

Ralph E. Pryor Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 7/06/1964
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Biographical Note

Ralph E. Pryor (1920-1972) was a judge and county chairman of John F. Kennedy for President in Ohio County, West Virginia. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy's West Virginia campaign in the Democratic primary and general election and the role religion played in the campaigns, among other topics.

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Administratrix of the Estate
RALPH E. PRYOR
of Ralph E. Pryor
Deceased 7/3/72

DATE September 1, 1973

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Oral History Interview

with

RALPH E. PRYOR

July 6, 1964
Wellsburg, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: Judge Pryor, when did you first become interested in the possibility of Senator (John F.) Kennedy as a presidential candidate?

PRYOR: It was probably shortly after the campaign--or (Democratic National) Convention--in 1956, where he made the race for the vice-presidency and was defeated. Subsequent thereto, (Alfred) Al Chapman, who had attended that convention from Wheeling, West Virginia, contacted me and asked me what I thought in respect to Senator Kennedy, as he had made up his mind while attending said convention that this was the man he was going to support four years later, and he was beginning at that time what he considered his missionary work in promoting the candidacy of the senator.

YOUNG: When did the missionary work reach a more serious stage?

PRYOR: Probably in the spring of 1959, when the Kennedys had been in contact with Mr. Chapman. They were planning, together with others in the state of West Virginia, to make appearances in the tri-state area, the first one to be in Bellaire, I believe the 29th of June, 1959.

YOUNG: That would be Bellaire, Ohio. Then appearances in Pennsylvania at the same time?

PRYOR: I'm not sure about the Pennsylvania appearances.

YOUNG: What was your first personal contact with the senator?

PRYOR: I think the first time that I met him personally was on the 29th day of June, 1959, though I had seen him when he first ran for Congress, I believe it was the year of 1948, when I was a law student in Massachusetts. I was very hostile to his candidacy, though I was not a voter in that area, because I believe he represented those who came from money, and going to school under the GI bill, I automatically had hostilities to candidates in that financial position.

YOUNG: What changed your mind?

PRYOR: Well, it was quite a flamboyant campaign, which, of course, was successful.

YOUNG: You're speaking of the congressional campaign?

PRYOR: The congressional campaign. And subsequent reading in respect to the Kennedy family. And watching the convention--I believe it was 1956--where he made the run for vice president. The man had an attraction which simply was appealable to me.

YOUNG: When did President Kennedy, then, first come into this immediate area to speak, and what were your contacts with him at that time?

PRYOR: Well, the first time that he came to this area to speak where I attended, was the meeting of June 29th in Bellaire. Now, do you want to go into this?

YOUNG: Yes, I think you might tell us about that meeting, if you care to.

PRYOR: Well, we had arranged to have a caravan delegation go to Bellaire. And the arrangement through Kennedy's brother-in-law, Mr. (Stephen E.) Smith, was that he would arrive at the Ohio County Airport. Our aim at that time was to secure approximately a hundred and fifty people to welcome him at the Ohio County Airport . . .

YOUNG: That's the Ohio County Airport in Wheeling?

PRYOR: In Wheeling, West Virginia. To form a caravan and go to Bellaire with him, to have a brief speech made at the airport and taped for television and radio, and to get as much publicity as possible for Senator Kennedy at that time, believing this would be the time that we would officially begin to work publicly and openly on his behalf.

YOUNG: Well, was there something more? Do you want to go ahead with the rest of the story about the . . .

PRYOR: Well, the gist of the story was that Jacqueline (Bouvier) Kennedy flew into the airport, together with Mr. Smith, and summarily was taken to Bellaire. And everyone waited for Senator Kennedy to arrive. As the people became more restless, it soon became apparent that he wasn't going to come. And there was a good bit of grumbling, of course, as we had coerced all of our friends to appear for the occasion. We were more than upset when it was learned that Senator Kennedy was on another airplane with Wayne Hays, that would land in Cambridge, Ohio.

