

**Byron R. White Oral History Interview –JFK #1, 5/6/1964**  
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White, Byron R.; Supreme Court Justice, (1962-1993); Deputy Attorney General, (1961-1962). White discusses his role in John F. Kennedy's [JFK] presidential campaign (1961), the district and state conventions as well as the Democratic National Convention (1960), and the Citizens for Kennedy organizations, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

With

BYRON RAYMOND WHITE

Wednesday, May 6, 1964  
Washington, DC

Interviewed by Joseph F. Dolan

For the John F. Kennedy Library

DOLAN: This is an interview with Supreme Court Justice Byron White on Wednesday, May 6, 1964, in his chambers in the Supreme Court Building. Byron, can you tell, just for a starter, how you came to first make the acquaintance of John F. Kennedy.

WHITE: I was in school in England at Oxford University when his father was the ambassador and some of us used to be invited down to the embassy and I met the Kennedy family first at that time. It is rather vague in my mind at this moment but I believe I met the late president first there just very briefly. However, in the summer of 1939, I encountered him in Munich. I believe it was that summer, anyway. He and some others were traveling around the continent and I, on the other hand, was firmly located in Munich for most of that summer. As I recall, he spent a few days there and I spent some time with him, again just casually, mostly in the pursuit of interesting things to do and interesting things to talk about. I did not see him again until during the war.

DOLAN: What was he doing when you first met him back at the embassy; and when he was in Munich; was he working?

WHITE: I don't think so, I don't think so. I don't recall as a matter of fact. I think probably I wouldn't have had any awareness of what he was doing at that

time if I did meet him at the embassy in London. But I think he was just taking a typical American young man's tour of Europe when I saw him in Munich. I was there attempting to make some progress on some work for the next term at Oxford, but at the same time living with a German family and attempting to learn something about Munich and the language. And of course, the Hofbrau House in Munich was a great meeting place of Americans. And in those years, of course, Americans came in large numbers. I think he was doing just what a lot of Americans were doing.

DOLAN: On a Grand Tour?

WHITE: Yes, I think he had a friend or two along but I don't remember who that was. I suppose some people in his family would know with whom he took that trip that summer, but I recall very little about what we did. I think we mostly sat around and had a few beers, and went around and saw some interesting things in Munich.

DOLAN: And how did you meet up with him during the war?

WHITE: I was an Intelligence Officer for the PT boat organization. I was assigned to the PT's on temporary duty from the staff at Noumea. There were several of us who were sent up to attempt to contribute something to the PT organization. I was assigned to first this base and then that base. When I first arrived it was just at the time the president had had his encounter with the Japanese destroyer. I recall their recovering him and his arrival and his return. And I recall chatting with him and some of his crew at that time although I recall scarcely anything about the content of the conversation. I know I wrote a report about the event which I think had some currency around town some two or three years ago. As I recall, he went off for some treatment after that but then returned to the PT organization and at the time, I was, I think, assigned to the--it was either at Rendova or Vella Lavella, and I think it was the former. Mr. Kennedy, when he came back, was given a new--not a new boat, but a boat that had been converted somewhat to make it less vulnerable to small arms fire, had some armor plate put on it, and had been given considerably more fire power, so it was a heavier and a somewhat slower boat. Mr. Kennedy had that boat. I took two or three patrols with him on that boat in which there was no particularly exciting action, other than attacks by Japanese float planes at night. I thought that Mr. Kennedy handled himself very well under the circumstances. He was quite the cook, and I think it was rather obvious that most people in his boat thought extremely well of him and I think that most of the people in the PT organization did, although he was a somewhat disarming, quiet young man.

DOLAN: Is that nickname true? Did they call him Shafty?

WHITE: I think some people did. A lot of people thought at first, I'm sure, that he was just another rich man's boy out for a lark but I think they changed their

minds about him a good deal. He wasn't too impressive physically at the time, but he was in possession of all his faculties. He was very bright and didn't easily dissolve in times of serious crisis and I think by the time that he, by the time I last saw him down there, that most of the PT organization thought extremely well of him and I think that crowd of young men were not given easily to--well, they didn't go overboard easily about people. They were a fairly rugged group and fairly independent and I thought he, I certainly thought he discharged his duties very well, and at least for myself I picked up a rather abiding respect for him and also a good deal of affection. I thought that he was a very likable young man. However, I never knew him well, and was never an intimate of his then or since so that my observations have to be taken--have to be accepted with that in mind. My duties were such that I saw most of the boat officers at one time or another but for particular, and limited, and temporary purposes, so that I had an impression of most of the people but perhaps no experience in depth with any of them.

DOLAN: Can you think of any other people who were with that group who were with the Kennedy administration later on?

WHITE: Well, Paul Fay [Paul B. "Red" Fay].

DOLAN: Was Paul the skipper of another PT boat?

WHITE: A skipper or an executive officer. I don't know--I just don't recall, Joe.

DOLAN: They were on different boats--the president and Red Fay?

WHITE: Well, I thought so. Yes. I don't recall anybody else at this moment. Of course, his experiences in the boats have been hashed and re-hashed so many times that I suppose that there's no use belaboring that subject.

