

**Cyrus F. Rice Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 12/07/1965**  
**Administrative Information**

**Creator:** Cyrus F. Rice

**Interviewer:** Charles T. Morrissey

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**Biographical Note**

Cyrus F. Rice (1903-1981) worked as a journalist for the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. This interview covers the coverage of the 1960 Democratic primary race and general election in Wisconsin, John F. Kennedy's relations with the media, and the coverage of the Kennedy administration, among other topics.

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By Cyrus F. Rice

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Oral History Interview

with

CYRUS F. RICE

December 7, 1965  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

**MORRISSEY:** Could you tell me when you first met John Kennedy?

**RICE:** I first met Kennedy in 1947 when he was a congressman and a member of the Labor Committee. He came out to the Federal Building for a hearing on the Allis-Chalmers strike, as I recall it. I wasn't covering it. I came down to listen to the proceedings on a day off. And I looked up at Charles Kersten of Milwaukee, who was chairman of this subcommittee. I saw this young man alongside of him. Charlie is a personal friend of mine. And I thought to myself, "Well, Charlie, it is a mistake to have his son up there alongside of him even though he probably wants his son to get a good idea of how affairs are run." I had no idea that this young-looking man was a congressman until it was all over. When the hearing was over, I was introduced to Kennedy. At first I recognized him and then with that famous Boston family. So I sort of took him for over an hour that afternoon and took him around the Federal Building and introduced him to Federal Judge F. Ryan Duffy, who had been a senator elected in the [Franklin D.] Roosevelt landslide and later appointed a federal judge. I introduced him to other people around in the building. I believe he went back East that same afternoon.

The next time I met him was in August of '57 when he was out here and spoke for [William] Proxmire. And again I met him at the 1958 Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner, briefly. But it wasn't until 1959 that I really got to know him and met his wife Jacqueline [Bouvier Kennedy], as the rest of us reporters did.

In '59, [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen had come out in March, and it was obvious that Mr. Sorensen was sort of making contacts and sampling the climate for Kennedy as a candidate for the nomination in 1960. Now, from his book, we know that he was, but at that time, of course, there was no mention being made and we couldn't get Mr. Sorensen to say that that was his purpose. In April, however, April 9, 10, and 11, Kennedy made a visit to Wisconsin and that could be considered probably his first campaign visit, although of course it still was not acknowledged as being that. We interviewed him at the press club, and I recall very well that I was seated alongside of him at the table. There were two questions that we wanted to get answers to: number 1, are you going to be a candidate for the Democratic nomination; and second, if so, are you entering the Wisconsin primary? Well, Mr. Kennedy in his very gracious and witty way didn't answer those questions. He gave us replies, but not answers. He said he didn't know or couldn't say and that he was out here because he had been invited by various groups to make talks to them and he thought he would get them all bunched up in one. And he had been. The main talk that very night was to the Milwaukee Press Club at its Gridiron Dinner right here in the Schroeder Hotel. And he made a very fine talk and, of course, his manner was such as to win him friends right along.

Well, the next day we all got in a plane and took off and went to--oh pardon me, we drove up to Sheboygan where he spoke at a lunch there, and then we took a motor ride. This tour was by plane and by automobile. We took a ride up the Fox River Valley to another town, and Kennedy's promise was to have the reporters alternate sitting in the car with him. I remember I sat in and Jacqueline was along, and there was someone driving. He wanted to get personally known, and he just said if they had any particular questions he wanted them to ask him.

I remember my question that was the first one. I said, "Well look, I have known of your grandfather as Honey Fitz. I think that is the most beautiful nickname a politician ever had. How did he acquire that?" I had assumed that it had something to do with his personal manner. He's a honey, you know. Mr. Kennedy, then

Senator Kennedy, said, "Well, it came from his voice. He had such a nice Irish tenor voice. He sang in a quartet in Boston, and they called him Honey Fitz." That is my recollection of his explanation of that.

