one way or the other really had much effect on what's going to happen on election day. Especially, a great many people are not interested in primaries, especially those people who don't bother to register with a party. So that was true, he did very well up in the

[-83-]

Green Bay area in the primary and then lost it on election day. Whether the people up there wanted to make sure he had a chance at the nomination then, after giving him the chance, decided they weren't going to support him or not, I don't know. But this was true. You take Wisconsin.... Well, he carried Wisconsin in the primary. Indiana, he lost that. Oregon, lost that. Of course, the Washington state – everybody was thinking about the fact that he was going to carry Washington, the state of Washington. And Rosellini [Albert D. Rosellini] was supposed to be in trouble. And the result: Rossellini won and he lost. It was close, but he lost.

MORRISSEY: What happened in Ohio?

BAILEY: Ohio. What happened in Ohio, I don't think, should have been any great surprise, looking now. Ohio is a Republican state, I mean.

[-84-]

There was no question that Kennedy attracted great crowds in Ohio. Somebody was unkind enough to say that everybody who was going to vote for him apparently appeared when he was there, and all the people who stayed home voted against him. But he did have tremendous crowds in Ohio. As I say, that night he said, "I never got as great a crowd in any town and less votes than I did in Columbus, Ohio." But there, don't forget – the funny part, they talk about Ohio – Ohio came up percentage-wise as much as Illinois did from the '56 election. Ohio was down further than Illinois was. If you are at 42 – one state is at 42 – and you go up 8, you get to 50. If the other state is 39 and you go up 8, well, you're not up to 50. And I don't think organization-wise we were in good shape in Ohio, which

[-85-]

has been proven by what happened since. I think today we've got a big problem in Ohio. Pennsylvania was a good result. New Jersey. New York. But once you get out past the Mississippi, out in those farm states, we didn't even come close.

MORRISSEY: Were you traveling during the campaign?

BAILEY: My job during the campaign was to travel with the President, with the candidate, and to be the liaison with the local state organizations who we met and who got on the plane. I was supposed to be the fellow who had been in politics a long time and could talk their languages and knew most of them. And some of the boys hadn't had that kind of experience. The idea being that nobody is tenderer than a local politician. If he isn't recognized and given sufficient treatment, he kind of

[-86-]

sulks in his tent. That was my job. I traveled extensively with him coast to coast. I am going to Houston tomorrow, and I haven't been in Houston since the time in the campaign, the night he made his speech to the Protestant ministers of Houston. I traveled in Florida; I worked pretty nearly up.... I didn't travel much in the South. Well, Arkansas. We did the Texarkansas on the border area. The big meeting. That was a tremendous meeting. And I was in California, Oregon – all the way back and forth across the country.

MORRISSEY: Did some of the fellows on the state and local level miscall the results? Did they think Kennedy was going to win, and he lost?

BAILEY: Well, hope springs eternal in a campaign. And, of course, it's a hard thing to really know. You get too close to the forest to see the

[-87-]

trees. And everybody that they're talking to is telling you how good things are. However, I would say that they were not too optimistic in the middle of the country. Washington was one they were. Scoop Jackson [Henry M. Jackson], who was National Chairman at that time, felt he was going to carry that state. California, of course – well, it was a horse race. How could you tell? I mean, it got down.... We led up till the absentee ballots. So that was a flip of the coin. It was a great drive right up to the election day, right until the night before election.

MORRISSEY: I have often wondered how you assess the information you're getting from local people when most of them want to tell the candidate and the people in his entourage exactly what they think.

[-88-]

BAILEY: Well, what they want to do is that they don't want to have the candidate feel, you know, that they've lost their backbone and they're down in the mouth, and saying, "We can't win." It's a problem. Of course, I've been through it both ways. I knew in '56 on the Stevenson campaign, I knew – I was chairman in Connecticut, and I knew that we were going to get beat. It was just a question of how many. What do you say to a candidate when he comes into the state? "You're going to get clobbered." "Why are you wasting your time?" So you say, "It's a hard race, but I think we might pull it out." You can't be so unprofessional as to put yourself in a position where afterwards he says, "You didn't know very much, did you, when you told me that I was going to win?"

[-89-]

MORRISSEY: I've heard that in 1960 a lot of the people running in state and congressional elections were a little reluctant to attach themselves too closely to a candidate who might not win. You know there was a loss of about thirty House seats.

BAILEY: Twenty-one.

MORRISSEY: Twenty-one?

BAILEY: Twenty-one House seats. It's a most unusual thing for the President to win and still lose that many seats. But of course, what happened then, in '62 we won a margin of one, but the reason was we hadn't won any in '60. So those we hadn't lost in '60, we didn't lose in '62. We picked up a few extras. There were certain areas that Kennedy was great for congressional candidates. And they couldn't get their arms close around him. You take any candidate in Connecticut,

[-90-]

Massachusetts, around New York City area, New Jersey – they couldn't get close enough. But some places in the Midwest, they were running on their record. But we did lose twenty-one. One of the reasons was that we had an awful good year in 1958. This was a backlash, too. Some of them won in '58 who perhaps shouldn't have won.

MORRISSEY: In that '60 campaign, how well did the established party organization get along with the Citizens for Kennedy-Johnson groups?

BAILEY: Well, it's a....

MORRISSEY: It's a big question, I know.

BAILEY: It's a question that arises all the time. I mean, it arose during the Stevenson campaign when you had the Volunteers for Stevenson, and then with the Citizens for Kennedy it arose. The problem you've got is that many people who make up the so-called

[-91-]

volunteer groups are the kind of people who only want to get interested when there's a presidential election, when the glamour and the glory and how close they can be identified with the candidate for president. And they're not interested in doing the hard work or worrying whether a Democratic councilman is elected or whether the county sheriff is elected or whether members of the legislature are elected or whether even a governor is elected. But then when it comes time, they want to.... Well, you need them. You've got to get an umbrella to put them under because a) they don't want to work with the organization. For some reason, a lot of these people think that being an organization man is a naughty word. So you have to try and work out some solution. It worked out well in some places.

[-92-]

Other places it didn't work out so well. I was very fortunate that it worked out well in my state. I had the Citizens for Kennedy headquarters near our own headquarters and made sure we had some people in charge of it that understood the problems. And we worked pretty well together. However, in other states the organization felt that many of times these citizens and volunteers are opportunists who, as I say, don't want to do.... They're not interested in making voters. By that I mean registering voters or making sure that next year the right town committee is elected. They exist from presidential year to presidential year. You hardly ever hear of those kind of organizations arising in state elections. And it was a problem in some places. Apparently in New York City they had

[-93-]

problems.