DOLAN: How many of you would be on a boat when it would go out on a patrol mission?

WHITE: Well, the normal crew, but the only reason an Intelligence Officer would go along was if there was a particular mission that his information might be of some use. Or, if he were going to attempt to intercept some particular barge into a particular harbor or inlet, why an officer who had perhaps studied the shoreline and had perhaps studied the maps and the aerial photographs and whatnot, might be useful in identifying exactly where you were. The maps and charts down there at that time weren't the greatest things in the world and normally it was just a regular crew. I used to ride now and then when there was a particular job to do that I might contribute to. I didn't see the President again until he was elected to Congress. At that time, I had myself just come to Washington for a temporary job as a clerk for Chief Justice Vinson. Mr. Kennedy had been elected to Congress and I remember stopping to say hello to him two or three times over in the House Office Building when I was here. He, at that time, didn't seem any different than he always was.

DOLAN: What was that, do you know?

WHITE: Well, no.... I thought that he had, as always, a sort of indefinable self-possession about him that was somewhat impenetrable. He was friendly enough, interesting to talk to, not withdrawn exactly, but not given to excessive displays of temper or emotion, which was friendly enough, which is probably a great understatement.

DOLAN: Didn't wear his heart on his sleeve.

WHITE: No, he didn't and I think at that time. I think he was on the House District Committee, it seems to me, and a lot of people around town were interested in home rule at that time and of course ever since, and they were very busy talking with all the Committee people and some of them remarked that it was difficult to tell whether Jack Kennedy was a reformer or not. He didn't seem to get too excited about anything but he wasn't disinterested either. He seemed to understand everything that went on, he was charming, but some people despaired somewhat of being able to type cast him any particular way.

DOLAN: Would you say that people didn't, he didn't fit into the pigeon holes that most people had available to fit?

WHITE: Well, I suppose that's true, I suppose that's true. But again, I was busy, he was busy, and I didn't really see much of him except for the few times I would run into him.

DOLAN: Did you ever do any work with him on speeches or legislative issues?

WHITE: No, no, I never did, never did. He was interested....

DOLAN: Separation of powers.

WHITE: I would say he was interested in, he was somewhat interested in the Supreme Court, what was going on over here, and why I had come down here, where I was going to go afterwards, and I was interested in what he was doing. I was especially interested in how his health was. I think most of us who had know him were somewhat interested in that but I didn't pick up anything else of him for ten years.

DOLAN: Did you, you went back to Colorado in what fall of 1948?

WHITE: I did one year as a clerk like most of the clerks and then I retired from the fray and went out to practice law in my home state. Went to Denver and



easily got to practice law which was a very enjoyable, so enjoyable that I really didn't pay too close attention to all the details and events concerning various people in Washington. I used to be back here from time to time on business and I would see some of my friends and from time to time I would hear something about Jack Kennedy, but I did not see him and I really knew nothing about his development, or his goals, but you can probably tell me when I saw him next, Joe. I think the next time I saw him was when he came to Denver to give a lecture which was sponsored by the Social Science Foundation. I was on the board of the Social Science Foundation, which is really an instrumentality of the University of Denver and is interested primarily in international affairs. They had for years conducted one of the most successful lecture series in the United States, very well attended. One of their speakers in 19...

DOLAN: I think it was February, 1959.

WHITE: You think it was in '59? I think it was before that.

DOLAN: February '58?

WHITE: I think so, somewhere in there, somewhere in there. Anyway, they normally had these lectures out at the University of Denver but the responses for this lecture over ran the capacity of their lecture hall and they moved the lecture down to the city hall, down into the center of town. I think there was something like 8,000 people came out to meet him and he gave a good lecture. I think Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] was with him.

DOLAN: That' right.

WHITE: I think you, Joe, went back and forth to the airport with him.

DOLAN: Yep.

WHITE: As I recall, I barely said hello to him that night and I think I sat beside Ted Sorensen.

DOLAN: We sat down, Ted and I sat down, next to you--the two empty seats in front of you--we just sat down there and sort of chatted a little bit. We got to talk to him that night.

WHITE: I think they were curious. I think it was in 1958 that he gave a couple of speeches in the Senate on foreign policy which made quite an impression. Do you recall, Joe, when he made the speeches on Algeria? When that was?

DOLAN: 4th of July, we can check that.

WHITE: Well, anyway, I think he had been making some two or three major

speeches in the area of foreign policy.

DOLAN: They had been reported in Denver and they were being talked about a good deal. I think a lot of people were curious. He had obviously had a good deal of attention in the country since the vice presidential affair. When was that, 1956?

WHITE: Yes, 1956. He was attractive and I think people were interested in what he had to say. He gave a lecture from a prepared text and I think it was almost word for word. He spoke very rapidly, too rapidly, but it was well done. People understood it. I think it went very well.

DOLAN: He answered questions too, didn't he?

WHITE: Yes, they had a question and answer session. I also like Ted Sorensen who I had never met before. Well, Joe, I think that you can see my association with him was very fleeting.

DOLAN: He was beginning to warm up.