YOUNG: Congressman Wayne Hays?

PRYOR: Yes. (Richard W.) Dick Barnes and John Chernenko and myself were there, and the question arose as to who was going to tell the audience that Senator Kennedy wasn't going to come--which was considered a rather dubious honor to be conferred upon anyone. So finally I announced to the audience that as a result of the nefarious movements of Congressman Hays, Senator Kennedy was diverted without being aware of the fact that this splendid group was gathered at the Ohio County Airport to greet him, offered apologies to the crowd, and asked all those who were joining the caravan to drive as rapidly as possible within the law of Bellaire, Ohio, so we could then attend the banquet.

YOUNG: Well, what was the reaction of the senator when he learned about your disappointment?

PRYOR: Well, we criticized Congressman Hays at the main table to his face. We wanted to try to get the issue defined. And Mrs. Kennedy, overhearing the argument that ensued, kicked her husband, the senator, under the table. He stopped me after the discussion was over and asked me if I would contact him in respect to what had happened so that he could make apologies for anyone who had been inconvenienced. This was done, together with sending the senator a list of all the people that John Chernenko and Dick Barnes and I could recall who were at the airport to meet him, which was a list in excess of a hundred people. Though there were more than that there, that was the approximate amount that we could recall. And Senator Kennedy, through his staff and personally by signature, mailed each individual on that list a personal letter, which caused quite a bit of talk in the area, as it involved people from Marshall County, Hancock County, Brooke County, and Ohio County of West Virginia, and actually probably had a better result than if the senator had

arrived at the Ohio County Airport in person, because each one considered it a personal matter from the senator, and in the main, became imbued with his candidacy at that time. And all of those people, in the main, finally ended working extremely hard on behalf of the senator.

YOUNG: Judge Pryor, would you tell us of your first contact with President Kennedy with respect to the West Virginia primary?

PRYOR: Actually that contact was not with Senator Kennedy but was rather with his brother Bob (Robert F. Kennedy). (Robert P.) Bob McDonough had called me and asked if we would bring a delegation to Parkersburg, West Virginia. Similar delegations were to come from all other parts of the state at Bob McDonough's request to discuss whether Senator Kennedy should enter the West Virginia primary. Together with John Chernenko, Dick Barnes, I believe (Michael G.) Mike Gretchen, and others we went to the meeting, which was in the spring of 1959. And Al Chapman, of course, was there. And each group was asked whether they believed the senator should enter the primary. Speaking for the panhandle group--as we are always referred to--it was the consensus of opinion that he should not, and I told Bob Kennedy that from the floor.

This was predicated upon our feeling that there was considerable bigotry in the state of West Virginia and that we could handle our end of the state, meaning the first four or five counties in the northern panhandle, and carry them, but we had grave doubts with respect to whether the southern counties would vote for Senator Kennedy for president. However, almost all other areas that were represented felt we were mistaken. Each group seemed to believe they could carry their area, and if they couldn't carry the area, they thought it would be better to define the issue by a primary election and have it determined in West Virginia rather than simply evade the issue by advising the senator not to appear. So the consensus of opinion at that meeting as given to Bob Kennedy was that the senator should run in the West Virginia primary.

YOUNG: Once this decision was made, what were your actual responsibilities, then, in the primary itself?

PRYOR: Well, Bob McDonough had divided the state into districts. I was assigned to handle the first district, which was to include the first seven counties in West Virginia beginning with the most northern county in the panhandle--Hancock--and simply going down the first seven counties that adjoin each other. I told Bob that I was really only familiar with three or four counties and could only do an

effective job, if at all, in those counties. And I was advised by him that if I would let my name be used as chairman for the seven counties, he and I together would work out those in which I was not politically known and did not know those in politics who should be seen in this type of an effort.

YOUNG: Well, what do you feel were your most effective campaign techniques in those counties for which you were responsible with respect to methods in campaigning?

