

Robert P. McDonough Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 02/13/1965
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Biographical Note

Robert P. McDonough (1915-1981) was the director of John F. Kennedy's 1960 Democratic primary campaign in West Virginia. This interview focuses on the Kennedy administration's presidential appointments and John F. Kennedy's continued support for West Virginia after the campaign, among other topics.

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By Robert P. McDonough

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Second Oral History Interview

with

ROBERT F. McDONOUGH

February 13, 1965
Parkersburg, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

McDONOUGH: Bill, you mentioned Abe Pinsky's thought that if John Kennedy had not been a Catholic, his vote would have been higher. This is argued a great deal. I don't quite agree with Abe, because I never did think 1960 was a Democratic year. I think that the phenomenal candidate, the personality of John Kennedy, the fact that he was controversial, the fact that there were things like a great deal of unrest in the Negro vote: all of these things added up to a solidification of that old block that (Franklin Delano) Roosevelt put together when he put together the urban minority groups into a majority Democratic vote, which had deteriorated a great deal. John Kennedy, the personality, the controversial figure, the hard campaigner, brought it back. All you have to do is look at the map and see the counties that went Republican in the country, and the counties that went Democratic. It was a squeaker because it wasn't a Democratic year. The phenomenon of John Kennedy's election was that a Democrat was elected; there was no other Democrat in the country, at that time, at that year, that could have been elected.

You asked about events after the election, that is, the general election in November. For some time after that election -- and I really mean this, Bill -- the events of the twelve, eighteen, twenty-four months prior to the election had gotten so busy and so hectic, I don't believe and can't recall of even day-dreaming to the extent of what might happen if and when John Kennedy were elected president. Consequently, the day or the week or ten days after the election, I still hadn't gotten around to thinking of any particular relationship I might have other than a simple personal relationship with the president.

However, along about this time a couple or three things began to happen: one, I got a telegram indicating I was a parade marshal, (I didn't know what a parade marshal was, but I soon found out it was quite an honor); two, I began to get letters and telephone calls from people like Ralph Dungan and Ted Sorensen and those, asking about certain situations and certain persons; three, I began to hear that certain office holders on all levels in the state and federal government were making a lot of recommendations about employment and the like, and that they were stuck. If my memory serves me correct, somebody had to tell me that they were stuck because all these applications were going in without any expression on my part about them.

To a great extent unbeknownst to me but in the day-to-day activity, it began to develop in a manner that I suddenly realized that I've got, first, a big chunk of patronage out there, that nothing is moving because I haven't been consulted; and second, that when anything does move at all, it is only after I have been consulted.

Probably one of the first things I heard about was that, I think, Frank Pace recommended Elvis Stahr for secretary of the army. I was called and asked if I knew any reason why he shouldn't be secretary of the army. I'm pretty sure my memory is right, that I said I didn't see any reason why he should be secretary of the army, because he hadn't helped us a damn bit. As a matter of fact, I was under the impression that the day he might have been helpful, he ran out of the state. But nevertheless, if they thought he was good for the country and good for the president, why, he was all right with me. You say, what was the day he might have been helpful? One day in the primary particularly when -- a time or two, in fact -- when John Kennedy was going to Morgantown, we had tried to manipulate things in some manner so that we could put on a little demonstration of the candidate with the president of the university, which we felt might be helpful. One time that I recall particularly which I was interested in, we just couldn't find the president of the university.

One place along the line, though, where this cog of information evidently slipped, or where this procedure that the White House-to-be evidently wanted-- and that I was so surprised to be a part of -- was on the case of Ambassador [Joseph S.] Farland. One day it was announced in the papers that Ambassador Farland of Panama had been taken from temporary roll to permanent roll, and there was a great big write-up in the paper. It wasn't very long after that until some of my friends called me and wanted to know what was going on. Because we all knew that Joe Farland was a black Republican of a very stinking variety who had contributed heavily to past Republican campaigns, and maybe even more heavily to

McDONOUGH: Well; two things happened in the four or five weeks right after the inauguration. One, I had by this time taken considerable interest in the whole situation. I had prepared a list of immediate considerations for the president, of things that I suggested he should do in recognizing some of his more effective friends in West Virginia. I had taken it over to the White House one week, and in my impatience at that time (I hadn't got an answer in a couple of days), I went over the next week to see where it was and why all this hadn't been done, and got an unsatisfactory answer -- it's pretty interesting -- so I asked if I couldn't see the president.

