

**Teno Roncalio Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 12/20/1965**  
**Administrative Information**

**Creator:** Teno Roncalio

**Interviewer:** Ronald J. Grele

**Date of Interview:** December 20, 1965

**Place of Interview:** Washington D.C.

**Length:** 65 pages

**Biographical Note**

Teno Roncalio (1916-2003) was the chairman of the Wyoming Democratic Central Committee from 1957 to 1961, a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1956, 1960, 1964, and 1968, and a Representative from Wyoming from 1965 to 1967 and 1971 to 1978. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign in Wyoming, the selection of delegates for the 1960 Democratic National Convention, and Roncalio's time on the International Joint Commission, among other topics.

**Access**

Open

**Usage Restrictions**

According to the deed of gift signed July 3, 1968, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. 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 The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form.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**

Teno Roncalio, recorded interview by Ronald J. Grele, December 20, 1965 (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Teno Roncalio

to the

John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Teno Roncalio, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.
3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.
4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

Signed

Teno Roncalio

Date

July 1, 1968

Accepted

James B. Rhoads  
Archivist of the United States

Date

July 3, 1968

GSA JCS 7016

Teno Roncalio– JFK #1  
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Seeing John F. Kennedy [JFK] at the 1956 Democratic National Convention
2	Asking JFK to visit Wyoming for the 1958 campaign
3	Vice presidential race at the 1956 Democratic National Convention
4	Meeting with Ted Sorenson
5	Priorities in JFK's campaign
6	Democratic Party in Wisconsin
7	JFK's effect on the state campaigns
8	Public opinion of JFK
9	Working with JFK's campaign
10	Meeting with Edward M. Kennedy [EMK]
11	EMK's effectiveness in the western states
13	Work with Hyman B. Raskin
14	Staff of JFK's campaign in Wyoming
17	Lyndon B. Johnson's [LBJ] supporters in Wyoming
18	LBJ's campaign
21	Wyoming Democrats' opinions of JFK
22	Effect of JFK's Catholicism on the campaign
24	Anti-Catholic sentiment in Wyoming
25	Criticisms of JFK's record on agricultural issues
26	JFK's campaign trips to Wyoming
28	JFK's distaste for the mountains
31	Impression of JFK's staff
33	Selection of delegates for Wyoming
35	Dissent about the delegates selected
36	Makeup of the Wyoming delegation
38	Governor Joseph Hickey's support for LBJ
41	Agreeing on the votes for JFK
44	Wyoming's vote for JFK
46	Showing <i>The Houston Ministerial Appearance</i> in Wyoming
49	JFK's visit to Wyoming
51	Public reaction to JFK
52	JFK's loss in the Wyoming general election
53	Becoming chairman of the International Joint Commission
55	Function of the Joint Commission
56	Dispute between American and Canadian seamen over the Great Lakes
58	Pollution in the Great Lakes
60	JFK's strained relations with Prime Minister Diefenbaker of Canada
62	Suggestions on presidential appointments
64	Conflicts within the Kennedy administration

Oral History Interview

with

TENO RONCALIO

December 20, 1965  
Washington, D.C.

By Ronald J. Grele

For the John F. Kennedy Library

GRELE: Congressman Roncalio, do you recall your initial introduction to the Kennedy organization?

RONCALIO: I'm not sure that I do but I'll try to. I'm not sure that I have it in mind now but I will try to recall the first time I saw him. I think it was at the 1956 Convention in Chicago but I did not meet him.

GRELE: Were you a delegate at that Convention?

RONCALIO: I was a delegate at that Convention but I

did not formally or informally meet Senator Kennedy at that time. I became Democratic State Chairman of Wyoming in 1957 and I believe in planning the 1958 campaign I had been visited by Theodore [C.] Sorensen, Ted Sorensen of the Senator's staff, who wanted me to pull together a few of Wyoming's leading Democrats for a breakfast meeting in Cheyenne at which time he wanted to talk to them regarding Senator Kennedy as a potential man for this nomination in 1960 for president. This was a good three years, I think, before then, and certainly two and a half. And it was in planning the '58 campaign that I think I wrote to the Senator and asked him to make an appearance in Wyoming on behalf of the ticket and he obliged. I think we met for the first time either at Casper or Laramie or Cheyenne because he appeared at each of

those three places in behalf of the 1958 Wyoming ticket.

GRELE: Back to the Convention. Do you recall how you voted in the vice presidential . . .

RONCALIO: Yes, I believe I do. I believe that the entire Wyoming delegation voted for [Estes] Kefauver.

GRELE: Do you recall any specific reasons why the Wyoming delegation preferred Kefauver to Kennedy?

RONCALIO: No, I'm not sure that I do right now. I remember standing alongside Tracy [S.] McCracken and [Joseph J.] Joe Hickey at the time, but I don't recall if there were any particular reasons for this. It was just one of those things.

GRELE: In the meeting with Theodore Sorensen, was it put right on the line that John Kennedy would run for the presidency?

RONCALIO: Excellent, excellently presented on the

line. This first meeting which was a breakfast meeting held at a little cafe on Sixteenth Street in Cheyenne, Wyoming, one cold morning gave me my first insight into what I judged at that time to be almost political perfection in stating the case so far as the desirability of a particular Democrat to be nominated over other Democrats. Each was discussed, and each was discussed with kindness and with a charming review of their abilities and with a charitable consideration of their disadvantages by Ted Sorensen, and in each case he built this like a real professional to a masterful conclusion that in all objectivity, it would appear that Kennedy would be the only person we ought to be for in order to win in 1960. Of course, history proved him right but, as I say, this was the first time that I'd

been exposed to anyone from the Kennedy staff. It was the beginning of the drive for the nomination in 1960.

