

Arch W. Riley Oral History Interview – 2/16/1965
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Biographical Note

Riley, a lawyer from West Virginia, discusses the role of religion in the 1960 Ohio County, West Virginia Democratic primary and general elections, the volunteer groups organized in the 1960 Ohio County during the Democratic primary, and his role was in the West Virginia Democratic primary, among other issues.

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Arch W. Riley

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Oral History Interview

with

Arch W. Riley

February 16, 1965
Wheeling, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: Mr. Riley, would you explain your role in the Democratic primary in 1960?

RILEY: In 1959 every organizational Democrat was very interested in who would be the candidate to run against the Republican nominee who obviously at that time was going to be Richard Nixon [Richard M. Nixon]. Stevenson's [Adlai E. Stevenson] candidacy to most of us seemed to be out because he had lost twice. Many people in the state were looking toward Senator Symington [Stuart Symington II], Senator Kennedy [John F. Kennedy], Senator

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Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] and Senator Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]—Senator Johnson especially in the southern part of the state.

In 1959 Senator Kennedy began what I later found out was the beginning of his West Virginia campaign at the Elks Country Club in Brooke County. He came in with Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy]. John Chernenko [John G. Chernenko], who is now United States Marshall, who was Democratic chairman of Brooke County at the time and Ralph E. Pryor, who is now Judge of the Circuit Court for the First Circuit in West Virginia, headed up the people who set up the rally up there. At this time I talked to Senator Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy. It was more on a cordial basis, talking about politics in general. But at

this time he gave no indication that he would be entering the West Virginia primary. At this time I was a member of the West Virginia Senate and also

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vice chairman of the Ohio County Democratic Executive Committee and very active in politics. The thought of a presidential primary hitting West Virginia was something we had never contemplated.

During the session of the legislature that year various emissaries from Senator Symington's camp, Senator Johnson's camp, Senator Kennedy's camp, and Senator Humphrey came in person, feeling the pulse; feeling as to whether the West Virginia primary would be a good test for relative political strength. Senator Kennedy then contacted Robert McDonough [Robert P. McDonough], who later became his state campaign chairman. The entire Kennedy movement in Ohio County seemed to be rather underground. John Kamlowsky [John H. Kamlowsky] who is now United States Attorney, and Ed Cully [Edward A. Cully] ended up being the campaign chairmen for the May primary in Ohio County. The big

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problem facing myself with the Kennedy campaign, in the primary, was whether Senator Kennedy could win in the fall. This was the question that seemed to bug most Democrats, most organizational Democrats, who had been active in Democratic politics.

YOUNG: Did you consider yourself an organizational Democrat at that time?

RILEY: Yes sir, I had always believed in a strong organizational system which I found out that Senator Kennedy also believed in. I'll get to his organization later.

But this was a problem that troubled us. We felt that the defeat of the Republican Party was absolutely necessary to the wellbeing of the nation at this time, and we wanted to present our best candidate. Senator Humphrey sent in people from his office in Washington, and they contacted my father,

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Robert J. Riley, who is on the state committee, and myself because they felt that it would be, campaign-wise, good to have two of us, my father and myself, who are Roman Catholics to spearhead the Humphrey campaign. We, of course, at this time were worried about the gubernatorial race. Senator Kennedy came to Wheeling with Mrs. Kennedy—this was in early 1960. They had a rally at the McClure Hotel, and I have never seen a man draw people like this in my life. One interesting thing, my wife [Ellen Riley], who prior to my marriage had been a Republican and whose father was chairman of the Republican Finance Committee in Ohio County, stood and looked at Senator Kennedy for about ten minutes and kept looking at Senator Kennedy and looking at me. He had a Jamaica suntan and was quite a bit better looking than I am, and I felt

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that I was coming out on the short end of a very poor comparison there. But at that time, as early as that time—I think that was in January or February—I felt myself that Senator Kennedy would win the primary hands down.

YOUNG: In West Virginia?

RILEY: In West Virginia.

YOUNG: Arch, would you go back to this business of your doubts and the doubts of the Democratic organization? Were the doubts entirely religion, or did you have doubts for other reasons?