That tour covered Janesville and Madison. At every press conference, of course, he was asked about his plans to run for the nomination. He very pleasantly evaded all definite replies. He wouldn't admit that he was out sampling the political climate or seeing what the response was. Naturally he didn't want to go on record as saying he was, but it was taken for granted that that was his purpose, and there was no great issue made of it.

I remember, particularly at Appleton, at a dinner on a Saturday night--this was the final night of his three-day tour. It was really a two-day tour, but. . . . We flew to Green Bay and then drove to Appleton, and there was this talk at the Catholic Church school auditorium. There was no press table as such, but Kennedy was up at the head table, of course, going over his speech as he always did. I don't know when he ate you know, between the autograph hunters and. . . . He spotted me and he called, "Cy, would you come up a minute?" We were already on the first name basis by that time. So I said, "Yes," and I came over. He said, "Look, I have changed my text." We had all phoned in advances. This was 6:30 or 7:00 on a Saturday night. The New York Times was probably already rolling. At least our first edition had his talk on the farm problem, I believe it was. He said, "I am going to switch to labor management." You know, he had half a dozen different talks. He said, "Will you please tell the other boys, so they'll know?" And I said, "Yes, I will. I'll phone in the change." And we all scampered out to the phone there, and made that change.

And at the question period that night, he--somebody asked him about his stand on [Joseph P.] McCarthy. McCarthy came from down near Appleton. The question was phrased sort of critically. "Why didn't you take a stronger stand against McCarthy?" or "Where were you on the McCarthy vote?" Something on the nature of that order. And Kennedy replied very vigorously. He was in the hospital at the time. He went into. . . . "My record on civil rights," he said, "is well known. I'm not going to take criticism on that from you or Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt or anyone else." I don't know who the person was who asked that question. Nobody of great importance. When he said "you" he just meant. . . . And when the meeting was over, later in the washroom, I walked in, and saw Sorensen and Kennedy in conversation, see, and Kennedy says, "Do you think that

was too strong on the McCarthy thing?" And Sorensen says, "No, I don't. I don't think you were strong enough," as I remember it.

Then we got out and got into the car. We were all going to go back to Green Bay by car to get the plane. This was the end. And the way it came up, it was Sorensen and myself and the Senator were standing at the car. And Sorensen says, "Well, when are we going to meet again?" And I said, "You mean, 'When shall we three meet again?'" A little Shakespearean, you know. Kennedy says, "In thunder, in lightning, and in rain," according to the three witches.

**MORRISSEY:** I didn't realize he knew his "Macbeth".

**RICE:** Yes. So we drove back and got in. . . . Kapenstein, Ira Kepenstein, who is now with Postmaster [John A.] Gronouski, was along for the Journal, and myself.

We were the only two who followed from Milwaukee all the way through and then back to Milwaukee. Many other reporters went along. And we left them here and said good-bye to the Senator at Mitchell Field that Saturday night. It must have been about midnight.

It was a wonderful trip and he made great friends. His personality was simply enormous, winning. The nicest thing about that was that about three weeks later I got a letter. He said, "While I was munching a hamburger at Mitchell Field after we left you, I read your Sunday column on poetry." He says, "I was delighted with it. You know, this showed another side of your nature." I have that letter which I will have framed. In view of everything now, I think it's a wonderful thing. But he was interested of course, in poetry and the artists and was quoting Robert Frost frequently in his talks. And incidentally, in that column, way back in about '58, I wrote a piece on him after he made his talk at Harvard about if poets knew more about politics and politicians knew more about poetry, things would go along better. I sent him a copy of the column. I hardly knew him at that time. It was just after meeting him for Proxmire. But I got an acknowledgment at the feast. So that ended that trip.

