

**Paul Ringler Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 12/09/1965**  
**Administrative Information**

**Creator:** Paul Ringler

**Interviewer:** Charles T. Morrissey

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**Biographical Note**

Paul Ringler (1907-1990) was a journalist and editor for the *Milwaukee Journal* from 1927 to 1972. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy's 1960 primary campaign in Wisconsin and the news coverage of the campaign, among other topics.

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Paul Ringler– JFK #1  
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Oral History Interview

with

Mr. Paul Ringler

December 9, 1965  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Why don't we start simply by my asking you when you first anticipated a Kennedy-Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] campaign in Wisconsin?

RINGLER: I think that we sensed that Senator Kennedy would probably make a race in Wisconsin against Senator Humphrey, or whoever decided to enter the Democratic primary, in 1957 or 1958, because some of the Wisconsin Democrats coming into our office said that they had received hints from people around Senator Kennedy, members of his staff and others, that he was thinking very much of running for the presidency, and that if he did Wisconsin was a place where he would kick it off.

MORRISSEY: Despite Hubert Humphrey's being a neighbor?

RINGLER: I think that very much troubled the Kennedy enthusiasts in the state. And I know that it troubled Senator Kennedy because, I believe it was in 1959 in the winter, that I saw him in his office in Washington. And he asked a great many questions about Wisconsin politics, about the makeup of the people in Wisconsin, and its political background. And at that time he said, as I remember, that he was very much interested in coming into Wisconsin: he hoped that he wouldn't have to oppose Senator Humphrey, but that he had been told by people in Wisconsin that he could beat Senator Humphrey in a primary contest. There was some talk, I believe, at that time of a poll that he had taken, but I do not remember the details.

MORRISSEY: Go ahead.

RINGLER: I presume you are interested in how I came to know Senator Kennedy.

MORRISSEY: Very much so.

RINGLER: Another one of the Journal [Milwaukee Journal] editorial editors and myself were covering the 1956 Democratic convention in Chicago, the one at which Senator Kennedy made a try for the vice presidency and was narrowly edged out by Senator Kefauver [C. Estes Kefauver]. And we of course were much impressed by the speeches that Senator Kennedy made both before and after the vice presidential contest and decided that we would meet him. That really is all there is to it. We forced our way up to the crowd gathered around him following the decision and introduced ourselves. As I remember, he asked us a question or so about some of his friends in Wisconsin, and that was that. Senator Kennedy then came into Wisconsin in 1959, as I remember it--no, it was earlier than that, it was in 1958. And at the Milwaukee Journal we have a tradition of inviting distinguished visitors to meet with the editorial board and discuss affairs of state. And we arranged to have Senator Kennedy visit us and he did. We had a very interesting forty-five minute off-the-record conference, at which I'm sure matters of international and national importance were discussed. But unfortunately I cannot remember any of them at this time, or any earth-shaking statement by the senator or certainly by the editorial writers.

I believe I visited Senator Kennedy in his office in Washington at least twice. And both times were very pleasant and informative visits. He was very frank in discussing both political and international and congressional affairs in which he was interested. And certainly there was some rapport established between us because, when he came to Milwaukee in August of 1959 to address the National District Attorneys Association, and it was proposed that he appear on a television question program on station TV, he insisted that I be one of the questioners. This program won the senator some national attention because of one question involving the use of nuclear weapons in connection with the Berlin situation, which if I remember correctly, was some sort of crisis point again at that time. And the senator said something to the effect that Berlin was so important to us that, if necessary, we should involve ourselves in a nuclear war to save Berlin for the West.

The next time that I'm quite sure that I saw Senator Kennedy was on January 21, 1960, when he came to Milwaukee to make the announcement that he would enter the Wisconsin primary that year. He appeared with Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] at the Pfister Hotel.

As I remember, there was nothing remarkable about his statement. He said that he would come into the state to discuss the issues and stress the importance of Wisconsin and of the Wisconsin primary in electing a president. As I remember, he hinted at least that if Senator Humphrey entered the contest that he, Senator Kennedy, should be considered an underdog.

MORRISSEY: Did he emphasize that?