MORRISSEY: Upstate New York, too, I think.

BAILEY: Yes. Also, some of the personalities involved sometimes caused problems.

MORRISSEY: You mentioned registration. Did you get involved at all in that registration drive after the Convention but before the campaign?

BAILEY: Well, that registration drive so-called on the national level was a [blur?]. It started in Boston, everybody from New England was

involved, and they told us how we should register. I mean they gave us a speech on registration, how we should register and so on and so on. In some places, I under[stood it?]. Then they had stops across the country. In understand in Chicago they got a little bit upset about it – that somebody'd come out and tried to tell them how to register, that they'd been

[-94-]

registering for years. And this happened in many places.

Registration is something that cannot really be done – you can give an incentive from a national level. But to have registration you need manpower. You need, on the local level, somebody who's going to canvass a neighborhood and find out who has moved in and then make sure they get down to the registering hall, whether it's city hall or town hall or whatever it is, and become registered on the dates on which registration is open. Nationally, yes, you can say, "The thing we have got to do is register." But the national organization could never provide them the manpower in any one state, much less in fifty states, to do this registration. And it is a manpower operation. I think one of the important things that

[-95-]

the civil rights bill, talking to Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach], where they put in the federal registrars.... Unless there's some local effort, they still don't just walk in. And this was a good gimmick if you want to start the campaign. Bobby led the troop across the United States making these speeches.

Now in our state, we do our registration all the time. The greatest drive toward the registration is when you have a local primary and two fellows are running for ward chairman and each of them are beating their ward to make sure that they've got everybody registered who's going to vote for them for ward chairman. I've seen registration increased because of that much more than anything done on any national level. You and I want to be ward chairman, and we figure there are so many votes, and I find that if I make so and so a voter, he's going to vote for me the first time anyhow. This I found

[-96-]

out from my twenty years of experience as a chairman: as a state chairman, I can go around the state and just appoint a voter registration chairman, but I know unless the mayor of Bridgeport has the troops out, that there isn't going to be any.

You know, the thing about registration is that it's only in the cities that it's a real problem because in the suburban areas everybody knows when somebody moves into a street. And usually somebody approaches him about becoming a voter on either side, but when you get these large apartment buildings, I mean.... And that is one of the things that troubles New York today. Where there used to be three and six tenement blocks and a precinct leader could go around, now there is a forty story apartment building and he can't get past the man in the front door. I mean they'd arrest him

[-97-]

if he tried to up knocking on doors to find out if people were registered. I mean that is, as you can see, a problem.

MORRISSEY: Yes. Tell me about that visit to Houston. That was a major turning point.

BAILEY: Well, he had made the engagement to make the speech. It was a vitally important speech, and the Senator knew it was a vitally important speech. I think hr was slightly nervous that day. But, nevertheless, he was one who always rose to the occasion, tremendously. I remember when I was in Atlantic City with him in October, '59, and he was making a speech to the AFL-CIO convention there. I mean the same thing. He was tapping his fingers and so forth. I walked up the boardwalk with him. But he did a tremendous job because Hubert was there that day, and it was a vitally

[-98-]

important day for him. And he made a tremendous impression on them even though Hubert was more their boy than he was. I think that the situation there was that it was a rough, tough job, and he did it. It had to be done, and it was vitally important because I think that more than any other single thing kept some of the Southern states in line because we used that tape and the rest of it during the campaign. I know he felt good when we came back to the hotel after it was over. And he didn't need anybody to tell him that he had done well. I think we all know – who have been in public life – that on these occasions you know whether you've done well or not. If in your heart you know you didn't do well, no matter what your well-wishers tell you how good you did, you know you really stubbed your toe.

[-99-]

MORRISSEY: Were you with him the night of the first debate against Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon]?

BAILEY: Yes. I was with him. We were in Chicago. I was with him during the afternoon, too. We were over in a hotel up there in a suite. Dave Powers was there, and I was there. And of course, Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] was there, and Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] was there. They were going over, researching and all the rest – and taking up. Finally, I guess he got about fed up, and he said to Dave, "Tell me, what was Williams' average in such-and-such a year?" And he was loose. He felt loose. But he was loose that afternoon, and as I say, he shut it off, as I recall it. You may have heard more about this – from what I see, you know a lot more about it than you did the first time you interviewed me – having sat as

[-100-]

father confessor beside your machine over the last two years, that he shut it off early in the afternoon. They wanted to keep pumping it, and he said, "Look, I've got enough." And then we went to the studio, and there was nobody in the studio. I went with him to the studio.

We took off from there, and I think we went up into Ohio. That was the day we went through Columbus and got a tremendous ovation. I think everybody had seen it. I think that was one of the things that caused that tremendous outpouring. I think an interesting light on that trip was the first place we stopped, Lausche [Frank J. Lausche], who was with him, didn't endorse him very strenuously, but the next place he did. And we felt we had done well. Of course, they say a strange thing about that. The difference between radio and television is

[-101-]

that on television it looked one way and on radio it sounded a different way.

MORRISSEY: Yes.

BAILEY: I think that is true. I find that people are much more sensitive to what is said then they listen to radio when they are when they are watching television.

MORRISSEY: How about the subsequent debates against Nixon. Were there any in which he was downcast afterwards?

BAILEY: No. But I always felt that he had the Indian sign on Nixon head to head; that Nixon did best on that one that was on the split television screen when he was up someplace and the President was in another place; and that this is always true, I guess, that Nixon head to head with him, was never as good as he was apart. I think he was a little bit afraid of Jack. Rightfully or

[-102-]

wrongfully, I think that was true. I think that's what these debates showed.

MORRISSEY: As a person who has been in politics a long time, how effective do you think a ploy like Nixon's telephone session on TV from Detroit on the eve of the election was?

BAILEY: All I know is it scared the devil out of Kennedy because he immediately set one up in Manchester, New Hampshire, and had Hodges [Luther H. Hodges] come all the way up from North Carolina. They spent a lot of money to setting that up because they thought that was effective. Remember that?

MORRISSEY: Yes.

BAILEY: Now, how effective? How do you know what's effective? As any politician knows – Jim Farley [James A. Farley] put it very well many, many years ago – he knew that 50 percent of the money spent was wasted, but he never could tell

[-103-]

what 50 percent. And this is true today. I say in the '64 campaign we spent a lot more money in the last couple of weeks than we had to spend, but President Johnson insisted that we keep getting more television spots and all the rest – and keeping it going when everybody knew that we couldn't lose. Nevertheless, that money went in. You never can tell.

MORRISSEY: Between the election and the Inauguration, did you spend much time with the President-elect about staffing the new administration?