GRELE: Did he give you any inclination of what they thought their major problems in Wyoming or in the mountain states would be?

RONCALIO: He didn't put them out of context to their relative importance to the whole nation. He put matters in the world first -- in the nation first -- as respecting peace on earth first, prosperity in the nation second, general progress of humanity within our nation. These things were all in their proper order and somewhere along this line we touched on the prosperity of the mountain states. He happened to have some mountain states background himself. He's a native of Nebraska, as you know, and he also happened to have had as one of his professors at the University of Nebraska Dr. John D. Clark

and he'd asked about Dr. Clark, so this gave Sorensen some Wyoming roots and we discussed this. But he didn't come to us with the proposition that, "You are more important than anyone else in this nation." Everything was relative and everything was proper.

**GRELE:** Do you recall anything interesting or significant about the dates you've already talked about when John Kennedy campaigned in Wyoming in 1958?

**RONCALIO:** Not particularly. Looking back on it now, from 1965, it was a year for the Democrats of Wyoming to be up and it was a year for our Republican adversaries to be groping in dissension and quarreling a little more than party leaders usually quarrel. We just happened to luck in on that and many other reasons. One of the foremost reasons, however, is that we

happened to have one candidate, Gale McGee, who had courage and ambition and enthusiasm and aggressiveness and demonstrated to a lot of us so-called professionals of Wyoming that it doesn't take an old pro to make a tremendous candidate and a great incumbent. Here was a heretofore politically unknown college professor from Laramie, Wyoming, who'd never, I think, been a precinct committeeman or taken great identity or interest with his party in Wyoming and yet he was outstanding as a candidate. And we balanced the ticket out pretty well and we pros thought they were in good shape and as it turned out we about elected the full ticket.

**GRELE:** Did John Kennedy's appearances at that time -- in the state directly -- did his appearances help the ticket?

**RONCALIO:** I think it made a strong contribution to

getting every segment of the Democratic -- every segment of the voters in Wyoming interested in that election. He was tremendously appealing and charming and all of those attributes which later would be unfolded to the whole nation started in to have an effect in Wyoming. He was a tremendous dynamic attraction and I think he attracted people to the Democratic ticket in Wyoming who might not have otherwise voted Democratic.

GRELE: What segments of the population? Catholics, suburbanites?

RONCALIO: Well, in Wyoming this is a -- you know, we're a pretty small state and we're only three hundred thousand people. He interested those who sometimes don't otherwise find parties and political activities very attractive. He excited certain folks of a conservative or business community type

who would be more disposed under normal circumstances to vote Republican. And over and above all of this, there was no question but what he created some tremendous excitement in the bosoms of thousands of Catholics who felt that, "This man is going to break this little remnant of the second class citizenship thing that we've carried around." And this was a factor, too. Not a necessarily large one, not the only factor, but it was one to be considered.

GRELE: When did you start working closely with members of the Kennedy organization towards garnering the delegation in Wyoming?

RONCALIO: I think immediately after the Sorensen talk at Cheyenne. It wasn't but a few months after that that I met, I guess [Edward M.] Ted Kennedy was the second member of this team that I met. I believe

by that time I was pretty well devoted and dedicated to this candidate.

GRELE: I understand that when Edward Kennedy took his first trip west, shortly after Labor Day in 1959, he came to see you at that time.

RONCALIO: Well, if it was shortly after Labor Day in '59 then I'd been in the camp quite a little while, but if that was the time, I do remember getting a phone call at Aspen, Colorado, at a little skiing resort where we used to spend a lot of time, to come down into Denver to meet Teddy Kennedy and I did that.

GRELE: Was there any discussion of strategy at that time?

RONCALIP: No, I think the discussion then was mostly, well, not strategy. That's a rather large term for what we discussed. We discussed hard work; more of the precinct and the state and county level type hard work, and

meeting people. He was interested in meeting people and being exposed to those who might be beneficially impressed by him and we wanted to make sure that every person who was going to have a vote in 1960 would at least have an opportunity to meet him. We began by visiting the Governor of Wyoming, who we knew would be a delegate, the national committeeman, Tracy McCracken, who played a key role in these things, and we visited others. I introduced Ted to as many people as I possibly could every time we were together.

GRELE: How effective was Edward Kennedy out west?

RONCALIO: I thought he was very effective. I thought he was very helpful. I thought he was tremendous. This is not an objective opinion. I can appreciate that some people felt that the West had been pretty much written off by Senator Kennedy, by

assigning his youngest and least experienced brother to the mountain states, and perhaps he did assign him but it's not being written off. It's merely giving the proper importance to every place in regard to its relative importance. And coming from the state of Wyoming with three electoral votes and fifteen delegate votes we know better than to expect the Senator himself every other weekend. There were bigger fish to have to be snagged, too, but we were pleased that he was there. Colorado, I think, felt it might have been a little short on this because Colorado is more of a sophisticated area and Denver feels that it's one of the great cities of the country. I believe the Denver Post was critical of the fact. They felt the mountain states had been handed the short end of the situation. We were quite pleased to see any Kennedy as

many times as we could.

GRELE: Did you work at all with [Hyman B.] Hy Raskin?

RONCALIO: Hy Raskin I knew from years before and I did not work with him very much because Hy was well known in Wyoming, had visited there in Adlai [E.] Stevenson's interests in years before. There wasn't too much need for Hy to come through there so we didn't see too much of him.

GRELE: You say there wasn't much need for him to come through. What was he doing?