I got an unsatisfactory answer, so to the person who was giving me these answers I said, "Well, maybe I had better go over and see if Mrs. [Evelyn N.] Lincoln can arrange it." This sort of shook the individual because he must have recalled that Mrs. Lincoln and I had been pretty friendly for a number of years. And I think there was a little in-fighting going on right then as to who got through what door using what office. But at any rate, finally I was told that if I would wait around a little bit, why, I could see him the first break the president had.

In due time I got in. He asked me what my problem was, and I said that I brought you a list of people for jobs over here and nothing had been done about it. Quite to my surprise, he got a little upset and he called in quite a number of people, and he made it clear that requests even of this size and nature shouldn't have to be brought to his attention by me, that they should be taken care of promptly and adequately when I requested them. From then on they were done without too much trouble or too much time.

Now, I will admit, Bill, that I began to get wise to a lot of things. One, that if I was going to get this kind of accommodation, I always had to bring reasonable things, things that could be done, the proper people at the proper time. From then on I set about to make sure that my requests were, as far as I could determine, reasonable and proper.

Also at this time I began to develop in my mind the necessity that for the sake of the party, for the sake of the Kennedy people in West Virginia, and above all, for the sake of the President, this great reservoir of good feeling and goodwill and desire to help West Virginia and the people, if it was to be effectively used, it had to always be -- or 95 percent of the time -- it had to be something that was agreeable to and acceptable to the congressional delegation, the governor, and the people concerned. It wasn't long until I developed a routine of getting all these elements in agreement on a person or a thing before the request was presented to the White House. It wasn't long before they knew at the

White House that any of these recommendations were firmly founded in the political structure of the state or I wouldn't have presented them. And when they weren't, they were told about them in advance, that this might cause a little difficulty in this area or that area.

I also got to realize at this time that if I was to be of any help to the president of the United States, I had to do things that would minimize the problems, not increase the problems. Whenever you get individuals bucking congressmen or senators or governors, you are just magnifying the problem to the point where sooner or later somebody is going to have to be dropped; and you just don't drop the Congress, you usually drop the people that are bucking the Congress. Well, of course, basically we did have and still have a good delegation and a good political setup, and for the most part, all these accommodations were made. Consequently, it opened the doors to a great many things that would not have happened otherwise. Through this, particularly the first year of this thing, I was plagued -- and I mean plagued -- by a thousand requests for this little job, that little job, this little favor, and that little favor. I used to sometimes sit down and add up -- I have on occasion -- that if I would take every request I had and carried it over and got it done in one week, it would appear to the people who were accommodating us like they had done us a thousand favors, but what we really brought back to West Virginia wouldn't be a poke full of anything; it would just be a conglomeration of little favors.

Early in the game I adopted this viewpoint: that there were certain major prospects open to the state of West Virginia; that we had a certain amount of consideration or goodwill to draw on; and that I, for one, was going to push for the bigger projects, because as far as I have ever been able to determine, there is very little difference in a politician's mind if he gives you a thousand-dollar favor or a hundred-million-dollar favor -- each equals a favor. I determined to go for the million-dollar favors rather than the five-dollar favors.

Along this line, I went with Charlie Love and a couple other people one day to see Governor Barron. And I was able at this time to conscientiously say to Governor Barron that it appears that I have a great deal of favor available in Washington. And the governor agreed. He had had a few things hung up by this time that he couldn't get flushed out, but I could. I said to him in good faith, "I will make this favor available to the state and the party to the maximum degree that I can exploit it, if you so desire. However, there are certain things that I'm going to have to work out. One, this is going to take a lot of time and expense on my part. I think either some state agency or the committee should help defray the expenses." This the governor readily decided to do.