PRYOR: Well, our approach was probably the same as followed in most districts. We tried to pick out, in the main, people who were not seeking political office but who had been active in politics. And we tried to find the various factions that existed in each county and pick out a representative from each faction and make the person we believed to be the strongest person, chairman, together with a co-chairman from another faction in the same county. This was the procedure that was followed, basically.

YOUNG: You mentioned earlier in private conversation the effect of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.'s appearance in and work in Hancock County. Would you say a word about that?

PRYOR: Well, Bob McDonough advised me on the phone that Franklin Roosevelt was available for appearance on behalf of the senator and asked if we could use him. We were, of course, very happy to have that opportunity. So we arranged in April of '59 for a one-day tour for Mr. Roosevelt, beginning in the morning in Hancock County, where he was to stand in front of the mill gates, and ending that evening with a speech at the courthouse in Wellsburg, which is Brooke County. When Mr. Roosevelt came in, we very quickly learned that he did not like standing in front of a mill. But he agreed to do it after we had all urged him that we had arranged for the television cameras from the Steubenville television station, WSTV, to be there. But this was not the type of campaigning that he enjoyed. But when he went to the mill gates, the reaction of the shifts leaving and entering was almost electrical. As soon as word spread that he was standing at what is known as No. 1 gate, a tremendous crowd of steel workers leaving the mill immediately formed, each eager to shake his hand, many of them men who showed the wrinkles of extreme age and years of work in the mill, all telling him how they had felt about his father.

And of course, he looks and has the image of his father, talks like his father, and handles himself with considerable talent in that type of a group. And the impression was the exact type that you would be looking for if you were seeking

the perfect type of campaign image on behalf of someone else. His speech at Wellsburg later that evening was just as electrifying. The audience was totally responsive; they tried to keep him there after the affair was over. And when he left that evening, which was very late, we resolved to call Bob McDonough the next day and tell him that this is a man who should not be permitted to leave the state of West Virginia because the magic of the Roosevelt name was still alive.

YOUNG: You've mentioned the various factions in each county being represented on the committees. Could you indicate any other way in which you tried to broaden the base of the appeal for Senator Kennedy with respect to various factions within each county or within the state?

PRYOR: Well, we tried to get a representative from each political faction. We tried to see that the chairman in each county was a Protestant, if possible, and if possible, we wanted a Mason Protestant to head up the campaign. We thought this would be particularly effective in our area because the Catholic population in the upper four counties is roughly about 33 percent. We felt that they would have a natural affinity or a natural desire to support the president if his impact on them was acceptable. And we wanted to do everything possible to show that this was not a religious fight but a political fight. We thought if we could have Protestants and Masons in the forefront, that this would contribute greatly to doing that type of a job.

YOUNG: Did you seek the aid in any way, directly or indirectly, of the church hierarchy, or what was their role?

PRYOR: The church hierarchy was contacted directly, I think, only in Ohio County as far as our area was concerned. And Bishop (John J.) Swint at that time was rather cold, distant, and hostile to the Kennedy candidacy, mainly because of his staunch Republican beliefs. We did seek to reach labor very directly and contacted the union officials in the area, from the top to the stewards, and were very successful in having many of the lower echelon of labor leaders commit themselves promptly to us. And with that in mind we didn't worry much about what the higher echelon would do, because we felt they would be under a mandate, in all probability, from their national office.

YOUNG: The story persists that a number of members of the Catholic church who were Republican changed their registration so that they could vote for Senator Kennedy in the primary. Would you comment on this, please?

PRYOR: There was no substantial change in the registration in Brooke or Hancock County. There was a reasonably substantial increase in Democratic registration in Ohio County, which, we believe, in part was a desire of Republicans to switch to support the senator.

YOUNG: Would you say a few words about the opposition to Senator Kennedy as it developed--supporters for either Senator (Lyndon B.) Johnson or Senator (Hubert H.) Humphrey at the time in your own area?