RONCALIO: Well, we're a little state with fifteen votes and the identity was there. We already had our approach made to the delegates through the state chairman in my case, and I think that the Kennedy strategists could well conclude at that time that, "Certainly in this little state we were going to get our share of votes

If we weren't going to get all fifteen by unit rule, we were going to certainly get a majority of them." And they could almost conclude that as a fact. I don't know what Hy was doing.

GRELE: Who else worked a great deal for the Kennedy campaign in Wyoming?

RONCALIO: Oh, there were quite a few. The secretary of the state party was a young lady then named Jean Schoeck. She was a devoted Kennedy worker. Ed Whitehead, a state committeeman of Laramie county, was a Kennedy man. The delegates I have -- I'm just in the process now of sending out a little gift, the book Kennedy by Ted Sorensen, autographed for them as a little souvenir. I tried to get one of these little, I'm touching now a statuette of the late President's head that's on my desk. I tried to get thirty of those to send one

at least to the delegates who nominated President Kennedy in 1960 as a little Christmas present this year, but I wasn't able to get them. I've been trying to for six months. So I ended up buying thirty copies of Kennedy by Ted Sorensen and those are autographed by Ted which was very thoughtful of him, and I'll send those out to each of the Wyoming thirty people whose half votes nominated President Kennedy, since Wyoming was one of the states that came in at the right time in what was the talk of Los Angeles in 1960.

GRELE: Was Mike [N.] Manatos involved in any of this?

RONCALIO: Mike Manatos was involved only in this way. Mike didn't even bother to come to Wyoming in 1960, to come to the Convention or to see about getting to be a delegate.

GRELE: Isn't he from Wyoming?

RONCALIO: Yes, he's from Wyoming, but Senator [Joseph C.] O'Mahoney for whom he worked was not well at the time and didn't come out to the convention, the state convention, but out of honor and respect to Senator O'Mahoney he was included as one of the delegates. We were then asked to substitute Mr. Manatos for Mr. O'Mahoney and I objected at that substitution knowing full well that Mike Manatos was coming as a Lyndon B. Johnson delegate and not as an O'Mahoney vote, knowing full well that he had not participated in any of the procedures of the party. Anyway, that was put to a vote at Los Angeles and I lost that and Mike was seated. Therefore, he was seated and, of course, in the first votes, voted with about five other delegates and they got, I think two and a half or three and a half votes which were LBJ's.

However, as you know, we had enough to put Kennedy over the top so quite wisely the LBJ delegates threw in their votes with ours and cast the full fifteen votes on the floor for President Kennedy.

GRELE: Were the Johnson supporters active in Wyoming?

RONCALIO: Oh, yes. You bet they were. And at all times in Wyoming I was always overly courteous and considerate of the Johnson people as they were coming through. One old gentleman from -- I'll never forget him. He was an oil man. He worked for Mr. H. L. Hunt, and I was a bachelor in those days. I took him up to my house and I at that time was in an apartment house with a huge lawn out in front of it, and a lot of phonograph records and a world of books. And as he walked into the house he looked at my lawn and I was

turning off the sprinkler system and he said to me, "And how is your grass crop this year?" I'll never forget that little observation, but I sent him on up to Cody and he talked to Jerry Hausel, a fine lawyer up there, who was a Johnson vote. He had talked to Walter Phelan, who was a Johnson vote. He'd been to see Governor [Joseph J.] Hickey who was a Johnson man. He'd been to Russell Laird. He'd been to Rawlins, to Al Kinnamon. He'd been to quite a few Johnson people.

GRELE: What was the general Johnson tactic in Wyoming?

RONCALIO: Oh, I don't know that there was any tactic. These men would come and go on the hope that LBJ was a westerner and this should help in western support, and that Senator O'Mahoney was for him and had a world of respect for him, and that our

chances for getting a place in the sun would be much, much better under a westerner like this, who was more capable of running the country than anyone else on the scene. This was all affirmative.

GRELE: You obviously didn't agree with it, though. What were your answers to this?

RONCALIO: Well, you see, by this time I'd been in this game for quite a little while and I didn't want to push anybody around. I merely told them I was committed to Jack Kennedy. I thought his was the type of leadership I was interested in and that I was voting this way. However, this is a democratic party and you're welcome to come in and talk to the rest of the delegates in our state. We rarely go unit rule and I'd like to think we will this time but in case we don't, you ought to go in and talk to the people and here's what their names

are, and here's where they are, and come in and use my phone if you'd like to or come have breakfast with me tomorrow or here's my office and use it," and this sort of thing. And I might say now that I'm pleased that these are the things that we did.

[Irvin] Irv Hoff came through in Johnson's interests. Mr. [Clifton] Carter, a time or two. There was a man with Continental Airlines who'd come up to Cheyenne in the interests of LBJ. Mostly the business connections and industries and oil companies active in Wyoming had roots or connections in some way to the LBJ camp.

GRELE: Did anyone at that time think it incongruous that a representative of H.L. Hunt should come to Wyoming as a supporter of Lyndon Johnson?

RONCALIO: Not particularly because H.L. Hunt has had a ranch in Wyoming for some fifteen or twenty years and comes up every summer into the Cody country and is quite a citizen there, and his Life Line column appears in some of the weeklies in Wyoming, and Mr. [Dale] Petit is quite a fellow, who runs the Voodoo Ranch for Mr. Hunt. So this was the connection. There was this local angle.

GRELE: What were some of the special problems presented to the Kennedy campaign in Wyoming, such as, who did the state organization support?

