

Benjamin B. Stout Oral History Interview—JFK #1, 7/30/1964
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Benjamin B. Stout (1905 - 1965) was the Chairman of the Harrison County Democratic Committee in West Virginia from 1956 to 1961. This interview focuses on West Virginia's enthusiasm for John F. Kennedy (JFK), the influence of JFK's religious views on the 1960 presidential election, and JFK's New Frontier policies in regards to West Virginia, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Benjamin B. Stout

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Benjamin Bassel Stout—JFK #1
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Oral History Interview

with

BENJAMIN BASSEL STOUT

July 30, 1964
Clarksburg, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: In 1960 Mr. Stout was chairman of the Harrison County Democratic Committee, and worked actively for President Kennedy in the 1960 West Virginia primary contest. Mr. Stout, would you tell me when you first became interested in Senator Kennedy as a presidential possibility?

STOUT: I became interested in Senator Kennedy in 1958. Well, I really became interested in him after I'd seen him on television at the 1956 convention. I was not a delegate to that convention. But in May 1958 I made contacts with him, and visited him in Washington a couple of times at his office in the Senate Office Building. I would go to Washington to meet with the Federal Aviation Agency. I was building an airport at that time. And so then usually in the afternoons I'd try to slip over and see someone at the Kennedy office. Sometimes I'd see him and sometimes it would be Mr. Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] or somebody else over there.

Now, in 1959 I attended a meeting of the National Association of County Officials in Washington at the Mayflower Hotel, and on the program were Jack Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Robert Wagner of New York. I did meet and talk to Kennedy himself for a few minutes at that meeting. And then later Bob McDonough [Robert McDonough] contacted me and said he wanted to bring in some Kennedy people and wanted to know if I would get some Democratic leaders here together and meet with him here at the Stonewall Jackson some

evening for dinner. So I did. I got perhaps ten or fifteen people. Mr. Sorensen and Ed Wallace came here and talked to us for a couple of hours, and we more or less agreed that we would go along and set up a Kennedy organization here, when the time was ripe for it.

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A little bit later we had a get-together here. And I believe the first one to come in actively to set the thing up for Jack Kennedy was his brother Ted [Edward M. Kennedy]. I spent the day with him going around the town here and to the court house, and so forth.

Then that evening they had a meeting and that's when they set up a county organization for Senator Kennedy. I believe that that night Victor Gabriel volunteered to head the organization, to see that it got started. So they set the foundation for a Kennedy-for-President committee here in Harrison County. Then, a little bit later -- I can't remember weeks or dates or anything like that -- Robert Kennedy came in. It was right after the primary in Wisconsin; he flew in here the next day. He had with him I think Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and several men from New England. And we actually got to work on this thing. Then, I believe that somewhat later in the spring, now before the primary, Frank Wiseman, former city manager of Clarksburg, was picked to head the campaign for Kennedy here, to be the general chairman for the campaign here in Harrison County. And I think that he served in that capacity clear through the primary, until the county executive committee took over, of course, after the primary.

We had meetings. I was not an officer in the primary organization, being county chairman at that time, that is the overall Democratic county chairman. However, I attended all their meetings. And it began to appear that Jack Kennedy himself would be a shoo-in in this county. I mean it was easy, even though we had Hubert Humphrey here. Senator Humphrey had a headquarters set up and he did some work, but it was already set up for Senator Kennedy, and the election proved that he was in, the minute he made his appearances.

Now he himself came to this county, I believe once, and he spent the whole day here. He visited several factories and a couple of radio stations, TV stations, and so forth. He made a talk down here in the ballroom of the Stonewall Jackson. He was supposed to come back one more time prior to the primary election, but due to weather conditions he was unable to fly in here. We had a tremendous crowd here for him that Sunday afternoon, but he was unable to make it. So that about sums it up.

Oh, incidentally, Franklin D. Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.] came in here on his behalf in the middle of the spring, and spent some time here. He was here on the program the Saturday night before the primary election. Lyndon Johnson gave the major address down here at the Masonic Temple, and Hubert Humphrey was here, and Franklin D. Roosevelt represented Senator Kennedy. We had a lot of activity going on here for the senator. As I said before, it was easy. I suppose that if he had never even come to this county in the first place, he would have still carried it very easily, but of course, he

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was active here. He did a good job.

YOUNG: Well, Mr. Stout, to what do you attribute the ease with which Senator Kennedy carried the county -- good local organization, good local support, or were there other factors?

