

**Ira Kapenstein Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 12/15/1965**  
Administrative Information

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Kapenstein, journalist, *Milwaukee Journal* (1956-1963), discusses Wisconsin political press coverage, and the Wisconsin state primary of 1960, among other issues.

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Ira Kapenstein – JFK #1

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	John F. Kennedy's (JFK) first campaign trip to Wisconsin before the 1960 primary race
4	Kapenstein's doubts about JFK
5	The state of the Democratic Party in Wisconsin
6	Kapenstein's job offer to work for the Kennedy organization
8	Coverage of Kennedy campaign spending in early 1960
9	<i>The Milwaukee Journal's</i> endorsement of primary candidates
11	Press coverage emphasis on JFK's religious beliefs
13	Distortion of Kennedy's popularity by the press in Wisconsin
15	Hubert Humphrey's advantage as a Midwesterner
16	Humphrey campaign's poor financial backing and lack of internal organization
17	JFK's interest in Republic crossover votes
18	Jacqueline Kennedy's campaign trips to Wisconsin
20	<i>The Milwaukee Journal's</i> interpretation of the Wisconsin primary
21	Kapenstein's coverage of the National Convention in Los Angeles and the Kennedy-Nixon debates
23	<i>The Milwaukee Journal's</i> endorsement of JFK for President
24	JFK's loss against Nixon in Wisconsin
26	John Gronouski's appointment as Postmaster General
28	Anti-Catholic advertisements published during the Wisconsin primary campaign

Oral History Interview

with

IRA KAPENSTEIN

December 15, 1965  
Washington, D.C.

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Let's start by my asking you what you were doing in the late fifties when the Kennedy-Humphrey [John F. Kennedy and Hubert H. Humphrey] race began in Wisconsin?

KAPENSTEIN: I was working as a reporter for the *Milwaukee Journal* assigned to political coverage.

MORRISSEY: Had you covered John Kennedy when he came into the state?

KAPENSTEIN: I covered what I considered his first campaign trip into the state, and that was in April, 1959. From April, '59 on I covered him many, many times through the Wisconsin primary of April, 1960.

MORRISSEY: Tell me about that first trip. How did he impress you as a campaigner?

KAPENSTEIN: His first trip was very interesting. He came in, as I recall, with Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith], and I am certain Dave Powers [David F. Powers] was along. They started off in Milwaukee at the Milwaukee Press Club dinner and made an appearance at the University of Wisconsin,

Milwaukee, and then went out-state. As I recall, it was a three-day trip.

Now this was my first exposure to Senator Kennedy, and, at the time, frankly, I had a lot of questions in my mind about him and was very interested in covering the trip. There was one interesting incident that I might tell you about. One of the major questions in my mind, and I think in the mind of Wisconsin Democrats and Progressives, was the McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy]

[-1-]

issue. In '59, of course, McCarthy was dead, but the spirit lingered on. Senator Kennedy, of course, had been accused of vacillating on that issue, and when he came in on that trip that was one of the things that I was looking for, anyway, to see how he was going to handle that issue in Wisconsin. Well, the trip went along for a couple of days, and the question wasn't raised. I thought it would be raised in some public gathering or one of the press conferences, and it never was. We were standing outside the college at Beloit, Wisconsin. He had just given a very fine talk there. There was a small collection of National Press that had come in with him, quite small compared to the later gatherings. I thought I was in a press group. We were chatting, and I said in a rather offhand manner that he hadn't been asked about the McCarthy issue, and if somebody didn't ask about it pretty soon, I will. I thought I was in a group of reporters, and it turned out, as I found out later, that Dave Powers was standing right next to me. I didn't know who Dave Powers was at the time. Dave must have reported that back to the Senator.

The trip wound up in Appleton, Wisconsin that Saturday night. He spoke to a dinner in a church basement, and it was the last appearance of that three-day visit. After the dinner there was a question period after his talk. And from the floor someone asked him the question, quoting Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] having said that Senator Kennedy should show more courage and less profile, referring to the McCarthy incident. Kennedy bristled at the question and answered rather forcefully and forthrightly saying that he would take criticism from Mrs. Roosevelt or anyone else on that score.

Well, this, as I recall, was about 9:00 or 9:30 at night when that happened. Of course, I was writing for the Sunday paper. We're upstate, and I got to the phone and called in an insert into the story that I had previously filed. I remember Austin Wertheim of the *New York Times* was covering that trip, and he phoned it into the *Times* too. We were both lamenting the fact that it was brought up so late that we would have trouble meeting our edition deadline. But I did get it in to the final edition of the *Sunday Journal*, an insert of that question and answer.

What I am leading up to is that several days after the trip, I got a letter from Senator Kennedy in which he expressed his appreciation for my coverage of his Wisconsin visit. And then he went on to say, "The one regret I have in connection with your being with us was occasioned by something beyond my control. The deadline which your paper fixes and the untimeliness of your questioner were responsible for your inability to file the story you waited for so long." He obviously had seen the state edition of the paper that Sunday which didn't have the insert in it and he thought that it was too late for me to get it in the paper at all. I promptly wrote him back and sent

him a clipping from the latest edition in which I did have that insert about the McCarthy question. I also sent him a follow-up story for the Monday paper which was a very favorable piece on his three-day visit. He sent me another note on May 6, 1959, just thanking me for my letter and enclosing the stories, and he made a point of saying in his note, "and enclosed stories which I had not seen."

It was interesting to me, though, that after getting back to Washington, the Senator, or someone at least, had recalled that I had made that crack in front of Dave Powers in Beloit, and it had stuck with them to the point that they had mentioned it in the letter to me, that the question that I had been waiting for in the trip had come up so late in the visit. That was my first exposure to the Senator.

MORRISSEY: Did you have any direct discussion with him during that trip?

KAPENSTEIN: It seems to me there was a background session at one point in a hotel room where a small group of reporters were able to chat with him rather informally. That was the only direct expose I had.

MORRISSEY: How did he impress you as a campaigner?

KAPENSTEIN: Well, I came away from that trip tremendously impressed with him. I very much liked his style. I was taken with his rhetoric and the way he handled himself. Magnetism was there. It was obvious wherever he went. I remember the tremendous enthusiasm at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, when he spoke there. I thought he handled himself very well, and he would make quite a candidate.

MORRISSEY: Did the crowds that listened to him seem cool at the outset or did they seem already enthused about him even before he appeared?

KAPENSTEIN: The Press Club appearance was rather interesting. Of course, that's a fairly tough audience. He was introduced by Senator Gaylord Nelson who was then governor, Governor Nelson. And the Governor had a great sense of humor. He is quite a story teller. He went on at some length in his introduction which ultimately became a speech of its own, a very entertaining speech. He regaled the audience as he usually does, but he went on for so long it was obvious that Senator Kennedy was quite annoyed. The Senator had remarks which, as I recall, were not very long, but he cut those in half from the prepared text that had been distributed. I remember going up to him after the talk. I don't remember whether I asked

him whether he cut because Governor Nelson had been so lengthy or what, but it was quite obvious when he left that ballroom in the Schroeder Hotel that he was unhappy with having been upstaged by the Governor. That appearance, I don't think, was a terribly successful one, the one before the Press Club.