WHITE: And continued to. I think that he came back to Colorado on time for a political function down in Pueblo or Colorado Springs.

DOLAN: Colorado Springs.

WHITE: Right, and I talked to him for a few moments.

DOLAN: Oh, Byron, yes, you're right about February '58 because that trip. The DU appearance, was his first appearance in the state that was really public. He was out to a gastroenterologist convention once before that in about '57 but I can date it back now because his Colorado Springs appearance was the Saturday following the 1958 primary, which would be the second Saturday in September and it was a Congressional district harmony dinner. It was down in the basement of that hotel, the Antlers.

WHITE: I think that was after he had been up in Denver for the lecture.

DOLAN: Yes, yes, yes, which would make the lecture '58.

WHITE: Well, I had been sort of on the fringes of the political activity out there. Every now and then I would become interested in doing some work in election years and when it became obvious that Mr. Kennedy was going to run for the presidency I think it moved everyone to.... I thought it moved everyone to chose up sides and I enlisted in his army. I think you will recall that, Joe, sometime in 1959, in the fall of 1959.

DOLAN: Late spring. Remember Ted Sorensen. There was a regional meeting of the Democratic Party in the late spring.

WHITE: Of 1959.

DOLAN: Yeah, around June, I think. You were back here just before that and had a chat with him.

WHITE: Oh, I think you and I had a chat in the spring I guess, Joe, of '59 and one time in that year, right after that, when I was here in town on business I came and chatted with him. I was in town for two or three days. I think it was at the time that he was deeply involved in the Landrum-Griffin Bill and I think it was the time that the Conference Committee was attempting to arrive at some settlement. And he was riding herd on that. I was in his office a couple of times, two different times on two different days during that period. I had lunch with him in his office. We talked about, we talked about how he was doing his race we talked about the Landrum-Griffin amendments for a while. He seemed to me very confident and much in control of the situation. Although confident, he wasn't so very sure how far he would get in the presidential race but he wanted to give it a try. Then he wanted some representatives, even in some of the smaller states that that didn't have many votes for the convention, but he thought they might be important. So I undertook with you, Joe to do what we could out there in Colorado.

DOLAN: When did you start traveling around? So you remember that Byron you took a couple of trips, you know, combined with law business. I remember your going down to Alamosa and once you had to take a deposition or something and you stopped and visited a few people.

WHITE: Fall.

DOLAN: Fall of '59.

WHITE: The fall of '59 I took several trips. I would frequently go into the south, down to Pueblo or Trinidad. I went down there two or three times. I went into the north end of the state several times. I went to my home country, Fort Collins. I went to the Western Slope a couple of times. Then I went to Sterling. I also went to the north east end. I started in the fall and as time would permit traveled around.

DOLAN: What would you do?

WHITE: Well, we were interested in getting a Kennedy organization together in the state.

DOLAN: Was there a lot of pro-Kennedy sentiment.

WHITE: I wouldn't say so, Joe. I wouldn't think there was a great deal, and the party organization was not enthusiastic so that you couldn't really count on the party officials for support.

DOLAN: Was the governor for him?

WHITE: No, the governor was uncommitted or non-committal.

DOLAN: A Democrat, McNichols [Stephen L. R. McNichols]?

WHITE: He was a Democrat, Governor McNichols. We called on him, I think you and I called on him first, just to let him know we were going to do some work so that he would not be misinformed. He said that he hadn't made up his mind. He had great doubts that a Catholic could have success. It was my impression that he wasn't favoring the way of a Catholic running for president.

DOLAN: There was "favorite son" talk wasn't there?

WHITE: For McNichols?

DOLAN: McNichols, sort of alternative vice presidency possibility.

WHITE: That's right, alternative vice president. We talked to the late George Rock who was the National Committeeman at that time. He was unenthusiastic but approachable. We talked to the state chairman, Robert Crites [Robert S. Crites]. He was not particularly interested in committing himself at that time either. The chairman of the Democratic organization of the City and County of Denver, Lawrence Henry, was, it seemed to me, favorable about as early as anyone there. Another important county chairman was Phil Muhic from Pueblo, who normally did not commit himself very early but on this occasion he did although the advice was that he would be unreliable. This proved to be the furthest thing from the truth. There was never any doubt about it as far as I could see in his mind, or as time went on, anybody else's mind. But the problem was to get an organization together around the State and get them thinking about the problem of Jack Kennedy. The immediate problem being to get delegates to the district conventions and to the state convention who were favorable to Kennedy.

DOLAN: Who had the strength? Was it spread out?

WHITE: I think it was spread out. There were strong adherents of Senator Symington [William Stuart Symington] in the state, strong adherents of Senator Johnson also. There were strong adherents of Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey, Jr.]. I think each of those had more party support to start with.

DOLAN: That wouldn't have been hard.

WHITE: No, that wouldn't have been very hard. But anyway, we were attempting to get some Kennedy representative in each county of the state. There were some sixty-some counties, to get an organization together on the county basis. We didn't succeed in doing that but we did succeed in getting Kennedy organizations together in the major counties and in some southern--some in the minor counties. Enough, anyway. It was simply a process of keeping those people active and stirred up. And Joe, you were the major factor in that whole thing so you know what happened.