Then I said, "I think also that where it is proper and possible, you ought to help me cover some of my personal cost by diverting to my printing company any favors for printing under the subcontractors, that you can." And this he readily agreed to. There was no question in his mind that I did have access and contact, and there was evidently little question in his accepting that I was making this offer in good faith. It was made in the presence of a great many responsible people, some of whom were mutual friends. That was the start of a very effective working arrangement between me and the governor by which I made hundreds of trips to Washington in the interests of the state of West Virginia and the interest of the party in West Virginia.

When I now look back on it, I am more than satisfied with the way I handled that favor, because the bulk of it was directed to the state or to the party. While I didn't create any of it, Bill, because John Kennedy was already willing to accommodate the state in any way he could, what I did do was develop it to a state and a proposition that was reasonable and possible, and show on the face of it that there was a public interest and public good, and call his attention to it.

Thereby having been presented with something he could do and shown that he could do this, very frequently it was this access, with the repeated request and the request in good order, that let loose of what became a flood of federal favor. When I say flood, why all you have to do is add up the totals for any fifteen years prior to this -- times when we had Democratic presidents in the White House, Democratic governors in the State House, and all Democratic congressmen and all Democratic senators -- there was just never anything like that attention given by the federal government to West Virginia as there was in the three years that John Kennedy was president of the United States.

We got, for example, in public works appropriations, our share, and it was doubled and it was redoubled. And we got every legitimate effort that the president could make on various governmental agencies, as it was called to his attention, to direct, say, government contracts into West Virginia; all you have to do is compare the totals with the total of fifteen or twenty years before. We got the north-south highway, which had been a dream of the state for a long, long time, and we got it only after terrific amounts of bureaucratic bucking. But it came to us properly and legitimately, because there was mileage unallocated, supposedly held in reserve, and properly so.

The president of the United States simply decided in a particular case to commit some of these reserves, to commit it to an area that needed a road, needed it badly, and to an area that he had seen what greater communications, what a better road might do to help. So he just insisted that some of the

reserve be used to fill a serious, evident public need. The point was that nobody else would give us that much attention in years gone by; the need had been there for a long time, but nobody would look at it.

Eisenhower was in the White House throwing thousands of miles of roads around when [Cecil H.] Underwood was in the State House. We had at that time one Republican congressman, and I think there for awhile a couple of Republican senators -- did we ever have two there for a period? Yeah -- and Eisenhower kicking road mileage around by the hundreds of thousands of miles, and we couldn't get any good shake of it here. We were practically low man on the totem pole per square miles of the state versus road mileage allotted. So, eight or ten years after those original allotments were made, he comes along and takes a little bit from the reserve -- quite a little bit in relation to how much was left -- and puts it where it would fill its designed purposes of military need, but also gives it to a place where it served a social, economic, and political need. This is using the power of the presidency to put out fires when they exist, rather than debate as to whether or not you call the fire department. He didn't wait to call the fire department, he picked up the fire extinguisher and used it himself.

BEGIN SIDE I, TAPE II:

You wanted a little clarification on that north-south highway and the Bureau of Public Roads situation. I don't want to confuse you, Bill, on the roles played here. It's the bureau's job to locate those roads according to the laws the Congress has proposed, and it's an excellent bureau. The point that I am making here is that the bureau had some mileage available, held in reserve because sometimes roads are longer than they measure on the map. This is proper; they have got to hold mileage in reserve. It's a very small portion, just to cover emergencies.

The point I am making here is with John Kennedy being interested in seeing a road go into West Virginia, and with that interest being strongly conveyed to the Bureau of Public Roads, this gave them sufficient reason and encouragement for using a portion of their reserve for this particular need. In another situation, at an earlier or later date, they might have acceded to the wish of a powerful senator to pay particular attention to a need in his state. But we didn't have that powerful senator; what we had was that powerful president interested in our problem. He could and would and did keep directing the attention of the Bureau of Public Roads to the fact that West Virginia needed roads, and if there is anything that we can dredge up to help them, let's do it.

This whole problem of the north-south highway involved a great many trips to Washington, a great many conferences with the Bureau of Public Roads and officials from West Virginia, and a great many visits to the president, in which finally with his assistance a number of times, a number of technical objections to the road were reduced. One of the more important objections late in the game was that, as originally planned, the road did not connect major industrial or military centers. So with the permission of Governor Barron and the road commissioner, Burl Sawyers, Charleston was selected as an alternate, and the road was located through Morgantown, Fairmont, Clarksburg, and into Charleston.