The next day at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, that was not a cool welcome; he was welcomed very warmly. It was a college crowd. And then along the way I thought the responses when he got up into the Fox River Valley were very good, quite good for that stage of the game.

MORRISSEY: Since he was concerned about the McCarthy issue in regard to his own campaign, I am surprised that he chose to campaign in the Fox River Valley at that time.

KAPENSTEIN: Well, looking back at it, the Fox River Valley was a potential source of great support. I would guess that they were very much interested in testing the water there, seeing what kind of reaction they could get. As it turned out ultimately, the Fox River Valley gave them quite a bit of support in the primary.

MORRISSEY: Did you have the feeling at that time that the decision to enter the Wisconsin primary had already been made?

KAPENSTEIN: No, I did not. That was a very early exploratory trip. No, I did not have that feeling at that time.

MORRISSEY: You mentioned that you had some doubts about John Kennedy, and you specified the Joe McCarthy issue. What were some of the other doubts that you had?

KAPENSTEIN: Well, at that time I really didn't think he could go ahead and get the nomination. It was very early in the game. Personally, I had been taken with Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] in '52 and '56. I really didn't visualize at that point that Kennedy would go on to win the nomination. I thought the religious issue would be insurmountable.

MORRISSEY: Was Hubert Humphrey coming into the state at that time?

KAPENSTEIN: Humphrey was Wisconsin's third Senator for many, many years. He was just considered one of the family, really. Humphrey was in and out. I can't specifically remember, but I am certain that he made many appearances during '56, '57, '58, and, of course, again in '59. But



Wisconsin had two Republican senators for so long, until Proxmire [William Proxmire] won in '57, that Humphrey was just Wisconsin's man, the way he was considered.

MORRISSEY: When did you next see Kennedy?

KAPENSTEIN: I honestly don't recall the month. There were so many trips during that period, '59 through April of '60. I can't tell you the exact time.

MORRISSEY: Did you continue to cover his visits in Wisconsin?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I did. I covered almost all of them through that whole period.

MORRISSEY: Did you feel it was a well organized campaign?

KAPENSTEIN: As it got down into the latter months, middle of '59, fall of '59, it was quite obvious that the Kennedy people were serious about Wisconsin. The organization was beginning to form and to build. Certainly, by the winter of '59, there was no doubt.

MORRISSEY: Since Humphrey had served, as you put it, as Wisconsin's third Senator for so many years, I am surprised that more of the organized Democratic support didn't help him in that campaign.

KAPENSTEIN: Well, the Wisconsin Democratic Party, for one thing, has not been a strong party organization. There is very little patronage in Wisconsin, and the kind of party rule that you might have in some states just doesn't exist there. I don't think it ever has. Maybe it did to some extent under the Progressives, but it certainly hasn't in recent years. The state aparty machinery was controlled by Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey] at that point. He was the state chairman. He was a good state chairman, a great state chairman. It was obvious to everybody that Pat was for John Kennedy. So the Kennedy people had that going for them right from the start.

MORRISSEY: Do you feel that Kennedy's style of speaking and campaigning changed the more he became a presidential candidate?

KAPENSTEIN: I think it improved. I think it improved the more he spoke. And in fact, I think it kept on improving after he went into the White House. I think he became more forceful as time went along.

His speeches, though, in the Wisconsin primary campaign, after a while, pretty well hit a pattern. He emphasized the

importance of the Wisconsin primary in the national scene. He would get before a young people's group, high school audiences, and talk about the importance of politics and give a wonderful little lecture on history which the kids loved, and which was really quite good. Thinking back now, I can't really think of one substantive issue that emerged from that whole campaign.

MORRISSEY: Did you have any specific discussions with him during this time?

KAPENSTEIN: Oh sure, after covering him for awhile, we got to know each other quite well. Can I ramble a little bit?

MORRISSEY: I wish you would.

KAPENSTEIN: In early January of 1960, when he was on the verge of announcing his candidacy in the Wisconsin primary, I had a feeler from Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno] who was working for the Kennedy organization in Wisconsin on loan from Senator Proxmire. Jerry, one day, approached me in a rather kidding way about coming abroad, joining the Kennedy campaign and leaving the paper. I, kind of, as I recall, kidded him back about it. I didn't close the door. And the next time I knew I was called by Ivan Nestingen [Ivan A. Nestingen]. Ivan was the mayor of Madison, Wisconsin at the time and had emerged as the chairman of the Citizens for Kennedy organization of the state. Ivan called me one day and said he heard from Jerry that I might possibly be interested in hooking up with the Kennedy organization. He said that they were looking for a press man to work with Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] who, by then, was aboard. I remember Ivan started asking me what my financial need was, and I parried the question a bit. He came back with a figure of \$7,500. I said that was out of the question. He said, "Well, maybe they could do better than that." And then some days later, I got a call to go over to the Wisconsin Hotel in Milwaukee to see Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy].

And I went up one morning. Bob was in his suite there. This was the first time that I had met Bob. I remember being a little shocked when I walked in the room and he was in his shirttails and shorts. He was just getting dressed, and the informality stunned me a little bit. He continued to get dressed and started to talk and told me that I had been recommended by Ivan and by Jerry, and they were very much interested. I ticked off the number of reasons that I really didn't think I was right for the kind of thing they were looking for. And Bob was quite nonchalant about it, I would say. I pointed out that I was quite young—let's see, at the time I was twenty-four—had covered politics for the newspaper for a few years but really didn't have any professional political experience, and a number of other things. Bob didn't seem to care too much about that. He asked



anyway. The law is so loose, and so easy to cover up expenses and not report expenses.

Apparently, the Kennedy organization had been quite frank in its preliminary filing, and as a result, Bechtel wrote a story that clobbered them for spending an awful lot of money in the Wisconsin primary. I got very upset about it because I thought it was unfair and damaging. I remember coming off the road one night and ending up in the *Milwaukee Journal* city room about 2 o'clock in the morning, writing what was a pretty fiery memo for a young reporter to the managing editor of the *Journal* complaining about that story. Nobody had asked me to do that, incidentally. I did it on my own because I thought the story was an outrage.

The next day I was with the Kennedy people, covering them. I was probably in Milwaukee, in fact. Ken O'Donnell brought up the story with me and told me what he thought of it. I told him I agreed. Then I told him that I had written a memo complaining about it. Ken asked me if I had a copy of it. I said I did, and I showed it to him. He was quite taken with it. In fact, I was surprised how taken he was with it. He showed it to the Senator. He read it himself and showed it to the Senator. Then both the Senator and Kenny made a point of telling me afterwards that they thought it was quite a courageous memo because I had put my job on the line. Well, I hadn't felt that way about it. But it sticks in my mind how surprised they were that a reporter would write such a memo on his own, without any prompting, on something like that.

The result of the memo, of course, was nil. The story was written, and there was nothing that could be done about it. I did create some controversy in the city room, and there was some further discussion. I suppose it didn't do my relationship with Bill Bechtel any good. But it was an interesting little episode.

MORRISSEY: Any other episodes?