PRYOR: Well, we were organized in our area with chairmen and sub-chairmen and just people who were not normally in the political mainstream, very early in '59 and early in '60. And by the time the Humphrey people sought to contact those in our area whom they thought were desirable, we had pretty well obtained commitments from most key people. We had little trouble in doing this because we bypassed the so-called professional people. By professional politicians I refer to those not wanting to pick the wrong horse. Many of our workers were pleased and some even flattered that they were asked to participate in a presidential campaign. And by the time the Humphrey people were ready to make their drive, our area was very definitely under control. We were not particularly disturbed or concerned by their activities which were led, of course, by Senator Robert Byrd.

YOUNG: Before we started to make this tape, you mentioned the dinner in Weirton, West Virginia at which time you introduced Senator Kennedy. Would you say something about that dinner and any of the activities surrounding it?

PRYOR: Well, this was like all political dinners except it was on the first day of May of '60, and the election was the tenth day of May, so the timing, as far as we were concerned, was excellent. The Weirton Community Center can seat a thousand people at a banquet, and on that occasion it was an overflow crowd. The senator arrived, and, as you know, it was my privilege to introduce him. But he had lost his voice as a result of the campaign in West Virginia and spoke only a brief four or five minutes, at which time his brother, (Edward M.) Ted Kennedy, took over and made the speech that the senator was about to make. Of course, Ted has a voice and a mannerism that in many ways emulates that of the senator, and it was just as effective, and perhaps a little more emotional than if the senator had completed his speech.

YOUNG: Well, in the West Virginia primary--at least insofar as you were associated with it--what would you say

were the differences in terms of issues? Or was it rather pretty much a matter of personalities?

PRYOR: To me, it was a matter of personality and organization. The senator had planned and organized his campaign and that, to me, was the deciding feature. There was no great dichotomy between the views of Senator Humphrey and Senator Kennedy as I recall them, at least at that time. I felt that the success of the senator was the fact that he had an organized campaign. And if there was an issue, it was the religious issue that was injected into the campaign wherein most of us, at some time or another, received scurrilous pamphlets of the nature that a Catholic should not be president, could not be president, because of his obligations to the pope. The senator met that head-on in his campaign speeches where necessary, and on television and on radio. His forthright presentation of his cause and the cause of America, I thought, would be the one issue, if any, that resulted in his election.

YOUNG: Judge Pryor, I believe you had the pleasure of entertaining Senator Kennedy in your home. Would you describe his visit to Wellsburg and Brooke County, West Virginia?

PRYOR: Well, his formal appearance in West Virginia in respect to his candidacy, was to be on October the tenth of 1959. He was to appear in Brooke County in the morning and early afternoon, then fly to Charleston for a large banquet to be held in the Community Arena. He came in approximately at ten o'clock together with his wife, and the arrangement was that Mrs. Kennedy was to go to the home of John Chernenko, who together with his wife had arranged an informal tea for Jacqueline. At our home where the Senator was to be in the morning, we had asked only those people whom we had heretofore contacted in respect to his campaign. We had invited the county chairmen from the first seven counties to come, asking each of them to bring at least one friend. And we invited those people in the area who had helped to organize his campaign, which at that time was in a state of reasonably good progress.

When the senator first came in, together with (Robert A.) Bob Wallace and his brother-in-law, Mr. Smith, and of course, Bob McDonough, he was simply introduced to all the people there. And the reaction of all those who met him at that time was that he was a rather retiring and shy person and would only answer a question if it was specifically directed to him. After coffee and doughnuts, we all assembled the best we could in the living room and Bob Wallace, on behalf of the senator, outlined the campaign techniques they hoped