Then he came back in July 31, he came to speak at the district attorneys' national convention. They came, I think, in a private plane. It just happened that I was the only one at the right pier, and was down, and I ran down the runway to meet him, and there was a Look man who was taking pictures. They were getting mood pictures



at the time, as they called it. They didn't know what they were going to do with all this. They were working on something on Kennedy. Well, anyway, Kennedy thanked me for coming out. Naturally, I mean, I was definitely assigned to meet him, but, I mean, he was always gracious that way. We had a press conference. I don't know that we discussed anything of particular moment at that time, although there were--later that night, at a televised press conference at WTMJ, which I was listening to from a downtown set, down out at the station, he made, in answer to a question, the statement that Berlin was worth a nuclear war. It was the first time he made it as boldly as that. Some of them said, "Is Berlin worth fighting an atomic war about?" And he said, "Yes." And, of course, that took the ribbons. I think you'll find that there was a national page one story all over the country on that statement at the time.

He came back to announce that he would run in Wisconsin's primary on January 20, 1960. I went out to the airport with [P. Kenneth] Ken O'Donnell and Jerry Bruno. As it happened, Jerry Bruno, who I got to know very well during that summer, was out canvassing the state too, and when he'd come in there he'd give all his report to me. I had several stories on Jerry's findings that summer. At that time, he'd been loaned by Proxmire to just look around. There was no--I don't know how he phrased it at the time because Kennedy still was an unannounced candidate, but one who was expected to announce. But in any event, that was my first meeting with Ken O'Donnell. Bruno came up, and we all went out and there was a brief press conference at the airport, but nothing of consequence. It was just a greeting because the press conference was for the next morning at the Pfister. That would have been the 21st, I think, yes, that he announced he was going to run in the Wisconsin primary and seek the Democratic nomination. Of course, by this time the announcement had been made nationally. Not that it was something great, but it was big news in Wisconsin and it was given enormous coverage, television, and out of town reporters, and other things.

I remember shortly after that--oh, he was here on February 17, but overnight at the Pfister, but I didn't even get to see him that trip.

I remember Jerry Bruno and O'Donnell asked me if I could go on a panel in Madison on March 9th to interview Mr. Kennedy. I felt rather gratified. They said he had asked for me because he wanted a panel of newspapermen that he knew. He thought it would

make things a little better. And I couldn't make it because an office rule required that the reporters couldn't go on programs like that at that time.

MORRISSEY: Why?

RICE: I don't know exactly what the--and it being in another city and so forth made it awkward for me, so I had to decline. The best visit we had--nonpolitical of course--was when on March 20 he had an enormous reception at the Schroeder Hotel here. It was simply fantastic, on Sunday afternoon. It was at 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock. They had--I've forgotten the figure but the people were sprawled down from the fifth floor where it was, down in the street, you know. And Jerry Bruno had us under his wing. I had my daughter, who was about nine months pregnant at the time and wanted to meet him, and my wife. He had met my wife in April the year before. So I went with my wife in line and we shook hands. He used his left hand shaking hands with me, and he says, "Where's Mrs. Rice?" And then he spotted her and gave his right hand. I suppose he was able to--she felt pretty damn good about being recognized. So, my daughter was taken to meet him too, but she didn't want to get in that crush, of course.

He was back in March 26; that's when [Ray] Kinney covered him. And I interviewed Mrs. [Rose] Kennedy, his mother, at that time.

MORRISSEY: Why?

RICE: I wanted to get acquainted with some of the rest of them. Bobby, I had a long interview with Bobby on one of those periods on his book. Well, in 1962 he came back for the J-J [Jefferson-Jackson Day] Dinner, and he was President. And that was the big moment of my life, then. That was really a different thing when all the Secret Service and so on were around, and we were all there. They had an area for the press. [Clement J.] Clem Zablocki had Mr. Kennedy, and the President and told him to take him to a car where there was a crippled girl. Kennedy went over and exchanged greetings, and he turned around, and he looked me right in the eye. I thought, "Gee, this is twenty feet away or so." This guy spotted me, Mr. Kennedy, the President, and he strolled over to me and he says, "How are you, Cy Rice? And best regards to the Sentinel." Well,

the Sentinel, of course, put that on page one, with a picture of me just as he stopped, the only reporter he recognized and greeted. Of course, it flattered me enormously and boosted my morale and also prestige, I suppose. Well, anyway, that was that--he spoke on the Cuban--oh, pardon me, this was at the J-J dinner. He made quite an ordinary talk, more of a political good fellowship talk of the Democratic Party and so on, no big issues. And the next day he went to church at the cathedral. Kinney himself covered that part of it. I didn't cover him until the next day. He had a great visit. And I have skipped the campaign visit in 1960, unfortunately, when he was in the car that they threw a whiskey glass at.