KAPENSTEIN: Oh, [laughter] plenty of them. My colleague on political reporting was Kenneth Fry [Kenneth Frye]. Actually, he was the senior political reporter. I was the

[-8-]

junior reporter. Although he hadn't been on the paper quite as long as I had, he was assigned politics before I was. Ken got off on the wrong foot with the Kennedy people. Looking back on it, it is hard to figure out why he did, but he did. And it got, after a while, to be a great animosity. Possibly it was the Kennedy people over-reacted at the start to some of the stories he wrote, and he resented that. At any rate, over a period of months, it grew into quite an estrangement between Ken and the Kennedy organization. Ken went more and more into the Humphrey camp. I suppose you could say I was in the Kennedy camp, but I don't think you'll find any Humphrey people who will ever say that I was unfair to them. I think I maintained good relationships with both groups. I think I was fair to both groups, although, obviously, my personal feelings were with Kennedy as time went on.

There was one incident where Ken Fry was reputed to have made some very callous remarks about Senator Kennedy's personal life and Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis]. I can't vouch for whether he actually said these things or not. But the way the story

went at the time, Ken was supposed to have said that the Kennedys were estranged, Senator and Mrs. Kennedy, and that a divorce was imminent, and that they were holding up on a divorce until after the campaign was over. He was supposed to have said this in Kennedy headquarters in Milwaukee, in front of some Kennedy people. As I say, I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this. What I can vouch for the accuracy of is that this got back to Senator Kennedy.

He demanded an immediate audience with some of the officials of the newspaper. At first he didn't tell them why he wanted to come up to see them, but he did go up on a Saturday and met with Paul Ringle of the editorial staff. Paul is now chief editorial writer. I don't remember who else was in the meeting, possibly Arville Schalaven who was one of the other editors on the paper. The Senator recounted this story to them, and, as I recall, he asked that Ken not be assigned to the Kennedy campaign from that point on. The upshot of it was that Ken was not assigned to the Kennedy campaign after that period. He was assigned to cover Humphrey; and I was assigned to cover Kennedy. That's the way we finished the campaign.

MORRISSEY: Back in the early stages of Kennedy's campaign in Wisconsin, how did your superiors on the *Journal* view of candidacy?

KAPENSTEIN: I think mostly with a great deal of suspicion and with great reserve. The *Journal* had endorsed Stevenson editorially in '52 and '56. It was one of the few papers in the country that did. While the *Journal* maintains a reputation of being an independent newspaper, and at times does support Republicans, its history, of supporting

[-9-]

Democratic presidential candidates is pretty well established. But I think the general feeling was rather anti-Kennedy in the *Journal* operation, at least in the early stages of the campaign. The *Journal* did not endorse either Kennedy or Humphrey in the primary, although I think its sentiments were with Humphrey.

MORRISSEY: At any time was there a likelihood that the *Journal* would endorse either Humphrey or Kennedy?

KAPENSTEIN: Well, now you bring back to mind another Ken Fry story. [Laughter] In fact...can you break off for a moment? Let me back track a little bit. My memory is a little bit foggy in this area. In fact, the main purpose of Senator Kennedy coming up to the *Journal* office that day that I just spoke about, was not to complain about Fry's remark concerning his personal life, but rather was based on a report they had gotten that Ken Fry had said the *Journal* was about to endorse Humphrey in the primary. The Senator came up to tell the *Journal* editorial writers that he hoped we would have an opportunity to be heard by them in the event that they were planning an endorsement in the primary campaign.

My memory is a little faulty as to whether the personal reference that Ken was supposed to have made came up in that conversation with the *Journal* editorial writers. I am inclined to think it did come up. At least I know this, it got back to the editors of the *Journal* that Ken had made that remark.

Senator Kennedy came up that day in this very private and confidential meeting with Paul Ringler and the others. They discussed this report that Ken had said in front of some Kennedy people that the *Journal* was going to endorse Humphrey. The Senator was given assurances at that time that the *Journal*, at that point, was not considering an endorsement of either candidate.

MORRISSEY: So there was no real credibility to that story?

KAPENSTEIN: No, there was no credibility to that story. And just like the other incident with Ken in that campaign, I cannot, from first-hand knowledge, know what he actually said and what he didn't say. Our own relationship was on a very tenuous basis at that time. We did not have the kind of relationship where I would feel as though I could ask him whether these things were true or not. We just went on our ways, and I did the best I could under the circumstances. It was a very difficult period.

MORRISSEY: Was the Senator and other members of his entourage especially concerned about the press coverage of the primary?

[-10-]

KAPENSTEIN: Quite obviously they were. And quite obviously they were extremely concerned about Ken Fry because he was writing for the major newspaper in the state, the paper that blanketed Milwaukee County and had good circulation outside of Milwaukee. They were obviously very worried about the fact that he was writing stories that they felt were slanted and biased against them and in the favor of Humphrey. I must say candidly that I agreed with them.

MORRISSEY: I have heard similar complaints about the *Madison Capital Times*.

KAPENSTEIN: Yeah, the *Madison Capital Times* of course, those who know the paper just kind of take this thing for granted with them. It's the last vestige of personal journalism, and their biases are well known. The problem with the paper, though, is that too many thinking people take it too seriously. The *Capital Times* is obviously pro-Humphrey. I don't think they made any bones about that.

MORRISSEY: I know that some of the Kennedy people were irritated by what they claimed to be a tendency by newspaper men to picture Kennedy's campaign as a Catholic's campaign. And that some

newspaper reporters, they felt, were counting the number of Catholics in the audience and emphasizing this point.

KAPENSTEIN: This was another incident with Ken Fry. It was one of these Kennedy receptions. It was outstate. I don't remember the city any longer. But Ken wrote a story on this reception pointing out how many nuns and priests he spotted in the audience. Then he went around and interviewed the hostesses and found out that there were many girls from Catholic high schools there. He featured this rather prominently in his story. I remember that story was a great source of irritation to the Kennedy people.

If I can ramble a little bit more, there was another interesting incident right on the eve of the primary itself. That Sunday before the Tuesday election, Senator Kennedy was in Milwaukee, and there were a number of national television shows, *Meet the Press*, *Face the Nation*, done from Milwaukee with Kennedy and Humphrey. That Sunday morning, the *Journal* in its editorial section ran a large color map of the state, broken down a number of ways, including along religious lines. It showed where the heavy concentrations were of voters who were Catholic.

I know that thing was in the works. It was debated for weeks in the *Journal* city room whether or not the *Journal* should run such a map. I was opposed to running it because I thought it really drove home the specter of voting along Catholic lines and encouraged it. The map was run on that Sunday. I ran into

[-11-]

Senator Kennedy outside one of the TV studios where he had just been interviewed on *Face the Nation*. He brought up the map with me, and he was very annoyed by it and quite concerned over it. I remember him asking me what I thought the effects of the map would be on the election on Tuesday.

That was one of the things that stuck with him because some months later, he addressed the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington. Talking about the responsibility of the press, he cited the use of that map by the *Milwaukee Journal* as an example of what he considered irresponsible journalism.

MORRISSEY: As a reporter covering that campaign, did this Catholic aspect of it cause particular troubles for you?

