

**William L. Lonesome Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 07/14/1964**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** William L. Lonesome  
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**Biographical Note**

William L. Lonesome (1907-1982) was a West Virginia political figure. This interview focuses on the 1960 Democratic primary and general election in West Virginia, in particular the Kennedy campaign's courting of the African American vote, among other topics.

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William L. Lonesome– JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

WILLIAM L. LONESOME

July 14, 1964  
Charleston, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: This is an interview in Charleston, West Virginia, on July 14, 1964, with Mr. William L. Lonesome, an attorney of Charleston, West Virginia. Mr. Lonesome, would you tell me when you first came into contact with Senator Kennedy as a possible presidential candidate.

LONESOME: My first contact with President Kennedy and my first interest in the then Senator Kennedy as a presidential candidate took place in the year 1959--I believe that it was in the early part of the spring of that year--when Paul Butler, who at that time was the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, called a group of people throughout the country, Negro and white, to a meeting at the Statler-Hilton Hotel in Washington. The purpose of this meeting was not necessarily to inspire support for the then Senator Kennedy, but the purpose of the meeting was to get some idea from the people as to what could be done, as to what type of candidates that the Democratic Party should nominate in order to attract a sufficient number of people to support whoever the candidate for the nomination and the candidate for the presidency on the Democratic ticket would be. In this meeting Senator Kennedy appeared along with other hopefuls. Senator [Hubert H.] Humphrey

was there; Senator [Stuart] Symington was there; and there were others whose names escape me now.

YOUNG: Was Governor [Adlai E.] Stevenson there again, as far as you can remember?

LONESOME: No, I don't think Governor Stevenson was there. And Kennedy responded to a question and answer period, as others did. And I might say that the thing that impressed me most was the forthright position that he took on the many questions that were propounded, some of which were propounded by individuals who wanted more or less to try to embarrass somebody. But Kennedy answered them in a most forthright manner, without hesitation, and the lack of fear with which he expressed himself was particularly encouraging and inviting to me.

YOUNG: Do you remember if there were any specific questions dealing with the problem of discrimination, race, at that particular meeting?

LONESOME: Yes, there were. One question in particular, I remember, was asked by a gentleman from one of the Southern states, whose name I do not know--he was a Negro--and he asked Senator Kennedy whether or not, if he was successful in being elected President of the United States, would he put forth some effort to eliminate the discrimination and segregation practiced against the Negroes in the Southern states. Specifically, reference was made to public accommodations, to separate school facilities, and the denial of voting rights to Negroes and the systematic exclusion of Negroes from the jury system--as a matter of fact, the American way of life throughout the South. Senator Kennedy replied in these words--if I might from memory quote him--he stated that there should be no difference among people; that all people, Negro and white alike, should have the same opportunity and should have the same privileges; and that there should be no denial of any of these privileges or opportunities because of race, creed or color; and that we had played and toyed with this question too long, and it was time that the President of the United States, or the executive end of the government, take some rather positive steps to eliminate these barriers and

these conditions from which the Negro had long suffered.

YOUNG: Mr. Lonesome, then would you tell me what your personal reactions were after hearing all the Democratic hopefuls at this meeting called by Mr. Butler?

LONESOME: My reaction at the outset was rather mixed because there were so many hopefuls there. We had read of the contributions and philosophies of all these men, and apparently all of them were making a pitch for the Negro vote or the Negro support. However, you could feel and sense the feeling and attitude of the Negroes there assembled. They looked upon Kennedy as a youngster who was vibrant, who was courageous, and as one who would do what he said or would place into action the things that he had expressed there. That feeling on my part had tremendous influence upon my eventual support of Senator Kennedy in his quest for the nomination.

YOUNG: If we go in chronological order after this meeting, what was your next contact with the Kennedy campaign before the primary?

LONESOME: My next contact, with regard to the Kennedy campaign and before the primary, was in the early part of the year 1960 when Marjorie MacKenzie Lawson, who is a lawyer and who is now a judge in the Domestic Relations Court in the District of Columbia, came to West Virginia. She apparently was making a campaign swing trying to enlist the support of Negroes throughout the country in behalf of Senator Kennedy. I had lunch with Marjorie Lawson at the airport, and we discussed things that could be done and how best to solicit and inspire the support of Negroes. I had a rather large list of Negroes throughout the state, that I had worked with in previous elections, whom I considered quite influential. I supplied Marjorie Lawson with these names, and, as she travelled through West Virginia, she contacted these individuals. I told her to spare no pains in suggesting to them that I had talked with her about Senator Kennedy, and had indicated my