to use in the state of West Virginia. At which time the senator was to make some remarks, which he did for approximately ten minutes. When he stood on his feet to speak to the group, he was a different person than when he shook hands with them earlier. The force and the dynamic personality and the podium manner asserted itself immediately. This, of course, was not apparent when you first had the opportunity of talking to him individually. From the house then we went to the Elks Club, and everyone was greatly worried about the crowd that would be there. We had hoped to have approximately three hundred and fifty people, and were somewhat disappointed that there were approximately two hundred and fifty people there. But actually the meeting was a very great success. The United Mine Workers presented him with a miner's hat, through one of their members. He was given the White House from the Marx Toys Company, and made a rather forceful and dynamic speech. From that gathering we flew to Charleston. And one of the men, Dick Mosher, who had come at my request to the gathering at our home, drove to the airport and asked the senator if he could hitchhike a ride with him to Charleston. And when the senator graciously said yes, Mr. Mosher got on the plane, left his wife without saying goodbye, and together with the rest of us, flew to Charleston for the larger affair that was held in the Community Arena.

YOUNG: Well, did you have any indication of Senator Kennedy's manner changing during the day, other than the speech which he made in your living room?

PRYOR: Well, after the affair was over in Charleston, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Chernenko and myself were going out to get a hamburger at approximately midnight. We were going down the street about a half block from the hotel, when the senator apparently walked out of the door of the hotel coffee shop. And when he saw us down the street, he shouted at us in a very loud voice, "There go the three best damn Democrats I ever saw," which was not the type of comment or accolade that one would have expected from him when you had met him in the morning, when he was very shy and very quiet.

YOUNG: Let's turn to another issue in the primary. You've talked about the fact that religion--and we are all aware--was counted as an issue. Since your district included some of the predominately Catholic areas of West Virginia, looking at it from four or five years away, how do you feel with respect to this subject of religion as an issue in this primary election?

PRYOR: I think it clearly was an issue. I happen to be a Thirty-Second Degree Mason. And at one of the

gatherings at the Masonic Hall in Wheeling, where I work in several of the degrees, I was confronted by some of the Masons from Weirton who challenged my right to support Senator Kennedy and to remain a Mason. There was a very hot discussion for approximately fifteen minutes that involved a considerable number of people mainly listening to the argument between myself and the two or three Masons who were speaking against the senator from the Masonic point of view. After that meeting where I spoke my piece and told them that they not only didn't understand Masonic principles but the principles on which the country was founded, we had no more trouble in that area. But I felt that it was representative of the type of thing that was widespread at least up until the latter part of the campaign.

There was a definite feeling among a substantial amount of people that you should not or could not vote for the senator, because he was a Catholic. And by confronting this issue as he did, speaking about, discussing it, I thought he put it to rest very well. And I was always amused at some of the Republicans who after Kennedy won the primary from Senator Humphrey, took the view that the reason the senator won was that the West Virginians wanted to lay the bigotry issue to rest, but that in the general he would have no chance of winning in the state of West Virginia--which, of course, history does not hold to be true.

YOUNG: You have indicated, then, the superb organization as well as the religious issue, both factors in the primary election. If you were asked to summarize in general other reasons for the president's victory in the primary, could you list any others?

PRYOR: Well, I think if you ever heard him on a platform, as everyone, of course, subsequently did, either in person or on television, he did have a dynamic personality. He was an intellectual; he was the master of the spoken word; and he had the flair, the youth, the vigor, the talent, and the energy, which, of course, endeared him subsequently to all the American people as they came to know, to meet, and to love him. He himself really won the campaign.

Perhaps there's one thing that should be said, Bill. There was some talk about elections being bought in the state of West Virginia. Of course, I can only speak from the local area limits, but we in our area operated without funds from the Kennedy people. We received no money and asked for none for the campaigns in Hancock and Brooke County. The only monies we received for the campaign in Ohio County were to pay for the letters actually sent out inviting people to the McLure Hotel when he last spoke in Wheeling. It might be of interest to note that after he finished a speech at the

McLure Hotel, which was overrun with people, he was taken by Al Chapman, Joe Noll, and George Fahey and myself to a private club in South Wheeling known as the Kane Club. The building was overflowing when he arrived there at about eleven in a state of almost sheer exhaustion. A way had to be pushed through the crowd for him, which was not common at that time, as it later became.