STOUT: Well, just the magnetism of the fellow himself, I guess. He came here and people just swamped him. They just mobbed him, really. Of course, he did have a fine organization here and that had a lot to do with it. I don't know. He was just set up here before it was ever even announced, I think. It was easy for him. I really couldn't tell you what -- I'd say it was just the magnetism of Jack Kennedy, himself.

YOUNG: Well, before Senator Kennedy announced that he would run in the primary, did you at that time feel he might have difficulty over his religion in West Virginia?

STOUT: Well, I was asked about that by his brother, Robert Kennedy, when he was here. He wanted to know if in his speeches he could mention religion. And I said I'd never even mention it; I can't see it's a factor. So he did not. He never said anything about it. Now Jack himself, in his speech down here in the Stonewall Jackson ballroom that morning, mentioned the fact that he was a Catholic, and that's the way he had been born and he couldn't see in this country why a man would be defeated just as soon as he was born because he was a Catholic. That's the only thing that was said about it; there wasn't anything else said at all.

YOUNG: Well, did any of the local ministers actively work against Senator Kennedy because of his religion?

STOUT: Not to my knowledge.

YOUNG: You didn't have sermons in any of the leading churches against him or anything like that?

STOUT: Oh, no. I did go down during the general election to a Methodist church; they had me on the program against the boy running for prosecuting attorney here. He was an excellent speaker. This was in a Methodist church down there in all-Protestant precinct. And religion was discussed there, but I believe that I did all right, because we carried the precinct and carried about all the members of the church. So I don't think that was a factor here at all.

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YOUNG: Well, then in Harrison County in general, and Clarksburg in particular, there was none of the viciousness that was reported in other parts of the state?

STOUT: No. And we are primarily a Protestant county.

YOUNG: Then there just wasn't any of this to any degree at all. How would you compare the organization of Senator Humphrey with that of Senator Kennedy in the county?

STOUT: Well, Senator Humphrey was a very fine fellow, and his family was here. But they just didn't get off the ground, that's all. They did have a headquarters, now, and they had some fine people working for them. But, I don't know, they just didn't have the organization, I suppose you'd call it enthusiasm -- that would be it -- the enthusiasm we had for Kennedy.

YOUNG: Well, could you distinguish in the county between the people that supported Humphrey as opposed to the people that supported Kennedy? Did there seem to be any sectional or class or religious distinction between the two groups?

STOUT: No, I would not say there was any distinction at all. There were Catholics who were for Humphrey here -- not many but a few -- and there were Protestants, of course, who were for Kennedy. And so I can't see that.... The only one thing there ever was.... Now, the labor unions at first were a little bit cagey on Jack Kennedy because of his brother Bobby's connection with the Senate committee, but in the end the labor unions all endorsed him. No, I don't believe they did, either; I don't believe they endorsed anyone, because Humphrey had a terrific labor record, too. I think they just stayed out of it. But I think most of their members voted for Jack Kennedy, as I say, more or less from the feeling.... Now, Senator Humphrey, himself, was only here one time, and he didn't get around the county as Jack did, nor around the city. But his family were here quite a bit.

YOUNG: The Kennedy family you mean?

STOUT: No, I mean the Humphrey family. Now, the Kennedy family: one of his cousins was here from up in Massachusetts, a young lady. She was here on the Sunday that Jack was supposed to be here, but that was the Sunday he didn't show up on account of weather. Couldn't get

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the airplane in here. Robert and Ted, they were here.

YOUNG: Mr. Stout, you indicated you feel that personality and organization helped Kennedy as opposed to Humphrey. You've also indicated that in terms of organized labor, both men had similar records. So there seems to be very little difference. Were there any policy differences between two candidates that you could discern, differences of position or similarities of position with respect to Humphrey and Kennedy?

STOUT: Well, if there was, I don't recall that there was any difference.

YOUNG: Well, did Senator Kennedy make any particular appeal to this area of the state in his campaigning? Did he pitch any of his program in the direction of this county or this city? Or was his campaigning of the general nature that he did all over the state?

STOUT: Oh, of a general nature; he didn't single this community out for any special favors or anything like that, if he was elected president. It just fit in the state pattern, nothing particular.

YOUNG: In 1960 would Clarksburg been considered a depressed area?

STOUT: I'd say we were, yes.

YOUNG: What would be the items that citizens of this county as of 1960 would be most interested in?