KAPENSTEIN: No, I don't think it caused particular troubles for me. It was certainly an important factor in the campaign. Certainly, in the initial stages, the question was whether Senator Kennedy could overcome anti-Catholic bias. Then, in the later stages, the thing had turned around, and he was accused of playing for the Catholic vote.

I don't think there is any question that there was voting along religious lines. It was constant both ways. Whether it hurt more than it helped, it is hard to say. My feeling was always or at least certainly in Milwaukee, the Catholic vote was a Democratic vote anyway. The Polish Catholics on the South side of Milwaukee are Democrats. They have given

tremendous margins to their Congressman, Clement Zablocki [Clement J. Zablocki]. They almost always support the Democratic candidate for president. I think after awhile it got to the point where people were going overboard accusing Kennedy of playing for the sympathies of the Catholic votes, when actually, he had quite a battle on his hands trying to overcome any anti-Catholic bias. The final result, I think, probably the anti-Catholic bias hurt him more than the pro-Catholic vote helped him because he lost those western districts and came out with a clear victory, but not the kind of victory that he hoped for.

That is another story that I would like to get into. Edwin Bayley [Edwin R. Bayley], who was a former *Milwaukee Journal* political reporter and an outstanding one, at that time was Executive Secretary to Governor Nelson in Madison. And since Ed was well known in the national press corps because of his previous political reporting days, when the national press came into Wisconsin one of the places that they would go to would be to Madison to talk to Ed to get his judgments on how the campaign was going. I think Ed enjoyed this role. Of course, Ed was working for Governor Nelson who was officially neutral but unofficially for Humphrey in the primary. That was fairly well known.

[-12-]

But national press would come in and talk to Bayley to get his assessment. Bayley, after awhile, started predicting tremendous Kennedy victories. At some point, he predicted that Kennedy would sweep every congressional district. Now, I don't know whether Ed actually believed that Kennedy would do that well. My suspicion at the time was the Ed saw this as a good vehicle for taking the Kennedy victory in Wisconsin down a peg by predicting that he would sweep the districts. And if he didn't, it wasn't quite as much a victory as the Kennedy people should have gotten. That was my suspicion at the time. I think it is still my suspicion. And it worked out very well because the national press, many of them, reported Bayley's prediction as their own, that Kennedy was doing extremely well, and some high placed sources in Wisconsin thought that he would take every district. Of course, it turned out that he took 6 out of 10. Suddenly a victory was not a victory.

If you put it into perspective, looking back on it, Kennedy, a Massachusetts Easterner, foreign to Wisconsin, foreign to the Midwest, running against a man who was for many years Wisconsin's third Senator, came in and win by a sizeable margin in the popular vote and took 6 out of 10 districts. It should have been viewed as a very significant victory. It wasn't viewed that way, I think, because of the faulty national press corps reporting in advance of the election.

MORRISSEY: Was there anybody else in Wisconsin in addition to Bayley who was making similar predictions?

KAPENSTEIN: Bayley is the one who sticks in my mind. I wrote the election eve prediction story for the *Journal*, and I predicted 6 out of 10.

MORRISSEY: The 6 that he carried?



KAPENSTEIN: I don't remember now. I would have to go back to the clippings. I don't remember whether I got that specific. I don't recall.

MORRISSEY: Let me break that down into two questions. As I recall, Kennedy carried the fifth district, but the Humphrey campaign in that district was fairly strong. And also, Kennedy just barely carried the seventh district.

KAPENSTEIN: That's right, but the seventh district was really quite a victory because the seventh was the swing district. It had a mixed vote along religious lines. It was a big bellwether district. I think the fact that he carried it was quite significant in itself.

[-13-]

MORRISSEY: Did you predict that he would carry the state in the popular vote by as much as he did, more than a hundred thousand?

KAPENSTEIN: I don't remember, but I certainly wasn't surprised. I wasn't surprised. I think that I did predict the six districts that he carried although I can't say for sure.

MORRISSEY: Did you have a feeling that the Kennedy people, perhaps, were deliberately understating their chances in Wisconsin?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I think they probably were, and I think they were probably trying to counter-act some of the over-statements that were being made. And also, I think it is smart politics to understate your chances in that kind of situation.

MORRISSEY: Did you cover Kennedy throughout the state?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I did.

MORRISSEY: Did you ever have the feeling that the Kennedy people were conducting two campaigns, one for the Milwaukee area and one for the out-state?

KAPENSTEIN: Honestly no, I can't say that I had that feeling. I don't think that his messages changed any. I can't recall any dramatic difference.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall if the national press tended to stay in Milwaukee?

KAPENSTEIN: Well, the national press would usually start off in Milwaukee. Most of them would come into the *Milwaukee Journal* newsroom to talk to Ken, or myself, or to Paul Ringler, go through the clippings. It varied. Some of them would write from that base of operations. I remember one well known syndicated columnist came in one day, and he found his way to my desk, asked me for my assessment of how the campaign was going. I got out, "Well, uh," and that is about all I said. And for the next half hour he told me how the campaign was going. At that point, I wasn't going to argue with him. I said, "Well, you seem to have it pretty well under control." And he wrote his column. That is the way some of it goes, but quite a bit of the press went out-state. There was quite a bit of press that travel with him for a few days, here and there, on the out-state trips. I think the national press enjoys going out to the boondocks more than they do covering the campaign in the city sections.

[-14-]

MORRISSEY: You do?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes.

MORRISSEY: Because I have often had the opposite impression. When the national press goes into a certain state or region, they tend to stay in the city with the largest airport.

KAPENSTEIN: Well, I think, at least in the Kennedy campaign, they had the feeling that out-state Wisconsin, northern Wisconsin, was rather quaint. And it was rather quaint to see this effete, well dressed, reserved Easterner out in the cow fields of Wisconsin.

I can remember one very incident. On a farm in Northern Wisconsin when the Kennedy people wanted to get some rural photos of the Senator. They pulled the caravan over to the side of the road, and he went into just a random farm house and asked the farmer whether he would show him around. The farmer was very willing to do so, and he took him into the cow barn. It just happened to be, at that time, that the man in charge of artificial insemination was in the barn.

Mary McGrory of the *Washington Star* was along on that trip, and she just wrote a delightful piece about how this farmer told Senator Kennedy all about the artificial insemination of his cattle. I wrote the same story for the *Milwaukee Journal*, and they felt it was rather indiscreet and wouldn't run it.

MORRISSEY: You said earlier in this interview that you don't recall any issues that developed out of that Kennedy-Humphrey race. Do you recall that Kennedy's vote on farm issues was an issue with people in the rural part of the state?

KAPENSTEIN: I think that is right. I think the Humphrey people played it that Humphrey was of them. He was from the Midwest. He knew that problems of the farmers and the rural people and that Kennedy didn't. Yeah, I think that was an issue, but what I meant earlier was that... That's really a personality issue. It's hard to think of one policy difference between them in that campaign. In fact, Kennedy used that. He went around saying that there were no policy differences between Senator Humphrey and himself, that the difference was one of... He didn't say it this boldly, but his implication was that the difference was one of leadership potential. He tried very hard to establish himself as a serious possibility for the presidency, and by implication, establish that Humphrey would never make it.