YOUNG: Charleston was an alternate to what other place? Where had they first selected...?

McDONOUGH: Well, they had originally selected Beckley. And Beckley, as a terminating point for this mileage, simply did not come up to the minimum specification of a connecting-point in the laws written by Congress. At that time the governor made his decision, feeling confident that in due time other opportunities would come up whereby Beckley could be connected into this road, and then go on north. Of course, we now know that to be the case, because they're on the verge of locating a road from Beckley into (Route) 79.

YOUNG: Bob, a little earlier you described your role in West Virginia as that of keeping the old Kennedy organization and the state governor's office as well as the congressional delegation all working in harmony for the good of West Virginia. You compared this, in earlier conversation privately, to situations which developed in some other states where this sort of arrangement wasn't possible. Would you comment a little bit more on that subject?

McDONOUGH: Well, I had in mind, say, a situation that While I don't have any first hand knowledge, I had heard a great deal about the situation in Indiana, another primary state. There the Kennedy people, very active in the primary, had, for reasons of their own, evidently decided to buck the state organization. But the state organization, being very powerful, evidently accepted the challenge. This was a case where, however friendly the president might feel to a group within a state, he could not favor that group at the expense of the state organization. So being unable or unwilling to get together on the local level, the Kennedy organization in Indiana evidently lost out some of the favor it might have had, had it been willing to or able to cooperate and work in harmony with the regular Democratic organization.

Bill, you asked about some of the things that might be a little out of the ordinary or out of the way. As you well know, around as much power as there is in the presidency, there is bound to be a certain amount of palace guard politics. While it appeared to me in the three years that I was in and out of the White House weekly, that this was an unbelievable minimum -- at least unbelievable to me -- and that the people closest to the president worked very harmoniously, I still know that there existed -- and I don't know but what maybe some of it was encouraged -- a bit of friendly rivalry as to who could be of, say, the most important service to the president. Sometimes I would get near caught in it. I never let myself get caught completely. I was able to do this because really so many of these people were apparently genuinely fond of me due to these long, prior associations.

I was determined that I wasn't going to make any choice between this person being my friend and that person being my friend; I wanted them all to be my friends. But I can think of one time in particular when I wanted to see the president; one of my acquaintances happened to be in control of the door that day, and he was giving me a bad time. I simply walked around the president's office to Mrs. Lincoln's office and told Mrs. Lincoln, whom I had known for a number of years and worked with on a number of things, that I was having some difficulty in seeing the president. She took care of the matter promptly, somewhat to the chagrin of my acquaintance on the other side.

I think I had very little trouble on this score because most of the people around him realized that if they didn't accommodate me, the guy next to him would, so they might as well go ahead and help me in every way they could. But keep this in mind, Bill: this was no great, grand design or grand plan, this was just common sense on my part, that I asked the president things that were in his overall interest in keeping his commitment to West Virginia.

I asked him the possible, based on the assumption that he was interested in West Virginia, and he genuinely was. I had access to him because, for all my limitations and deficiencies, he for some reason or other liked me. I continued to have access to him because the propositions I presented to him were, for the most part, reasonable and possible and proper and fair.

You talked about some scale or measurement of presidential favor to the state, and I said that in the three years John Kennedy was helping us, the favor totaled more than any fifteen or even twenty years before. I don't have the figures in front of me, they have been reviewed a dozen times in the press. But by any yardstick that you use, whether you take the year 1962 or 1963, for example, and weight the dollars of public works to West Virginia per population basis compared to the other state, as against some prior year -- any prior year, ten or twenty years ago -- this is what I mean.

Of course, the need was here, but the need was here ten or twenty years ago, and when you take This is the way not only I arrive at them, but other people have arrived at them. I at one time kept sort of a log on the amount of defense contracts, public works, road money, and the like, allocated to West Virginia under Kennedy programs. And I came up with a figure -- and a pretty sound one, I think -- of almost six hundred million dollars. All of it, of course, has not arrived yet. A lot of it was programmed. All the public works money, for example, has arrived, but all the road money has not arrived.