MORRISSEY: I didn't know this.

RICE: Yes. During the campaign in 1960--has nobody mentioned that yet?

MORRISSEY: Maybe they have and my memory . . .

RICE: Yes.

MORRISSEY: . . . doesn't recall it.

RICE: Well, he came to Wisconsin in the fall of 1960 in the campaign. It must have been late in October, very late in the campaign. And he had a dinner and he spoke at the auditorium, and, as he was riding down with [William] Bill Feldstein and the sheriff in an open car, there was a party in a cafe over on Wisconsin Avenue, and they came out with their highballs, and one character threw the glass and all, right into this open car. Hit Bill Feldstein right on the forehead. I was away a block behind in a motorcade, and the cars had stopped. By the time I got out there, Kennedy--I've never seen a man so furious. And it was he who--he handed the glass back to somebody who came up for a souvenir just as Bill Feldstein was wiping the whiskey off of his forehead. I believe he was not cut, slightly bruised. It was a very deplorable incident on a public visit. It was of course, in the papers. It's too bad it happened in Milwaukee. The sheriff, he was surprised. I guess he was not able to make an arrest. Somebody should have been arrested, but the person the President gave the glass back to was just somebody who

came up to get it, I guess, not the actual person who had thrown it.

Well, in October President Kennedy was due to come to Milwaukee, you know, and he got to Chicago. That was when the Cuban crisis was on. I went down to Chicago, heard him talk in McCormick Place. And that afternoon, as he got off the plane at the--I was with [Patrick J.] Pat Lucey, and we stood at the bottom of the ramp as he got off the plane at O'Hare Field, the military part of it. Kennedy spoke to Lucey and then he spoke to me. He said, "Hello, Cy. Say, you know, I met your cousin up in Minnesota. He said he was your cousin." I said, "Yes, that's my nephew." He had met James Rice, my nephew, who was political secretary to Governor [Karl] Rolvaag, and still is. Of course, James had told him about me and so on. Well, of course, you know what happened in that case. The next morning we were going to go out and fly to Milwaukee and at that time it was announced that Kennedy had a bad cold and was returning to Washington. I was with Lucey and [John] Reynolds at that time. And that morning we were all at the Palmer House, and we went over to the Blackstone, I guess it was, where we got this announcement. Everybody was a little surprised that he had a bad cold.

MORRISSEY: Did you have any suspicions?

RICE: Yes. There was--some voiced that there may be some other reason, but I didn't. They said he was running a temperature and people were questioning whether that was it, but we had no idea that it was the Cuban--I had no idea that it was the Cuban crisis. Frankly, I'll admit that I thought it must be something in Washington, perhaps, that needs him. He didn't seem--he looked good, but, of course, a man can have a temperature and you don't take chances. It was a rainy day. It was raining that morning and half this stuff is in the open air. And if the President of the United States is running a one point temperature, I don't suppose his doctor is going to let him run around in this. So we accepted it. It wasn't until a week later that we discovered, of course, what this thing had been going on.

Then he came back in September, 1963. I went up to Ashland to cover him. He was to speak at Duluth. He came in on a helicopter and made a ten minute talk at the airport in Ashland. He had a crowd of ten thousand people assembled out there. And this was late in September in 1963. He was on a tour--conservation

type tour. Governor [Gaylord A.] Nelson had asked him to come out and go over to the Apostle Islands. Nelson wants to make it a park. Then the Senator spoke at Duluth. The next morning he took off from Duluth to go farther west. That was the last time I saw him, and he was with Kenny O'Donnell. The last view I had of him was when he and Kenny O'Donnell got out of the plane together, sort of on the ramp.