RILEY: The doubts to me were entirely on the religious basis. I felt that the religious issue would be the entire issue of the campaign, that the Republicans would be unable to defend their administration successfully, and that it would become a personal attack on Senator Kennedy's religion. This is what

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made me afraid. The thing that interests me now, looking back, is that it's obvious to me that Senator Kennedy is the only person that could have beaten Vice President Nixon in this race. He was the only man who captured the imagination of the American people. And he captured them from top to bottom, Democrat and Republican. He was the type of man that you were either all for him or you were really against him. He was a very positive personality. As the campaign grew up toward May, the local organization here, the Democratic Executive Committee, stayed out of that campaign in its entirety. However, various members of the Executive Committee participated very actively in the campaign.

YOUNG: What was your role?

RILEY: I would like to say now that I was a leader in President Kennedy's campaign. I was not.

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I was just a person; I was for Senator Kennedy, and I viewed my opinions. I talked to various people down state, friends of mine in the Senate, concerning his candidacy. Although, as I say, I would like to say I was one of the great big instruments in his win, I was not. They, of course—the people in southern West Virginia that I talked to—were definitely afraid of the religious issue. They felt that the Senator Kennedy's religion might carry down the entire Democratic ticket. I think politicians—and, as I say, organizational politicians—many times discount the intelligence of the voter and overemphasize any prejudices that he

might have. West Virginia has always been a very liberal state on religion. I think maybe Senator Kennedy knew this. I was talking to his younger brother, who is now

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Senator Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy], and he asked me about this.

YOUNG: When was this Arch?

RILEY: This was, I would say, two weeks before the campaign. The Kennedy forces were starting to push the panic button as many organizations do right before the election. This is good because no stones are left unturned. He asked me what I thought would happen, and I told him that I thought Senator Kennedy would win hands down. He asked me about the religious issue, and I told him that my grandfather, who was former Attorney General of West Virginia, and Senator Kenna [John E. Kenna] were both Roman Catholics and were both running statewide in 1892. They campaigned on horseback, and they were referred to in southern West Virginia and in the mountains as the two “Romanists.” And they both won

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very easily. West Virginians are not that type of person. They judge a man on his individual merit. I think Senator Kennedy knew this. I think he felt that, even though the pros would look at only the existence of the 5 percent Catholic population, he was dealing with people that took a man as he was and not as he went to church, or as he went to school, or things like that. The Kennedy group was called into Washington on a real panic meeting about a week before. I think at that time, now Senator Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy], told them that things looked terrible and everything. And they came back and pushed their efforts forward. Their organization—and this has been the great benefit of President Kennedy to politics in Ohio County—came from all walks of life and were people who were never before interested

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in politics. They were a completely new breed of person, people who were looking for excellence in government, who were looking for no job in return—at least on the surface they weren't, and they tackled the campaign with enthusiasm. Senator Humphrey's campaign never got off the ground in Ohio County.

YOUNG: Arch, before we go into that I would like to go back to this business of people in politics that hadn't been in before. Did many of them stay interested?

RILEY: I would say 50 percent of the people. It was a personal magnetism from President Kennedy to them, and 50 percent of those people who came in through the Kennedy magnetism stayed.

YOUNG: Would you say a word about the kind of people who volunteered in terms of sex, class, religion, color, and any other category

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you might care to use?

RILEY: The younger people felt as if a new Messiah had come. All the young people were for Senator Kennedy. They were all the way from businessmen, to laborers, to even Rabbi Robert Kaufman. I've never seen him in a campaign before, and I've never seen him in a campaign since. Clergymen became interested in politics; nuns went down and registered to vote. But I would say the background of his organization was between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five or forty. All clean-cut people with no axes to grind.

YOUNG: Okay, would you go ahead then with the Humphrey campaign, which is where I think I interrupted you?

RILEY: Well, West Virginia is a money state when it comes to politics. People set up paid organizations. The volunteer groups do not come through; they are very hard to get.

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Senator Humphrey sent people in to set up a volunteer group for the Senator, and they were just lost when it was explained to them. They approached my father and myself about setting up a group for him, and we told them that we were at that time not interested in Senator Humphrey's campaign. They asked how to set up an organization. Of course, I told them how to do it, and it took money. They were a volunteer group. We had never seen this type of politics in West Virginia. It just wasn't done that way around here.