STOUT: Now, we were not a depressed area like an all-mining community, because we are diversified here, in glass -- besides coal -- and other manufacturing. We would not be in the same category as Logan, perhaps, or Welch, where their economy is based entirely on coal. But our problem about 1960 was the importation of glass, flat glass, which was keeping our plants.... Their backs to the wall, they were fighting for existence. That seems to be alleviated some now. The plants are going pretty good. Then one of the plants he visited was -- and they don't allow people over there very often either, but they gave him access to the plant -- the Hazel-Atlas Division of the Continental Can Company. They make tumblers and all sorts of glassware, not flat glass though. And I believe they were in a little trouble at that time over importation. I can't recall if he made any statements that he would do anything about the tariff or anything, but he did become cognizant of the fact that there was a

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problem, you know.

YOUNG: That there was a glass industry in...

STOUT: You're darn right; he knew that.

YOUNG: Was Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. in this area?

STOUT: Yes, he was. He came in several times. As I say, he represented the Kennedys down here at the Masonic Temple, one night when we had a big dinner. The

county executive committee had this dinner. We had Lyndon Johnson who made the main speech, and Hubert Humphrey was here, and Franklin Roosevelt represented Jack.

YOUNG: Well, was there any feeling during the primary that a vote for Senator Humphrey in the final analysis might really be a vote for Senator Johnson, and that Kennedy perhaps got some votes in the primary because of this?

STOUT: I don't think so.

YOUNG: This was not a major factor in the campaign?

STOUT: The only time that Johnson was in the state was during the primary, and he made it very emphatic that he was not coming into West Virginia to campaign for President or get mixed up in any primary race. It was just that one time that he came down here to Clarksburg, to the Masonic Temple. That was on Saturday night before the primary on Tuesday. And he went right on out that evening; he didn't stay.

YOUNG: Well, do you have any anecdotes about President Kennedy, any stories about his visit here that might be of interest, any special events that took place, that you would want to add before we go on to discuss the general election?

STOUT: There probably were some things that developed, but I'm getting a little senile now, and I can't recall them.

YOUNG: Well, in the primary itself, from everything you've said, I would gather that the Democratic party in this county wasn't particularly split. In other words there was not a vicious battle within the party.

STOUT: There was none whatsoever.

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YOUNG: Well, after the convention did the Humphrey faction and the Kennedy faction bury the hatchet and work for the good of the ticket?

STOUT: Oh, sure they did. There wasn't any viciousness between the two. I mean there wasn't any name calling or anything between them; they were all just trying to win the election, but in a friendly way.

YOUNG: Since you've already indicated that religion in this area seemed to be non-existent as an issue, then I suppose the answer to the next question can be anticipated: Did religion become an issue at all in the general election in the fall, then, in November?

STOUT: Well, as the county chairman, I had charge of the campaign then, the active campaign for Kennedy, and if there was, I don't recall. I did make several speeches about it around in some churches here and, one in particular at the Methodist temple that I told you about, where they had me up against an A-number-one speaker, a young man who had gone to Princeton at the same time Jack had gone there (if you recall, he was a freshman at Princeton and he transferred to Harvard later. And he knew him.) But even there in there in these Protestant churches there wasn't anything said about it, I mean particularly that he shouldn't be elected because he was a Catholic. So I don't think that his religion had anything to do with it.

YOUNG: Well, what was the subject of this debate in the Methodist church?

STOUT: Well, that was just... I don't know. They just wanted to know about Jack, about his stand on religion. And so I just told them that he was a Catholic, that he was born and raised that way, and the Catholic church was his church just like the Methodist church was these people's church. And that I happen to be a Baptist. I did say this, that if there was a church problem in this country about separation of church and state, and I thought that a Catholic would be a better president to understand this problem than a Protestant would be, see? And, really, as it turned out, that was true.

YOUNG: Well, why did you feel this way?

STOUT: Well, I thought that he felt very strongly about separation of church and state. And since he was a Catholic, he could stand on his own two feet and slug it out. I don't know that there was a problem, but I

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was being constantly impressed by the newspapers that there was this problem. And I thought that perhaps a Protestant wouldn't be able to stand up there and slug it out that way, because they would say you had a personal interest in it, you know?

YOUNG: Do you remember the name of the young man you said was running for prosecutor who was speaking against you?

STOUT: Oh, it was Don Wilson [Donald R. Wilson], that's who it was. He had been national commander of the American Legion.