RINGLER: No, it was not strong. I have not gone back to look up the clippings, but I think he made the point, as he had done before in his conversation in Washington, that Senator Humphrey had obvious advantages. He, of course came from a state next to Wisconsin; he had devoted a great deal of attention to Wisconsin problems, probably because Wisconsin had no Democratic senator; he was the beloved of much of the Wisconsin Democratic organization because he had the reputation of never turning down any of their invitations of coming to speak; he was a regular visitor to communities along the western part of Wisconsin; and of course his background as a member of and leader of the Farmer-Labor [Democratic-Farmer-Labor] party in Minnesota made him akin philosophically to many of the old Wisconsin progressives of the La Follette [Robert M. La Follette] persuasion.

I suppose we go now to Senator Kennedy's actual campaign in Wisconsin. This, from my personal point of view, was the most exciting primary campaign that we have ever had, and, as you know, we have had some good ones in Wisconsin. Dewey [Thomas E. Dewey] and Wilkie [Wendell Wilkie] paced off here, and after his defeat in 1944 Wilkie withdrew from the race. Earl Warren, then governor of California, now chief justice, came into the state to campaign against Senator Taft [Robert A. Taft]. And, incidentally, General MacArthur [Douglas MacArthur] and Senator Kefauver in 1956--'52 and '56--practically lived in Wisconsin. So, this was the competition that Senator Kennedy and Senator Humphrey had to face in the matter of conducting a stimulating and exciting campaign. And I think it's generally agreed that they outdid all of the others. I spent part of three days campaigning with Senator Kennedy, and later went out to Madison and attended one of the evening social affairs and also attended a small party that Governor Nelson [Gaylord A. Nelson] and Mrs. Nelson [Carrie Dotson Nelson] held at the executive mansion for Senator and Mrs. Kennedy. [Interruption]

MORRISSEY: I simply was going to say at this point we'll insert the column that you wrote after watching Kennedy campaign and also we'll insert into the transcript the column you wrote after watching Senator Humphrey campaign.

RINGLER: You did that? This got pretty good coverage. The Post Dispatch [St. Louis Post-Dispatch] and several other papers picked them both out. As the campaign drew to a

close, the feelings that I had had before the contest actually started were strengthened. I had a feeling at the start that Senator Kennedy would have a very serious problem in Wisconsin. This was based not only on the fact that Senator Humphrey was his opponent, but that Wisconsin is a Midwestern, somewhat provincial state and that Senator Kennedy would, and did appear as a rather strange New Englander with a strange accent, strange mannerisms. And of course there was the religious matter. This historically has been a strong Protestant state and also a strong Republican state. However it was evident, on this campaign trip and in developments during the campaign and polls that were taken by various politicians and political groups, that Senator Kennedy was making real strides in the state.

I suppose that you learned that as the campaign came to a close visiting correspondents began to send out stories that this might be a tremendous victory for Senator Kennedy. It's interesting at this point to note that the traditional pattern in the primary campaigns in Wisconsin has been for visiting correspondents from Washington, New York, and elsewhere to start out in Madison and then come to Milwaukee. And oftentimes the political atmosphere and attitudes are a great deal different in these two communities. These correspondents coming from Madison would tell us, in Milwaukee, about how everyone in Madison was saying that Senator Kennedy was going to win easily and he would probably sweep all ten districts. We did our best to dampen this point of view because it just didn't fit into what we were hearing from around the state or from what we thought we knew of the background of Wisconsin.

We had the feeling that we had the approval of the Kennedy organization people in doing our best to dampen this feeling. However as the election approached I think the feeling around the country was that Senator Kennedy was on his way to a smashing victory in Wisconsin. This, of course, didn't happen. And I'm sure that from talking to the politicians you have more knowledge as to why it didn't happen than I can give you here. My own feeling--and I think my associates here--is that the basics of the state political history still prevailed; that the western part of the state, because of its proximity to Minnesota and Senator Humphrey, and its Republican background and its religious background, just didn't cotton to Senator Kennedy. The eastern, more populous urban part of the state, did. And of course it was these urban areas that provided his large popular majority.