YOUNG: You mean the Kennedy type of volunteer group?

RILEY: No, I'm talking about the Humphrey.... The Kennedy group was well organized. They used money, of course, in promotion and everything, but they had a real organization; they had it right down to the precinct level, people going from door to door,

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telephone calls. Now the Humphrey people, Senator Humphrey did not have the personal magnetism that Senator Kennedy did, nor did he have the leaders to set up an organization. They never did get an organization set up in this county. I think Senator Humphrey got just a little bit over two thousand votes in the primary here in Ohio County. I think he beat him six to one, or seven to one. I forget what it was. But one campaign was completely floundering,

and the other one was going like an oiled machine. That is, I say, it was not a machine that you heard a lot of talk about. The work was done down on the door-to-door level. And this is the most successful type of campaign.

YOUNG: Well, Arch, would you make a distinction between the type of organization that might be set up in Ohio County as opposed to the

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kind that one might expect in one of the southern counties in terms of money, organization, and that sort of thing?

RILEY: Well, in Ohio County, you can effectively run a campaign, you can get approximately 30 percent of your workers who will be volunteer workers. These 30 percent are the ones that produce the votes; the paid worker in Ohio County does not. Now in southern West Virginia they run on a very strict control basis as far as your political machine goes. The people follow better down there, follow the dictates of what is known as the political boss, where in Ohio County we have to offer candidates up here that are acceptable to the people. In Ohio County you can set up a terrific organization on five, six, or seven thousand dollars. In order to set up an organization in McDowell, Logan, Mingo, Lincoln, and

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Raleigh Counties, you're speaking of terms of fifteen, twenty, twenty-five thousand dollars. In Hancock County, which is just up the river from Ohio County, it's the same type of very highly paid political organizations.

YOUNG: Similar then more to southern West Virginia?

RILEY: That's correct.

YOUNG: Let's go back to the primary again. Considering that we did have a contest between the two United States Senators, did you distinguish any difference in reaction to policy between Senators Kennedy and Humphrey in terms of future program, or did it seem to revolve around personalities?

RILEY: To me in talking to people I spoke to during the campaign, it was almost entirely personality.

YOUNG: Is it possible at all to find any difference in program, or is this forcing an issue that didn't exist?

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RILEY: Well, I have never heard any real difference between Senator Humphrey's and Senator Kennedy's programs. Senator Humphrey was considered too liberal by many people in this area.

YOUNG: By Democrats?

RILEY: Yes. West Virginia, although liberal, is also conservative. They are liberal on some things and conservative in others. Senator Kennedy would be considered more middle of the road, and I consider the West Virginian to be more middle of the road.

YOUNG: Well as far as you know, Arch, did the Humphrey forces make any attempt to contact organized labor in Ohio County, or were they successful at all in this? Oh, yes. They tried very hard. In fact, I think one of the big disappointments they had was that they expected organized labor

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to carry the entire Humphrey campaign. I know they tried that in this county. I think they got some of the leaders to help them. But as far as an endorsement or anything like that, it was never forthcoming.

YOUNG: What would you say about Senator Kennedy and organized labor in the county?

RILEY: Well, the laborers were for him. Organized labor in this area—and I may be wrong about this, but it's always been my feeling—can defeat you or help defeat you but they cannot elect you. The laboring man in Wheeling is pretty well educated; he's very up to date on his politics and on government; and he'll be for whom he desires to be for. Of course, Kennedy won their wives over, and their wives won their husbands over if there was any doubt, because the women were all for Kennedy.

YOUNG: Well, Arch, let's turn to something else.

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As a close observer of the scene here and since, I believe, the bishopric or the headquarters of the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church is located in Wheeling. Did the Roman Catholic clergy play any significant role in the campaign?

RILEY: To the best of my knowledge, my father and I were general counsel for the Catholic Church in West Virginia, we're the attorneys.... Archbishop Swint [John J. Swint] had a great dislike for politics. He...

YOUNG: And politicians?