BAILEY: Well, I went away, and he called me when I was in Puerto Rico. He said, "Look. You know you are going to be the National Chairman, so why don't you get up here?" So I came up here – down here, came home and down here, about the third of December. And I saw him considerably on N Street.

[-104-]

I also saw him at the Carlyle Hotel. The staffing of the government was very interesting – how people finally arrived at the job they got and the rest. I say all that was a very interesting period of time. It is only when there is a complete change of administration can there be such a period of time. And there wasn't that period of time in '64 because there were a great many holdovers and people they had. But it was. The people who went in and how they got in and why they got in. All the rest, you could see. As the names appeared, the characters and what they had done and where they had been and why they arrived.

MORRISSEY: Do you want to elaborate on that a little bit?

BAILEY: No. I would rather not.

MORRISSEY: Let me ask just one. That's the appointment of Senator, or Governor Ribicoff, at that time, to HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare].

[-105-]

BAILEY: Well, of course as you know, Governor Ribicoff was one of the first, in fact, the first governor who was for President Kennedy.

Abe and I decided earlier – early took the position that a) we were going to be for Kennedy, and I said to Abe, “We’re never going to be big enough to be last. So the best thing we can do is to be first.” And we’d been for him in ’56, and Abe was very helpful to Jack. And Jack was a great admirer of Abe and his ability. Consensus of opinion seemed to be that Abe could have been Attorney General. And to my mind, he could have been Attorney General. And the person who decided that he wouldn’t be Attorney General was Ribicoff because at that time, Ribicoff’s chief desire was to be, ultimately, a Justice of the Supreme Court. And he felt

[-106-]

that if he was the Attorney General, and involved in the amount of civil rights that he knew was going to be involved in the Administration, that he might have difficulty in the Senate in being confirmed. So, he discussed the matter with me at some length, and decided that he would tell the President that he didn’t want to be Attorney General, and that he desired to have the HEW because it was his feeling that in that job all you did was give things away, and in that kind of a job he could build up friendships that he would eventually arrive as Justice of the Supreme Court. Of course, as it turned out, I mean, he was the first Cabinet member named by Kennedy. And as it turned out, he later lost his desire to be a Justice of the Supreme Court and decided that he would go back and run for

[-107-]

the Senate in Connecticut, which caused me one of my most difficult contests that I have ever been through. Nevertheless, he was nominated.

MORRISSEY: That’s the one the fellow from Meriden ran against....

BAILEY: Kowalski [Frank Kowalski], yes. And the fight was, of course, in our state you’ve got to have over 20 percent to have a primary, and the job was to keep Kowalski from getting 20 percent. That makes it pretty difficult, especially when Ribicoff refused to announce until awful late, and Kowalski was running in a vacuum. What Abe hadn’t realized was that he had been extremely popular in ’58 and that he had dropped off between ’58 and ’62. I don’t know the reason, but it was a tough one, but nevertheless he’s got it – he’s doing a good job and enjoying himself. I suppose you’ve asked him the question.

[-108-]

MORRISSEY: No, I haven’t, as a matter of fact.

BAILEY: Haven’t you talked to him?

MORRISSEY: No.

BAILEY: Why? Won't he talk?

MORRISSEY: Was the President perturbed when Secretary Ribicoff announced that he wanted to resign and run for the Senate? That was the first Cabinet resignation, as I recall.

BAILEY: I don't think he was perturbed. Of course, this was a decision Ribicoff had made a considerable time before. In fact of the matter, Ribicoff decided in August of '61 that he wanted out, wanted to run for the Senate. Ribicoff found the Cabinet a very difficult position. Ribicoff is very much of a take-charge guy. He'd been the governor of a state for six years, in which he was number one man, in which his word was law, and what he wanted to do was what had to be done. He found it very difficult in a Cabinet post when it

[-109-]

wasn't doing what he wanted to do, but what other people wanted to do. And he found problems when people changed the signals on him. I think he felt sometimes that staff members were changing signals on him without the President knowing they were changing signals. I wouldn't say he wasn't comfortable, but he was frustrated. Of course, that HEW job, apparently as he found, was a frustrating job because it's a combination of a great many agencies. You take, they have 78,000 employees, and he only appointed sixteen of them, with the result they've got bureaucracies there. They just feel, "Secretaries come and go, we go on forever." And I think this was one of the frustrating things.

MORRISSEY: How about the choice of his successor?

BAILEY: You mean the gentleman from Cleveland [Anthony J. Celebrezze]?

[-110-]

I think it was a very good choice. I noticed that he was happy to go on the bench from the job. Apparently, from what Abe has told me, it's a frustrating job. Finally, we appoint a Republican [John W. Gardner].

MORRISSEY: Was that telephone call to you in Puerto Rico the first time you had had it so straightforwardly that you were going to be the chairman of the party?

BAILEY: Oh, no. I knew for some period of time. In fact, I knew in Los Angeles I was going to be the chairman. The only question was when. I remember, of course, Dave Lawrence and a lot of the other people who had the delegates that were so important to Kennedy, especially the old-line people who had been in the party for years, were all for me for being chairman. I remember one day that

[-111-]

the President called me aside and said, "Look, I've got some problems. These people want you for chairman. I'm for you. However, I mean, I don't need you chairman for this campaign." And I said, "I understand. You'll have no problems with me." He said, "I'll tell you, the day after I'm elected, you'll become chairman of the party." There was never any question. Most people knew that. I'm talking about people in the inner circle. Jackson knew it was only to be till after elections when he took the job.

MORRISSEY: I'm an Irishman from Massachusetts so I can ask this. The chairman of the party since Raskob [John J. Raskob], I think, had been a Catholic.

BAILEY: Yes, but we'd never had a Catholic candidate for president.

MORRISSEY: Right. And you had a Catholic as majority leader in the Senate and one about to be

[-112-]

Speaker of the House.

BAILEY: Of course, at one time, you had a president who was a Catholic; you had a majority leader of the Senate who was a Catholic; there was the Speaker of the House who was a Catholic; and the Chairman of the National Committee who was a Catholic. But there wasn't a chairman during the campaign who was a Catholic.

MORRISSEY: [Laughter] And that's the vital distinction. During the time you were chairman, you had some rather difficult party controversies. I'm thinking of the Connally [John B. Connally]-Yarborough [Ralph W. Yarborough] business in Texas.

BAILEY: That's still there, isn't it?

MORRISSEY: Very definitely.