The Wisconsin primary has often been called a spoiler. And of course it was again a spoiler in this case. It spoiled Wilkie's career and it has hurt several others. In this case there was no winner. Senator Kennedy scored a victory. But it wasn't what he wanted, of course--what he had hoped for. Senator Humphrey didn't win, but he didn't lose. So he went on to the disaster in West Virginia. And

Richard Nixon didn't win.

Now, of course, I suppose the question comes up as to what happened in the following November. The primary and the general election can never be confused in this state because the factors are entirely different. The vote was, I believe, three or four hundred thousand smaller in the primary than in the general election. I suppose in the general election Wisconsin returned to its historical Republicanism. Many of the factors that had helped Senator Kennedy in the spring didn't help him in the fall. For one thing, I'm sure many of the Republicans who had come over to vote for Senator Kennedy, for reasons sufficient unto themselves, went back into their own ballot and voted for Nixon.

MORRISSEY: One point is unclear to me. I had had the impression that the Kennedy people were unhappy with the predictions that Kennedy would sweep the state in the primary; that they purposely wanted to understate their chances as sort of a protection of the rear in case they didn't get as many votes as they did. Did you have the impression that they were not worried about these rash predictions, that Kennedy might carry ten out of ten congressional districts?

RINGLER: No, I agree with you. I had the feeling that they were very worried about it. Now, not being privy, of course, to their purposes here, or to what their real thinking was, or if they were trying to understate or not, I suspect that because of their dependence upon polls, which carried on in later years, that they had a much better feeling of this than we in the newspaper business who operate something by guess and by gosh, and I suspect that they knew that this was going to happen.

MORRISSEY: Did any of these polls incidentally happen to find their way into your office?

RINGLER: No, not in detail only in generalities. I've heard this and I offer it only as gossip; that the Kennedy people felt that the stories about the great Kennedy sweep--surge--was being put out by friends of Humphrey who also knew what was probably in the wind, but did want to give the impression that this was going to be a more sweeping Kennedy victory, so that when the facts did develop, it would look all the more crushing. And the stories would go out that Senator Kennedy had taken a bad beating in Wisconsin.

MORRISSEY: I have also heard that the Kennedy people were worried about what they claimed to be a tendency on the part of many newspaper reporters to emphasize, for example, the number of Catholics serving on a committee in a certain community that welcomed

Senator Kennedy as a campaigner. As a newspaper man, I imagine you were exposed to this sort of discussion.

RINGLER: Well, this is true. I know that there was great unhappiness in the Kennedy camp. I'm not sure that it was as strong or felt as much prior to election day as it was afterwards.

As you remember, Senator Kennedy made a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors later in April in Washington, in which he spoke very critically of this phase of the Wisconsin campaign. Personally, looking back on it, I admit to a divided attitude toward it. I think that perhaps, in some instances, there was too much emphasis on religion, on Senator Kennedy's Catholicism. I think that perhaps there were some reporters who were perhaps overemphasizing this phase of the campaign.

I have no way of knowing why this should be. I suppose that one motivating factor would be that this was a way of getting a story that would attract attention. The old controversial approach of a newspaper reporter. I saw several stories in the state press that I think the Kennedy people had every reason to be critical of. And I think there was one, or two perhaps, in the Milwaukee Journal that deserved their criticism.

There is however another side of the coin. On this three-day tour that I made with Senator Kennedy, we started in Madison, site of the state university, site of the state capitol, where I'm sure there's no particular religious prejudice of any kind. We proceeded up the central part of the state in communities that are heavily Catholic, some that are heavily Protestant. One of the ways I like to operate when I go out with political candidates is getting out in the crowd and asking people what they're thinking about and what they're talking about. It was not until we reached the northern part of the state, around Wausau and Merrill and moved west of there, that you began to get questions about the senator's religion. People would say, "I'm a Protestant, and I wouldn't think of voting for a Catholic," and things like this. Now this was a factor in Wisconsin. And, of course, detailed studies made of precincts after the election, both Catholic and Protestant, showed a change in the political coloration which no one can prove was caused by religion, but which reason would cause you to think that it was.