RILEY: Well, not especially politicians, but he was an avowed Republican. Many times candidates coming to this area have asked my father and I to take them to meet Bishop Swint and tried to get a commitment from him or an act of friendliness. I think the clergy as a whole was discouraged to take any part in the campaign. I think the

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Catholic clergy, as individuals, did quite a bit of work. I think they did it in a backhanded way in that they would joke with people who might have some prejudice, joke with them about the Pope coming over and this and that, to try to alleviate the fears the people might have as to a Roman Catholic being elected President.

YOUNG: On the other hand, were there any Protestant sermons or active Protestant activity against Senator Kennedy?

RILEY: I only heard of one sermon being given in Wheeling. I forget which church it was. But the reaction by the people in the church was such that the minister almost lost his job over it. The first thing was that almost his entire membership was Republican anyway, but still they resented this. I think the man was just an individual who was carried away on his feelings on the subject.

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YOUNG: Was this in Wheeling?

RILEY: This was in Wheeling, yes.

YOUNG: Do you remember the denomination?

RILEY: No, I don't. I think maybe it was a Lutheran church. I may be mistaken.

YOUNG: Arch, do you have anything else with respect to the primary that you think might be interesting?

RILEY: Of course, we had a governor to nominate, and we were all concerned with that. Right before the election, I would say four days before, Senator Randolph [Jennings Randolph] of West Virginia and Senator Gruening [Ernst Gruening] of Alaska came into Ohio County. They naturally were very interested in the campaign, and I was talking to them both, driving down from the airport. Senator Gruening asked me who was going to win the West Virginia campaign. I said I thought Senator Kennedy would win without any doubt.

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He said, “Well if he wins then he is the next President of the United States.” Well, this is the first president I ever knew, and it just seemed inconceivable to me. I thought that the religious issue would stop him somewhere along the way, and I was very shocked when he made this statement. Senator Randolph asked what kind of a machine he had up here. I said, “He has got a supercharged machine.” And he said that Governor Barron [William W. Barron], who was running for the Democratic primary, wished he had had Kennedy’s machine; he’d be sure to win then.

YOUNG: Okay, would you like to go on then into the general election? This thing comes to mind first: Separate organizations, as we knew, were maintained. Frequently, Senator Kennedy worked with the existing county committee; sometimes, of course, he had to

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set up his own group. How did the ranks close in Ohio County after the primary?

RILEY: The politician who was a selfish politician, I mean a person who was in politics for the money—or money which could be made through having political contacts—resented the existence of a separate Kennedy organization. Your politician who was for winning did not resent it but looked to them for help to supplement the existing Democratic organization. Many times as we set up our precincts going into the fall, we’d find ourselves weak or short in certain precincts and would contact the actual people who were running the Kennedy organization to supplement our workers with their workers. In Ohio County, as I say, it worked very effectively. Senator Kennedy carried this county. This county is a rather peculiar county; the registration, at that time, was

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about eighteen or nineteen hundred Democratic, yet the county always went Republican. I don’t think it voted for a Democratic president since 1940 or 1936. We felt that, with a large Catholic population here, Senator Kennedy would run very well. I expected him to carry the county by more than he did. But what happened was in what we call the Gold Coast area, which is the “out-the-pike” section, we have a very, very large Catholic population. I felt when it came down to the guts fight, which it was becoming on the religious issue, that these people would go with Senator Kennedy on the religious issue alone because most of these people—these Catholics—are registered Republican.

YOUNG: You are talking then about middle or upper middle class Catholics?

RILEY: Yes.

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YOUNG: I think the Bishop in Pittsburgh calls them Catholic Presbyterians. [Laughter]

RILEY: They're Catholic Republicans to me. And we had a very, very big shock. The Catholics were so afraid that they would be identified as voting for a Catholic because he was a Catholic that we had in that area Democratic Catholics swinging away from Kennedy and voting for Nixon, sheerly to show that they were not prejudiced.

YOUNG: You would be talking about the general election?

RILEY: Yes, that's what I'm talking about. So in the area I expected President Kennedy to, say, run even with Vice President Nixon, he was beaten badly—even worse than a lot of your local Democratic candidates. This was a real shock. This might be called a Catholic backlash. But it was strictly a thing of people feeling that they

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would be considered prejudiced if they voted for a Catholic because they were a Catholic.