DOLAN: Was this carried on in the open, Byron, from the outset?

WHITE: In the open?

DOLAN: Was there an announcement of formation of a committee?

WHITE: Oh yes, oh sure. There was no secret about anything as far as I could tell. I think a lot of people kept their feeling secret but as far as our organization was concerned there was no doubt about what we were trying to do. We would have meetings--when we went somewhere, we would have meetings everyone knew about. From time to time we would have a meeting in Denver and we would try to have a dress rehearsal for those conventions. Get the people together that you had some confidence in who were delegates to these district conventions.

DOLAN: First formal meeting that I can recall is out in the game room, out in your house. Remember?

WHITE: Well, that was early. That was in the fall of.... '59?

DOLAN: Stewart came up.

WHITE: '59. 1959.

DOLAN: Who was in town? Was someone in town; Governor Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] or someone like that, there then?

WHITE: Yes, Governor Ribicoff was there. We had a meeting before that meeting.

DOLAN: He was there for a non-political purpose, wasn't he?

WHITE: Yes, we had a party for him that night, and I think before that meeting we had all the out of town people we could get to come in we got to come in.

DOLAN: We had a meeting down at that hotel on Logan, at the end of the legislative session. I think it was in '59.

WHITE: Yes.

DOLAN: There was a big ruckus among the legislators about would you be seen there, were you committed, if you were seen there would pictures be taken.

WHITE: Oh, yes. This was the great tempest in the teapot out there. All struggling over how many votes in the national convention?

DOLAN: 21.

WHITE: 21 full votes, but nevertheless it was important to all of us and it was important, I'm sure, to the Kennedy organization. They paid some attention to it. You were the ringleader, Joe, who got the thing started. Sorensen came out a couple of times. Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] came in the spring of 1960 which was the first time I had met him. Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] came.

DOLAN: What did you do when Bob was there?

WHITE: We took him down to Pueblo. Phil Muhic had a rally down there or a meeting so Bob could meet the political figures. He also spoke at Colorado Springs at a function, then he came up to Denver and went to two or three things. I had never met Bob or Teddy before we started this organization. Teddy came out in the fall of 1959 which was the first time, as I say, that I met him. He was fresh out of law school. I think there were some feelings in Colorado, as I'm sure there were a lot of other places, that there were too many Kennedys, that it might not be desirable to get too many of the brothers into the act. I think they were quite used to that reaction however, and were quite used to having it pass away quietly without any real trouble. That's what happened in Colorado. Ted Kennedy was very good with the Western people. He was very friendly and very open.

DOLAN: Ted spoke to the students at DU [Denver University], didn't he?

WHITE: Yes.

DOLAN: Was it that trip that you went along the Western Slope?

WHITE: I don't think that was on that trip.

DOLAN: Not that trip?

WHITE: No, I think on that trip, which was his first trip to Colorado, we went down to Denver University and spoke to the Young Democrats. Then we went up

north, Joe, remember, you went didn't you?

DOLAN: No, I went with Bob, I don't remember going with Ted.

WHITE: Teddy and I went up through Adams County and to Greeley and had a meeting, over to Fort Collins.

DOLAN: Oh, yes, I remember.

WHITE: Brighton, Longmont, Boulder.

DOLAN: We were back at Ira Rothgerber's [Ira C. Rothgerber, Jr.] on a Saturday night.

WHITE: That's right. I think that was Teddy's first trip. He did a very creditable job, I thought. He came back later, took another trip. He brought his wife, Joan, and we flew across the mountains into Montrose, Colorado, way over on the Gunnison River. Then, starting there, we took a car and went up through Delta, Grand Junction, over to Ranglely, Meeker, out to Glenwood Springs and back to Denver.

DOLAN: It was not more than about four votes that were involved in the whole thing.

WHITE: Well, no more than four votes involved in the whole operation, but we were hard after them. Then in the spring the state district convention occurred.

As I recall it, there was a district convention in each district. Each district had four votes and there were four districts. Each congressional district choose those four themselves at their own conventions, which were sort of at staggered dates but the 4th district convention was held in connection with the state convention, or at the same time. So there were four votes for each district, four districts, that makes sixteen, and there were four at large.

DOLAN: And a half for a committeeman and half for the committeewoman.

WHITE: I think you went to the second district convention, Joe. The second and third were held the same day.

DOLAN: The second was at Boulder, I took that. You and Ted took the third.

WHITE: Ted Kennedy and I went down to the third, on the same day, that's right. The meeting in Denver for the City and County of Denver, which is a separate district, was, I believe, the day before Senator Kennedy came to Colorado.

DOLAN: I just can't remember that meeting.

WHITE: Yes, he came to the Cosmopolitan Hotel, remember? Sure, Joe. He came very briefly.

DOLAN: He came in, then we had a coffee for him, didn't we, in the morning?

WHITE: It seems to me that was before the Denver meeting. Sure it was. It was the Denver meeting but he wasn't there for the meeting. He wasn't there for the convention. No, I don't think any of the Kennedy's were there for the Denver contention. We split two and two, didn't we? Didn't we get two votes out of Denver? We got two delegates.