Now, I don't think that anyone would contend that the newspapers could have overlooked this issue in the campaign--overemphasized at times, perhaps yes. But it wouldn't have been honest journalism, realistic journalism, to have ignored this. And I think you could make an argument--perhaps no one in the Kennedy camp would--but that the things that they learned in Wisconsin about this feeling actually came and brought them in time to a realization that this subject must be

faced squarely and frankly, and ended in the Houston speech to the ministers, the [Greater Houston] Ministerial Association, which to my way of thinking practically buried the issue as far as that campaign was concerned.

MORRISSEY: Did you have a feeling as a newspaper man that the Kennedys were running two campaigns really in Wisconsin: one for the Milwaukee metropolitan area and another for the outstate area?

RINGLER: No, frankly I never sensed this. It could well be, but watching it through the eyes of our reporters I really didn't have a feeling of this. Yet perhaps it's logical. One complaint I had early in the campaign, and several of us voiced this to Senator Kennedy in Wausau, was that we weren't getting enough serious discussion of issues, that we were getting a glamour-type campaign. Senator Kennedy was indeed a glamorous figure in Wisconsin, but we weren't getting any bread-and-butter-issue discussion. I think that this may have had some little effect upon helping the senator in the succeeding weeks to talk about serious things: nuclear testing and nuclear control, and labor problems, farm problems.

MORRISSEY: Well, of course, on farm problems his voting record was at a distinct disadvantage to his opponent, and on labor matters some people were suspicious because of his service on the Senate Labor Committee and the antiracketeering.

RINGLER: This is something that I guess I didn't mention back as one of his handicaps when he started out. I can't say that his farm voting record was emphasized much by the opposition. Perhaps it was. I didn't follow Senator Humphrey into the farming districts. I was with him in Kenosha and Racine and southeastern Wisconsin, the more or less urbanized part of our state. I do know that early in the campaign we were told by our labor reporters that labor was anti-Kennedy--organized labor--and that they were going to put some money into the campaign against him. I don't think that this developed to that extent. I think the Kennedys succeeded in somehow or other blunting the attack. And I know that in the end places like Kenosha and Racine and Milwaukee--heavy labor centers--that Senator Kennedy was doing very, very well and Senator Humphrey was the one who was disappointed in the kind of support that he was getting. The farm problem I'm not so well informed on. Of course he did not do well in heavily farming districts, by and large. But you don't know what factors entered into this, whether this was his voting record or not.

MORRISSEY: Before we started you were telling me about Senator Kennedy's fear that the [Milwaukee] Journal might endorse Senator Humphrey during that campaign. Could you tell that story now for the record?

RINGLER: During the 1959 visit with Senator Kennedy in his office in Washington, in which he showed to me a remarkable knowledge of Wisconsin political history and facts, he asked what the Milwaukee Journal attitude would be in a primary campaign in which he was opposed to--as I remember he named Senator Humphrey or Senator Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], or possibly even a favorite son. Although he, as I remember, said that if there was a favorite son he would not come into the state. And I told him that it was the Milwaukee Journal's practice not to enter primary campaigns because these were largely, we believed, intraparty matters and that should be settled usually by the decision of the voters and the party. However, if there were overriding reasons we would enter, and had in the past in a few cases. But that at the moment from my own personal point of view I couldn't see any possibility of taking part in a campaign in which Senator Kennedy was entered in Wisconsin.

This apparently continued to bother the senator despite the fact that we had no time in the early part of the campaign to voice any preference for either Senator Kennedy or Senator Humphrey; in fact, said kind things about both of them when they announced, and commented only upon the mechanics of the campaign and some of the humorous developments.

One morning I received a phone call from the senator in Washington who said that he had been told by Charlie [Charles L.] Bartlett, who was a Washington correspondent, I believe at the time, of this Chattanooga paper--that he had been informed that the Milwaukee Journal was shortly going to endorse Senator Humphrey. Senator Kennedy wanted to know if this was true and I told him that it was not, to my knowledge. He wondered if perhaps the decision had been made somewhere else in the organization, and I said that I would check that for him. I did, and was assured that no such decision had been made.