YOUNG: That reminds me of a question I should have asked in connection with the primary. Did very many Catholic Republicans change their registration so that they could vote in the Democratic primary?

RILEY: We had quite a few changes, but I think it was more the younger people changing over to vote Democratic because, one, they wanted to vote for Senator Kennedy—as a person, not because he was a Catholic—and, two, they felt that they were tired of the Republican administration and felt that we needed a change, and were changing their politics, generally, from Republican to Democrat.

YOUNG: How long ahead of time before the primary must you change parties? In other words,

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is there a cutoff point someplace?

RILEY: There is a cutoff point—sixty days.

YOUNG: So you would have had to be anticipating sometime ahead in order to change. This would have taken in anticipation back into March.

RILEY: Yes, that is correct. Of course, these new changes.... These were people who were changing for a purpose. You always pick up that list of people, and they are contacted directly to become workers. Many of these people volunteered. As I say, there was an awful lot of switching of young people. The registration has grown in

this county on the Democratic side, and I feel it's strictly because of the personal magnetism of President Kennedy.

YOUNG: In other words no significant number of Catholic Republicans who'd been practicing Republicans changed?

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RILEY: Republicans in this county are Republicans before they are Catholics. They are a real tough breed; they take their politics very seriously. Of course, the campaign came down virtually to a religious issue. I think that many people nationally have tried to discount the religious issue, and hoped it didn't exist. I think the Midwest went Republican because of the religious issue. Of course, when you read back over, Senator Kennedy did not have a very strong farm background as far as his voting record in Congress. But the...

YOUNG: Very strong farm background?

RILEY: I mean as far as voting record in Congress, he was not considered someone like Senator Humphrey. In the local fight about four of our local candidates were Catholics. They began to be afraid that they were part of what they called the Catholic conspiracy to

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take over the country, and people joked about all the Catholics running. We felt that it would have some impact; I thought it would be a favorable impact in this county because I think the Catholic population is about forty-five percent in Ohio County. But as I said before, it didn't work out this way. I think President Kennedy won by eighteen hundred votes in the county, and Senator Randolph, I know, won by twenty-five or twenty-eight hundred.

YOUNG: This leads to the interesting speculation that if 45 percent of the voting population is Catholic, how does it divide between the two major parties?

RILEY: I would say in Ohio County it would maybe be around 45 percent Republican, 55 percent Democratic.

YOUNG: The Democrats have a slight edge but not...

RILEY: Yes, it's not a real significant edge. This

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is a rather peculiar county. In other words, many times your Catholic people

are poorer people and because of economics are registered Democratic. In this county, many, many of the very wealthy people are Catholics, and economically they are registered Republican. Well, they stayed Republican all through this campaign, and they fought extra hard.

YOUNG: For Nixon?

RILEY: For Nixon, yes.

YOUNG: I want to ask you some other questions then about the approach to the general election, Arch, but I think we are running out of tape on this side.

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1]

Well, Arch, let's continue our discussion then, if you will, of the general election. You were talking about the effect of a

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Catholic at the head of the ticket in terms of the state and county officers running for office. Would you say something more about that?

RILEY: As I said before, many of our local candidates were Catholics. And the Republicans, to use this to advantage with bigoted people, or narrow-minded people, said, "Well, if you don't think there is a Catholic conspiracy, look at the Democratic ticket." It just happened that, I think, there was only one Catholic on the Republican ticket, and we were sitting with about seven or eight. Luckily, I wasn't on the ballot that time, or I would have made it nine. The argument of Kennedy on religion that the Republicans put forth—this was done at cocktail party talk, and things like that—was more of an argument to me of desperation. I think thinking people didn't pay any

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attention to it. Now in the rural areas in Ohio County, John Ruckman [John L. Ruckman] was the chairman of the Democratic Committee; his mother was a loyal Democrat. Now his mother would not vote for Senator Kennedy. She had never voted for a Republican president in her life, but she would not vote for John Kennedy strictly on the religious issue. We ran into this, but it just happened that most of the narrow-minded type people were in the Republican Party already, and so we did not lose our straight line Democratic voters. I may be sounding like I'm being a little bitter towards the Republican Party, but it is just as a matter of fact, this is the way it is worked out. I just think that the religious issue probably came out about a draw in this county. The working class people who might.... We have a lot of working class people in this county who

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are registered Republican because their employers are registered Republican, and they feel that for job security, or other reasons—or out of habit—they should be registered this way. They also vote this way. Now we got some of those. Because they were Catholics, they did vote for a Catholic president. However I would say the switching in this county because of religion affected the vote maybe around 5 percent. And I would say it was about 5 percent against President Kennedy.