MORRISSEY: It is hard now to reconstruct the context of that

[-15-]

race, but a lot of people thought that Kennedy and Humphrey would kill each other off and maybe Adlai Stevenson would romp home for a third time. Do you recall that this was much of the sentiment on the part of many Wisconsin Democrats?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I think it was, and in fact, I think some Wisconsin Democrats wanted it that way. I think really Gaylord Nelson was at that time still essentially a Stevenson man and looked to Humphrey as Stevenson's stand-in.

MORRISSEY: Just how troubled were the Humphrey people by the lack of strong financial backing?

KAPENSTEIN: Oh, I think they were quite troubled by that. They were also quite troubled by very poor organization. In the latter stages of the campaign, it got to be almost pathetic. They had no money, and they had no organization. Maybe those things go hand in hand. Humphrey would travel around on this bus from place to place. Once in awhile he would fly and he would use one of these commercial peter (?) airlines, Northwest Central or Lake Central. Kennedy would have a plane at his disposal wherever he went. Kennedy headquarters were much more desirable, much more substantial than Humphrey headquarters. The Kennedy contingent, the people who were working, were much more professional. Humphrey relied on volunteer amateurs and people who could come in from Minnesota to help him. These were a tremendous difference in the organizations.

MORRISSEY: Did you cover Humphrey at all in the latter stages?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I did cover Humphrey quite a bit and got to know Humphrey and the Humphrey people quite well too.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall his commenting to you on his chances?

KAPENSTEIN: I can remember one time when Humphrey let his hair down and was feeling quite low. I think it was late at night after a campaign day. He was feeling quite low. He was lamenting the fact that they were just about out of money—or they were out of money, I guess. They were in hock at that point—that the Kennedy campaign was so well organized and so well oiled. He was quite pessimistic about his chances.

[-16-]

MORRISSEY: At that time, do you recall that the decision either to enter or not to enter the West Virginia primary had taken shape?

KAPENSTEIN: On whose part?

MORRISSEY: Humphrey's part.

KAPENSTEIN: At that time, in the latter stages of the campaign, that was the key question, I guess. Would Humphrey, after being beaten by Kennedy in Wisconsin, drop out altogether or go on to West Virginia? Election night, in the *Journal* city room, Humphrey announced at that point that he would go into West Virginia. I remember he was very closely questioned as to why he would go into West Virginia. He said that he had made a commitment, and that he had a lot of people counting on him, and that he wasn't going to let them down. There was a feeling, at that point, that Humphrey was hoping to kill off Kennedy in West Virginia but without any realistic chance anymore of winning the nomination for himself.

Election night in the city room was an interesting experience. The *Journal* city room on election night is usually the focal point of the state. We had live television, and for that occasion we had the networks covering right in the city room. Both Kennedy and Humphrey came up to the *Journal* city room after the results were clear. I interviewed Senator Kennedy on television, and even at that point, he was steaming over that *Milwaukee Journal* religious map and made a point of mentioning it in the *Journal* city room on the *Journal* TV station. And he mentioned it in bristling terms.

MORRISSEY: It is my impress that Humphrey was never able to utilize his lack of money as contrasted to Kennedy's resources as an issue to win votes in that primary.

KAPENSTEIN: I think that is right. It did not become an issue of any major degree. I think Humphrey suffered most from the lack of an image as a serious presidential candidate which Kennedy obviously had. I don't think there was any substantial resentment of the fact that Kennedy was rich and had money and had a lot funds for his campaign.

MORRISSEY: Do you see any indication that the Kennedys wanted very much to pull some of those Republican Catholics over into the Democratic primary?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I think that was certainly one of their goals, to appeal to Republican votes in that primary. Wisconsin has a tradition of one party crossing

[-17-]

over into the other party's primary. I think they pitched it, again, on a personality basis. For some Republicans Humphrey was a wild-eyed radical, and they viewed him as a real threat, disaster, if he could win the nomination. I think Kennedy was able to cash in on that. I don't think it was purely religion. I think there was a combination of factors there, that Republicans rather enjoyed crossing over into where there was a good contest. Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] was running alone in the Republican primary, and there was no doubt that Republicans crossing over would vote for Kennedy.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall much effort on the part of newspaper men to arrange a Humphrey-Kennedy debate on TV during that primary?

KAPENSTEIN: Can I think for a moment?

MORRISSEY: Sure.

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2]

KAPENSTEIN: I don't have any clear recollection of an issue arising over a Kennedy-Humphrey debate. I never paid too much attention to that in a campaign. It's raised in almost every campaign. Will the two opponents debate? One camp or another sees an advantage. It was raised, but a debate never came off. I don't remember it becoming a major issue. I don't think anybody got terribly excited about it.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall Mrs. Kennedy accompanying her husband to Wisconsin?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, she was there a number of times. Another Ken Fry story that aggravated the Kennedy camp was one occasion where Mrs. Kennedy was there at some gathering where the Senator was to speak, and he was delayed getting into the state. He was coming from outside and for bad weather or some reason, he was delayed in getting there, and Mrs. Kennedy filled in for her husband at this rally, or whatever it was. Ken wrote a story which took Mrs. Kennedy to task for not having done a very good job of filling in for her husband. The Kennedy people

felt that this was too rough on the wife of the candidate.

There was some feeling among the press corps that Mrs. Kennedy didn't have much of a taste for campaigning or for the campaign. I remember from my own experience, there was a Kennedy reception at the Schroeder Hotel in Milwaukee. This was probably in March of '60. It was a huge affair. They had some 5,000 people, as I recall it, crowded into the ballroom of the Schroeder. The Senator was there shaking hands in the receiving line.

[-18-]

Mrs. Kennedy stayed with him for just a few minutes and then went behind the stage and sat out most of the reception. I remember thinking to myself that this was kind of unusual. Later on it occurred to me that she was in the early stages of pregnancy at that point. It might well have been that she wasn't feeling very well.

MORRISSEY: Way back before the Kennedy-Humphrey race began to shape up, do you recall a movement to have Gaylord Nelson run as a favorite son in that primary?

KAPENSTEIN: Oh, that's right. The favorite son gimmick was kicked back and forth for months, and it got to be a real shadow boxing effort between Nelson and Proxmire as to whom was going to run for favorite son. There were all kinds of maneuverings like that. The breakdown of the delegates was another big fight, how the delegates were apportioned, the at-large delegates. The early maneuverings between the Kennedy and the Humphrey camps were quite obvious in 1959 among the Wisconsin followers. The favorite son theme went back and forth for months and then died as the serious candidates, Kennedy and Humphrey, made it clear that it would be a battle.

MORRISSEY: Was there much maneuvering on the part of the Humphrey people to get an endorsement from organized labor, and similarly, on the part of the Kennedy people to prevent it?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, there was. Going back in my memory, Humphrey clearly had the advantage there. He knew all the Wisconsin labor people intimately. Wisconsin labor was quite suspicious of Kennedy. Humphrey was one of them; he came from them. Humphrey had a real advantage there.

MORRISSEY: Do you remember any specific episodes in regard to this point about labor support?

KAPENSTEIN: Let me think for a moment. [Pause] It seems to me there was one by-play where it was leaked that labor was supporting Humphrey, and it was a premature leak, a premature story that was spread. But I guess my memory is a little faulty there.