The subject came up again the weekend before the primary. Friday afternoon I received a call from Pierre Salinger asking if Senator Kennedy could see me at the Journal office Saturday morning. Saturday isn't a work day for most of us here at the Journal, but I assured him that we would be there to talk to the senator. I asked what this business might be, and Salinger said he couldn't tell me at the moment.

The next morning several of us: John Reddin, Jack Thompson, [John Thompson], and Arville Schaleben, the then assistant managing editor of the Journal, met Senator Kennedy in my office. After the usual pleasantries, Senator Kennedy, who was obviously quite perturbed, said that he had been told that the Journal would endorse Senator Humphrey in the Sunday paper, the next day's paper. This came as more than a shock to all of us because the editorial columns of the Sunday paper were already in print, and there was no endorsement of anyone. In fact, there was no comment on the election, as I remember it.

We reassured Senator Kennedy on this point, and we then asked him where this information had come from. He said that he had been given the information by a member of the Journal staff. And pursuing this point we were told that Kenneth Fry, one of the Journal political reporters who had been assigned to the primary campaign had, while riding with the senator in the senator's car the previous day, told him that the Journal would endorse Senator Humphrey. Senator Kennedy obviously was happy that this had all turned out as it had, thanked us for the information and went on his campaigning way.

We next saw him Tuesday night, primary election night, when with his brother, Robert [Robert F. Kennedy], and other members of his staff, they came to the Journal building to get the final election returns. I believe Senator Kennedy appeared on national television that night. I believe they were accompanied by Mrs. Kennedy, but I'm not sure. We had the feeling that they were not too happy about the results of the primary election.

MORRISSEY: Do you have any recollections of additional face-to-face meetings with John Kennedy?

RINGLER: I have several. I think Senator Kennedy was probably one of the most charming and delightful politicians that I have ever known. I suppose having the newspaper background that he did, he always seemed understanding of the problems of the newspaper man. He always made an effort on these campaign trips and on other occasions to discuss passing newspaper problems, or passing things that were of particular interest to newspaper men. He always seemed to find time for personal conversation. He was, to me at least, and I've been told to others, very courteous in this respect.

I remember having decided that I had to leave this particular tour with the campaign party at Wausau late in the day. I was catching a plane out, probably eight o'clock at night. The senator had retired to his room up in the hotel, and apparently someone on the staff, Kenny O'Donnell [P. Kenneth O'Donnell] or Chuck Roche [Charles] told him that I had to leave the party. And suddenly as I was practically walking out of the door, someone called out and I stopped, and here he was thanking me for accompanying him on the trip, and said he hoped I'd see him again and he'd see me again, and wished me a pleasant trip back to Milwaukee.

I also noticed that after he had come to recognize your face, no matter how big the crowd was or how big the occasion, if he saw you he'd make a point of waving at you or calling you over, shaking your hand. And I remember my surprise after he had been nominated in Los Angeles and he moved from one room to another in the hotel. I forget just exactly what it was. And of course now he was surrounded by, it

seemed, thousands of people, it probably was a hundred or so, and John Reddin of the Journal and myself were standing off to the side in one of the hallways along the route, and somehow or other he saw us and insisted on forcing his way over and saying hello to us, which I thought was very nice.

There was one other thing I wanted to mention in this respect. I know a funny story, if you'll turn that thing off for a minute. [Interruption] Another interesting meeting with Senator Kennedy came following one at his Madison appearances at a party at the governor's mansion, the executive mansion--a very small, brief meeting that Governor and Mrs. Nelson held for the senator and his wife. I don't think it's any secret that at that particular time of history Senator Kennedy and his forces felt that Governor Nelson was not particularly friendly to the Kennedy move in Wisconsin, and that while Governor Nelson didn't take an active part or endorse either candidate, that his long ties with Senator Humphrey inclined him to feel sympathetically for Senator Humphrey. This was a very small party, as I remember. It was Governor and Mrs. Nelson, Ed Payley [Edwin R. Bayley], then Governor Nelson's executive secretary, and Mrs. Bayley [Monica Worsley Bayley], Carrol Kilpatrick of the Washington Star, two or three of us from the Journal. It was a rather stiff party in which there didn't seem to be much conversational rapport between Senator Kennedy and particularly Governor Nelson. The Kennedys left after forty-five minutes or an hour.