We all got a tremendous boot out of the fact that as he looked around, he seemed to revive at the friendly faces and the accolades and cheers he was receiving. And without assistance or direction, he climbed up on top of the bar, said if someone would give him a glass of beer he would make a speech. And he made what we believe to be the only campaign speech he ever made on the top of the bar at the Kane Club with a glass of beer in his hand. That glass is still enshrined in Wheeling by the person who handed it to him, who considers that a memento that will never leave that family's possession, even though she has now entered a religious order.

YOUNG: Judge, this particular section of West Virginia has not been listed as being as depressed as the coal fields to the south of us, but could you say a word about the Kennedy appeal with respect to economic conditions in this particular section of West Virginia in the 1960 primary--or was it an issue?

PRYOR: Well, in the state campaign it was. And as you know, he made definite commitments in respect to what he would endeavor to do to alleviate the problems in the coal fields, and the other economic problems of the state. But those issues were not issues, as I recall now, in the pan-handle area. And his speeches and our approach to the problem were not along those lines in this particular area.

YOUNG: Judge Pryor, in terms of the primary, would you describe any role you may have played in the selection or the election of convention delegates-- talking about Brooke and Hancock and Ohio counties, those counties with which you were most concerned?

PRYOR: Well, Dick Barnes from the beginning was very interested in running for delegate from Brooke County to the national convention and was interested, of course, in supporting the candidacy of Senator Kennedy. He worked very hard early on in behalf of the senator. And when he filed for a delegate to the national convention from the first district, a very fine man, Frank Rybka, who is now the present mayor of the city of Weirton in Hancock County, West Virginia, likewise filed. Since a delegate had to run at that time in seven counties, we were greatly disturbed that they

would chop eachother's votes up and as a result thereof, neither one would be elected, in one of those internecine or fratricidal warfares that end up helping the opposition.

So we made arrangements to contact Frank Rybka to see if he would withdraw as a candidate for delegate to the national convention, with the agreement being made that he would support Dick Barnes wholeheartedly in Hancock County for that position, and then Dick Barnes would appoint him alternate. Frank Rybka was very generous and agreed to do so. He did withdraw. He did campaign fervently for Dick's candidacy openly on the grounds that a vote for Dick was a vote for himself for alternate and a vote for President Kennedy. And this combination was very helpful in having Dick Barnes elected delegate to the national convention. Of course, Dick did make Frank the alternate and they did go to the national convention and they did spend their time, their energies, and their talents there on behalf of the senator.

YOUNG: With the victory in the primary, what was your role between the primary and the general election, or at least in terms of the Democratic slate in West Virginia?

PRYOR: Well, of course, it was to keep alive the individual contacts that we had made during the primary, to endeavor to influence any uncommitted delegates, and, of course, to keep alive all the interest we could from the primary to the general, so that the primary victory would not be lost in the fall election. But the pressure of the campaign, of course, on the senator, moved elsewhere, as he had his other races to run, his other areas which had to be reached. And the flair and savor of the Kennedys appearing as they had in the primary wasn't with us in the general. But we did keep the total organization alive and, of course, this was done state-wide. And the senator was elected at the convention.

YOUNG: You mentioned earlier a Republican friend that had said that it would be impossible for Senator Kennedy to carry the state in the general fall election. We know now, of course, that this certainly was not true. What were the main contributing factors to Senator Kennedy's victory in the general election within the state; could you list some factors there for me?

PRYOR: Well, of course, probably the largest factor was the feeling that people in the state of West Virginia had, that they had met and known this man. He had campaigned extensively through the state of West Virginia, and, in effect, to know him was to love him. He had made the type of appeal directly and personally so that people believed that

if he became president, he would be their president. And I would say his own campaign in the state of West Virginia was what resulted in his victory in this state in the fall election.