interest and support for him, and that she could use this as a means of getting to these persons whose names I had supplied her with in order to get them lined up behind the effort of Senator Kennedy. Marjorie spent quite a few days in West Virginia. As a matter of fact, she spent two or three days here in Charleston. I took her to several meetings where groups were assembled for the purpose of having her talk with these groups about Senator Kennedy and his interest in obtaining the nomination for the presidency. Marjorie was rather forthright and she was received very well by these groups. There was some skepticism on the part of some on Kennedy's religious faith, but this skepticism purely came from those whom I considered the conservative thinkers and element of the Democratic Party. They naturally were not inclined towards a man who expressed himself in such liberal terms as Senator Kennedy. They were more or less conservatives and middle-of-the-roaders. But, on the whole, the younger element of the Democratic Party apparently was more enthusiastic than these oldsters, if I might coin an expression. And it seemed to me, though, that the impact created by these small group meetings throughout Kanawha County and throughout West Virginia served more or less as a starting point for the snowballing of the organizational effort and crystallization of thinking on the part of the majority of the electorate here in West Virginia.

YOUNG: Well, other than supplying the list of names and attending these small meetings in Charleston, were you directly involved in any other activity before the primary itself began?

LONESOME: Yes. I went throughout the state of West Virginia. I do not like to make this statement because it might be self-serving, but for twenty years or more I have travelled throughout the state of West Virginia on behalf of the Democratic Party, so that I have a large list of contacts throughout the state. As a matter of fact, the Negro leadership in these most populous counties or in a county where there is an appreciable proportion of Negroes have more or less looked upon me for their guidance and direction. And again, that's

a rather ticklish thing for me to say. And so I busied myself in trying to sell Senator Kennedy to these Negro leaders in the various counties in West Virginia. There are approximately 19 to 21 counties in West Virginia where there is an appreciable proportion of Negroes, and I covered each of them individually and I gave Marjorie Lawson names and addresses of individuals in most of these counties for her to contact.

YOUNG:           You mentioned a minute ago the reaction among conservative Democrats to the possibility of the President's religious standing in his way. Do you feel that the Negro community as such reacted in about the same proportion, or was the reaction among your Negro friends different than the reaction of the total population?

LONESOME:        The reaction among the Negroes was a bit different from the total population. The Negroes were looking at Senator Kennedy for what he stood for and for the attitude and philosophy that he displayed, rather than his religion. They did not take this religious issue in the same manner as the conservatives took it. However, the Negro Republicans were rather vocal in their denunciation of Senator Kennedy. I remember attending a meeting down in Huntington at which a Negro minister got up in the pulpit and virtually preached his sermon against Senator Kennedy, stating that, if he was elected President of the United States, that the Pope would rule the United States, which is something that I did not agree with then. History proves that it was incorrect. And the majority of the Negroes in the Democratic Party did not accept this expression on the part of those who denounced him because of his religious affiliation.

YOUNG:           Mr. Lonesome, I know that the exact figures may be impossible to obtain right off the top of our head as we talk here, but if you were to take the total number of Negro voters in West Virginia, how did they divide in terms of the two major political parties?

- LONESOME: I would say that 65 per cent of the Negroes in West Virginia are registered Democrats.
- YOUNG: But there is a sizeable Republican . . .
- LONESOME: Very sizeable.
- YOUNG: Were there any other activities before President Kennedy filed for the primary, that you remember, that might be of importance before we move on to the primary?
- LONESOME: None that I can recall other than what I have already stated. Naturally, there were several others, but I can only be in one place at one time. But there were several meetings held by colored and white people throughout the state of West Virginia in the interest of Senator Kennedy.
- YOUNG: Well, as we move on into the primary then, with the filing of both Senator Kennedy and Senator Humphrey, did you discern any difference between the two in their attitude on civil rights?
- LONESOME: Well, there wasn't any basic difference in their thinking. In some instances, perhaps, Senator Humphrey may have been a bit more outspoken than Senator Kennedy. But the thing that more or less attracted Senator Kennedy to the Negro people, aside from his outspoken attitudes and philosophy, was the fact that here was a youngster, a vibrant individual, who mixed well with the people, who was not afraid of them, who shook hands with them, who put his arms around them, and walked in groups with them, and talked with them sometimes in groups of twos and threes. This closeness that Senator Kennedy demonstrated and exhibited, in my opinion, had a more pronounced effect on the Negro people than the outspoken attitude of Senator Humphrey.
- YOUNG: Do you feel that in the campaign between the two men in West Virginia that there were broad ideological differences, or was the campaign one more of personality and personal relationship?