RONCALIO: Well, the state organization, as such, the chairman and secretary supported the national committeeman, Tracy McCracken, at the time. Tracy was quite candid for a good long while. He would have preferred not to have another Catholic run because

he went through 1929 and he knows what an ordeal that was. Yet as the contest narrowed and the inevitability of it was apparent, Tracy wrote one of the most classic editorials of my lifetime, pointing out the folly of the prejudice against a Catholic president and reviewing the public careers of a half dozen Catholic senators so far as pressures ever being brought to bear that would indicate the violation of their oath of office, and it was a classic defense, really, of the Kennedy situation. So, the organization was Kennedy pretty much, and even those who might have been reluctantly not for Kennedy at the beginning because of historical objections pretty much came along. There was no absolute prejudice against a Catholic president. There were one or two who voted affirmately as Masons for what they regarded the long traditional separations of church and state which they

feel are better protected by a Protestant in the presidency than a Catholic. There were others whose personal lives brought about separation from the Catholic church and who carried with it a rather vehement objection to Catholicism and this was apparent in some of their discussions.

GRELE: Who were these?

RONCALIO: Well, there were a few of them there. With one or two of them I could sit down and talk because I happened to have been baptized a Catholic and raised as one but at the time hadn't been inside a Catholic church except for an occasional funeral for some thirty years or so. So I think I could discuss these things with them with some degree of understanding of their problem and of the futility of their talking of this as an objection to President Kennedy when he made such a sturdy and

classic case of stating his role as a president regarding the separation of church and state.

GRELE: Was there an undercurrent of religious hostility to John Kennedy in Wyoming?

RONCALIO: There is no question about it. You get off into the masses in the streets -- you know, Wyoming is a state where it's tough to live. Life can be harsh in Wyoming. The towns are small. The ranches are far apart. Our winters are harsh and rough and it takes a peculiar, tough breed of cat to live in this country, and what may be a slight prejudice when they're young becomes an ingrown way of life by the time they've pretty well been there a few years and faced this weather. There's no question but what, I'd say, he lost because he was a Catholic, and for no other reason.

GRELE: Is this true of the election?

RONCALIO: Oh, yes, in the election of 1960. This was it and nothing else.

GRELE: Did any of the other criticisms that were leveled at John Kennedy, such as his farm record . . .

RONCALIO: No, these things weren't too much of factors. There were some who felt that he was not really very sympathetic toward the mountain states because he didn't have a knowledge of the feed business or the cattle business or the problems of the sparsely populated areas, and that may have resulted in a few votes. Generally, I think it was the feeling there that those who didn't -- well, as I say, it was just there were only two ways to go. There was a little bit of Stevenson feeling but it was pretty well gone. They were either Kennedy or they were apathetic to Kennedy.

That was the situation. I'd say of all the Johnson campaign I don't know of a person there that was affirmatively, determinably pro LBJ because of some particular attribute of LBJ leadership.

GRELE: Did you accompany John Kennedy when he came into Wyoming before the Convention?

RONCALIO: Oh, yes. On all three of these trips we'd meet his plane. I'd hoped that he could have come in a half hour earlier once from Pueblo, Colorado where he'd appeared -- a county chairman down there named Tiger Muhick had him, sheparding him around for a while. But he was a half hour late coming in or I would've taken him to Laramie, Wyoming, where at the time -- I believe that this was November, 1959; I'm not too sure -- fiftieth wedding anniversary was in process of a great patriarch there named Joseph Sullivan. Joe Sullivan was

a great lawyer and an oldtimer and a tremendous man whose family had been Democrats for years and had wide respect through out the whole state of Wyoming. It would have been a classic and wonderful thing for them to have had him show up. Mr. Sullivan died a month or two after that.

I was able to accompany him on each event. I never rode the Caroline with him, or got in it with him though I was at the time a pilot and had my own airplane and we used to meet at the field where he was coming in and we'd get around the state this way. I've flown around the west with Ted Kennedy a bit, but never with Senator John F.

GRELE:

Do you recall anything interesting or significant, any anecdotes or any talks that you had with either Edward Kennedy or John Kennedy?

RONCALIO: Well, I can recall I had a convertible at the time and I was driving with Senator John Kennedy from this town of Casper to the airport at Casper. It was one of those days when the wind was blowing about thirty or forty knots and there was nothing there but the high barren sagebrush, and he'd look out over this nothingness. And he looked and he shuddered and he looked back at me. His eyes almost seemed to say, "Good Lord, why do you live here?" You could almost feel this sort of thing. But this is not unique to Jack Kennedy. There have been others who had the same look in their eye many, many times.

Now with Edward M. the thing was quite different because Edward M. skis and really had, I think, an understanding of the mountain country and the prairies that

perhaps his older brother didn't have. Or at least Edward M. was making it his business to acquire this, in any event, and it was genuine in the ski areas. There was no question about it. And around the horses. Senator Edward M. Kennedy loved horses, loved riding. Good Lord, at Thermopolis every morning for three or four days he had me up at six o'clock in the morning to go riding for an hour or so. I'd been riding for delegates all night long but I had to get up at six o'clock in the morning to ride a horse with Teddy for a while, and we enjoyed that.

GRELE: You were riding for delegates? you mean riding a horse?

RONCALIO: No, I didn't mean literally. It's a figure of speech. I was working to get delegate votes. We enjoyed this very much.

And as I say, I don't think Senator John Kennedy had an opportunity to spend any time in the West in order to acquire his particular . . . . His back made it impossible for him to be a skier and enjoy this, although when he was President he came out to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, about a month before the assassination and I'm sure he loved that particular trip. The mountains were majestic at the time. It was late fall and just a thing of beauty.

GRELE: Did he ever discuss with you the existence of a frontier at one time in Wyoming?

RONCALIO: No. Senator John Kennedy never discussed a great deal with me. I was a state chairman and he was busy looking for some votes and we'd spend a few minutes together on the business of the matter at hand and that was about it.