That compared to any other, I say, fifteen- or twenty-year period. Six hundred million dollars is far in excess of federal fund allocation into the state, in that short period of a thousand days, as compared to ten thousand days before. That's the yardstick I use -- total government contracts, total public works, total federal funds, total road funds -- and compare that with prior years, and then take some population factor compared with other states of prior years. Now, some other states can go back, like Virginia -- for all the years that Harry Byrd has been able to influence federal money into there -- and put us, over the years, to shame. But in 1961, 1962, and 1963 Harry Byrd couldn't put West Virginia to shame.

Maybe to elaborate on or clarify what I mean: traditionally in the United States, location of federal facilities or the selection of this area to get this favor as against another area, has been in so many cases or in most cases controlled by the Congress, because the agency or the bureau had to look to Congress for the money. So then they try to accommodate to the best of their ability -- legally, of course -- the head of a certain committee or subcommittee, and members of the Appropriations Committee or this committee or that committee.

This particular senator, being powerful on the Appropriations Committee, will treat the Bureau of Navigation very kindly and recommend that they get all the money they ask for, and then the next day he calls the head of that bureau up and suggests that there ought to be two more navigation lights on the river running through his state. Obviously, they can always use more light on the river, so the bureau head is glad to put two more on his river.

Well, West Virginia, if it was ever in a position to get that help from Congress, had never utilized it. But in this particular case, we had a president in the White House who was very friendly to us, and he was willing to use his persuasion to direct the attention of a particular bureau or agency to a need in West Virginia, and be helpful to us in that way. Whereas the next day it might have been Senator Byrd over in Virginia telling the War Department that since he was going to go along with their appropriation, he hoped they could spend

some of it by repainting some army camp in Virginia.

How, you asked for an elaboration of this cottony ground of state, federal, and Kennedy people relationship. Well, lots of times there were ticklish situations -- and they don't mean much unless you can take a specific instance -- but back, say, for example, to the road. This illustrates what we were talking about a little bit ago, of what I thought my role became in West Virginia so far as the president was concerned. It was to try to assist him in the political situation rather than create problems for him, but sometimes this got very difficult. I had felt that after it became evident that we were going to get the road, I knew that Congress was very interested in it. But, of course, the governor was also very interested in it and had been working on it a long time in conjunction with these difficulties that I mentioned to you before.

But this had all been done without any publicity, because it is a terrible thing, politically and otherwise, to hold out this hope and have something happen to it. So we kept it as quiet as possible until we were sure that it was going to actually happen. When it became evident that it would happen, then there was the question of who was going to get to announce it or, in effect, who picked up the credit for it. In the normal routine of things, the White House would have notified simultaneously, in a lot of cases, all the West Virginia congressional delegation, and they in turn then could have gotten their press releases out announcing that through their efforts, such and such was done.

In this case, though, it seemed to me that this was such a valuable piece of federal favor to West Virginia. It was of interest so much to West Virginians but West Virginians alone. And it appeared to be one of those things in which the interest of the president in West Virginia could be clearly demonstrated; whereas sometimes the interest is there and the work is there, but it is not always as evident as it was in the road. It seemed that an announcement from Charleston of this additional mileage and this location of the road would make more sense to West Virginian people, and would also give a better credit to the president, where it belonged.

Consequently, that recommendation was made to the White House, and the mechanics were set up for Governor Barron to announce that the mileage would be given to West Virginia. As I recall, he did a good job on announcing it; he gave full credit to where the credit belonged; that is, that it was the result of the president's intense interest in helping West Virginia and helping it in a particular area in which she was so deficient. It got good state-wide coverage and good state-wide play. It was a West Virginia project; a West Virginia hope achieved only because the president had maintained a continuing interest in the problem for more than six months prior to the announcement.

Now this, of course, created some consternation in congressional circles.