MORRISSEY: Were you at the Sentinel on the afternoon of the assassination?

RICE: The day of the assassination I was at home. Friday was my day off, and I was at the dining room table with--I must have been having a late breakfast. I had worked till midnight anyway. I got a call from a friend, a woman. My wife got it. She said, "Have you heard the television?" She said, "No." "The President's been shot." Evans went in and turned on our TV set, and got [Walter] Cronkite, I guess. I've never admired a newspaperman so much as I did this Cronkite's handling of this. Anyway, he'd been shot. We didn't know. We just sat there. Finally, news came that he had died, and I remember--then we must have had on NBC by that time because it was not [David] Brinkley but this other man.

MORRISSEY: [Chet] Huntley?

RICE: No, it was Brinkley rather. He said, "A punk with a mail order rifle." And that's all. So that was it. Then I called the office. And they said, "Yes. Come in and write your. . . ." At that time they wanted a story I wrote, a story of all his visits to Wisconsin, a straight new story from all the clippings from what he said. That ran the Saturday story. Then on Sunday I came in, and they said, "Give us a personal story." So I wrote much of the stuff that I've told you here, from the time that I first saw him in 1947, mistook him for Kersten's son, and the personal contact that I had. And I used a quote from a letter; I had received several letters. Some of them were personal, that he dictated I assume. And some were just the "Thank you for the coverage on my last trip." I was never able to compare signatures. I saw an article someplace where they said you can tell which is the genuine and which is Sorensen's and which is somebody else's. There are several people.

MORRISSEY: I've heard people say that when he was campaigning out here in the primary of 1960 that he felt some of the Wisconsin newspaper people weren't giving him a fair shake, especially on his Catholicism. There seemed to be a tendency to count Catholics in the audience and that sort of thing.

RICE: There was that element on some of the papers. The Journal, the Milwaukee Journal, had an article after the vote that tried to analyze it, but it wasn't any anti-Kennedy thing. It was trying to analyze whether Catholics were voting as a group or not. I think he felt that the Madison Capital Times was hostile to him, but I don't know whether they used the Catholic angle there or not. I forgot to mention that in Madison on that April '59 visit, [William] Evjue, the publisher of the paper, referred to him as Senator McCarthy.

MORRISSEY: Oh, really.

RICE: Then, immediately--no, he never did correct himself. Later, he called him Senator Kennedy and so on. We were all aghast. As far as I know I'm the only one that used it in a story. Kennedy thought it all right. He kept referring to Evjue as Mr. "Nevue" like an English Oxonian would pronounce the word "nephew," you know, "Nevue." Of course, that was pretty understandable. But I went up to ask Bill Evjue later. I said, "Did you call this man McCarthy deliberately?" He said, "Hell, I don't know how I ever happened to make a mistake like that. It was a slip." He used the word "hell" and I'm quoting him at the time. But if it was a Freudian slip or not, I don't know. They've been hounding him. They've been using some stuff that he didn't take a strong enough stand against McCarthy and so on. And I noticed in the book, Sorensen's book, he had some reference to Miles McMillan. Kennedy's reference to McMillan was a "face full of hate." I don't know what the--McMillan was at the press conference at Madison. They had a number of them that I don't know of. Well, there were other occasions. Kennedy made several--well, he said he campaigned all the way through Wisconsin. I didn't ever accompany him through the state on other trips. We didn't cover him that closely, you see. I don't know that anyone else stayed with him. For many of the papers if it was that long, they'd catch him in the town and like that.

MORRISSEY: You've been covering Wisconsin politics for a great many years. As an outsider, it is difficult for me to understand why Hubert Humphrey didn't do better because he had done so much for Wisconsin Democrats for so many years, and yet John Kennedy came in and won that primary.

RICE: Yes, he did. He won six districts and Humphrey won four, and Kennedy won the state.

MORRISSEY: I'm just wondering why Humphrey didn't do better.