BAILEY: That's an ideological difference, I think. Johnson always kept his hand in Texas, though, even when he was Vice President because he

[-113-]

had told the President that that was one of the conditions on which he'd run for Vice President; that he wasn't giving up his rights in Texas if he ran. In fact, he called me over to the Vice President's office one day, and said, "I want you to know this, Mr. Chairman. I want you to check it out with the President." And I did, and he was right. Yeah, they got in the jackpot on everything from law marshals, up and down.

MORRISSEY: Well, we're interested.

BAILEY: One of the biggest problems I had was New York. I mean, New York was a problem.

MORRISSEY: The Buckley [Charles A. Buckley]-Bingham [Jonathan Brewster Bingham]...

BAILEY: No. No. No. I mean, back with Prendergast [Michael H. Prendergast], DeSapio [Carmine G. DeSapio] – that situation was very difficult. They're all my friends. However, they get these problems during the campaign. There was feeling against

[-114-]

them in certain quarters. And it didn't work out. Charlie Buckley of course, was one of the President's greatest and earliest supporters. Very definitely. And the President always had a kindly feeling for Charlie Buckley. I think he was the first person in New York City, the first leader in New York City, who was for him. DeSapio told me privately that he was going to be for him, but he had problems with the Stevenson crowd, with Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] and Lehman [Herbert Henry Lehman] and those people – and Manhattan. But, nevertheless, we got 110 out of 114 delegates from New York, which was important. I worked early in upstate New York. That was one of the first jobs I had.

MORRISSEY: Getting delegates?

BAILEY: Lining up county chairmen. This is in '59.

[-115-]

Our first meeting we went up to Rochester, and we had a meeting with all the northern county chairmen at that time. Jack was there and spent the evening with them. I kept in contact with them after that. Some of the later spokesmen who went into the state never did know them when they were important to know. They claimed all the credit – which is not unusual.

MORRISSEY: That Connally-Yarborough difficulty is of interest to us, of course, because it led to the trip to Dallas.

BAILEY: That's right. I had a date with the President that I had made at 4 o'clock in the afternoon to go to a party. I flew down commercial. When I got off at Austin, I found he had been shot. The first I knew about it. I was en route. In fact I stopped at Dallas, and the President's plane was over there on

[-116-]

the landing strip about the same time it happened.

MORRISSEY: At Love Field?

BAILEY: Yeah.

MORRISSEY: Was this a meeting to patch up the differences?

BAILEY: Yes, I mean it was an attempt to patch it up. It got so involved that, apparently, at first Connally didn't even want to invite Yarborough to the party at his house.

MORRISSEY: How about the John Glenn-Stephen Young [Stephen M. Young] business in Ohio?

BAILEY: Well, I think that Glenn got considerable encouragement along the way. I mean, many people felt that – as I say, this was early – Steve Young couldn't make it.

MORRISSEY: Yes.

BAILEY: They thought a new fresh face like Glenn would do something. I say, I think – I couldn't prove it, but I talked to Glenn on several occasions – it would have been a very

[-117-]

interesting primary if he and Young had a primary. Nobody knows what would have happened.

MORRISSEY: Yes.

BAILEY: But this was '63, I think, when the discussions were held. And as it was, I mean, the '64 election nobody can tell. Query: What would have been the results with Jack Kennedy versus Goldwater in '64? You never can project – forward or backward.

MORRISSEY: Did he anticipate that Goldwater might be his opponent in 1964?

BAILEY: I think he thought Goldwater would be his opponent. I think many people thought that after Kennedy was shot that Goldwater was out of the picture. I think that was the feeling. Then he came on again, especially figuring that Goldwater could carry the whole South at that time.

[-118-]

MORRISSEY: It's hard to go back before November 22, 1963, but during that autumn things were pretty jammed up here in town. A lot of legislation wasn't getting through Congress, and I wonder if you recall the President being concerned about how it looked less than twelve months to go before he ran again?

BAILEY: Oh, yes, I think he was concerned about it. It was a concern, a real concern, because he had promised to get the country going. There were certain things he was going to do, and if he didn't do them, what shape would he have been in in 1964? I know it was a matter of deep concern to him. Whether or not that second half of that Congress he would have been able to get them is another question as election day came up to these people. Of course, the Eighty-Ninth Congress has been a great success. We had sort of a landslide;

[-119-]

we had forty-one Democrats take the place of forty-one Republicans, and they voted 85 percent of the time with the President which has made the difference.

MORRISSEY: Fall of '63 was the first time that people started talking about backlash.

BAILEY: Yes.

MORRISSEY: And I wonder if that bothered the President.

BAILEY: Well, I don't know, I mean, at that time. You see, at that time, it bothered everybody because there was no arrest. By the time '64 came along other things had happened, and it wasn't the same situation. Other things became the important issues in the campaign – I mean, as the results showed. You know, Mike Kirwan [Michael J. Kirwan] at the National Committee the other day said, "You know, you fellows have got a job ahead of you. You haven't got a Goldwater running

[-120-]

for them. You ought to vote him a medal.”

[BEGIN TAPE II, SIDE II]

MORRISSEY: Let me ask about the Dirksen [Everett M. Dirksen]-Yates [Sidney R. Yates] contest in Illinois. Some people thought the Administration was not too sad that Dirksen won that contest.

BAILEY: I wouldn't say that was true. I think that people felt that Dirksen had a better chance of winning than Yates, and that there was no use going out of their way to irritate Dirksen. I know I had an experience. I was going out to give a speech in Illinois, and I was sitting beside the President at Matt McCloskey's [Matthew W. McCloskey] dinner, and I said to him, "You know, I sent that speech over to the White House because I'm saying some things that I thought I'd like you people to clear before I said them." And he said, "I didn't see

[-121-]

the speech. Get the speech to me tomorrow." And then, in three minutes he said, "Can you get it for me now?" So, my secretary who was there, I sent her over to the headquarters and brought back the speech, and he sort of did a penciling job on some of it in which I was pretty strong on certain things. Now, I think, I figure that he felt that he was going to have to live with Dirksen. He would have rather had Yates and not have Dirksen, but he was a practical enough man to know that if he was going to have Dirksen, there was no use going out of his way to give him pain.

MORRISSEY: How about the Nixon-Brown contest in California in '62?

BAILEY: Pat Brown is a very strange kind of candidate. The only time Pat seems to be up is on election day. Everybody talks about him. "He isn't

[-122-]

a good candidate." He said to me one day, "All I beat for governor was Knowland [William Fife Knowland], who was Republican Majority Leader of the United States Senate, and Nixon, who came within a hundred and twelve thousand votes of being president. Now I don't know who else you have to beat in order for somebody to say you're not a bad candidate." And I think that, many things, I think Nixon, while he was in California against President Kennedy, I mean, then came back there, people knew that he was just moving in to get another base in order to make the run again if he could. They didn't like it any more than they did when Knowland moved back from the Senate to the governorship – it was the same kind of a deal – and put Pat Brown in a good campaign. Pat won well. In my opinion, Pat is one of the most able men I know in political life.