A personal thing of interest that night was a rather long conversation with Mrs. Kennedy. Attitudes in Wisconsin at the time towards Mrs. Kennedy were very mixed, among politicians as well as public. There were many who felt that she was much too stiff and formal and unfriendly. I can remember a comment that Mrs. Kennedy was losing a vote for every one that Senator Kennedy made. On the other hand there were obviously many people, many women, that liked Mrs. Kennedy very much and admired her character and her carriage and her clothes, and her whole demeanor. I always had a feeling that many women whose husbands are in politics probably feel just the way that Mrs. Kennedy seemed to feel about the whole political turmoil. But what I started to say was that Mrs. Kennedy didn't seem to be entering into any of the conversation. I moved my chair over next to her, and we began to talk about the University of Wisconsin and its humanities courses, its arts courses, some of the people on the faculty of national fame. I was fascinated by the fact that Mrs. Kennedy knew much more about what was going on at the University of Wisconsin in these fields than I did, and could comment on the work of John Steuart Curry, past artist in residence, and others of Madison and many fields. It was a very interesting experience, and I must say I was fully prepared for her enthusiastic and wonderful efforts in this field after she got to Washington and the White House.

MORRISSEY: Did you cover the Wisconsin delegation at the Los Angeles convention?

RINGLER: No, not directly. We sent quite a staff to the national convention, and I was actually watching the candidates more than covering the delegation.

MORRISSEY: I see. Go ahead.

RINGLER: I think Ira Kapenstein covered the delegation and perhaps Bill Bechtel [William R. Bechtel] who is now on Nelson's staff. I don't remember.

MORRISSEY: I know that.

RINGLER: Yes, yes. Well, as you know and are finding out, I'm sure, that the divisions that were created in the Wisconsin Democratic party in the 1960 primary are still very much with the party. The Kennedy-Humphrey divisions still exist even though Senator Kennedy is dead and Senator Humphrey is vice president.

MORRISSEY: Well, do you think that about covers it?

RINGLER: I would think so, unless you've thought of something.

MORRISSEY: I've been trying to think if there's anything I've omitted and undoubtedly after I've gone away I'll think of several things.

RINGLER: Why don't you turn it off and I'll. . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

*The Milwaukee Journal*

*Mar. 20, 1960*

## We Trail Along to Watch—2

*P.O. - Kenosha*  
The main building of the American Motors Corp. plant at Kenosha is nine blocks long. Hubert Horatio Humphrey bounces every foot of it and then some. He is in and out of the two moving lines of Ramblers (1,185 this day). He's dodging accessories bobbing overhead and fork trucks darting by. He's reaching up to decks and down to pits to shake hands.

The Minnesota senator hands out cards (with the Braves' 1960 schedule) urging a Humphrey vote at the Apr. 5 presidential delegate election. Occasionally he is heard to mutter: "This is wonderful." Whether it's the many hands he finds to shake or the magic of the assembly line no one asks.

Now it is night and Humphrey (blue coat, gray fedora) is stationed under the bright Woolworth sign at 57th st. and 6th av. in downtown Kenosha. Shoppers crowd by and Humphrey's outstretched hand misses but few of them. ("You have to shift your grip every time; even so, my little finger is a wreck.") This time, for the women, the card carries his wife Muriel's recipe for beef soup. ("It's a dandy; your husband will like it.")

Early morning, the sun is edging out of the Lake Michigan vapors. The Greyhound bus pulls up at the main gate of the strikebound J. I. Case Co. at Racine. Out pops Humphrey. Out pops Joe Glazer, troubadour of the labor movement, and his guitar. Glazer sings: "We're Fighting for a Contract, We Shall Not Be Moved." Humphrey and 39 pickets mumble along. At a breakfast of labor leaders at the Racine Labor center he mentions the Case strike and adds: "No candidate in either party has a better voting record in behalf of labor."