YOUNG: Well, what was his position on the issue of religion?

STOUT: Oh, he didn't say too much about it, really. The fact is that the debate down there really proved a dud as far as religion is concerned.

YOUNG: The debate that really wasn't a debate.

STOUT: But he could outspoke me, you know, and did.

YOUNG: Did he feel that there might be some danger in having a Catholic president?

STOUT: No, I wouldn't say so.

YOUNG: Did you use in this county very many volunteers in your work, either in the primary or in the general election?

STOUT: Well, in the primary we had dozens of them, and then in the general election I was completely swamped with them. I had so many I didn't know what to do with them.

YOUNG: Did you find that these volunteers were frequently people who hadn't been active in politics before?

STOUT: Yes, surely.

YOUNG: Did you find at the same time, then, that they represented Catholic groups or Protestant groups?

STOUT: It didn't make any difference; they didn't represent any particular group.

YOUNG: It seemed to be again a pretty broad sampling of the

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population.

STOUT: Surely.

YOUNG: Let's move on then, Mr. Stout, if we can, to the New Frontier and Kennedy policies in the White House. You may remember that in the congressional election of 1962, it was charged that President Kennedy had made a great many promises to West Virginia, but hadn't kept them. How do you feel people in Harrison County and Clarksburg reacted to the President's policies with respect to West Virginia?

STOUT: Well, I don't know that he hadn't kept them. After all, we are getting the Interstate 79, which is coming right down by Clarksburg and goes on south. It hadn't been built in Jack Kennedy's time, of course, but it was instigated through him and he is the one that made the decision that that road should come down through West Virginia. I can't see that he made any promises to West Virginia that he hadn't

fulfilled up to the time that he passed away. He was over there carrying right on. West Virginia has benefited tremendously, I think, from the Kennedy administration.

YOUNG: Other than the interstate highway program, can you mention some other things that you think West Virginians were pleased with? I would mention something like the Peace Corps, although this, of course, was a national program.

STOUT: The Peace Corps: that's a little larger than Clarksburg, West Virginia. I don't know of anyone from here that's a member of the Peace Corps or has any interest in it. We're a little town down here in West Virginia, and we don't know too much about the broader things. The Peace Corps: I don't remember that that was a promise in the election; perhaps it was but I don't recall.

YOUNG: We might go to something else. If you were to summarize the significance of all the national attention that was focused on West Virginia through the Kennedy primary, could you make any broad generalizations as to the effects on West Virginia of suddenly being the center of the stage, and having all this attention called to the state in both -- well, more so in the primary, of course, and then in the fall election.

STOUT: Well, perhaps I don't recall that Jack said this -- but perhaps he did -- that West Virginia had made him President. Now, I heard it from the Republicans at

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this past convention that they've just had. I think Rockefeller [John Davison Rockefeller, IV] used it when he was down here making speeches. After all, Jack Kennedy came in here an underdog, more or less, just starting, and West Virginia had made him president; and it was his hope and dream that West Virginia would make himself, Rockefeller, president. So, West Virginia maybe assumed more of a limelight than they actually deserved, I don't know -- since we're a small state and had a small number of votes. But we did have the enthusiasm anyway. But I believe that here in the first place, we were not what I'd say the really depressed areas that he found in other places in West Virginia.

When he decided to do something for West Virginia, I don't believe that he had particularly Clarksburg, West Virginia in mind, because we were staggering along here fairly well. I think that what he had in mind -- he developed this thought while he was here -- was that he had to do something about retraining the people for other jobs -- the coal miners. And that he had to put more defense contracts in West Virginia. He had to help us build our road with his federal program, which he did. And probably, as I said, more defense contracts should come in here. And there have been plenty more. I believe in these welfare programs. I think this has suited the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare that we are taking better care of our people than we did, that is, the ones who are indigent or who have not been retrained or can't get jobs. And the surplus commodity program that they have in this state, the food stamp program in southern West Virginia.

I think all those things came to his mind when he was campaigning in here. In other words, he was brought face to face probably with a West Virginia factor that he didn't realize existed, until he got in this state. And he decided to do something about it. Of course, I don't recall too many of the things that he has done. I mean I can't tell you right offhand; a really professional politician would have all these things at his fingertips. But he really did so much for this state, and we're coming out of our doldrums.

YOUNG: Did you notice any reaction in Clarksburg or Harrison County at the time of the Kennedy medical program, which you may remember was defeated, I believe, in the Senate. Was there much feeling here for the medical program or against it?