But this was something the White House was aware would happen and they from time to time will take a course of action with their eyes wide open, knowing full well that they might momentarily offend somebody in the Congress. Nevertheless, they decided that it was worth this risk in order to make this more of a West Virginia event rather than one announced in Washington and mailed to West Virginia. They permitted a Democratic governor, from his State House, to announce this major program, as and when received from the Democratic President Kennedy in Washington, rather than have Washington send it down.

YOUNG: Bob, I would like to turn to something else. Would you explain President Kennedy's continued interest in West Virginia politics and in the people in West Virginia -- other than, of course, yourself -- who had supported him; any plans you might have had politically which were interrupted, of course, by the president's death?

McDONOUGH: Well, Bill, you cover a long period there and a lot of things. President Kennedy's continued interest in West Virginia politics was, first of all, that which applied to any similar state that is held by the Democrats. And of course he wanted to keep it alive because he was looking for a good vote out of West Virginia when he ran again. To this end he was very helpful. He tried to be extremely helpful in the 1962 campaign in trying to get our Congressmen elected. He was always most helpful on direct requests of any West Virginia facility or agency.

I have to point out, though, too, at this time, that Governor Barron was always very helpful to President Kennedy. Any number of times I would get a call from the White House in which I would be asked to contact the governor and see if he would do this or that thing, like Oh, let me see, a specific example: along in 1962 there was a trade bill up, which the administration was taking a more liberal view on than we normally suppose is typical of West Virginia -- which sometimes gets pretty stuffy on imports and exports. I got a call and was asked if I knew what the governor's feeling was, and if he would come out in favor of the administration's bill. I had to say, "Well, I don't know what his feeling is, but I will certainly find out; I will ask him."

In a matter of hours I was in contact with the governor and the governor said he was willing to support the administration's bill. I said, "Well, would you send up the trial balloon?" He said, "Do anything they want." They telephoned a statement down which he worked into his own words and announced. And this was helpful to the administration. Here you got a governor of a

state in which the import-export question was sometimes an issue, and you've got a governor of a state in which it could be an issue with supporting the presidential position. This was valuable to him. These are what I call continuing daily political interests, back and forth, the state helping the president and the president helping the state. Now the role of the Kennedy people during all this time: from time to time I would call upon the so-called Kennedy people over the state to try to drum up interest in a certain piece of legislation, or to try to get their friends to use their influence with their congressmen to make sure that they were going to go with the administration. Many people were called on frequently during the three years John Kennedy was over there, to continue to be helpful to him by helping on the local level to arouse interest in an administration bill, or to help arouse congressional interest in an administration problem. Most of these people, when asked, would respond. Half the names that occur in my conversation or in any conversation you've had with anybody else involving so-called Kennedy people, half of these people at one time or another -- and many of them more than once -- have played, again, a part in John Kennedy's administration by doing just this sort of thing.

BEGIN SIDE I, TAPE III:

There was an organization, in that throughout the state a great many of these people who had been very helpful to the president in the primary and general election, continued to be interested in him. Many of them had gotten into good political or semi-political positions. There was much favor to be -- I shouldn't say much; favor in certain areas on a federal level is very limited -- but there was continuing favor to be dispensed. They all had that common interest, John Kennedy. Many of them had continuing rewards from him, and consequently the basic political interest in maintaining John Kennedy in the office was, of course, there, and still there. So that was the minimum foundation of the Kennedy organization in West Virginia. For the most part, though, it worked hand in hand with the local organization, on the basis, as I have stated before, that working together, more could be done; and also, working apart, we created problems for the president rather than being helpful to him. And we didn't intend to hurt him in any way.

However, there came a time in 1963 when the consideration for the nomination of the candidate for governor began to get warm, and a great many of the Kennedy people had strong views for or against certain names. As time developed, it was pretty evident that they wanted to have their say in some of this matter. At one time it got pretty well defined and pretty hot.

We had made certain studies in early 1963 that indicated that there might be better candidates for governor than Hulett Smith, who evidently had the administration support. Public

opinion surveys indicated that [C. Donald] Don Robertson was one of these people who looked like he would attract more votes than Hulett Smith. I would say that the consensus of the Kennedy people actively working in politics was that Don Robertson would be more desirable from their point of view. This was discussed among the Kennedy people all over the state to a great extent, and these discussions were carried to Washington. And Washington indicated that they would be willing to help their old-time friends in West Virginia, help any candidate for governor they decided upon. This, to all those concerned, was very gratifying, because at this time the federal feeling could have been very, very important in the state.