RICE: Why Humphrey didn't do better? I don't think people regarded Humphrey as a serious presidential contender frankly. Even his friends. They didn't feel that he had national--that he wasn't nationally known. He was regarded as too far left perhaps. Kennedy certainly was unknown too as far as that goes. But I know that I talked to people that were very sympathetic to Humphrey, but regarded him more as a regional candidate or as a candidate of a group rather than expecting him to win the nomination. Now, why he didn't win the districts in the northwest part of the state, the ones near Minnesota and the Third District, which is also there near the Minnesota line, in areas where he was well known, and also. . . . This is sometimes attributed to a Protestant vote in that area, heavily Protestant. He took areas like the Green Bay, the Fox River Valley where they're heavily Catholic. I think myself that probably there was a Catholic vote of a certain number that went for Kennedy. On that basis, everything else being equal, there is no question but some of them would say, "Well, I'm a Catholic, I might as well vote for a Catholic." Some people were still a little resentful of the [Alfred E.] Al Smith campaign, in that sense. Humphrey, I think, did as well as could be expected from a man who didn't have any national image. Although, if you compare it, Kennedy didn't either, did he?

MORRISSEY: No, he was still thought of as a New England figure.

RICE: Only he. . . . But Humphrey had a more extreme attitude. Businessmen at that time, in 1960, still used to shudder when Humphrey was mentioned. And I can remember a press conference in 1959 or '60 when somebody said to Humphrey, "Have you changed your attitude on civil rights since

1948?" Phrased in a hostile way again. And Humphrey said, "No." A very eloquent answer. He said, "I feel the same way now as I did then. The country has caught up with my views." But Humphrey was regarded as somewhat farther to the left than most Democrats. He was the liberal wing of the Democratic party. In 1948 he had established himself as such at that--was it the Philadelphia Convention?

MORRISSEY: Yes.

RICE: I didn't cover that one. And whether rightfully or not, I think he was. He was quite a liberal. And I do think that Kennedy got the basic Democratic vote here, you see, in the state. He waged a terrific campaign too; don't forget that. He campaigned harder than Humphrey did in Wisconsin, and his whole family was out here. And Humphrey was even mentioning in some of his speeches he couldn't compete with him, private plane and that kind of money, you know. And it was to a certain extent, I suppose, although, I didn't know that Humphrey lacked for money. Labor was contributing to Humphrey. He got all over Wisconsin, Humphrey did. I covered him on several stops. But I remember Eugene Foley coming to see me. He's now head of Small Business Administration. He thought we could do more for Humphrey. I said, "Oh, go on. We've given everybody a break. We're covering him fine." He said, "We'd like you to interview the Governor of Minnesota." He was down here.

MORRISSEY: Orville Freeman?

RICE: Orville Freeman, yes. He brought him right into the Sentinel office. I had a very fine interview with Bill, Mr. Freeman, at that time. And Freeman, of course, was here to praise Humphrey, and at that time it was when I first met Karl Rolvaag. He was down. Minnesota was sending people in. Now I wrote quite a long story on the Humphrey campaign, and I got a letter from Humphrey on the tie-up with [Eugene J.] McCarthy of Minnesota and the St. Thomas gang. I went to St. Thomas up in St. Paul. There was such a thing. While Humphrey taught at Macalester down Summit Avenue, there was a liaison there. And they formed a group, McCarthy and Humphrey and some more of these Irish running around St. Thomas--they're



still up there--that were active in the Humphrey campaign. Foley, the whole Foley family went to St. Thomas, you know. His sister went to St. Catherine's up there. There's a Patrick O'Connor, I think, a lawyer in Minneapolis. Are you going up to Minneapolis?

MORRISSEY: No.

RICE: Well, anyway, that was the tenor of the article. It had some--it was one of those long editorial page features. I forget just how it went, again, but it was during the campaign and it was helpful.