MORRISSEY: As a newspaper man, were people interested in having you know what various polls were showing?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, that was a favorite game too. That went back and forth. There are all kinds of reports of polls being taken during the period, and it is

[-19-]

hard to tell which were really accurate and which weren't. It seems to me that I got my hands on one or two of them through the help of Pat Lucey and others, and I probably reported the results at the time of the polls.

MORRISSEY: That was a favorite game of one team more than the other?

KAPENSTEIN: Yeah. I think the Kennedys played the poll game. I don't remember the specifics.

MORRISSEY: Did you feel particularly in the early days of the Kennedy-Humphrey campaign that Kennedy people were especially anxious to get sympathetic reporters on their side?

KAPENSTEIN: Well, I probably didn't get the feeling at the time although it was obvious that this was a very intense group of people and that they took their business very seriously. Going back to that incident that I spoke of earlier where I had that phone conversation with Bob Kennedy and told him that I was not going to join their staff, I remember now that it was quite clear from Bob's remarks that there was little doubt in his mind that Senator Kennedy was going all the way. He was going to have that nomination. It was a very confident group, at least the inner circle was.

As far as getting sympathetic reporters, yeah, I think that there was a very real interest and a very real concern as to how the campaign was being reported in Wisconsin. I think the episodes with Fry probably dramatized how concerned they were.

MORRISSEY: In regard to the various interpretations which were made of the results of that primary, did you ever discuss this matter with Senator Kennedy or anyone in the inner circle?

KAPENSTEIN: Interpretations of the results of the primary? I think the *Milwaukee Journal's* own skirts were quite clean on the interpretation of the results. We interpreted it as a clear-cut victory for Kennedy and showed, I think, in our analysis which I helped to write—in fact, Bill Bechtel and I wrote it together. And Bill, while his sentiments were the other way, I think, did an excellent job on this. Our interpretation was there was a clear-cut victory. He

had done very well in the popular vote taking six out of ten districts in a state where a couple of years earlier nobody would have given him that kind of a chance and showed it as a good win. In later conversations with the Kennedy people, there was obvious disappointment that they hadn't done better. And there was also obvious disappointment that the result of the election was

[-20-]

misinterpreted because of the big build-up that it had gotten in advance, and also that the religious issue had become so clouded in Wisconsin.

MORRISSEY: Did you go down to West Virginia to cover any aspect of that primary?

KAPENSTEIN: No, I did not. I didn't cover the national campaign until I was at the National Convention in Los Angeles, and then I covered some of the Kennedy-Nixon debates and made a ten-state swing with Kennedy in the fall. I think it was ten states.

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

KAPENSTEIN: We had a convention reporting team of five or six of us. I was not specifically assigned to the delegation. I did some stories on the Kennedy organization. I did an interview with Ken O'Donnell on how they had geared up to the Convention, and techniques they were using at the Convention. I covered Kennedy out at his hideaway on the balloting night. He was at the home of an actor. I can't remember the actor's name at the moment.

MORRISSEY: I can't either. I have heard it.

KAPENSTEIN: I believe I wrote the story on his acceptance speech.

MORRISSEY: How many reporters were out at the hideaway when you were there?

KAPENSTEIN: It wasn't a very big crowd. It was difficult to find out where the hideaway was. They kept that pretty well under wraps. I think they just told the reporters who they felt deserved to know, as I recall. But I did find out and went out there. I would guess maybe thirty. That's a wild guess. I'm not sure it served too much of a purpose. We didn't get to see him until the balloting was finished, and he came out. Then he was mobbed. There was this wild caravan back to the Convention Hall. I remember he got over the Convention grounds and first went into this reception room where Governor Lawrence [David L. Lawrence] and Abe Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] and various others of the inner circle of the Kennedy campaign had gathered. He spent some time with them before going into the Convention Hall. It was a very dramatic



moment.

MORRISSEY: Were you covering the Wisconsin delegation when it was learned that Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] would be the vice presidential nominee?

[-21-]

KAPENSTEIN: No, I was not specifically covering the delegation. I think Bill Bechtel was assigned to delegation coverage, but I remember quite clearly that there was some stunned feelings and real shock. It sticks out in my mind that Bill Proxmire, who had quite a history of opposition to Lyndon Johnson as Majority Leader, carried the ball and got up and said that this was a great choice and helped to assuage the feelings of the delegates.

MORRISSEY: When you said you covered the Kennedy-Nixon debates, did you cover them in the studios where the debates occurred?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I covered the Chicago debate which I believe was the first one in the studio in Chicago, and then I covered the New York debate in the studio.

MORRISSEY: Can you describe to me what it was like to cover, let's say, the Chicago one first.

KAPENSTEIN: Well, the Chicago debate, I am not really sure there was much value in actually being there. I think it could be covered just as well watching on television. We did get a peek at the studio in advance, to see the elaborate arrangement and the set up. Then there was a great big room for the press set aside covered with many TV monitors in the room. I suppose the only advantage was that some of the Kennedy people were around, and you could talk to them and get some reaction.

MORRISSEY: What was their reaction?

KAPENSTEIN: I think the instant reaction was that they had done extremely well. It was a great success.

MORRISSEY: Had you talked to any of these people before the debate, or to the candidate himself?

KAPENSTEIN: I did not talk to the candidate himself, but I do think I talked to some of the people about it, Kenny and Pierre. There was obviously great tension. They were putting all their money on this thing. I remember there was just no doubt among the many, many reporters in that room

that this had been a real turning point in the campaign, and it was an immediate reaction. There was just no question about it.

MORRISSEY: Was covering the New York debate similar to covering the one in Chicago?

[-22-]

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, quite similar. I think the New York debate was about the third in the series.

MORRISSEY: Was that the one in which one candidate was out on the West Coast and the other one was in New York?

KAPENSTEIN: Yeah, and it almost got to be routine by then. I was with the Kennedy campaign when the *Milwaukee Journal* endorsed Kennedy in mid-October of 1960. I had anticipated the *Journal* endorsement by that time. The *Journal* had come a long way from the Wisconsin primary by then. There were a couple of things about that. One was that the *Journal* endorsed significantly earlier than it had in previous presidential campaigns. Apparently, the feeling was that this was so important. It had become quite important to the *Journal* at that point that Kennedy win. They were very strongly anti-Nixon. It came out in the Sunday paper. I felt fairly confident they were going to endorse. I did not know when. I got the word that the *Journal* had endorsed from one of the people in the Kennedy entourage who had seen it come over one of the press service wires. That day I was invited on to the Kennedy plane to chat with the candidate which I enjoyed. He was very happy about the *Journal* endorsement. I got the impression at the time that he took a great deal of pleasure in the fact that the *Milwaukee Journal*, which he had not considered a friendly paper when he was in Wisconsin, had come around to the point of giving him a very strong endorsement. And then he reminisced about the Wisconsin primary. He brought up the name of Ken Fry as did so many of the Kennedy people for such a long time after that Wisconsin primary. Each time they'd see me they would make some kind of a joking or a slighting remark about Kenneth. It stuck with them for a long, long time.