[-123-]

MORRISSEY: I've heard that the President wanted to keep his fingers off that campaign lest he leave some fingerprints.

BAILEY: Well, after all, he had some friends running out there. But I don't think he wanted to get into the position where his name was on the line. You would have had another Nixon-Kennedy fight instead of a Nixon-Brown fight, and I don't think that would have done Pat one bit of good. I think Pat was winning it, and there was no use to confuse the issue.

MORRISSEY: How much time did you give it?

BAILEY: We didn't do.... We did a lot. What we did is, we spent money out there on registration and get out the vote. We sat down with the leadership with which we made a deal that we'd provide them so much money if they would match it. Which money was to be used for two purposes alone. You see, California is a

[-124-]

state where you can register very easily. They have what is known as Deputy Registrars, and they're paid fifteen cents. So if the organization says, "We'll give you fifteen cents more for each name you get." I got the great shock of my political career when in 1958, when I was at the Bar Association Convention and went to church on Sunday and heard the priest get up and make a speech about some proposition that was on the machine, and then he wound up by saying, "Now if there's anybody who's been in this state six months or a year – or whatever it was – and is not a voter, I want you to know there is a man in the back of the church who will register you." And to somebody who comes from the East where you have to go to town hall on certain hours, this to me was quite a shock. But it's true. Out there you can register at a supermarket

[-125-]

or anywhere else. And then we got involved in a get-out-the-vote drive. This caused some talk afterwards because apparently some people, especially the California Democratic clubs, felt it wasn't fair to spend money to get the vote out. But some of us felt that that was the best money you could spend because, believe it or not, there are a lot of people, unless you go right down and get them out of the house and drive them to the polls, who'll never go. And if it's going to be close, that could be the difference. And we did spend money and we did spend time on the end of it. We weren't in the issue end of it; we were in the nuts and bolts department, which I think is where the Committee belongs in a state election.

MORRISSEY: When you were appointed chairman by President Kennedy, he said in the announcement that you would handle all the patronage.

[-126-]

BAILEY: Well, of course, your problem is you can't handle all the patronage. First of all, we handled a lot of the patronage in those days. But there were certain things we didn't handle. We didn't handle federal judges; that was in the Justice Department, and Bobby set it up with the American Bar Association.

MORRISSEY: Did you stay out of that entirely?

BAILEY: I mean, this was completely there. I mean, we transmitted to the Attorney General's office the recommendations, the political recommendations I made. He also wanted some Republicans which he did take. I mean, we didn't want all Democrats, and that caused some troubles in the places where the Republicans went. And then, you see, you've got to realize that one of the problems you have in the National Committee in which you get in trouble with the state committees is

[-127-]

over the fact that anything that goes to the United States Senate for confirmation, the senator is the major voice in the situation. And oftentimes state organizations fail to appreciate the fact that this is so. This is especially true in Ohio where Cuyahoga County organization couldn't understand why you'd say, "Well, Young doesn't want that, he wants something else." They'd say, "Who cares what Young wants?" And you say, "Well, you may not care back in Cuyahoga County – that's the Cleveland area – but he's voting in the Senate, and nothing's going to happen unless he's for it." Of course, all the ambassadors, that was a matter strictly of the White House. And the amount of patronage is greatly overrated because, you take, for example, there are so many civil service jobs, there are only so many c-jobs

[-128-]

that you could fill. And then of course, we had.... One of the problems was that Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] had by executive order put all the Small Business offices and Federal Housing offices in the state under civil service. And there was a great demand by the states. I mean, "Hell, we just won an election. Why is that son of a gun still handing out small business and federal housing? Why can't our guy get in?" And the only way it could have happened was for Kennedy to have issued an executive order taking them out of the civil service, and he didn't feel that this would be the best thing to do to give the Republicans an opportunity to claim that he was destroying civil service, and there was a patronage grab. But we had an awful lot of gripes on that subject. And I can understand, too. Back

[-129-]

home, I was state chairman, I had the SBA. We couldn't do a thing about it. And my people, my local leaders would come and say, "Oh, God. What did we win this election for?" You see, the amount of federal patronage that goes into a state is not very much. It used to be. I mean the theory of all this federal patronage goes back before the Hatch Act [Carl A. Hatch] the Internal Revenue could be completely changed with all the rest of it. But you know, take in a state like Connecticut, we got some federal judges; we got the United States District Attorney; we got some assistant United States District Attorneys, but they're full time jobs and nobody really wants them because they've got to give up their practice; and you get a Collector of Customs which now have been taken out and put under civil service; and a marshal. And that's about it. Of course, if somebody wants

[-130-]

to come to Washington, you could in those days get somebody a job, but too many people didn't want to come to Washington unless they came in a very top executive position. But they took care of a lot of people who had been active in the primary campaign and in the campaign. Matt Reese came up, and other people came in. All in all, there really isn't that much – I mean, on a high level. Of course, we in Connecticut did very well. We got a member of the Cabinet, I got the National Chairman, and we got the Undersecretary of State in Bowles [Chester B. Bowles]. And we took care of all the other jobs which were handled through the organization in cooperation with the Senator.

MORRISSEY: How about the postmasterships?

BAILEY: They were one of the greatest headaches that there are. I mean, I would say that – and this I know over a period of years....

[-131-]

Your post offices now, of course, are under civil service, and unless there is a vacancy, you can't fill the job. And of course, that's congressional patronage. I mean each congressman in a district, and if there isn't a congressman, a senator takes it. But the problem gets into it, when a vacancy does occur, you've got a right to name an acting postmaster. Now, one of the things that happens to you is that you name an acting postmaster. Then the exam is held, and the acting postmaster doesn't make the first three for various reasons, including which is that a disabled veteran gets ten points and jumps over him. So you've put the fellow in a job; he'd given up the job he's had; he's been acting postmaster for seven or eight, nine months; and all of a sudden the exam comes, and he isn't in the first three and can't be selected. Well,

[-132-]

he can't understand that and said, "What about an exam?" Of course, the exam is a matter of interviews where they interview people around the community and evaluate the gentleman's experience and all the rest of these. And he says, "I never took an exam. What do you mean?"