DOLAN: I think on the next interview I'll bring in a list of names. I remember how we ended up, but the problem when you try to recall in my mind, Byron, is always the differentiation between the district delegates and the delegates that were elected at large at the convention. You know, you mix people.

WHITE: Well, you mix people up, but I'm sure we got two. We got two there and we got two up in the second district. I'm talking about full votes. Because there were eight--at the Denver County meeting there were eight. Eight delegates to the national convention elected, right? I think we got four, for half votes. How many did we get up in the second district? You were there, I wasn't!

DOLAN: We didn't do as well in the second as we did in the third because you had Ted's help, also Pueblo.

WHITE: We had a pre-run in Pueblo. We had a meeting of our people before and I think we get four out of, no, we got six out of eight in the third. I think our main strength was in Pueblo, Trinidad, Walsenburg and from over in the San Luis Valley we got some strength, the Spanish-American delegates. Most of the people, I must say, who committed were surprisingly firm.

DOLAN: Stubborn did you start to say?

WHITE: So that was pleasing and really we did better than we thought, which was encouraging. The president also came out to the state convention which was down in Durango, Colorado. Durango is the very southwest corner of the state, a very remote area. It takes hours and hours to get there by car from Denver. The location was very unfavorable for purposes of the Kennedy people because our greatest strength was from the larger cities and our delegates to the state convention might have a very hard time getting there and some of them didn't get there, but most of us did. Durango has a very tiny airport sitting up on a bluff and the president was good enough to visit that convention, coming in in the morning, I think, leaving in the afternoon. It was quite an effort for what was at stake. I think there weren't very many votes at stake. Sixteen of the votes had already been chosen.



WHITE: There were four full votes, eight half votes delegates to be elected to the national convention on the day he arrived. We ran a slate of five.

DOLAN: We'd left openings for the governor, the United States senator, former governor and Senator Johnson and George Cavender[] to fit in.

WHITE: We ran a slate of five and I think.... This is one that I don't remember, how did it come out; four? Did we get four?

DOLAN: We elected all, no, I guess we elected five. Five, that's it, five.

WHITE: Five, that's right.

DOLAN: We left three slots for Ed Johnson [Edwin C. Johnson], Steve McNichols, John Carroll [John A. Carroll] and George Cavender, whom we regarded as the strongest of non-candidate people, and three of them made it.

WHITE: And did we get the five?

DOLAN: Yes, we elected all of the five.

WHITE: We got ten and a half or eleven and a half votes, I don't remember which. We ended up at voting time with thirteen and a half, with McNichols, Aspinall [Wayne N. Aspinall] and Crites [Robert S. Crites].

DOLAN: Crites came out.

WHITE: He committed, that's right.

DOLAN: He committed that day in the Cosmopolitan Hotel. He went up to see the then senator and he came down to the lobby and the reporters went at him and he said he was for Kennedy.

WHITE: That's right.

DOLAN: The president spoke at that state convention?

WHITE: Yes he did, yes he did. That was the first time that I ever met O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], on that trip, I think. Ken O'Donnell was traveling with him as I remember.

DOLAN: Kenny was on the trip n the Cosmo.

WHITE: Was he?

DOLAN: Where, I think, you had a coffee or something later in the morning with some business people we were trying to get interested in the campaign.

WHITE: Yes, that's right. I think that's right. But the president really profited by all his travels and experience. He turned into quite a, to put it mildly, quite a campaigner. He was a much different person in 1960 than he was in 1959 or 1958.

DOLAN: In what way?

WHITE: Well, he just seemed to be more mature, to be firmer, had more of his ideas firmed up a good deal. He was a good deal more aggressive when it was appropriate.

DOLAN: Byron, I just thought of another trip on this subject that you haven't described and that was the 4th District Dinner in Grand Junction where we flew over in the Convair and had a long chat with him. You remember, at the table coming back over, flying over talking about various military personages that you had run into?

WHITE: Oh, yes.

DOLAN: And what do you think of so and so, and what do you think of him? Remember?

WHITE: Oh, yes. I don't know what that dinner was over in Grand Junction but Wayne Aspinall asked him. He said yes and it was a very well attended dinner. He stood up on a chair and gave his speech. The Western Slope people didn't particularly think that Eastern seaboard personalities could understand Western water problems of problems of reclamation. There was some inherent distrust of an Easterner with a Boston accent. But he had himself quite a good night in Grand Junction, I thought. You were there weren't you Joe?

DOLAN: Yes.

WHITE: We flew over there from Denver with the president. Coming back he dropped us off and went on, didn't he? He was always on the run.

DOLAN: That was the third day of one of those visits we're talking about. That was a Monday. Can you tie it in?

WHITE: Well, I don't...

DOLAN: I know, tie it in with that Sunday morning we flew down to Pueblo and had a coffee.

WHITE: Yes, I suppose it was down at Pueblo. That was after the convention when Phil Muhic arranged a coffee in Pueblo on a Sunday morning. The president was aghast at going to Pueblo for a coffee on a Sunday morning thinking that he would probably be talking to fifty people. But Phil Muhic, better known to the president as Tiger Muhic, turned out quite a group, something like 1,500 people, a very large group for Pueblo. The president was delighted. As time went on he became very devoted to the president.