LONESOME: I think that the campaign was one more or less of personality and personal relationship rather than differences in ideologies and philosophies. I do not think that there was sufficient variance in political philosophies and ideologies between Senator Kennedy and Senator Humphrey at that time to precipitate a selection purely from their expressed ideologies and philosophies.

YOUNG: In other words, to say that one was left and one was right, or right of center or left of center, would be to slice it pretty thin?

LONESOME: That's exactly right.

YOUNG: Political writers--at the time noted as political writers--have since the primary said that, in some cases at least, a vote for Senator Humphrey was considered in many places to really be a vote for Senator [Lyndon B.] Johnson. Were you aware of this at the time, and, if so, what was your reaction at the time?

LONESOME: Well, at that time--I might go back a bit and say that Senator [Robert C.] Byrd from West Virginia was an avowed supporter of Senator Johnson then, and the effort apparently was to stop Kennedy. And they figured that by throwing as much support as they could to Senator Humphrey that they would of necessity keep a certain amount of votes away from Senator Kennedy. The idea was apparently that Senator Humphrey would not be a formidable candidate anyway, and that, when this thing reached the convention stage, that perhaps there would be sufficient unpledged support so that Senator Johnson could ultimately get it all.

YOUNG: Would you continue then, Mr. Lonesome, with the discussion of the Humphrey-Johnson possible arrangement?

LONESOME: Within the state of West Virginia, a lot of the political organizations were in the camp of Senator Humphrey. However, when this image of Lyndon Johnson was projected among the people and when Senator Byrd came out and indicated his support and preference for Senator Johnson, a lot of people then realized that a vote for Senator Humphrey may be an ultimate vote for Senator Johnson. And it was then that the people began choosing sides. And we saw political organizations that, heretofore, were in the Humphrey column becoming either disintegrated or shifting their support to Senator Kennedy. So that--it's historic now--but Kennedy's margin of support, of victory rather, in the primary exceeded even his expectations.

YOUNG: Other than the banquet in Washington, which you described, called by Paul Butler, did you have any personal contact with Senator Kennedy during the West Virginia primary?

LONESOME: No, none other than the meetings in Washington. Incidentally, there were two meetings in Washington which I attended, and on each of these occasions Senator Kennedy was there. And then during the primary I saw him once in West Virginia, and, of course, during the general election I saw him on several occasions. But I was so busy trying to get a job done that shaking hands with Senator Kennedy and being seen or being photographed did not attract me because I was interested in getting the job done.

YOUNG: Well, you have described the pre-primary work. Would you describe in more detail the work which you did between the--before the primary itself in May 1960?

LONESOME: From May 1960 up until the general election my primary purpose was to set up an organization or machinery to capture the Negro vote in West Virginia for Senator Kennedy. One of my first moves was to persuade C. W. Dickerson, a good friend of mine and a Negro attorney, to take the leadership in this movement,



and Mr. Dickerson was placed in the state headquarters as a sort of coordinator. And I, in turn, took the field work because I don't do too well sitting behind a desk. I like to get out where the people are. Mr. Dickerson, then, did the directing, and I did the contacting. We worked together quite effectively. We must have started our campaign sometime during the first part of September. And we worked diligently up until election day. As a matter of fact, I had the privilege of going into twenty-six different counties during that election, and I compiled a rather impressive list of persons that I contacted. I even took the opportunity and took the advantage of some people in some instances--I even went to Bluefield State Teachers College and talked with the faculty and staff there, tried to enlist their support for Senator Kennedy. I gave them a story of a new image, a man who apparently had the courage of his convictions, who recognized the problem and wanted to do something about it. And in my travel I would meet with groups of people in their respective counties. These meetings were all arranged for me ahead of time by the office in which Mr. Dickerson was the coordinator, and when I got there, it was my job to do the salesmanship.

YOUNG: Which of Senator Kennedy's proposals other than, of course, the civil rights question, which you were interested in, had the most appeal? I guess another way to phrase this question would be: What do you think were the contributing factors to Senator Kennedy's victory?

LONESOME: The thing what West Virginians were primarily interested in was the economy of the state. Senator Kennedy, in his many trips into West Virginia, always took cognizance of the fact that we were a depressed area and his avowed pledge was that, "If I am elected, I am going to do something to eliminate some of the depression here and some of the distress." As a result of that, you have this food stamp program, the distressed area bill, and movements of that kind designed to channel direct help into West Virginia to help those needy persons who were unemployed--some were not even employable--and to eliminate

this distress and poverty which he saw so much of when he toured West Virginia. He would go in the coal mining areas that once used to be thriving communities, and you would see the houses boarded up, the windows boarded up. It would be just a ghost town. And he was aware of this. In many instances and in many areas where you might find houses boarded up, you might find some life in the community, but the economy was down because the coal mines in those areas or communities had apparently been worked out. So that he could see these conditions, and he promised these people some relief from the poverty and the distress. And one of his first official acts was--after his election and after he took the oath of office--was to channel some relief to the people in West Virginia in these distressed areas.