GRELE: As state chairman did you ever meet John Bailey?

RONCALIO: No, not until the Convention at Los Angeles. That was the staff at the time and [P. Kenneth] Kenny O'Donnell would be out with him a time or two, Pierre [<sup>Emil George</sup> E.G. Salinger] once or twice, [Lawrence F.] Larry O'Brien once or twice.

GRELE: Was your initial impression of the Kennedy organization confirmed by these further contacts or was it amended in any way?

RONCALIO: No, my original impressions of the Kennedy greatness as president has never been affected in any way. I came to have a fine regard for the close knit operations there and the fact that if a job couldn't get done in one way, you'd just sort of tip your hat and with good courtesy and manners went around and found some other way to get the job done. This was the

big thing that this team taught us. I must say that about that time I met [Stephen E.] Steve Smith, who was very helpful and I found very efficient in organization work.

GRELE: He was financial manager, wasn't he?

RONCALIO: Well, he was financial but he had an office down here in the Esso Building, first time I met him, with eight or ten people working then. It was a case of classifying and holding cards and running a little check on potential delegates and their feeling toward the Senator and what might be sent to them to change their minds, what kind of information, literature and material. This sort of thing, not so much the financial. We didn't have any need for financial participation and cooperation too much in Wyoming. For contributions we would write and ask

for modest contributions on particular affairs. Most of the time we found the dinner things the best way to really raise money and do it on a level that was least objectionable.

GRELE: The Wyoming Convention selected delegates to the national Convention. I believe it was held at the same time as the West Virginia primary.

RONCALIO: That's right.

GRELE: What were the politics involved at the Convention and how did the primary in West Virginia affect the outcome, or did it?

RONCALIO: It didn't because it was so simultaneous. I believe Ted Kennedy learned of the West Virginia outcome in a phone booth on a street corner in Thermopolis while our very convention was going on. This is how close these two affairs were, even

though there was maybe a three-hour time spread at the time.

GRELE: At that convention was there ever any doubt that the majority of the delegates would be Kennedy delegates?

RONCALIO: No. No, I made it my business to see that there would be no doubt.

GRELE: How did you make it your business?

RONCALIO: By submission of the potential candidates running for that delegation and by just working hard at what I was doing.

GRELE: You submitted a list to the convention and they approved of it?

RONCALIO: They didn't approve it. It was a matter of submitting a panel of nominees and cooperation with those who were interested in the Johnson delegates, too. And it was -- most things are in this business -- a compromise type thing to which everyone agreed.

GRELE: There was no significant dissent of the . . .

RONCALIO: There was significant dissent here and there but it was the dissent of the intemperate, the dissent of the man that was out to stop the Catholic from being president. This sort of thing. I can remember one or two examples of tremendous ugliness at the time. I can remember being manhandled in the outer halls of that convention by a couple of labor men who didn't get on. They claimed it was shorting labor but they would have preferred to benefit other than the way they did. But this is all part of the game.

GRELE: Who would the labor men have voted for?

RONCALIO: Probably LBJ. I have no idea. I know one thing. One of them was certainly not a Kennedy man. The other one I know -- well, I resented at the time anyone

trying to tell me how to run a political party. This is, I think, the sense of it.

**GRELE:** Can you describe for us the Wyoming delegation at the 1960 Convention and the history of that delegation from the mement it hit Los Angeles to the time it cast its vote?

**RONCALIO:** Yes. I think generally we were a good cross-representation of the people of Wyoming's Democratic party. We had a few businessmen, a few professional people, a couple of publishers, four or five lawyers. We had the Governor, we had Senator McGee. We had quite a fine group. We were billeted at a place called Blair House which before then had been a little operation of doubtful repute, apparently, because when we asked the taxi driver to take us to the Blair House he looked at

us in a sort of weird look, and we found out that it had been raided by the police a time or two. It was some sort of a super, super bordello, I guess, and it had been closed and then it had been opened under this new name. And oddly enough it was only a block or so from where Senator John F. Kennedy was hiding out now and then. I think it was on Rossmore, the corner of something and Rossmore. We were a hard working group. There wasn't anybody out of line or the excessive drinking of one or two members of a delegation you usually find. We didn't have this sort of thing. We had four or five golfers that loved to get out and play some golf and luckily we were billeted right near the golf course. We had some hard working people with us. It was a business-like group.

GRELE: Just as a point of information, what were Senator McGee's sympathies?

RONCALIO: Oh, Senator McGee had been committed to be of help to, and vote for, John F. Kennedy and Senator McGee did just that. He was unhappy about one aspect of this Convention and I don't blame him. We had sort of felt that because we were primarily a Kennedy group that we would go on this way, and up until then we had more or less usually discussed with each other various new developments but no one had discussed with Senator McGee or anyone else up until a few minutes before it happened the fact that the Governor of Wyoming at the time was going to second the nomination of LBJ for president. This was extremely annoying to Senator McGee because he had been asked to place the name of [Stuart] Stu Symington in

nomination for the president and had declined. And had he known that we were going to have this type of representation with other people he certainly would have accepted that and fulfilled his role to nominate Symington while our Governor seconded the nomination of LBJ. This would have made him feel a little better, I think.

GRELE: The Governor never conferred with the delegation about that?

RONCALIO: Not until a minute or two before he did it.

GRELE: Why?

RONCALIO: Oh, I don't know. I suppose he felt it would have been so actively unpopular that it would have just been too unpleasant a situation so he disqualified it. Because he said to me, "Good Lord, my own wife, Wynn, isn't talking to me," because she

wanted Kennedy very very much. He was a Catholic who felt, I think, that he'd rather not have him on the ticket because it would affect him, obviously. I feel this was his reason. However, I don't know. I wasn't in that same category as Joe Hickey, Governor [Albert D.] Rosellini, and [Stephen L.R.] Steve McNichols of Colorado, who found themselves in that situation.