He also brought up the *Madison Capital Times* and their opposition to him in the Wisconsin primary. I remember that he commented that the *Capital Times* and Miles McMillan [Miles J. McMillin] had been responsible for him having lost the second district of Wisconsin. Other than that, we just exchanged some pleasantries, and I probably talked a total of ten minutes and that was it.

MORRISSEY: Did he feel that the *Capital Times* had cost him votes in the second district because they emphasized his Catholicism?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I think he did. I don't think he expressed it on that particular occasion that I was referring to, but clearly during the campaign they were quite resentful of the *Capital Times*

handling of their campaign.

[-23-]

MORRISSEY: When he was reminiscing about the primary, wasn't there anything else that was foremost in his mind?

KAPENSTEIN: Just that Wisconsin had gotten him started, and some reference to the fact that the Wisconsin primary was the beginning. Other than that, no.

MORRISSEY: Did this discussion occur during this ten-day swing that you mentioned?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, it did.

MORRISSEY: Was this a swing through the Midwest, primarily?

KAPENSTEIN: We were in Wisconsin, and Ohio, in Washington, D.C. We were in New York, and it seems to me that there was an airport stop in Delaware, and I think, possibly, Indiana.

MORRISSEY: What were your impressions?

KAPENSTEIN: Well, things were going swimmingly well for the Kennedy campaign at that point. The crowds were great; the enthusiasm was obvious. I think I walked away with the feeling that the Kennedy people had just a great reservoir of confidence at that point about the outcome.

MORRISSEY: Had you covered Nixon?

KAPENSTEIN: I covered Nixon just in Wisconsin, but not outside of the state. Ken Fry went on a swing with Nixon similar to my swing with Kennedy.

MORRISSEY: When you were on that ten-state swing, did you feel that press relations were handled well by the Kennedy entourage?

KAPENSTEIN: I can't remember any complaints. Of course, the national press corps that was traveling with him on a regular basis was much more accustomed to the method of operation and had better contacts than a reporter who was just picking up along the way for a short period as I was. But I knew Pierre, and I knew Kenny, and I knew the others, and I didn't have any particular problems.

MORRISSEY: Kennedy lost Wisconsin by more than 60,000 votes after having defeated Humphrey in the primary by more than 100,000—1.) why did he lose the state, and 2.) could you see it coming?

[-24-]

KAPENSTEIN: Taking your questions in reverse order—2.) no, I did not see it coming—I was confident and certain that he was going to carry the state by a close margin—and 1.) why he lost, a combination of factors. Wisconsin, at that point, was still essentially a Republican state. I think probably in November, '60 election, the religious issue crossed in the state.

MORRISSEY: Was the Kennedy campaign in Wisconsin, to your knowledge, coordinated or not coordinated well with Gaylord Nelson's campaign for re-election?

KAPENSTEIN: They went their separate ways, pretty much. It seems to me, at one point, they finally made some effort to work it together, but there were a lot of resentments from the primary that didn't wear off. They pretty much went their own way. Nelson had been looking for a very big victory in that 1960 election. He won first in '58, and he thought in 1960 that was going to be his big year. He got quite a scare. He won by a small margin in '60, and there was great unhappiness over the margin that he won by. I think probably the Nelson people wanted to not become too closely aligned with the Kennedy campaign.

MORRISSEY: Did you come to Washington with Mr. Gronouski [John A. Gronouski]?

KAPENSTEIN: No, I came to Washington for the *Milwaukee Journal* in its Washington bureau in January of 1963.

MORRISSEY: I see. So many of these questions are very general, but in covering Washington for the *Journal*, did you have any encounters with the President?

KAPENSTEIN: No direct encounters with the President, but prior to coming to Washington, Kennedy made a trip into Wisconsin in 1962, and I covered that in Milwaukee. He spoke at a dinner for John Reynolds [John W. Reynolds], I believe, in '62. John Reynolds was running for Governor then. He was the Attorney General. Reynolds had been a very early Kennedy man, and stayed close to the Kennedys after the election as did Pat Lucey. My only fleeting touch with the President, at that point, was when he first arrived and the caravan pulled up in front of the Schroeder Hotel. I was out in front of the Hotel there, and, as you can imagine with the President arriving, there was a tremendous crowd. But somehow he spotted me in the crowd

and made quite an obvious point of detouring over to shake hands and indicated that he knew that I had a rather serious illness by asking me how I was feeling now and how I was getting along.

[-25-]

This rather struck me, at the time, that with so much going on that he would have recalled something like that.

MORRISSEY: Did you have any clues about Mr. Gronouski's appointment to the Cabinet?

KAPENSTEIN: Yes, I did. It was in August of 1963, and I was working at the Washington bureau of the *Journal*. I got a call from Gene Foley [Eugene P. Foley], who at that time was head of the Small Business Administration. I knew Gene fairly well. Again, I got to know him in the Humphrey campaign in Wisconsin in which Gene had been quite active. Gene called me on a confidential basis and asked me if I knew a man named John Gronouski. I told him, "Yes," I did know him, and I told him what I knew about him.

He was State Tax Commissioner, had been very active in the Kennedy campaign in Wisconsin, very outspoken man with a Ph.D. and a fine background. I got curious and asked Gene what was up. He told me that he had been asked, on a confidential basis, to get some information about John. Well, it was apparently that John was being considered for something at that point.

So, I called Gronouski out in Wisconsin. At the time, he was just going on a vacation in Door County, and I tracked him down through some rural telephone. I got him on the line and asked him what was cooking. I don't think I told him the basis of why I was asking. I don't remember. At any rate, I asked him if he knew whether he was being considered for a position. He said that it was news for him, that he didn't know, but that he would be very interested. We did know, of course, back in 1961 that he was under consideration for Director of Internal Revenue so it was possible that in '63, he was being considered for something else. We kidded about whether they might be considering him for Ambassador for Poland. That was a good two, three weeks before his appointment was announced.

MORRISSEY: Going back over the years that we have been talking about, are there any specific episodes, conversations, events, problems that you think we have missed?

KAPENSTEIN: There are a couple of things that stick in my mind, maybe not terribly important. I recall the night that Senator Kennedy came into the Milwaukee airport in preparation for his press conference the next day. This was early in January of 1960. In his press conference of the next day, he was going to announce his decision as to whether to enter the Wisconsin primary, and everybody assumed that he was going to enter. He arrived, I forget, 8, 9 o'clock at night.

It had been his intention to go straight to the Pfister Hotel and not make any press statements, but there was quite a press contingent out there at the airport to meet him including myself. I wasn't especially interested in getting a statement from him that night because I was writing for the afternoon paper, and the press conference was going to be held on my time anyway. But Cy Rice [Cyrus Rice] was there, the political reporter for the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, the morning paper. Cy, through his persuasive powers, managed to get the Senator into a conference room at the airport to ask him some questions.

The incident that sticks in my mind is that just before he entered the conference room at the airport, the Senator sneezed. The AP [Associated Press] photographer, Danny Nero as I recall, took a picture of him. The Senator saw that he had been photographed in the act of sneezing, and he cornered the photographer before going into the conference room. I was standing there listening to it.