YOUNG: Well, in this connection, would you also then evaluate the effectiveness of Franklin D Roosevelt, Jr, in the Kennedy campaign?

LONESOME: I think that Franklin Roosevelt, Jr., had a tremendous influence in West Virginia. Franklin Roosevelt worked primarily in southern West Virginia, and that's where most of the population is, and that's where most of the distress is. And Franklin Roosevelt really told the story to these people in West Virginia as to what the Kennedy Administration would do and could do.

YOUNG: Mr. Lonesome, we've talked about your work in the general election. I'd like to go back now, if we can, to the time immediately before the primary. How did your work during the primary for Kennedy differ from your work after the primary?

LONESOME: In the primary election, or before the primary, my work was primarily with, totally with Democrats, because even though they were registered as Democrats, we wanted them to support Senator Kennedy in the primary election; whereas in the general election, I worked with people, Republicans and Democrats. Perhaps there may have been a few Socialists or Communists; I don't know.

But wherever I could find an individual, I attempted to get them to support Senator Kennedy and the Democratic ticket. So that is the difference.

YOUNG: In other words, the general nature of the work, mechanically, was pretty much the same. It was just that you were working with different groups each time?

LONESOME: A larger sphere of people.

YOUNG: What effect do you think Senator Kennedy's Harvard accent and perhaps his Eastern reputation and Eastern mannerisms and the effect of the Kennedy family had on the outcome of the primary?

LONESOME: Well, the Negro people think that there is not much that a person with a poor cultural background, who comes from humble circumstances, and who is, shall we say, a poor man, can do for them. The Negroes feel--and I agree with them--that if they are going to get anywhere, they are going to have to obtain their help and greatest support from those who have been exposed to the better things in life, from those whose backgrounds (culturally and economically) are such that they can depend upon on what they say, and the further fact that here is a man who is a Harvard graduate, who has written some books, whose father was a millionaire, whose family all became millionaires through their father's benevolence, so that the Negro people were not his competitors. And here is a man who they felt would do something for them. He had everything he wanted, and here he was out here now trying to help them. They thought that the man was genuine; they thought he was sincere. And those factors created a tremendous impact among the Negro people.

YOUNG: Well, Mr. Lonesome, do you think then that the Kennedy war record played any role in the West Virginia primary?

LONESOME: The Kennedy war record, along with the Kennedy benevolence and the Kennedy philosophy, all of those factors had something to do with the overall success. It would be difficult for me to pinpoint or to evaluate relatively the effect of any of these three factors. They all served a very healthy and useful purpose.

YOUNG: I'm going to ask you another question--and perhaps you have just given the answer for it too. But comment, if you would please, on the effectiveness of organization and financing with respect to Kennedy versus Humphrey.

LONESOME: Well, to begin with, [Robert F.] Bobby Kennedy, in my opinion, is perhaps the greatest organizer that I have ever been exposed to. He came into West Virginia, and he had more know-how, organization-wise, than any politician that I have ever been exposed to--and I have been exposed to some pretty good ones; we've had some great ones here in West Virginia--the further fact that Bobby, or the Kennedy people, knew where to place their money to get the best results. I don't think they threw away any money. I think they got value received for every dollar that was spent. They were the wisest political investors that I've ever seen.

YOUNG: Well, this again is a hypothetical question, but, had the Kennedy-Humphrey forces been perhaps almost evenly matched in terms of organization and financing, do you think the results would have been any different?

LONESOME: No, I do not.

YOUNG: That the victory was still a personal victory for Senator Kennedy?

LONESOME: Very definitely so.

YOUNG: Do you have any other general observations-- well, one thing I did want to ask on the primary that I'd forgotten was, again, the general question of the final importance of the religious issue. Do you believe that in the primary it really made any difference?

LONESOME: I don't, in summarizing, think it made any difference. A lot voted against him because of his religion, and a lot of people voted for him on account of his religion. I think that possibly the two things more or less resolved themselves.

YOUNG: Balanced each other . . .

LONESOME: Balanced each other off. That's what I think.

YOUNG: Well, let's turn then, if you would please, to the early activities of the Kennedy Administration. Previously you mentioned the food stamp plan and emergency relief programs. How did the Negro community which you represent in West Virginia generally feel about the President's civil rights program up to the time, of course, of his assassination?