YOUNG: Let's turn, then, to the period after the election and the years of President Kennedy's tenure in the White House. West Virginia was, of course, an issue and became a national issue in the campaign--poverty, Appalachia--we've heard a great deal, of course, in the last few years about this particular subject. Speaking just of your own section of West Virginia which is the northern pan-handle area, what was the post-election reaction as to whether or not President Kennedy did help West Virginia, whether he kept election promises, and so forth?

PRYOR: Oh, I suppose the answer to that is a political answer. The Democrats throughout the state felt that he did, and the Republicans contended with false vigor that he did not. Actually, probably one of his monumental contributions to West Virginia has not been realized at this time. That was the interstate road funds which were allotted to this state. These roads are still in the process, as I understand it, of being built, which will play a tremendous part in opening up this state, and which will have an impact for the next fifty years or more on this state.

His dedication and interest in the state was, of course, unflinching. He used West Virginia for testing the stamp plan. He reappeared in West Virginia in 1962 at the Wheeling stadium, and certainly in this area the people thought he had kept his promise. Because his reception was something tremendous to behold. People stood in a rain that was unceasing and torrential, and cheered each word, nearly, that he spoke, and on his trip from the airport to the stadium--the Ohio County Airport to the Wheeling stadium--it was lined with people. And in Warwood the crowds simply surged through so heavily that they stopped the cavalcade at more than one place. People in this area felt he was their personal president. He was greatly and is greatly loved.

YOUNG: Well, this recent appearance in Wheeling which you speak of in 1962 was an attempt on the part of President Kennedy to ensure the reelection of Congressman Cleveland Bailey. What explanation is there for the fact that the crowds loved Kennedy but wouldn't vote for Bailey?

PRYOR: Well, I suppose that love is not transferable. This Franklin Delano Roosevelt learned when he tried to defeat--I believe it was Senator (Millard E.)

Tydings--years ago. I suppose it's a lesson that all men in political life have to learn, that their own popularity is not necessarily and probably should not necessarily be transferred to another. Cleveland Bailey was a very fine congressman, but was in his seventies and was running against a man who had held office in this district and was well-known. And it was beyond the powers of President Kennedy to ensure his election, though he certainly tried.

YOUNG: Judge Pryor, in coming to the conclusion of this interview, what overall impressions do you have, or what statements would you care to make, in terms of an evaluation of the Kennedy administration?

PRYOR: Well, of course, it was our feeling that we had had a small part to play in the election of President Kennedy, and an opportunity that was unlikely to have occurred and which would never happen again as a result of the primary election in West Virginia, where we had had the opportunity of meeting, eating with, and actually sitting down and talking to the man. When he became president, his inaugural speech was such that many of us believe it will go down in history as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, inaugural speech that was ever made, and his performance as president, we thought, was beginning to reach fruition at the time of the tragedy of November 22nd in Dallas.

We ourselves were totally satisfied with President Kennedy and felt that if he had lived, he would have gone down in history as one of the great intellectual geniuses to have held this office. And his impact would have been far-reaching not only in domestic matters but in foreign affairs. And that the present civil rights bill is, of course, the product of the dynamic drive of President Kennedy. That the conviction of (James R.) Hoffa is the result of the tenacity of President Kennedy and his brother Bob in refusing to quit when the odds seemed hopelessly against them. The loss as a result of November 22nd is one that in this area was felt on a very deep and very personal basis. Socrates said that no evil can occur to a good man in life or in death, and we feel here that there could be no evil ever occur to Senator Kennedy in either of those dimensions.

YOUNG: Thanks, Judge Pryor. For purposes of the record I would like to identify Michael Gretchen, whom you referred to, as an official of the United Mine Workers (His home is in Windsor Heights, West Virginia. I believe his office is in Bellaire, Ohio.); Attorney Richard Barnes of Wellsburg, whom you mentioned as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention; and John Chernenko, who at the present time is serving as a federal marshal--is that the

correct title?

PRYOR: United States Marshal for the Northern District of
West Virginia.

YOUNG: Thank you.