I never sat down and took an exam.” Anyhow, it causes trouble. For example, right now, we have in the city of New Britain a vacancy because a man is retiring. And I’m sure it’s going to cause more trouble than Congressman Grabowski [Bernard F. Grabowski] can ever heal between now and election because he’s got six candidates, two Polish, two Italian, and two Irish. At least he didn’t appoint an acting postmaster. He’s going to let them all take the exam, but even if it gets to three, he’s going to be in trouble. And the disabled veteran gets the ten points, and there’s

[-133-]

nothing you can do. You can’t go over him if he falls to the top. In other words, if he gets an eighty-nine on the exam and you get ninety-eight, he comes up with ninety-nine. I mean, there’s nothing you can do about it. Postmasters is really.... Congressmen talk about it and wish they didn’t have it, but I haven’t known any of them to give it up.

MORRISSEY: The reason I pick away at this matter of patronage is that Edward Day [J. Edward Day] in the little book he wrote claims that Robert Kennedy was the one that was making the decisions on patronage.

BAILEY: Well, I would say that Robert Kennedy made many decisions not on the question of patronage alone. I mean, it was a question of.... Don’t forget, Robert Kennedy was the headquarter man all during the campaign, in the primaries. I would say that Robert Kennedy knew more than any single individual what people had done for his brother

[-134-]

in helping his campaign. There was never any conflict between any of us about the situation. Maybe I have a feeling about this, having been state chairman for twenty years and worked with patronage over that length of time. I’ve got that feeling that I’ve got to name everybody because I found out over the years that you don’t need a feeling of power that I can say, “You’re going to have the job,” or “You’re not going to have the job.” Because for every one guy you give it to, three guys for five years later are going to keep reminding you that you didn’t do it for them. But there wasn’t any problem. I mean, I think Robert Kennedy was the closest single individual to his brother. I mean, he was very influential. I would be the last one to say that wasn’t true. I had a very good relationship with him, and if he had somebody for a

[-135-]

job, I wasn’t going to argue about it or anything – the Matt Reeses and the rest of these people who had worked in the vineyard. Dunny McDonough from West Virginia, Pat Lucey [Patrick Joseph Lucey] never wanted a job. Hy Raskin [Hyman B. Raskin] never wanted a job. But all these people. Of course, the answer with Ed Day was that Ed Day came in out of left field. I had been around all during the primary and all during the election, and I had never

seen Ed Day. The story on Ed Day, as I get it, is that they got down to the end of the Cabinet and had nobody from California. Apparently, they suggested somebody out there whom Jess Unruh threw a fit at. Jess had been their good friend so they said, "Well, if you don't want him, who would you like?" And he had lunch with Ed Day that day, so he said, "How about Ed Day?" Ed Day, apparently, had his problems with some of the closer Kennedy

[-136-]

people. What they were, I don't know. Bill Brawley [Hiram W. "Bill" Brawley] was deputy, and they had a run in. And I wound up with Bill Brawley working for me.

MORRISSEY: If a piece of proposed legislation was jammed up on the Hill and somebody thought that a little bit of patronage might pry it loose, would you get involved in that? Or would that be a matter of the White House staff people?

BAILEY: Larry O'Brien had the responsibility which he spent most of his time at, and he was in the position. Chuck Roche [Charles D. Roche], from my office, was our legislative liaison. And it was a question of what had to be done. I mean, I'm sure that many times congressmen held the boys up to get something that they wouldn't otherwise have thought of. But I would say that was usually done through the White House.

MORRISSEY: Roche worked directly with Larry O'Brien's shop?

[-137-]

BAILEY: Well, he worked from our shop, but he is now with them. He is working for the White House. He left our shop in our reorganization and went over to the White House. He had been with Kennedy all along, too. He used to be with the *Boston Post*, I guess, or one of these newspapers up there. He was an old Harvard fullback.

MORRISSEY: I'd like to hear how you paid the debt off.

BAILEY: Well, we owed – what was it? – about four million.

MORRISSEY: It was a huge debt.

BAILEY: It was about four million. And the question is, I don't think it was ever all paid off. A big slice was paid off at that big gala we had right at Inauguration time. A good part was paid off then, and then parts of it were paid off by the President's appearance. To raise any sum of money at all, you have to

[-138-]

have the President. I mean, we had affairs in California, Florida, in New York, in Chicago, when it was hard to get the money out of Chicago. But I would say the debt was reduced. But the problem is the debt never gets all the way reduced because expenses keep going on. Not only the Committee, but you know, we spent money in '62. Don't forget the '62 campaign came on, and we had those expenses. We worked on those. We were trying to help the congressional and senatorial candidates. Right today, as you may have noticed in the paper recently, we owe over two million dollars. It's a hard thing to get the debt paid off. McCloskey worked at it, and Dick Maguire [Richard V. Maguire] worked at it.

MORRISSEY: Was the idea of the President's Club something new with the Kennedy Administration?

[-139-]

BAILEY: Well, the President's Club was an outgrowth. I would say that McCloskey started it, but he also.... If you recall, they had the 750 Club during Stevenson. The 750 Club was the idea that at that time the National Committee owed seven hundred and fifty thousand. The 750 Club was the idea of getting 750 people to pay a thousand dollars apiece. I don't know whether they ever got the 750, but they got some. But the problem is they apparently had told those people they'd treat them well at the Convention and something happened to those tickets, and they didn't get good tickets, and they weren't treated well. That was one of the reasons why the President's Club was treated so well at Atlantic City. Sometimes I think they treated them not too well, but we spent an awful lot of money on them.

[-140-]

MORRISSEY: How'd you coordinate your fundraising and your expenditure of money for political campaigns with the committee on the House side and the committee on the Senate side?

BAILEY: Look, early in '61, McCloskey and Rayburn [Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn] and Hartke [Vance Hartke], who was then chairman of the Senate Campaign Committee, got together. It was McCloskey's idea that we shouldn't spread ourselves and everybody fight over the money, that we all work together. So a deal was made in which we'd raise the money – they'd support us, we'd raise the money, and we agreed to give them then thousand dollars a month for their operating expenses and then to give the committee on election time two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the House and three hundred and fifty thousand for the Senate, which we did. We kept those commitments in '62 and we kept them again in '64. And then,

[-141-]

apparently recently.... We ran a dinner last year which has caused all the talk, in which we picked up, with the help of the Administration and congressional people, some six hundred thousand dollars, which we paid out the ten thousand a month to them from that time and we also gave them some money early. But then the talk got along that this all should have been set aside. And as a result of the discussion over this, the President decided that they'd better go their own way. And so they're having the dinner May 12th which the President is going to speak at, but which the Senate and House campaign committees are handling themselves – all the money will be handled by them, received by them, spent by them. And any other money the President wants to spend, as he sees fit, on the campaigns will be raised by Arthur Krim [Arthur B. Krim]. And that's one

[-142-]

of the reasons why we're going down to Houston tomorrow night. There's a big fund-raising there, and then, I think, on May 17th, there's one in Chicago. And there'll be one in California sometime, which will be raised for the President. The President's feeling was, of course, I think, that he would get more if he let them raise their own money and then he raise whatever he did and wanted to help out, that he would get credit directly from the congressional candidates.