GRELE: Who in the Kennedy organization was the contact man for Wyoming? Was it still Edward Kennedy?

RONCALIO: No, it wasn't.

GRELE: Was he with you when you voted for John F. Kennedy at the Convention?

RONCALIO: At the Convention, EMK. In fact he was with us at the very time. He would<sup>n</sup> his way near our place on the floor and about the time that we were called upon to vote he was amongst us.

GRELE: Do you recall any agreements that were made to cast the total of the Wyoming vote for John Kennedy if it could push him over?

RONCALIO: Well, in our caucus we had such a proceeding. I was trying to get an understanding that if he was over seven hundred votes and it would come to us, would they all agree to come in? Their answer in effect was, "We'll be the judge of that when the time comes. We're grown up. We're not little kids now. We know this is a man's game and we'll play it accordingly. We're not making any agreements particularly now." I was asked specifically by Leonard McEwen, "Well, will you make the same deal? Will you vote for LBJ?" making this the other way around. And I said, "No, I can't. I'm too close to the Kennedy camp. I'll walk off the floor

and leave my delegation but I will not vote that way and can't." This was my feeling on the situation. We didn't have it as a firm set promise, but Tracy McCracken pronounced the fifteen votes for JFK.

GRELE: Did anyone think that this would be a serious possibility, or was it just something that was discussed?

RONCALIO: Oh, yes. We thought it was a serious possibility. You see, when you're from a state that begins with a W you think of these things at a Convention, and in years gone by we've seen it come fairly close a time or two on a ballot.

GRELE: Wisconsin and Washington?

RONCALIO: Surely. Those at the tail end of the alphabet can figure, "Well, can we get that done?" Now, we wouldn't have had this role in history if New Jersey hadn't played footsie with its Kennedy votes

and if Iowa hadn't been caught busy still caucusing and at any event passing up the opportunity to vote. This left it up to us to put him over the top.

GRELE: Oh, I didn't recall that.

RONCALIO: Iowa, or somebody passed there and didn't get their vote in.

GRELE: Kansas.

RONCALIO: Kansas, I guess it was.

GRELE: That's right and they had cast some votes.

RONCALIO: They had cast some votes and if there had been fifteen votes there for JFK we would have lost our opportunity.

GRELE: Was there ever any chance that the leaders of the delegation would not throw the whole delegation to John Kennedy?

RONCALIO: Oh, it was never known that they would until the split second before they did and, of course, at the time we didn't care. I think we needed a vote of one or two

people to put him over the top because we didn't already have them. And when these became apparent out of the six or seven people who were not Kennedy each one of them was indicating and considering the invitation and saying, "Yes, put him over the top. Take my vote and let it be changed," and so on. Then I think Tracy McCracken conferred with Dave Richardson and J. J. Hickey. And when Ted came up, as I recall it, it was pandemonium at the time, you know. Then as I recall, he merely announced that Wyoming has enough votes to put JFK over. Then he still didn't cast them. It was still pandemonium and then it so happened that enough quiet prevailed for him to be able to say, "We cast fifteen votes for JFK."

GRELE: Tracy McCracken, then, cast the votes?

RONCALIO: Oh, yes. He cast them. He was chairman

of the delegation.

GRELE: There was reported one time that you would cast them.

RONCALIO: That's in print and it's an error. It's in the proceedings of the Democratic National Committee. But it is in error.

GRELE: Can you describe the delegation when the vote was cast? You said it was pandemonium. What, in specific, was pandemonium?

RONCALIO: Oh, it was all over. There were about twenty-one, or two or three of us who were the happiest human beings on earth, and the rest I don't know.

GRELE: What delegations were around the Wyoming delegation?

RONCALIO: The District of Columbia was just behind us.

GRELE: They had not voted for John Kennedy?

RONCALIO: They had not voted at all. They hadn't cast their ballots yet. Of course, they

were going to then make it unanimous, as you know. New Jersey was ahead of us a little bit. I forget what -- a few feet ahead of us. But it was a very historic thing.

GRELE: Did John Kennedy ever comment to you or to anyone from Wyoming upon the fact that the Wyoming vote had put him over the top?

RONCALIO: No. Mrs. Rose Kennedy made that observation on television that night, and said she loves everybody in little Wyoming. And we were all pretty proud of that.

GRELE: What did you do during the campaign?

RONCALIO: I was state chairman. Well, the thing that I did that I remember more than anything else was take a film called The Houston Ministerial Appearance and threw it in the back of my little blue Cessna at the time and I flew that film into every little nook and cranny in Wyoming where I

could get a movie projector and could show it in front of anybody.

GRELE: Because you felt that this was the issue in Wyoming?

RONCALIO: There was no other issue. Yes, that's right.

GRELE: How effective was the film?

RONCALIO: We lost by fourteen thousand. [Laughter]

GRELE: Did you show the film on television?

RONCALIO: Yes, we did. We showed it several times on KFBC television at Cheyenne and K2TV at Casper and a little station at Thermopolis, the only three stations within Wyoming.

GRELE: What was the newspaper reaction to the film?

RONCALIO: Very well. I think it was -- the newspaper reaction? There was none. We were that small a state. In all fairness there were only eight or nine dailies in the state and they had nothing to say about it.

Except, of course, the classic McCracken editorial which got itself reprinted in quite a few papers around the state.

GRELE: What about various ministers in Wyoming?