STOUT: Well, the doctors, the Harrison County Medical Association here, carried on a terrific campaign here against it. They had meetings at the courthouse, they really worked the people up about it. But even so, with all their work, I think if it had been put to a vote

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of the people, his Medicare bill would have passed right here in this county. He would have gotten a clear majority. But they carried on a pretty hefty campaign against it here.

YOUNG: Did anybody carry on a campaign for President Kennedy's program? Was there any opposition for him against the doctors?

STOUT: No.

YOUNG: But the people would just listen to the doctors, then made up their minds that they would have voted the other way, you think?

STOUT: Well, only through the news media, maybe; that would have been all the information they had for the bill.

YOUNG: There was no active campaign for it on the part of any group. Well, during the Kennedy primary, of course, the national press came into the state, the reporters from the big urban newspapers. Did Clarksburg share in any of this publicity? Were any of the newspapermen here that you remember?

STOUT: If I recall now -- I might be wrong -- we had Bill Lawrence [William H. Lawrence] of the New York Times; he spent a lot of time here. I think James Reston was in here once or twice. Herb Kaplow [Herbert Kaplow] was here from NBC. The day that Jack Kennedy was here and spent the day here, there must have been forty pretty big time operators from the eastern press. I would say the general press of the United States, from Chicago and all over, NBC and CBS people, were here, and they

were in and out of this town all the time. And the night Johnson was here, was the night the U-2 was shot down in Russia. There must have been forty or fifty newspapermen in here. They were here because they wanted to find out what Johnson's idea was about this U-2, see, because he was in close touch with the White House on it. But they were also here to try to find out what Jack Kennedy was going to do in the primary, which was three days away. Yes, we had the press and radio here all the time; this hotel was full.

YOUNG: Well, what was your reaction and what was the reaction of your friends and neighbors to the way the national press portrayed West Virginia in the Kennedy primary?

STOUT: All right. You mean did they discuss our poverty or anything? No, they didn't. They discussed the presidential campaign. And our feeling -- that's it. Like the day Johnson was here -- I don't want to mention this

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too many times, but it fits in this program -- was Band Festival Day here. So we had about forty or fifty bands here in town, and they were marching around. A newspaperman from the *Baltimore Sun* said, "What's all these bands doing around here? Are they here for Johnson?" I said, "Oh, no, they don't even know Johnson's here." I said, "Nobody in West Virginia is working now, so we don't have anything to do. So we just have bands march around just to entertain us, to make us more cheerful in our idleness."

YOUNG: Well, if you picked up any hint of disappointment in the Kennedy years in the White House, did you find that West Virginians felt in any area that the President perhaps should have done more? Was there any feeling that the New Frontier was not quite satisfactory in West Virginia?

STOUT: Well, I don't know about in West Virginia, but there wasn't any feeling about that here in Harrison County. You know the day that Kennedy was assassinated -- and I believe they got a congressional citation for this -- over here in front of the courthouse, the National Guard started a vigil. (I'm sorry, I have a picture over home, but I don't have one here. Perhaps Ed Seagers of the National Guard can tell you about it.) They put a big picture of Kennedy out there right in the middle of the front entrance to the courthouse. They draped it in black, and then they stood guard there, the National Guard, with a sentry all the time for the next forty-eight hours, until he was buried. Or maybe longer than that, anyway until he was laid to rest in Arlington. The flowers kept piling in there, people sending flowers, until they practically had that courthouse yard full of flowers, while Kennedy was lying in state. It was a first. I don't know whether it was the only one in the United States that did that or not, but it was done right here. It was quite a sentimental gesture, you know. People came in here by the hundreds to see that. The courthouse yard was practically full of flowers. People go down -- wreaths, you know. And then they had this big

picture of Jack Kennedy there in the middle, draped. And sentries -- they stood there four hours at a time, until he was laid to rest.

YOUNG: How would you explain this rather unusual outpouring of emotion?

STOUT: Well, it was just the people who loved Jack Kennedy here, I would say.

YOUNG: And the fact that someone said, "At last we have a West Virginian in the White House."

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STOUT: I don't recall that that was said, but that was true.

YOUNG: At least the personal contact with the man as he'd been here....

STOUT: You know this group from the National Guard had just come back from a year's active service. They didn't go overseas. They were pulled out of here and sent to Camp Meade down there in Washington, and spent a year down there on active duty. You know, that's when they built the Berlin Wall.