MORRISSEY: You mentioned Chester Bowles, a few minutes ago as one of the three Connecticut people that got top jobs in the Administration. Was he considered for Secretary of State?

BAILEY: Well, I don't know. I think Chester was very interested in being Secretary of State. Was very interested. Chester Bowles' part of this whole operation was very interesting. I was

[-143-]

instrumental and played a part in it. I supported Chester for governor in '48, elected him and supported him in '50. I didn't support him in '54 when he wanted to come back as governor. I was with Ribicoff. In the '58 campaign for the Senate, Ribicoff and I kept our hands off. Nobody ever believed it, but it happened to be true for awhile. Anyhow, I was the one who told Chester, "Look, we're going to be for Kennedy in Connecticut. Now, I think that you ought to be for him; I think you can do better with him. I think he's going to be nominated and elected, and I think you ought to get in early like we did." And of course, they were very interested in Bowles because Bowles was quite a liberal figure in those days, and Kennedy didn't have the picture of liberalism. I mean with Humphrey and with Stevenson and all the rest.

[-144-]

Bowles was the first person, you see. When he went with Kennedy, he was the first national person who was recognized as a leader of the so-called liberal group in the country to go for

Kennedy. And he was very helpful to Kennedy in Wisconsin. I mean, the fact that Bowles was for him was helpful in Wisconsin. It was helpful in California; it was helpful in Oregon because Ribicoff and I or Dave Lawrence or Mike DiSalle [Michael V. DiSalle] didn't have this image with that segment of the party across the United States. And I know he hoped to be Secretary of State. Well, he wound up one underneath it, which is pretty good.

MORRISSEY: I recall that he didn't run again for reelection to the Congress in 1960 after winning in '58.

BAILEY: Yes. That caused a problem too. I think the reason.... I know I thought he ought to run. But I think he thought if he was

[-145-]

in Congress, then that might be used as an excuse to...

MORRISSEY: ...keep him there.

BAILEY: ...keep him there. I often wondered whether or not if Chet had run again.... He'd have been elected that year because we only lost the district by four hundred and twelve votes, and we didn't have a candidate until three weeks before the election. He'd have been elected then; he'd have been elected in '60; he'd have been elected in '62; he'd have been elected in '64. He would be quite a figure in the Congress today. Now whether or not he wouldn't be much more a figure in American political life than being ambassador to India – whoever knows where the ball bounces.

MORRISSEY: The interesting thing to us that '58 election in Connecticut was that the new

[-146-]

senator was a Lyndon Johnson man.

BAILEY: Always.

MORRISSEY: One could say he was the only major New England politician who...

BAILEY: Who was for Lyndon Johnson.

MORRISSEY: Or who was not for John Kennedy.

BAILEY: But he was definitely for Johnson. And I think Johnson thought that he was going to be more helpful, delegate-wise, than he was. Well, we

had a delegation that was instructed for Kennedy and bound by the unit rule.

MORRISSEY: There was no question, was there?

BAILEY: No.

MORRISSEY: In the '62 congressional campaigns, you recall that the Cuban missile crisis came up. Were you traveling with the President when he went back to Washington?

BAILEY: I was traveling with the President. I was in Chicago that night with him. We had a big dinner in Chicago, and I remember there was a

[-147-]

telephone set right behind the stage. I was leaving, and he was going on to St. Louis or someplace.

MORRISSEY: Milwaukee, I think.

BAILEY: Milwaukee. He was going on. I was coming back East, and then I went on a tour into not even marginal areas through the middle of the country – Ohio, out. And I remember right during the crisis, I was flying into St. Louis. I think it was maybe the night he was going to make a speech. I got a call. I was in a little airplane. This tower asked us, "Is Mr. Bailey on board that plane? Have him call the tower when he comes in." I called the tower and they said, "The White House wants you." So I called up, and the President said to me, "Now, look. I don't want you out there saying that you've got to vote for Kennedy because of the crisis we're in. Skip

[-148-]

that entirely. Don't get so enthusiastic that you've got to support Kennedy because of the crisis." I think that was the night he made the speech. I was in St. Louis, I think, that night watching it on television.

MORRISSEY: So you had some foreknowledge on what was in the wind?

BAILEY: Well, I knew there was something because I know he had that cold and it wasn't that bad that night when we took off. I was sleeping right down the hall. We had a big crowd that night in McCormick Hall. He made a good speech. I flew out with him. We flew out with him that morning. I left at the White House with him, and we flew the chopper over to get on the Air Force Number 1.

MORRISSEY: We've talked about an awful lot of subjects, but we really haven't

focused any on the man himself. John F. Kennedy. Off the

[-149-]

top of your head, do you have any isolated recollection of any incidents, anecdotes, just Kennedy's style as a man?

BAILEY: Well, I mean, I liked him very, very much. Of course, I was one of the new people in the whole troop who traveled with him a great deal who was older than he was. In fact, somebody once said, "The reason Kennedy wants you is you've got to prove you've got somebody over thirty-five years of age who's been in politics." But I was. Jack was years younger than I was. I'd known him as a young man, got to like him, and I think we had a mutual respect for each other. And I enjoyed his sense of humor. In effect, I think that one of the things about Kennedy was that he was able to shift. He could be involved in it and then change into a different part of his life entirely and enjoy that, too. And I don't think he carried politics over into his social life

[-150-]

to the extent that other people have in the same position. As I say, he had a great sense of humor, and he was as sharp as a tack. I enjoyed being with him. I enjoyed every minute I was with him. He was not difficult to be with. I remember when he had that bad throat traveling on the airplane. He called me up to sit beside him because he knew that I could sit beside him and wouldn't bother talking to him. He wanted to rest his throat and the rest. And as long as I occupied the seat, nobody else would come over to talk. Especially on those trips we have visiting politicians who'd want to talk his ear off and expect him to answer everything. I could just sit there and let him do his doodling on a pad and not bother him at all.

MORRISSEY: Could you read his handwriting?

BAILEY: I got to be able to read it after a while.

[-151-]

You could always tell if Kennedy wrote it because you had trouble reading it. That's how you could tell if it was an original signature or not. I had some very interesting – a few, not as many as I wish I had – notes he wrote me during those days when we were traveling.