RONCALIO: I remember the minister of the Congregational Church at the time, a very fine chap who consented to an invocation at a Kennedy breakfast before the election, for which I was so grateful because I had called one or two others who couldn't come, and I was very happy that this one was able to accept. I don't recall that he had any observation to make about this.

GRELE: Did the hostility to John Kennedy break down denominationally? Were certain denominations working hard for him and others . . . .

RONCALIO: No, I don't think so. There were some denominations that got out literature. There were others who had sermons devoted to this a week or two before the election.

One particularly strong attack statement came out of Nebraska and was given from the pulpits of the Methodist churches in Wyoming, I recall. I don't know, however, that any of the others were any less effective.

GRELE: Did you accompany the candidate in his swing through Wyoming during the election? Or during the campaign?

RONCALIO: During the campaign for his election the only time he touched Wyoming, poor fellow -- he tried to land at eleven or twelve at night and we had one of those nights when we fliers call "the Cheyenne fog condition." There was actually an up slope condition that seeps back in from the Nebraska side and it's a heavy, thick London-type fog. On this night there wasn't enough visibility for a safe ILS [instrument landing system] landing and consequently they made about three

passes at the field and on one of them I distinctly remember looking up and hearing the airplane and seeing the landing gear. But it simply was just not enough of a clearing situation for him to make a landing. He'd already pulled up in what I think they call a missed approach and was on his way around. Well, the pilot decided to land at Denver, forget about the landing at Cheyenne. So they did. They landed at Denver and I think they got in down there and into their hotel rooms at one or two in the morning, if not later, and he had to be back on that plane again at seven or eight to get up in time for a breakfast in Cheyenne. It was a difficult situation. That was his only appearance in the state of Wyoming during the campaign.

GRELE:

How were the crowds?

RONCALIO: Oh, excellent. Excellent. We'd never seen crowds of this kind before.

GRELE: Did he stick mostly to the cities?

RONCALIO: There was just one appearance in Wyoming and that was in Cheyenne. What he evoked from people, or what I think I saw in people who came out to see him is best described by fifteen or twenty pages from a book called, Lead, Kindly Night, by Vincent Sheehan, describing an Indian experience called Darshan, and I commend this book to you and the reading of what this experience is. And this is what I think I saw in the eyes, in the countenance of those who would come out to see Jack Kennedy.

GRELE: You've already given us the assessment of the election in Wyoming. Would you care to repeat it? That Wyoming was lost because . . .

RONCALIO: Wyoming was lost primarily because we were simply not populated by enough people who could overcome the historic objections to a Catholic as president. This is the reason why Wyoming was lost. We may have been lost by not so big a vote if he had been of another denomination, but I rather doubt it because he was the sort of a Democrat who really appealed to the whole spectrum of Wyoming's vote and I think he would have carried our state had it not been for this one factor.

GRELE: After the election, were you at all consulted about jobs by the President or by anyone?

RONCALIO: Well, I, of course, rather obviously probably grabbed off the cream plum job in Washington. I'm not sure how this developed. You'd have to ask probably

Ted Kennedy or [Richard] Dick Donahue, who worked in the White House at the time. I was offered the chairmanship of the International Joint Commission long about the end of May of 1961. I had inquired once -- I don't know why -- whether the ambassadorship to Italy would be open and it had been discussed that a fellow who was not quite what you would call a devout Catholic, a little on the backsliding side, worshipping in the Congregational church and this sort of thing, might not exactly pose a great honor to the Vatican to have that Catholic in Rome. No, seriously, if this would give offense to the people of Italy, not to the Vatican but to the people of Italy, then this is a matter that would affect one's representation there. Furthermore, I was not qualified to be an ambassador at the time to Italy -- well,

I'm not so sure of that. I think I was qualified to be, but in any event we discussed this and found that maybe that wouldn't be the niche to take. And then I was no longer interested in very much of anything. I was quite happy in things going along. I wasn't a disgruntled patronage type because I have a law practice and a bank and if there was anything, I was well taken care of. But I was not very happy in Wyoming in those years. I was a bachelor and had not yet married and when a call came again -- I think I was skiing in Aspen, Colorado or somewhere around the state -- from Dick Donahue saying, "Well, do you want a job or don't you? We've got one here that's got a little diplomacy attached to it. It involves some diplomatic work in Canada. It involves some law and it's a commission of six and it pays you

very well and you can come and go as you want to. Do you want it?" Well, I came to Washington and had a look at the International Joint Commission and accepted the appointment.

**GRELE:** What does the Joint Commission do?

**RONCALIO:** The International Joint Commission was created by treaty about 1909, I think. It has the responsibility of a sort of quasi-judicial overseeing of anything that stems from the administration of navigation or power or anything else affecting the waters that are jointly owned by Canada and the United States. Over a third of the boundary runs through St. Lawrence River joint boundary area, and the Great Lakes. Many, many rivers run back and forth in between the two nations like the Kootenay of Idaho and Montana, the Columbia River of the Pacific Northwest, the St. Johns,

St. Croix of Maine, and things like that.

GRELE: At the time was the dispute between Canadian seamen and American seamen raging over the Great Lakes?