But to get to stay with the question, other than what I said, I don't understand why Humphrey didn't do better. He was Wisconsin's second senator, but Kennedy, I think, made a far better campaign and won friends. You must remember that people were astonished at this young man, just as they were in that Nixon debate. I talked to people after that first debate. They had been lukewarm or anti-Kennedy, or didn't know. "What does this guy think he's doing? A forty year old kid." After that, they had heard him and they changed completely. One of them was [Richard] Dick White, one of our top supervisors here. I talked to him about two days later. So, I think that that had a great deal to do with Kennedy's showing. All they knew about him was: a young man from Boston; he'd been a good senator; he had a fine war record. But after they heard him talk and answer questions--and he was on TV and radio and everywhere while he was here. You must understand that, in addition to his personal appearances where he'd talk to a thousand or a few hundred, all this time he was on TV all the time, too. And he made quite an impression, just as he did on the press corps.

MORRISSEY: Why didn't he carry the state against Nixon?

RICE: Well, it's basically a Republican state, and there aren't enough Democrats, even the ones--there were enough to nominate him, to give him the nomination of the Democrats, but not enough to elect him over Republicans. Nixon is very strong here, too. Nixon had been in this state a lot ever since he was a senator. He could easily get out here and he had a big following. And this was basically, was at that time, 1960--although we got a Democratic governor elected, that year, re-elected--that's the reason Nixon won I think, although I had

put Wisconsin in the Kennedy column in advance. They'd ask me to pick it, I think, and I wasn't much of a prophet. I thought he'd do better in the big cities. I don't know. I don't like to get on to that religious factor, but I do think it was a factor. I'm a Catholic, Irish Catholic. I never ran into any outspoken feeling on it, but I think it exists. I'm not deploring people for feeling that way about it particularly. I think sometimes they have a feeling that we weren't quite ready for a Catholic President. I think religion was a factor. I honestly do. But you must remember, of course, that Nixon was enormously popular man too, and having been Vice-President for eight years. . . . When it finally became a fight between Kennedy and Nixon, rather than Kennedy and Humphrey, there may have been people who even voted for Kennedy in the primary--you know, you could vote for him in the primary and vote for Nixon in the fall.

MORRISSEY: Yes.

RICE: Well, there is no way of telling. I don't have any better answer than that for the question. That's a hard question, Charlie.

MORRISSEY: And very essential one too.

RICE: It is, yes. I don't know whether Lucius Barker's analysis went into anything like that. Have you talked to Lucius Barker yet?

MORRISSEY: Yes, I have, and I read that unpublished manuscript.

RICE: Oh, yes.

MORRISSEY: I just can't recall now how much attention he gives . . .

RICE: It was mainly on the nominating process, I think.

MORRISSEY: Right. On the primary itself. Do you have anything else that you'd like to put on the record?

RICE: No, except just that personally, of course, I couldn't imagine a finer man than Mr. Kennedy--humor full of life, always seemed in the greatest spirits.

I didn't know anything about his back. I remember one day after I heard about it--it must have been very close in a car or something--I said, "Are you having any trouble with your back?" I said, "I've heard you have to sleep on a board or something." He said, "No. No." Of course, he always fenced it off. But he was the type of--I've known that type of person, that witty Irish type, who always look on the gay side of things--I mean, they've grown up with it--nobody as brilliant as this man or anything, but with that attitude, one of self mockery on occasion. To me he was the epitome of personal charm, grace, and of such a high quality--well, the Kennedy style, I guess, is as good as you could name it. And that's it. It was a great campaign. I'm very happy to have covered that one right from the start.

**MORRISSEY:** Did you notice a change in his campaigning techniques or in his speech delivery each time that he came back to Wisconsin? Did he seem to become more of a finished speaker?

**RICE:** No, I didn't. I always thought he was pretty good. He may have improved a little bit. He was forceful and his tone was a little hard to catch sometimes because of his Boston accent. I didn't notice any particular change. I thought right from the start that he was a good platform speaker, and he--I suppose if you saw a newsreel of it or video of him at one time and then saw him another two years later you might notice it, but I didn't. No. In other words, what he cared about was getting his message across as thoroughly as possible, no oratorical effects, very few at least. I don't think. . . . He wrote just as-- or he talked just as he--a man who would try to write as clearly as he could--this has effectively been known--nothing flowery, nothing oratorical, nothing redundant, none of these long periods. He talked like Bernard Shaw wrote, just as, make it as--maybe Sorensen was writing some of this stuff, but he must have been off the cuff a lot of it, and the Kennedy entered. Bernard Shaw's style is just to write it as clear as possible. He happens to be a very witty man too, and that keeps popping up, but it's not like some writers who go and do a--Walter Pater, for instance--write it and then dress it up with a whole lot of fancy phrases and stuff like that.