YOUNG: Yes, the President at that time activated several National Guard groups.

STOUT: This was one of the groups here.

YOUNG: Mr. Stout, before we bring this interview to a close, do you have any more comments on the mechanics of the election and the problem that perhaps religion did bring into the campaign?

STOUT: One more observation. I presume they had this thing probably in the primary, but I had it in the general election: the enthusiasm of the Catholic population here in Harrison County for Jack Kennedy. Now, I realize that the Catholics were not the majority here, and they couldn't elect anyone if the Protestants are started to go the other way. Therefore, what I tried to do was to de-emphasize this. And they had terrific enthusiasm, the Catholics did, for Jack. I was afraid they might have too much enthusiasm. So while I wanted them all to be for him, I did not want to take over or to put themselves too much in the front. Therefore, what I tried to do was de-emphasize religion and build up some enthusiasm among the Protestants. We had no religious issues to begin with, and there was no use to get one started by just a group taking over, you know, and running things. Therefore I de-emphasized it and gave them -- they all had their jobs to do and they did a tremendous job. The Catholics did, but also we had the Protestants mixed up in this thing, too, and they did a good job. Therefore, we had no trouble at all.

YOUNG: Well, I know these aren't figures that everybody keeps right on the top of his

head or at the tip of his tongue, but what is the percentage of Catholic population in this county? Could you make any generally rough estimate, at least?

STOUT: Well, this is a rough guess, and I might be off as much as 20 percent: I think about 40 percent.

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YOUNG: It would be that high?

STOUT: Well, that's a pretty high figure.

YOUNG: What is the national origin of the group; do they come from any particular part of

STOUT: They are Italians from Italy, and we have a lot of Belgians here in the glass industry; and probably we have a lot of Polish people here, too; they came here to the steel mills and coal mines -- originally, I mean -- not many now, particularly. And Irish: they built the railroad in here.

YOUNG: If we assume that your figure of 40 percent -- given a few points one way or the other -- is correct, what percentage of that percent would normally be registered Republicans; how does it break in terms of the major parties?

STOUT: Well now, not all Catholics are Democrats in this county; I would say the majority of them are. I'm taking the figure 40 percent; say, well, 30 percent would be Democrats.

YOUNG: You mean of that 40?

STOUT: Oh, no. Of that 40, 90 percent.

YOUNG: Ninety percent would be, normally. Did you find, then, Republican Catholics giving a great deal of support to.... Do you know of any incidents where Republican Catholics supported President Kennedy?

STOUT: Well, a few of them did, but not too many, now. You know, the real rich Catholics, I don't believe in this state or any place else supported KENNEDY particularly because it was his religion. They had their pocketbooks, and so forth, that they thought were being jeopardized. That's what I understand.

YOUNG: We might put this in the record: In terms of Harrison County, your own county, how are the registration figures generally -- percentage Republicans

and the percent Democrats?

STOUT: Well, this is it roughly: thirty thousand Democrats and sixteen thousand Republicans.

YOUNG: So that you begin with an almost two-to-one registration majority. Normally, then, most of the

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county officials, and so on, are Democrats?

STOUT: They are all Democrats with the exception of the circuit judge over here. And we aren't so biased here that we don't go along, you know. And the bar association recommended Judge Pryor [Ralph E. Pryor] who is a very fine fellow, to be reelected last time, and of course, our criminal judge is a Democrat. So that race was won before it even started; neither one had any opposition.

YOUNG: Mr. Stout, in coming to the end of our discussion of the Kennedy years in West Virginia, have you any broad generalizations about the importance or the impact of the Kennedy excursion into West Virginia politics, or the effect of the primary on the state as a whole?

STOUT: Well, I think that Jack Kennedy coming into West Virginia has been very good for this state. It gave us national prominence that we never had before. And people became aware of West Virginia because it was mentioned so often during the campaign, both the primary and the general. I would say that it's been a good thing for the state, and his program has been good for the state. We certainly hadn't been progressing any under our other great president, Eisenhower; we remained pretty stagnant.

YOUNG: Well, did you notice in the general election that state or county official were still a little wary of being associated with President Kennedy in the general election in November 1960? Was there any reluctance to identify with the national ticket because it might possibly....

STOUT: Not to my knowledge. They were all very enthusiastic.

YOUNG: You were not aware, at least, of any reluctance on their part.

STOUT: Oh, no.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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