YOUNG: In other words, had Senator Kennedy been an Episcopalian his vote might have been 5 percent higher?

RILEY: That's correct. That is correct.

YOUNG: Did you notice any reluctance on the part of either the senatorial candidate in the state, or the gubernatorial candidate to be identified with the presidential ticket?

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Was there feeling that statewide this might do a great deal of damage?

RILEY: Senator Randolph really boomed President Kennedy, in my opinion, and was identified with him any chance he had. He in no way shied away from the head of the ticket. He preached and pleaded the straight ticket. We on the county Executive Committee preached and pleaded for the straight Democratic ticket. The governor in southern West Virginia, I hear, backed off a little bit as far as Kennedy was concerned, but I think when it came down to the last month of the campaign and running right through the election, everyone was pushing for the straight ticket.

YOUNG: Well, Arch, you have already indicated that in the primary you feel that personality and charm had a great deal to do with the Senator's victory, and that differences of

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policy between the two senators didn't really exist to a great degree in the primary. Would you comment on the effectiveness of such things as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.'s campaigning in the state? Was he effective in this part of the state?

RILEY: Of course, the name Roosevelt in West Virginia has always been a magic name. For the Doubting Thomases, for people who wondered about who are these two people running.... I mean even though they were nationally known as United States senators, we never had presidential aspirants campaigning as hard as they did in this state or spending as much time. But the feeling in the primary with the dyed-in-the-wool Democrats, the real loyal party people was that if he was good enough for Franklin

D. Roosevelt, Jr., the man must have some quality and some substance to him. I think his campaign was

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very much helped by the help of these men.

YOUNG: Well, Arch, was there any appeal to the specific economic interest of Ohio County? In other words, any Kennedy proposals, platform speeches which mentioned steel, glass, pottery, small industry—the sort of thing that Ohio County would be interested in?

RILEY: We in Ohio County were going through a tremendous depression at that time. And I will not call it a recession. It was a depression. My income—and being lawyer, and a young lawyer, it should grow every year—but my income during '58, '59, and '60 was substantially cut in half. I thought maybe that I just wasn't making it as a lawyer, but it seems that all the other professions were suffering the same way. We were stymied; there was no feeling of resurgence, no feeling of movement; the

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coal industry was dead in the state; people had no hope. It looked like we all were going to just eke out a living and pass our days here. President Kennedy always remarked during the general election, after he had received the nomination here, that he would always remember West Virginia. I've never seen a man or group of men that fought as hard for West Virginia as they were elected. I, personally, was the attorney for one corporation which was working on a government contract which meant a new plant for Wheeling, and the Kennedy Administration did everything they could to help those people. The big thing that President Kennedy did, and the more I get away his death removing us from him.... The biggest thing this man did is he stirred up the sleeping people. He had a vitality that made people want to go and to do things.

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This, to me, will always be President Kennedy's greatest contribution; that just because it's like this today, doesn't mean it always has to be like this. We can change; we can push forward. This enthusiasm is still with me today, and this will always be his greatest contribution to me.

YOUNG: Arch, what's your feeling about the national image-makers in West Virginia? I'm thinking of the way in which the national news media covered the Kennedy primary and the long-range result that this may have had on West Virginia?