I do know that this upset Governor Barron very much. I do know that through late summer and early fall he made some serious objections to the president that I was evidently more interested in Don Robertson than in Hulett Smith. These objections were evidently ignored by the president. Governor Barron also attempted to see the president on this matter two or three times and was never able to see the president. I think it was because the president didn't intend to agree with him, didn't intend to take Governor Barron asking that the president do something about me, shut me up or something. From the way events turned out, I concluded that the president wasn't going to attempt to shut me up, wasn't going to ask me to change my opinion.

However, as events became quite clear to some of us. While the selection of Don Robertson or somebody else as a candidate for governor, and, hopefully, the nomination and election of him, might have been some great advantage to us, there was no known particular advantage to the president. It also became evident that if the president did help us buck the state machine, which we firmly believed he would, he would be participating in a rough game of which we might well have been the winner, but again, he wouldn't have particularly have won anything.

Some of us felt later on in that fall that to pursue this thing would be to create and demand -- if the president should have gotten involved -- would demand efforts and attention on his part to a situation not particularly beneficial to him, maybe hurtful to him. And he could well use his efforts, his time, and his prestige some place else. So, in the final analysis, we decided that we would not participate in backing another candidate. An agreement was made the eleventh of November in Welch with Hulett Smith, in which most of the Kennedy people agreed to support him.

Then, of course a few days later, the president was killed, and there was a period of three or four months there during which many people felt like getting out of politics. Because some way they associated this terrible hurt that they felt and

political activity, I guess, and thought maybe they could diminish the hurt by just throwing politics to the wind. But as time went on, they began to separate these things into their proper categories, and most of the Kennedy people did respond in the primary and support Hulett Smith. Most of them worked like the dickens for his nomination and election in 1964.

You asked about Senator [Robert C.] Byrd. This question comes to the mind of a lot of people because Senator Byrd had opposed Senator Kennedy in the primary. But what the people forget is that Senator Byrd also supported strongly Senator Kennedy in the general election. There developed after Senator Kennedy became president, a very good working relationship between the White House and Senator Byrd. Some people may have held some animosity towards him, but if it was, it was one of those things that in due time, like a lot of political battles, are forgotten. I don't think the president ever held any animosity toward him. The president was not a vengeful person anyway; he never took the attitude that there was much to be gained by getting even with a person. In fact, I always got the impression from him that getting even with people was a waste of time; he had to get on with the next job.

You jumped back there to 1962 about the president's trip into Wheeling, West Virginia to make a speech for Congressman [Cleveland M.] Bailey. The best information we could get from constant public opinion surveys -- and I mean constant ones -- was that Cleve Bailey could not win that election. This was known to the state organization and this was known to the president. However, the state organization went to extreme lengths to help Bailey, because not only was he the candidate for Congress -- even though they very carefully concealed the fact that they weren't too hopeful of his chances -- he was the candidate and there was the whole ticket at stake, and local offices. And if we hadn't tried to elect the whole ticket, we could have lost local offices.

The president of the United States was aware of these studies. He was not particularly happy to go into such a situation, but he went into it when presented to him on just the basis I have told you, that this is a party obligation, that we have many local offices at stake, that we need the help for the party as a whole as well as an individual. Of course, this, some people say, risked his prestige by going in and supporting a candidate; well, that's true, he could. Maybe a lesser man would have decided that his prestige was more important. But you also remember that as president of the United States he was head of the Democratic Party, and there was a party obligation there, even in an unfavorable situation, to do everything we could to support the party, because there were more offices at stake than one.

All of us would have liked to have seen Cleve Bailey elected. Any of us who had worked years with public opinion surveys knew

that it was an impossible task, but that didn't keep us from trying and trying and trying. Because everything we did, and everything the president did, to support Cleve Bailey, helped diminish the effects of a strong Republican against the sheriffs and the county courts, or the county clerks, or whoever else, and then the House of Delegates in West Virginia.