As I say, one of the most interesting things is when we were up in Bismark, North Dakota, in February of '59, which was early. No, it was in '60 because it was prior to the primaries. We were up there hunting delegates. We had a Bob Wallace [Robert Ash Wallace] who was with us, who is now in the Treasury Department. I got a call from Washington. They were putting the brochures together, and they had no western farm pictures of Kennedy. So they instructed him to get some pictures taken.

[-152-]

now that he was in North Dakota which is good farm country and so forth. So we drove out about ten miles to one of these feeding pens that some cattle are in. It was my job to drive the cows toward him. I'm not a great hand at driving cows. And he's there to get his picture taken with the cows, and he's perfectly willing, but he wasn't too anxious to be too close to them. So the picture, if you've ever seen it, in the old original brochure was the figure in the back of the cows was me with my fedora hat on and he with his coat on with his hand out towards the cows. [Laughter] We both needed a shine after we came out. But we did have a lot of fun together because, as I say, I traveled with him. He and I traveled American Airlines, and I carried the suitcase. As I said before, he said to me, "You haven't gone very far in twenty years." I said

[-153-]

"Yes, but twenty years ago I wasn't carrying the man who's a candidate for president's suitcase. I was only carrying the guy who was running for mayor." I said, "I think it's just relative." But he did. It was enjoyable traveling with him because he always had a quip or something to say. It wasn't always business. I mean it was a joke; it was about things. No, I have the very fondest memories of him.

MORRISSEY: I've heard people say he could take a batch of papers and very quickly come up with the essence.

BAILEY: That was why he was able to make a speech. I mean, most people, I know I have.... I mean, reading a speech is a difficult thing. Apparently, he could have that thing and take one glance at it, and almost take a half a page, which he could go over. Of course,

[-154-]

we got to know his speeches, though – I mean his endings. He had certain endings. The press and we who knew when he got into a certain phase, that that was time to close up the typewriters and get ready to go, you know. "Colonel Davenport, bring on the candles." And the other ones had, "many miles to go." Those were all endings he had. And if you read that volume of his speeches, just look at the last paragraph and go along, you'll see how many times in various – not the same locations, but across.

MORRISSEY: Did he ever comment on this?

BAILEY: We all knew it. He knew it, too.

MORRISSEY: Right after the assassination, you must have been awful hard to shift gears.

BAILEY: Oh, everybody was in a state of shock.

MORRISSEY: Where did you go from Austin?

BAILEY: Well, I got off the plane, and my advance

[-155-]

man who was there for me is the one who told me. He went in and got his suitcase, and got on a tanker plane. I don't know whether he had ever flown a tanker plane or not – with some of the Secret Service men we flew back to Washington. By 8:30 that night, I was over in the White House working on the list. A tanker plane has no windows. It was the worst thing I ever had happening, flying back. They had to throw off thirty thousand gallons of fuel. It had been ready to go and refuel some planes, and it was commandeered to take the Secret Service and the rest of us back. I came back to Washington to make preparations. My job was on the politicians coming in.

MORRISSEY: This was for the funeral?

BAILEY: I was in the White House that night at 8:30-9 o'clock. A very tragic moment. Hard to believe.

[-156-]

MORRISSEY: Anything else?

BAILEY: No. I think that covers it.

MORRISSEY: Well, thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-157-]

John M. Bailey Oral History Transcript – JFK #2
Name List

B

Bartlett, Charles Leffingwell, 74
Bingham, Jonathan Brewster, 114
Bowles, Chester B., 131, 143, 144, 145, 146
Brawley, Hiram W. “Bill”, 137
Brown, Edmund G. “Pat”, 80, 122, 123, 124
Buckley, Charles A., 114, 115

C

Celebrezze, Anthony J., 110
Christie, Sidney L., 63
Connally, John B., 113, 116, 117

D

Daley, Richard J., 81
Daly, Lawrence Joseph Sarsfield, 78
Day, J. Edward, 134, 136
DeSapio, Carmine G., 114, 115
Dirksen, Everett M., 121, 122
DiSalle, Michael V., 145

E

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 129

F

Farley, James A., 103
Freeman, Orville L., 82

G

Gardner, John W., 111
Glenn, John, 117
Goldwater, Barry M., 76, 118, 120
Goodwin, Richard N., 100
Grabowski, Bernard F., 133

H

Harris, Louis, 61
Hartke, Vance, 141
Hatch, Carl A., 130
Hodges, Luther H., 103
Humphrey, Hubert H., 62, 67, 68, 70, 71, 74, 82,
98, 99, 144

J

Jackson, Henry M., 88, 112
Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 77, 82, 91, 104, 113, 120,
142, 143, 147

K

Katzenbach, Nicholas deB., 96
Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 72
Kennedy, John F., 61, 62, 65, 66, 67, 68, 71, 72,
73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 86,
87, 90, 91, 93, 98, 102, 103, 104, 106,
107, 109, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116,
118, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124, 126, 129,
131, 134, 135, 136, 138, 139, 144, 145,
147, 148, 149, 150, 152
Kennedy, Robert F., 66, 96, 127, 134, 135
Kirwan, Michael J., 120
Knowland, William Fife, 123
Kowalski, Frank, 108
Krim, Arthur B., 142

L

Lausche, Frank J., 101
Lawrence, David Leo, 75, 76, 111, 145
Lehman, Herbert Henry, 115
Lodge, Henry Cabot, 73
Lucey, Patrick Joseph, 136

M

Maguire, Richard V., 139
McCloskey, Matthew H., 121, 139, 140, 141
McDonough, Robert P., 66, 136

N

Nixon, Richard Milhous, 100, 102, 103, 122, 124

O

O'Brien, Lawrence F., 66, 137
O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 66

P

Powers, David F., 72, 100
Prendergast, Michael H., 114

R

Raskin, Hyman B., 136
Raskob, John J., 112
Rayburn, Samuel Taliaferro, 141
Reese, Matthew A., Jr., 55, 131, 136
Ribicoff, Abraham Alexander, 69, 105, 106, 108,
109, 111, 144, 145
Roche, Charles D., 137
Roosevelt, Eleanor R., 115
Rosellini, Albert D., 84

S

Sorensen, Theodore C., 100
Stevenson, Adlai E., 77, 80, 89, 91, 115, 140, 144
Symington, (William) Stuart, 77, 78, 79, 82

U

Unruh, Jesse M., 80, 136

W

Wallace, Robert Ash, 152
Williams, 100
Wixler, Benny, 75, 76

Y

Yarborough, Ralph W., 113, 116, 117
Yates, Sidney R., 121
Young, Stephen M., 117, 118, 129