RONCALIO: Yes, these disputes were raging but they were not particularly under the jurisdiction of this Commission. However, this Commission could be of tremendous more importance than it is. The job I took I later found is pretty much used as the the number one patronage plum. It is sometimes given out to men who served the President very, very well. You'll recall that Governor [Douglas] McKay of Oregon had been asked by President Eisenhower to run against Wayne Morse. He did. He quit as the Secretary of the Interior to go out and do that and lost. He was given the chairmanship of the International Joint Commission immediately after that election and I think he kept it

until his death. Idaho's Len [B.] Jordan was chairman of the IJC for a few years. It could be a very, very responsible position but it can be a frustrating one too because, you see, it's a six-man commission, three from Canada and three from the United States. It cannot of its own accord and momentum initiate a darn thing. These things have to come from the joint messages of the two heads of government, the President of the United States through the Secretary of State, or the Prime Minister of Canada through his Minister of External Affairs. And this is what can be frustrating about the specific problems here of getting rid of some sludge in Lake Erie or cleaning up the pollution of a particular river, like the Rainee River in Minnesota. This is a terrible thing up there and yet this

Commission is almost powerless to get anything done.

**GRELE:** With all this discussion now of pollution in the Great Lakes, it would seem that this Commission would be ideal in cleaning up the Lakes.

**RONCALIO:** It would be an ideal one to work on if there could be something done about the absence of authority. You see, people resent, as you know, when you're on a river and you have a little plant, you belong to a city, and then a county and then a state. Or you belong to a town and a province if you're on the other side of the river, and you resent any intrusion of a political subdivision telling you what to do, or being around, let alone a super structure, an international agency telling you what to do. It's bad enough to put up with the provincial authorities,

the federal authorities, the state authorities.

So this is a bit of a problem in this pollution thing.

GRELE: This is as true on the Canadian side as it is on the American side?

RONCALIO: Absolutely, and this is why the IJC tries to make up joint boards, advisory boards or actual administrative boards that actually do the work of administrating these things, as in the case of the power plants on the Niagara River, one of which had a failure just a few months ago and caused a tremendous blackout. These are all matters in the jurisdiction of the IJC, but getting the work done there is another problem. And in all candor there is not enough to do down there to keep a young man busy. My predecessor told me that and I tell it to you as a fact. You cannot sit there at a desk with an IJC chairmanship and keep

yourself busy at all unless you just shuffle papers on a "make work" type of thing.

That's the tragedy of the job.

GRELE: When you were involved in the Joint Commission, did you have any impressions of the very tender relations between President Kennedy and Prime Minister [John] Diefenbaker?

RONCALIO: Yes, a little bit of an awareness of them. I knew that this was the reason for one of his early trips to Ottawa before I was appointed. I knew that there was an extremely sensitive relationship between the people of the two countries, as a matter of fact. I never realized they resented us as much as they do. I didn't realize that they felt we were a monstrous, mammoth obliteration of their own identity and of their own arts and of their own culture. I didn't realize all of these things until I spent some time with them.

GRELE: Did any of the Canadians on the Commission tell you how they felt President Kennedy was handling Prime Minister Diefenbaker?

RONCALIO: Yes. We have an old-timer up there at the time, a great soldier named [Andrew G.L.] Andy McNaughton, General McNaughton, the one-time commander of the Canadian troops; but I think he got into a fight with [Viscount] Montgomery and got sent home to North Africa, I think. He discussed this a little bit, but we didn't go into anything that can be of any historical value.

GRELE: Did you ever discuss any other jobs for the President? How did Mike Manatos get into the White House?

RONCALIO: Yes, I did this. Right after the election of President Kennedy in 1960, Joseph C. O'Mahoney was retiring from public life as a senator representing Wyoming and a

man named Keith Thompson had been elected, a Republican. This meant the entire O'Mahoney staff needed jobs after January. This is before Keith Thompson died. He died in December of that same year so that he could never really take the office to which he was elected. I made up a list of O'Mahoney's people and at the head of the list was Louise Love, Jerry [A.] O'Callaghan, I think was still there -- I'm not too sure --, Mike Manatos, certainly, Phil O'Neill of Casper and people of this kind. I went to [Lawrence F.] O'Brien whose office at the time was in the Democratic National Committee. They were at 1001 Connecticut Avenue at the time. These were hectic days for him but he was kind enough to give me a half hour, or so, and I made a little case for each of these people and said, "I'd like you to put Mike Manatos on the payroll, if you

would, or give him a job, Larry, because he only has a year or two until retirement, he told me, and he'd love to be able to finish up, say, four years with President Kennedy. He's a great person and knows everybody on the Hill." And Larry O'Brien said, "Yes, I know Mike Manatos," and he put his name down and that was it. He made no allusion as to who he'd been for or who he hadn't been for. This was of little importance at the time. Larry was looking for a staff that could get along with the people on the Hill.

GRELE: Was your opinion asked on any other appointments?

RONCALIO: No. It wouldn't have made much of a contribution if it had been asked.

GRELE: Did you have any further contacts with the President or any members of his staff?

RONCALIO: Oh, certain members of his staff from time to time, yes. I'd drop in at the White House

during the brief thousand days and see Ted Sorensen more than I would anybody.

GRELE: You were closer to Ted Sorensen than anyone else?

RONCALIO: Yes, I was closer to Ted than the others. We had the geographical identity and some of his writings I was fond of.

GRELE: I've been told that there was some kind of a conflict on the staff between the more intellectual side of the staff -- Sorensen, [Myer] Feldman -- and the more political side of the staff?

RONCALIO: Undoubtedly. I don't know of it, never was around it. I didn't experience it, but this is inevitable. I doubt if any of them would be so void of good sense as to let it get to anything obvious or that it bothered them in their work.

GRELE: Ted Sorensen never told you about it?

RONCALIO: Oh, no, no. These aren't the kinds of

things that he would discuss with anybody.

GRELE: Is there anything we've missed? Any contacts you had?

RONCALIO: Not that I know of that could be of any real historical value.

GRELE: Do you have any final comments you would like to make?

RONCALIO: No. It's all over.

GRELE: Well, thank you very much.