**MORRISSEY:** Did you go out to Los Angeles and cover the Convention?

RICE: Yes. That was a wonderful convention. I got to see all the Kennedy people there, but I never got to talk to him personally out there. MacGregor Burns was out there, and I saw him quite a lot. And then he was out on his first April trip, James MacGregor Burns. I met him and his wife. His wife was either a delegate and he was covering for a paper, or vice versa. They were both out on the floor. I think his wife was correspondent for some New Hampshire paper. She had press privileges or else he did.

MORRISSEY: Why was the Wisconsin delegation still divided just before the first ballot was taken? Remember some of the Humphrey people were still for Humphrey?

RICE: Oh, Frank Nicolay, the Assembly Speaker, he never did vote for Kennedy. Oh, he was bitter. And some of those Dane County-Madison people. Oh yes, the Second District went for Humphrey. I don't--they didn't care for--they were strong Humphrey people, and I think slightly anti-Kennedy. I think some of them were still annoyed at Kennedy for not voting against McCarthy, from Dane County. Now, Nicolay, is a Catholic. I don't know that I had to mention that, but, I mean, there was no religion in there. But Frank Nikolay was a die-hard Humphrey man, and I don't think he ever did cast a vote for Kennedy. I've forgotten how the final Wisconsin vote was. What was it? Wasn't it still split?

MORRISSEY: It still was, yes. Twenty some-odd for Kennedy and about ten for Humphrey.

RICE: Yes. Well, that was it. Some of them felt, "We were elected as Humphrey delegates and we're going to stay that way." Don't forget that those people did take a pledge. Of course, by that time, they could have been released. I've forgotten what the law was at that time.

MORRISSEY: I think they had to stay pledged unless their candidate released them.

RICE: At that time, yes. And they felt under an obligation to fulfill for Humphrey too, as well as liking him. So that's why... explain that.

MORRISSEY: How about the selection of Lyndon Johnson for the vice-presidential nomination? Did that cause some troubles with the delegation?

RICE: It did, yes. Labor was against it. I remember a caucus under the stands there with a naked electric bulb light. You could hardly see anything. There was a box of some sort that people who wanted to talk to the delegation stood on. It was just this impromptu. And among those who said he was okay with Labor was a steelworker's--John Giacomo, G-i-a-c-c-o-m-o. He said Labor feels okay for him, that he feels okay about him. And Proxmire, also, said if Mr. Kennedy wants him, he's okay. Proxmire was very friendly to Johnson. Proxmire had been elected in '57, and I think he was still--he had started a little war he had with Johnson by that time or not, but in any event, I'm sure he spoke for Johnson, to my best recollection. And also Zablocki. Clem Zablocki was one of the greatest Kennedy men in Wisconsin, right from the start. He was out there and I remember he got up on this soap box, if you want to--I don't know if it held much soap--but said, "Yes, let's go for Johnson." Oh, there was quite a lot of grumbling, not only among Labor. They felt he had an anti-civil right attitude, that he wasn't a real liberal Democrat like Wisconsin Democrats thought they were. But it ended in a vote for Johnson at the caucus and went back and voted for him. But it was a most unusual caucus. You know how at conventions they're caucusing all the time anyway, but I never attended a caucus where they didn't have some kind of a room where they could see one another. This was in a barely lighted place right under the stands, right on the ground. This is in an enclosed building, but it's under the seats, you know.

MORRISSEY: Well, I think that about covers it.

RICE: Well, good.

MORRISSEY: Thank you very much.

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