RILEY: Well, just prior to the Kennedy campaign, *Saturday Evening Post* wrote an

article on West Virginia—the contrasts in the state; the rich, the real poor. I appeared on television with a couple of Republicans—the Republicans were in power in the state then. I thought that this sort of thing

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if it's true, let's get it out in the open, and let's air it out. Now I think Brinkley's Bridge down in southern West Virginia was a little overemphasized. But these conditions do exist. We have people who are very, very poor. We have people that are fifty-five, sixty years of age; they are no longer employable in the coal mines. And these men did not have any training to go into other types of industry; they had no hope for the future; they had no way of bettering themselves. Consequently, they became landlocked in the coal camp and just sat there to spend the rest of their days. We had the same thing here in the steel industry. Wheeling lost a couple of big mills. Men were laid off. They were at an age they could not find new work. These people were just subsisting. Now these things do exist. What is it that's

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best for us? Should we show this country here we are; here are our problems; and we've all got to get in and help and change this thing? Although many people resented the way the press and news media handled the economic situation in West Virginia, I think it was the best thing for us.

YOUNG: Well, Arch, would you go on then and comment specifically on aspects of the New Frontier which West Virginians, as you observed it, approved of or disapproved of and then on perhaps to a word about the West Virginia reaction in Ohio County to Kennedy's foreign policy?

RILEY: Of course when President Kennedy went into office he was young, and everyone sits around with a young person and says, "Well, he's there now. Let's see what he's going to do." Kennedy gave this area hope that something would be done. Whether it was

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right or wrong, whether it would end up a bust-out or complete success, we were at such a desperate stage economically that all we wanted was hope. And the New Frontier gave people hope. The New Frontier scared your conservative—the people in the Fort Henry Club here in Wheeling who were worried about creeping socialism and the price of gold and things of this nature. Kennedy was rocking the boat. He was rocking a boat that needed to be rocked. Of course, many of his ideas—the real New Frontier ideas—were not passed into legislation until President Johnson came into office and in the present Congress today, many of the—Appalachian bill, aid to schools. But as I say, the biggest thing that President Kennedy did was that he gave us all hope. He revitalized the people to go out and strive for better things.

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The foreign policy of President Kennedy was, I think, different to me. Now I'm not talking about the average person because people look on foreign policy twenty-five different ways. To me the foreign policy of President Kennedy was one that all people in the world—whether communist, socialist, democracies, monarchies, oligarchies—are not striving for self destruction; that with the existence of the atom bomb and the H-bomb, self destruction is a possibility these days; and that with everyone not wanting self destruction, there was a way to negotiate. This was at least one common meeting ground. I think the Republicans in this area, in the Ohio Valley area—as I say, they take a real rough approach towards politics—immediately started preaching the, “Soft towards communism,” and, “We're becoming a weak nation,” and this and that.

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The people were wondering just what would be accomplished as far as easing foreign tensions. I may follow foreign policy a little closer than the average person, but as I say, the big fight in this area was still the home economics. So I don't think people paid that much attention to it until the Cuban Crisis.

YOUNG: Well, let's go back to something else then. Do you think President Kennedy, as President, convinced anti-Catholic Republicans and Democrats that he was not going to establish a rapport with the Vatican as charged earlier?

RILEY: Well, I think President Kennedy has broken down many of the barriers that existed between people in the United States as far as religion goes. I think that he showed it was a question of not knowing, a question of ignorance rather than anything to fear. I think that some people will continue to be

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prejudiced against things they do not understand. Kennedy played it smart in that he knew this was going to be the issue, and he dragged it right out in the open. He said, “We'll slug it out right here and find out what the American people think.” I think probably the next Catholic that runs, they'll be campaigning against him saying that he is not a good enough Catholic. You might run into this sort of thing. It depends whether the fellow is a Democrat or Republican.

YOUNG: Well, I suppose, too—and you might want to comment on this—that Protestant-Catholic communication was increased at a time when Kennedy was President. In other words, the ecumenical movement and that sort of thing. Would you care to comment on that?

RILEY: Well, I think that with the majority of your control of the Catholic Church

being in Italy and in various countries where

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Catholicism is the predominant religion, when responsible Catholic leaders see a man of the talents and background of President Kennedy running for the office of president and the whole issue, to me, starts revolving about his religion, then these Catholic leaders start realizing, “Well, here is the strongest country in the nation, here is probably the strongest financial Catholic country in the nation in that most of your money going into the Catholic church comes from the United States. Maybe we have just pressed this archaic idea of Martin Luther that all those bad guys leaving the church too hard.” I think it caused the Catholic church to back up and reexamine itself. I think it caused the Protestant churches to back up and examine what is their position towards Catholicism.