DOLAN: That reminds me, you worked him and some of the other Colorado people a little bit down in New Mexico, was it Santa Fe? At a regional meeting there in '59 or sometime in early 1960, you and Lawrence Henry went down there.

WHITE: Yes, we went down there in '59 I think. It was a regional meeting of the Democratic party and some of us from Colorado attended. I think I had urged the president's organization to make sure that Kennedy people came to that meeting even though they weren't party organization people in a formal sense. We were just there and talked around.

DOLAN: Didn't Tiger take the president's bed?

WHITE: Muhic was there and he didn't have a room and I think the president put him up in his quarters. Tiger needed a bed so he got a bed.

Well, Joe, I suppose you'd like to slow up to check out these dates. Going to Grand Junction, I don't think could have been until after the national convention.

DOLAN: No, because he wouldn't have given it that much time.

WHITE: No.

DOLAN: I think he was just in the state once in the campaign, that would have been in Denver in about September when I wasn't there. I don't know whether you were with him or not, when he appeared at the Civic Amphitheater in Denver.

WHITE: Yes, I was there.

DOLAN: About 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock in the morning on a weekday.

WHITE: I went out from here.

DOLAN: Well, then you went to Los Angeles as a delegate.

WHITE: I think I was 5th in line; how many votes did I get Joe? I think I almost didn't make it.

DOLAN: You made it.

WHITE: Almost didn't make it.

DOLAN: No you weren't.... I know you weren't trailing because I knew who was. The last man to get on was Phil Massari.

WHITE: Massari? I was 4th, I think. I was very glad to go out and I think by that time his organization had hardened up and we were dealing with a lot of other people in his organization. We didn't deal much with the president. He had bigger fish to fry. In the early days we dealt with Bob Wallace, then we dealt with Teddy. I think we dealt mostly with Teddy from then on.

DOLAN: Stephen Smith, by correspondence, with that Esso Building operation-- Kennedy for President Committee.

WHITE: Yes, Stephen was.... It was obvious that Bobby was riding herd on things. Down at the state convention running against all of us was Senator and ex-Governor Johnson. He didn't make it and was rather angry with me, with all of us, and said so. The president, when he left Durango, didn't know what the results were. The voting hadn't even started but if he was going to make that kind of trip for so few votes, he was going to find out how it came out. So after the voting Bobby was quick to call him. Weren't you along, Joe?

DOLAN: No.

WHITE: Later, I remember the president calling up because of the roasting we took in the papers and magazines for being rather aggressive in seeking votes. He told us that we had been fair and open and not to worry. It didn't concern him too much. Then Bob Kennedy asked you and me to come out before the convention opened and be available to help around. That is about all I can say. What did you do, Joe?

DOLAN: I was around. We were supposed to be advisors on rules, remember consult on the rules.

WHITE: Oh, yes.

DOLAN: Oh, I remember. Don't forget the first problem that came up. Bobby said yes, he remembered how it had come up in '56 and what the Virginia delegation had done and he remembered the whole thing. We had one or two little questions on unit rule;...

WHITE: Oh, yes.

DOLAN: ...who could bind; whether they were bound by a second ballot on instructions, that sort of thing. It turned out to be academic. Most of the parliamentary problems were worked out. There weren't any parliamentary fights on the floor.

WHITE: Well, I think I was just hanging around in Bobby's office most of the time trying to help with whatever came up. Then, when the Colorado people arrived I spent some time with them. I remember going around to the president's room in the hotel, and I was chatting with him when the news came up that the Texas delegation was meeting and they were inviting the president to come down and hold forth. We chatted about it a while and he decided to go. I went down with the group and sat near the podium. That was one of the more famous occasions of the convention, I thought. He did a very good job, was in complete possession of his faculties, was brief, as usual, sharp, incisive and humorous.

I don't recall a great deal more about that convention that's very meaningful. There are a lot of those things that have happened. I know that Bob Morgenthau [Robert M. Morgenthau] from New York showed up on his own there and helped around a good deal, spent a lot of time with Ken Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith] who was going around visiting farmers from various places.

DOLAN: That's another assignment that we were given--to look for Stevenson people in the farm belt delegations that might be influenced by exposure to intellectuals like Galbraith and Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.], people like that.

WHITE: I was working mostly on the fringes. I wasn't involved in any of the major movements, just part of the army, I guess. It was during this period that Governor McNichols decided that he would go along. This was the day before the voting was to occur. Who did the national committeewoman plan to vote for, Joe?

DOLAN: Marguerite Peyton Thompson--I think she voted for Kennedy finally.

WHITE: Yes, she probably did.

DOLAN: Very difficult decision.

WHITE: And who was the national committeeman?

DOLAN: Lawrence Henry.

WHITE: Oh, yes, Lawrence Henry. And Bob Appel [ ], who did he finally vote

for?

DOLAN: Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson].

WHITE: He voted for Stevenson, that's right.

DOLAN: He has succeeded Lawrence as Denver county chairman.