The bus stops in bright warm sunshine in Burlington. Humphrey is up and down the streets, in and out of the Echo Inn, the Coffee Cup, Tobin's and the Rexall drugstores. ("I never miss drugstores, I'm a druggist myself.") Then three blocks to the National Tea store. ("The butcher wants to meet me, butchers are important in politics, they talk to all the women.") In front of the soups, farmer Orville Ihrke of route 2 explains gravely that he came from South Dakota, knows "Andrine" and is all for Humphrey. "Andrine" is Humphrey's Aunt Andrine Grimes of Lily, S. D. ("It's amazing how many relatives and friends from South Dakota and Minnesota I meet in Wisconsin—last night an old friend of dad's was in the crowd.")

Now Delavan. As usual, the Humphrey campaign is running late. A brief stop is scheduled at the state school for the deaf. The children are at lunch. Humphrey insists on shaking hands with all 132. He quickly learns a few sign language symbols and uses them to his delight and that of the children. The senator's eyes are misty as he departs and, out in the yard, he warmly hugs the small boys who cluster around him.

The driver has fixed a reclining seat in the bus. "The senator won't spend five minutes there," chortles an aide. Humphrey doesn't. He's advising aides what to do at the next stop, or scolding about their wastefulness with literature and campaign buttons. He's announcing how next week's tour will be more efficient. ("There'll be an advance car and a trailing car.") He's talking with your wandering editorial writer about congressional progress, outlook for the Geneva disarmament conference and Nikita Khrushchev: ("We've got to get over the idea that he's just a vodka drinking fat boy.") He's musing out loud: "I love small towns; I'll bet I've campaigned in every small town in Minnesota." He's bantering or telling some anecdote.

Like the one about the pig sign in front of the Humphrey Brothers drugstore in Huron, S. D.: "We decided to remodel. The pig sign, advertising cholera serum, had been there since dad started the business. Brother and I said the pig was a disgrace and had to go. Dad said this would be a terrible mistake, the farmers wouldn't know how to find the store. We won out. The pig went. And so did some of our farm business. So the pig went back, big as life. Only now it's in neon lights."

Someone called Humphrey a human dynamo. It's a good description. He's first of the party up in the morning, last to bed at night, first out of the bus.

His speeches, chronically too long, have been trimmed for this campaign. He has eliminated (usually) the triple explanation, the multiple description, the "this suggests another subject." He hates prepared texts. His impromptu speeches have emotional and political bite. Still, he is at his best in smaller groups, where flamboyant oratory does not overwhelm the man's intensity and conviction.

His attack is the broadside variety. ("Nixon and company will give us a snow job that will make these Wisconsin blizzards look like tropical breezes.")

His platform humor is strictly midwest. ("Khrushchev treats us like Grandpa Buck used to treat his chilblains—first he put his foot in hot water, then cold water, then he did it over and over again.")

Hubert Humphrey is fundamentally a grandchild of prairie populism, a son of the great depression, an apostle of the New Deal. ("I'm an idealist, a progressive, a liberal.") By nature, by background, he is aiming much of his current campaign at workers, farmers and the many who consider themselves neglected or ill treated by society or Uncle Sam. (Said the old man in Jackett's bar at Delavan: "I've been here 42 years, never made enough to get out, wonder what Humphrey will do for me.") But the senior senator from Minnesota is also talking seriously and knowingly about foreign policy, disarmament, the missile gap, national growth and other major problems of our times.

With his opponent, Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts, he is responsibly conducting the preliminaries of the great dialog that will challenge the American people until they go to the polls in November to choose their leadership for the next four years.

"The eyes of the nation are upon you," these distinguished senators are telling the people of Wisconsin.

The truth is in their words.

## We Trail Along to Watch

These are dark winter days in central Wisconsin, the snow lies thick on the sleeping fields, the wind is raw and biting, and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, junior senator from Massachusetts, is campaigning hard for the presidency of the United States. We trailed along to watch him.

*Pal - U.S. - Pres Po*

In Columbus the pride of the Boston Kennedys ("he says some words kind of funny, doesn't he?") is dashing in and out of the bank, the barbershop and the Town Tap. In Portage, school is out and he is furiously giving autographs to excited children. In Antigo he is talking American government like a political science teacher to the high school assembly. At Merrill he is racing through factories and trying to shake hands at a plant gate.