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YOUNG: In other words, the whole issue of religion may have had a benefit in other areas that we weren't aware of at the time?

RILEY: I think it had a good laundering. I think it was brought out into the open which should have been done a long time ago.

YOUNG: Did you have any contact with or were you responsible for any of the arrangements with respect to President Kennedy's appearance in 1962 in support of Congressman Bailey [Cleveland M. Bailey]?

RILEY: No, I was on the platform, that's all. It was the rainiest night I have ever seen in my life.

YOUNG: We've talked a good bit about religion and issues and that sort of thing, and we haven't said really much about any personal contacts you might have had with Senator Kennedy. Is there any anecdotal material, any stories?

RILEY: My contacts with President Kennedy, which

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were only three, were all business. I mean when we were talking in Wellsburg, up in Brooke County, it was strictly politics—whether the state would go Democratic, as to the feeling toward the present Republican Administration, as to the local issues, whether the leaning was Democrat or Republican. The meetings with him on the island when he was here with Cleve Bailey was although it was damp.... He wanted to get to the people, and the people wanted to get to him. Now he could call me up, if he wanted to see me that badly, anytime he wanted to, and I'd have been there like Jack the Bear. I saw him in the White House when we were working on a government contract. He, of course,

reavowed his interest in West Virginia. I think he felt a real particular debt to this state that I was glad to see. A real

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love to the people of this state. He was dealing with some of the roughest politicians that I have ever run into—this John Chernenko and the group up in Brooke County who really spearheaded his drive in this area. These are probably the roughest politicians I have ever seen in my life and the most effective and absolutely honest. I think he enjoyed every minute of the West Virginia campaign.

YOUNG: Well, Arch, one of the local Republican papers, as well as many Republican papers throughout the state, charged that President Kennedy had used West Virginia to ride to victory and then had not done enough for the state or had let the state down. Would you comment on this from several angles? Number one, your own personal opinion; and number two, public opinion, as you were sensitive to it, through 1961, '62, and '63?

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RILEY: Well, I feel, personally, that President Kennedy did everything he could for the state of West Virginia. I think many people thought that overnight this area was going to become a Mecca of monetary interests and factories and things such as that. This, of course, is not possible to change.... Just like the government contract we were working on. They could only go so far, they can't go any further or they would be breaking the law. Now he did everything within his means that he could do. We ended up losing the government contract; the President did everything he could to get it for this area. He did the same thing in southern West Virginia. If a man applied for an SBA [Small Business Administration] loan from West Virginia and sent an accompanying note to President Kennedy, it immediately got into the hands

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of Mr. Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] and he expedited the matter. These, of course, are things that are done that the public may not see. They see no great big plant, but there are existing businesses which were having economic trouble. Of course, Republicans will always say, "Well, we don't see any tangible plant; we don't see any tangible this; or we don't see any tangible that." But all they could do is look at Wheeling today and look at it four years ago, and they can see that something happened. Now I think that something was the Kennedy Administration, and I think the Johnson Administration will continue. We now knew we had a friend in Washington. If we had problems that in the legislature we couldn't work out, if we had problems about federal moneys, we could go to Washington, and we were heard immediately,

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and if possible, it was taken care of. Under the prior administration, West Virginia was absolutely forgotten. I think he kept every promise that he could to this state.

YOUNG: Well, Arch, as we bring this interview to a conclusion do you have any final analysis of the Kennedy contribution?

RILEY: I think that what President Kennedy did for this country, and for this area, was that he created a spirit that I hope never dies. It is a spirit that things can be done that have never been done before. He started the Peace Corps, which I looked at very skeptically when it started. I wondered what a bunch of college kids were going to be able to do in Nairobi and places like that. And this thing has grown so that it has become a world symbol of the United States, that the United States is not some great imperialist power, but

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composed of people, and that we feel basic things just as people throughout the world do. His spirit that he's enkindled—a spirit of doing what is excellent, doing the exceptional—is what he has put into the young people of this country and the young people of Wheeling. They are no longer satisfied with just getting on through life; they feel it is necessary to better themselves, better help their neighbors, and better the United States and the world.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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