He said, "You are not going to use that picture, are you?" And the photographer said, "Well, it depends on how it turns out. If it turns out to be a good picture, I probably will use it, yeah." Kennedy just kept right after him. He said, "You wouldn't use a picture like that. You are not going to use that." I remember him saying, "that's beyond the pale," which up to that point was a foreign expression to me. He kept it up for quite a while before going into the conference room. Finally, after getting Nero into a corner, he extracted a promise from Nero that he would not use that picture. And only at that point would Kennedy proceed. He went into the conference room and parried Cy Rice's questions—he didn't tell him anything—and then went on to the hotel. For me, it was a little episode, a minor one, but it was one of those things that sticks in your mind, that it was crucial to Kennedy that a picture not go out of him in the act of sneezing. It would seem to be a very human thing to do.

MORRISSEY: Anything else?

KAPENSTEIN? Can you hold it for a moment? [Interruption]  
There's another incident at a breakfast meeting in Madison.  
This was quite early in the game. In fact, it might have been on the first trip, that April '59 trip. I am not sure, although it was quite early in the primary effort, some time in 1959. The Senator spoke at a breakfast meeting in Madison, and he was introduced by Bill Evjue [William T. Evjue], the publisher of the *Madison Capital Times* and a rather legendary figure in Wisconsin journalism. As he was introducing him, he made what appeared to be a slip of the tongue which turned out to be very embarrassing. He got through his introduction and then his preliminaries, and then introduced Senator McCarthy and immediately realized what he had said and corrected

himself and said, "Senator Kennedy." I have always wondered about that. He was quite an old man. It could have been an innocent slip of the tongue, but knowing the *Madison Capital Times* and their obvious dislike of Kennedy, there was always some slight doubt in my mind

whether it was a slip of the tongue or not. And then just to compound the thing, Kennedy got up and referred to Bill Mevjue instead of Bill Evjue. It was just one of those little things that stuck out at the time. I reported it in the paper, and it was one of those whimsical incidents that you are never quite sure was accidental or purposeful all along the line.

There was another critical moment in the primary campaign toward the end when some scurrilous ads appeared in some newspapers around Wisconsin making an obvious anti-Catholic pitch. Senator Kennedy and the people around him became extremely concerned about it, went to great lengths to find out who was behind the campaign, who was financing the ads. It got to be a very shadowy area. I spent a great deal of time right on the eve of the primary trying to track it down to its source. There were some links to a former Wisconsin Democrat named Charlie Green [Charles Green], who was at that time in Miami Florida. Charlie was working in Florida for another former Milwaukeean named Leonard Bursten. Bursten was a character of questionable repute. We were able to determine that Bursten had some connection with the Teamsters. He was a representative of the Teamsters, I think, in one of their welfare funds or some of their welfare funds. The strong suspicion existed that Bursten had financed Charlie Green to come to Wisconsin to place these anti-Catholic ads in the papers and get out in a hurry. Of course, our assumption was that Bursten was using Teamster money to do this. I don't think it was ever proved. As a newspaper, we were mighty cautious in reporting it because we were dealing with potentially high libelous material, but we reported it as best we could.

The Kennedys were very interested in this as was John Reynolds, who was Attorney General. Reynolds had his own investigation going on it. I heard later on that that investigation developed some material that was later used against Hoffa's [Jimmy Hoffa] finagling in Teamster pension funds, but John Reynolds would be the man who would know that.

MORRISSEY: I don't have any more questions. Do you have any more comments?

KAPENSTEIN: Maybe one final story. I worked in Washington for the *Milwaukee Journal* until October of '63 when I joined John Gronouski who had just been named Postmaster General and became his Special Assistant. Just at the time that my appointment was announced, a story appeared in the *Washington Star* that Gronouski was going to have a big purge at the Post Office Department, and that a number of heads were going

[-28-]

to be chopped off, high level heads at the department. The story appeared in the noon edition of the *Star*, and within minutes after he must have gotten the paper, the President called Gronouski.

It was the first call that John had gotten from the President since he had taken office and it rather stunned him. In fact, he wasn't real sure what to do when that White House button went off. I was standing there. I happened to be in his office when this happened so I heard at least one end of the conversation. In fact, Gronouski picked up the phone and the

person on the other line, who was the President, started to talk and Gronouski said, "To whom am I speaking?" The President said, "This is the President," Gronouski told me later.

At any rate, the point of the story is that the President had seen this big purge story all over page one of the *Star* by Joe Young [Joseph Young] and was quite disturbed by it. Gronouski assured him that he had no purge in mind at the Post Office Department, and the story was just fictitious. He went on to tell him that the only changes that he had made, at that point, was to bring me in as his Special Assistant. Gronouski told me afterwards that the President had said to him, "Oh yes, Ira, I know him. He's a good boy."

Incidentally, in the rest of the conversation the President told Gronouski to call up Joe Young and give him hell. And if necessary, call up Joe Young's editors and give them hell, and squelch that story. I guess he used some epithets to describe it. He was quite upset over it. That was shortly before the President's death, and he did acknowledge to Gronouski over the phone that he did remember who I was. That was the last indirect contact I had with him.

MORRISSEY: Well, if anything else comes to mind, we can always add it to the transcript. Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]



Ira Kapenstein Oral History Transcript – JFK #1  
Name List

**B**

Bayley, Edwin R., 12, 13  
Bechtel, William, 8, 20, 22  
Bruno, Gerald J., 6  
Bursten, Leonard, 28

**E**

Evjue, William T., 27, 28

**F**

Foley, Eugene P., 26  
Frye, Kenneth, 8-11, 14, 18, 20, 23, 24

**G**

Green, Charles, 28  
Gronouski, John A., Jr., 25, 26, 28, 29

**H**

Hoffa, Jimmy, 28  
Humphrey, Hubert H., 1, 4, 5, 8-13, 15-20, 24

**J**

Johnson, Lyndon B., 21, 22

**K**

Kennedy, John F., 1-29  
Kennedy, Robert F., 6, 7, 20

**L**

Lawrence, David L., 21  
Lucey, Patrick J., 5, 20, 25

**M**

McCarthy, Joseph R., 1-4, 27  
McGrory, Mary, 15

McMillin, Miles J., 23

**N**

Nelson, Gaylord, 3, 4, 12, 16, 19, 25  
Nero, Danny, 27  
Nestingen, Ivan A., 6  
Nixon, Richard M., 18, 21, 22, 23, 24

**O**

O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 7, 8, 21, 22, 24  
Onassis, Jacqueline Kennedy, 9, 18, 19

**P**

Powers, David F., 1, 2, 3  
Proxmire, William, 5, 6, 19, 22

**R**

Reynolds, John W., 25, 28  
Ribicoff, Abraham A., 21  
Rice, Cyrus, 27  
Ringler, Paul, 9, 10, 14  
Roosevelt, Eleanor R., 2

**S**

Salinger, Pierre E.G., 6, 7, 22, 24  
Schalaven, Arville, 9  
Smith, Stephen E., 1  
Stevenson, Adlai E., 4, 9, 16

**W**

Wertheim, Austin, 2

**Y**

Young, Joseph, 29

**Z**

Zablocki, Clement J., 12