Madison, Medford, Abbotsford, Wausau, Bloomer, Durand, Eau Claire . . . smiling, bareheaded, hand outstretched, there goes John Kennedy.

There are moments of deep satisfaction. Madison, Wausau, Merrill and Eau Claire provide big, enthusiastic crowds. At Portage, Dr. C. W. Henney, onetime Democratic congressman, introduces Kennedy as "the next president." At Merrill, Leonard F. Schmitt, long time Progressive, primary opponent of the late Senator McCarthy in 1952, announces for Kennedy. Walter B. Chilsen, influential Merrill editor, explains that he's Republican but hopes Democrats will vote for Kennedy. At Abbotsford a husky farmer says "I'm with you all the way" and friends nod agreement. At Medford a woman whispers "God bless you, senator."

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But occasionally the Kennedy smile fades. The crowd at the Columbus city hall is small. Some workers flooding out of the Weinbrenner shoe plant at Merrill sidestep the waiting figure (are they anti-Kennedy or only anxious to get home to lunch?). At the Medford Curling club, where the Badger state women's bonspiel is under way, the women show resentment at the political intrusion. As Kennedy moves westward toward Minnesota, Farmers' Union country, the "Bible belt" of Wisconsin, followers and newsmen hear more praise of his primary opponent, Senator Hubert Humphrey, and much more talk about Kennedy's Catholicism as a political issue.

There are light moments, too. A whiskered old man in Columbus is insisting he's "too young to vote." A teen age girl in the Portage drugstore gravely tells Kennedy, "We're the teen age delinquent crowd." An Abbotsford questioner expounds at length: Senator Kennedy must do something about the new water tower at Owen. A lady correspondent from Washington gets herself locked in the school kitchen at Abbotsford, and misses the convoy back to Wausau. Card players in a Columbus tavern tell the senator: "We said we wuz gonna go listen to yuh at the city hall when we got this game over, but I guess we're late, huh?"

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What is Kennedy saying, other than "I'm Jack Kennedy and I came here asking for your help"? He is commenting on current issues, as reported in the news columns . . . talking about the significance of the Apr. 5 primary . . . urging young people to concern themselves with government and politics. He says over and over that the country desperately needs leadership in "the decisive sixties when all the unsolved problems of the fifties must finally be faced."

He speaks with concentration, without notes or manuscripts. Sometimes the words tumble out too rapidly. He quotes Lincoln, Jefferson, Churchill and other historical figures, and he does it naturally. Rarely does he show emotion. Only at Abbotsford, questioned sharply about unemployment compensation, "chiselers" and "rocking chair workers," does he indignantly insist that there are "chiselers" among farmers and professional men as well as among workers, that most Americans are not of such stripe, and that compensation, social security and other welfare legislation are good and necessary.

He is a serious man on a serious mission. One joke in two days goes over big in Abbotsford: "Your greeting reminds me of what the Maine cow said to the farmer, 'Thanks for a warm hand on a cold morning.'"

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Reporters ask voters how it looks: Humphrey or Kennedy? And voters ask reporters. Certainly no one knows. There are indications that people are listening at last to the candidates. Republican leaders say their people will invade the Democratic primary. No one will know until the day after election, if then, who is helped or hurt by straying Republicans or by the religious issue.

There is current criticism of presiden-

tial primary elections and of the exhausting, grass roots campaigns they force upon busy, important men. The Journal has expressed doubts about this system. Nevertheless, it is an inspiring experience and a lesson in democracy to stand in the high school gym at Abbotsford (pop. 1,013) and hear the like of the senator from far-off Massachusetts—candidate for president—say in all earnestness to some 50 voters and 200 students:

"This isn't an exercise or a game. This is the lifeblood of the American way. This is a most important part of the system by which the American people pick their president."

Soon we shall spend a day or so watching Senator Humphrey, Senator Kennedy's opponent, campaign; also Vice-President Nixon, if he decides to campaign in Wisconsin.