WHITE: Yes, that's right.

DOLAN: How about after the president was nominated and prior to the time the vice president was nominated, any interesting events there that...?

WHITE: Well, I was completely out of that. I was just on the receiving end of announcements like everybody else. I had no part in any of those events at all. I thought that some members of the Colorado delegation were unhappy about the choice for vice president.

DOLAN: Some doubly, since they had been unhappy about the choice for president.

WHITE: I suppose so. They were sort of in an "I told you so" frame of mind. The high feeling in our little delegation was like that of a lot of others, I suppose, but it didn't survive too long. At least they got over talking about it. I went back home and then Bob Kennedy asked me if I would come back and help them out at the national headquarters. I think Bobby, although I don't know this, this is my impression, wanted to have a separate citizens' organization entirely aside from the Democratic party. I suppose the president wanted it too but certain other members of the campaign organization were opposed to the whole idea. Anyway, Bob asked me if I would head that up. I said I would although we were starting from scratch and we didn't have much time. I thought it might be a real boondoggle in many ways or at least not very helpful. But perhaps the president knew more about what would help him than anybody else. So we got started and tried it out.

I scarcely saw the president from the time the convention was over until after the election. I think I went on two trips with him. One through Nebraska, and one through Montana, Wyoming and Colorado. I think that was the time he ended up in Denver, the one appearance in Colorado after the convention. I spent a good deal of time in Washington from August 1st on through the election. You were in that organization, Joe, the Citizens' For Kennedy. Our job was to get the Kennedy organizations going in each of the states. Some of them were good organizations, others weren't. In some states we had scarcely any at all. The idea of the organization was not to challenge or compete with the Democratic party but to interest people that the regular party perhaps might not reach, or appeal to. It might be Democrats, might be Republicans, might be Independents. There were several problems to it. One of them was securing active leadership. A lot of the people we wanted to enlist were people who normally weren't active in politics, who thought they could leave that for somebody else, people who

thought politics were dirty business, or people who are awfully busy and couldn't take the time. So one of the problems was just getting somebody to do the work and take the time. It was not hard to find people interested in Senator Kennedy, but finding people who were interested and willing to undertake a task was another matter. The other major problem was the fact that the Democratic party in most places thought the Citizens organization was an abomination, sort of a useless appendage that simply divided talent and dissipated funds, without any real return. I'm not sure what the verdict had been about that organization or whether there has been a verdict. Probably no one can prove a case one way or the other. I have the feeling that it did some good in many places, especially in places where the Democratic party was not well organized or places not particularly responsive to Senator Kennedy where special things might have to occur. But as I say, it is difficult to know. We did get a lot of people interested and do a lot of work. We raised some money of our own but we also spent some of the funds raised from other sources. Almost all of my contact with the regular campaign group was through Bob Kennedy's office. I reported to him chiefly or to Stephen Smith.

DOLAN: Talk about particular places, didn't you start out in New York with difficulties between the regular organization and the so-called reform groups?

WHITE: I think the first day that I got back here in August, Bob Kennedy said that we ought to go up to New York. The regular party was fighting with the reform group and he wanted to achieve some sort of harmony, however temporary, some kind of a working arrangement between these elements which might survive through the campaign and through the election.

Bobby went up there a couple of times and I went with him. One of the questions was whether we would have a Citizens For Kennedy in New York. The way it ended up, in a ward, was that we had a Citizens For Kennedy organization which represented the reform group but also had a wider focus. To keep the peace it was thought necessary to have a coordinator in the state. Bill Walton took this job and mediated between the Citizens and the party. He was also general liaison between political organizations in the state and the president's campaign organization. This device was used elsewhere even where there weren't disputes between the two groups. It was useful to have somebody reliable from the Kennedy organization riding herd on what was going on in the state. The Citizens organization of New York was very large, it raised its own money and ran its own functions. In other states where we ran into strong party organizations, the Citizens group was a much less robust affair.

DOLAN: Would that be true of Chicago?

WHITE: We divided Illinois into two areas, Chicago and down state. The Citizens group in Chicago was not a major force. Sarge Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver] had gotten some women going there in sort of a separate group, they were very active. The Citizens organization was imposed over that but the regular party organization was the dominant face. The chairman of the Citizens there met with Mayor

Daley's [Richard J. Daley] approval but we didn't expect really to do a whole lot. As long as the party was going to be effective there was no point of blunting its effectiveness with a Citizens organization that would be abrasive. You might lose more than you would gain. If you had a Citizens organization that would add something to the party, then all very well and good. Ted Kennedy was out in the West. He handled a good deal of the Citizens things out there.

DOLAN: How about in Los Angeles? What was your relationship with the regular party there?

WHITE: Well, Joe, I never did figure that out. As a matter of fact, in a lot of places it was rather difficult to know who was doing what to whom. Did we have a Citizens organization in Philadelphia, Joe?

DOLAN: Yes, with my blood, some of my blood is still there. You ask if we had a Citizens organization!

WHITE: Who was our Citizens chairman?

DOLAN: Co-chairmen. Victor Moore, a city councilman who met the local--met with the approval of the leader of the organization but with differing degrees of approval from other people. The other co-chairman was Abe Freedman [Abraham L. Freedman] who was later United States District Judge and now Judge of the Court of Appeals. That's the first place Bob sent me after New York. Remember you and Bob were on that traveling show, you had eight or nine people. We went down to Philadelphia by train and then you went off. Dutton was with us, then you went off to the West somewhere and left me there to make recommendations as to whether or not we should go along with Bill Green [William Green].

WHITE: Yes, we did have a tour around the country right early in August, 1960.

DOLAN: Detroit, you were in Detroit sometime. You were in Pittsburgh.

WHITE: The whole campaign organization had that road trip all across the country early in August, 1960, it seems to me. The whole group got on planes and went to various regional meetings all across the country to explain their aims and goals, their organization and their activity. I went around on that. You took some states or organizations, Harvey Poe took some other, Phil Kaiser [Philip Kaiser] took others. We had some very helpful girls around like Jane Wheeler and.... What was that girl's name from Boston?

DOLAN: Pat Twohig [Patricia Twohig].

WHITE: Pat Twohig. We had a varied organization, I would say. Some places it did well, other places it didn't.



DOLAN: What was the modus operandi down South?

WHITE: We stayed out of the South except for Texas. We tried to get something going in Texas. We tried to get something going in and did to some extent, but not much in Oklahoma. We tried very hard to get something going in Virginia but without a great deal of success.

DOLAN: What was the theory back of that?

WHITE: It was just a question of how much you could get out of the effort that it would take and in that respect the South did not differ from some places in the North. It would take too much effort for what you got out of it. There was more of a monolithic political organization in many states in the South and there was perhaps not very much room or very much potential for a Citizens organization. It would probably be more of an annoyance than it would have potentiality for producing votes. I think that was mostly it. Did we have one Citizens organization in Florida, Joe?

DOLAN: I don't recall.

WHITE: I can't remember.

DOLAN: That's some indication. I guess it was probably John Moore who stayed.

WHITE: Oh yes, we did have John Moore helping us. So much of that has gotten so dim in my mind. It occupied really such a small period, you know, a couple of months.

DOLAN: In addition to the organizing work of getting the organization going, you made public appearances didn't you, just as a speaker?

WHITE: Yes, to some extent. I went to Detroit and Indianapolis. Did you go with me out there, Joe?

DOLAN: No, I was there a couple of times though.

WHITE: Indianapolis?

DOLAN: We never traveled together, never.

WHITE: I went up to Detroit, I went up through Pennsylvania, went up to New York to visit Bob Morgenthau a couple of times. Then near the end of the campaign we got a rather unusual assortment of people together to go around to some difficult places and see if we could do some good. We got James Michener [James A. Michener], who by the way was our county Citizens For Kennedy chairman in bucks

County, Pennsylvania. Arthur Schlesinger, Stan Musial [Stanley F. Musial], Angie Dickinson, Jeff Chandler and then one of the Kennedy girls would usually be along, Ethel or Joan or Eunice. Eunice was with us up in Illinois. Who else was on that trip? Jane Wheeler was along.

DOLAN: Chuck Roche [Charles "Chuck" Roche].

WHITE: Charlie Roche went with us, that's right. Charlie Roche and Jerry Hoffburger [Jerold Charles Hoffberger], who was our Citizens chairman in.... Where?

DOLAN: Baltimore.

WHITE: Baltimore, oh yes. He was state chairman in Maryland.

DOLAN: He was very helpful anyway.

WHITE: Yes, he was very helpful. We took a DC-3 and covered a wide area. We went to Detroit and a couple of places in Illinois.

DOLAN: Including Decatur.

WHITE: Including Decatur. We went to a couple of places in Indiana. We went to three places.

DOLAN: Indianapolis, weren't you?

WHITE: Went to Indianapolis, Bloomington and some other place. And we went to Denver, Boise, Idaho and Salt Lake City.

DOLAN: Didn't you go only to places where the president had not appeared during the campaign? Well, no, he had been to Indianapolis.

WHITE: No, that isn't entirely so, but we went to some very unlikely places, places where you didn't think you were going to get any votes but you might. We would have a rally, most of which were very well attended, I thought.

Everybody would get in the act a little bit, Chandler, Dickinson, Michener, Schlesinger. Arthur Schlesinger, one night out in the middle of Indiana, drew a tremendous ovation from the crowd. He marked up and gave an extremely good speech that brought the house down. That was one of the high points. Joan Kennedy was a great hit in Denver, as was Ethel. Up in Boise, Idaho, we were taken to the country club by a prominent Democrat in the city. It was obvious that some of the members were far from sympathetic with our course and that we were not very welcome in that particular club. Finally, we went to Kentucky. Mrs. Auchincloss [Mrs. Hugh D. Auchincloss III] was

with us down there. But all the while, of course, the fellow who was winning the election was Senator Kennedy.

DOLAN: Say, you went up to New York on the movies didn't you on the campaign, on the spots, on the screen?

WHITE: Yes, I went up there for that talk about what kind of spots, what kind of spots were worthwhile to put on. You know, to show around television around the country. [END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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