LONESOME: The Negro people looked upon John F. Kennedy as a symbol, as more or less a god. When you would talk with a Negro--he might be the most rabid Republican--he'd have to take his hat off to John F. Kennedy. When Kennedy would go before the public, go before television audiences, and state what the government should do, what he wanted to do. . . . And I shall never forget the comparison that he drew between the Negro and the white man, about his lack of educational opportunity, his lack of economic opportunity, and the time that it took him to get an education, and the many handicaps that he had to overcome. His civil rights program was so magnetic, insofar as Negroes are concerned, that if he was living today, I would daresay that 95% of the Negroes of America would vote for him.

YOUNG: Mr. Lonesome, it has often been said that the President took a legal issue, the legal issue of civil rights, and raised it to a moral level. Do you believe that this is true?

LONESOME: I very definitely do for the simple reason that the big problem, the basic problem, in civil rights will never be settled by force, or by enactment of laws, or by court decisions. The Supreme Court, to illustrate, in 1954 passed, wrote the decision Brown vs. Virginia, I believe it was, on this separate but equal school system business. Yet, we have a tremendous amount of states and cities that have not desegregated their schools. Kennedy put it in the hearts of people that this is a moral issue, and, if you are morally right and if you look upon all individuals as being equal and entitled to the same opportunities and the same privileges and freedoms, as all Americans are entitled to, then you are morally bound to do something about these many problems and these sufferings and deprivation of the Negro people. In that respect, that pitch had a tremendous impact upon the people of America. Of course, down South there isn't anything you can do with some of those people. Some of them will go to their graves hating the Negro and thinking that he is still a chattel rather than a human being. But this idea of making this a moral issue rather than a legal issue will ultimately penetrate the hearts and souls of even the most rabid diehards.

YOUNG: Was there any feeling in West Virginia, do you think, that the Kennedy civil rights program was perhaps advancing too slowly?

LONESOME: Well, there wasn't the thought that it was advancing too slowly because the West Virginians, as most Americans did, realized the many problems and the many barriers that he had to overcome. To begin with, he had his stubborn and recalcitrant Congress to battle with, of which the important committees were dominated by Southerners. They would get his important legislation in there and bottle it up and--you take Judge [Howard W.] Smith from Virginia, Chairman of the House Rules Committee. You saw the attitude that he took, and I don't know what would have happened if Kennedy had lived. The people did not blame Kennedy for the lack of speed in the enactment of the civil rights program; they blamed Congress for the lack of speed.

YOUNG: In other words, it was complete confidence in the leadership of the President but very little in the leadership of Congress at the time?

LONESOME: That's exactly what it was.

YOUNG: Could you comment on reactions in West Virginia to other aspects of the New Frontier. I'm thinking of things like the Peace Corps, the North-South Highway, medicare (the proposal of the President with respect to medical care), that sort of thing, and the reaction, at least among the people that you knew very well politically?

LONESOME: Among the rank and file of people, the medicare bill and the highway bill were rather popular things, all of which people felt were sorely needed. Our leadership again in Congress--from West Virginia, I mean now--was divided, particularly on the medicare bill. Senator [Jennings] Randolph cast what many consider the death blow against the bill; Senator Byrd was for the bill. So that people have not forgotten this. And, of course, the highway program is something that was more or less interlocked with all the other states. It was more or less like a gathering moss--a rolling moss--gaining momentum as it went on. People realized that distressed states in particular would benefit from this highway program, in that the travelling public would have an opportunity to travel faster and to cover more ground, and the tourist public then leaves money in these various areas. The Peace Corps received a tremendous shot in the arm when the native Charleston, Charlie Peters, Jr., was taken into the Peace Corps. I am a member of the Mayor's Commission on Human Relations in the city of Charleston, and we brought Sargent Shriver here, who at that time was the head of the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was a rather popular issue, rather popular movement among the people in West Virginia. People are rather selfish when they see some of their own having a prominent part in it; they take to it with more kindness than if none of their own are identified with it. And Charlie Peters, who is a very likeable boy, a very fine young man, comes from a very fine family, had made a good representative in the Peace Corps movement.

YOUNG: Mr. Lonesome, you have already indicated that you believe that, if President Kennedy had lived to run for a second term, he would have gotten 95% of the Negro vote in the United States. Would you apply this same analysis to the total vote in West Virginia? Do you feel the President's popularity among the general public in West Virginia has gone up?

LONESOME: The President's popularity at the time of his death was at its height in West Virginia. In the general election of 1960, I think that President Kennedy ran behind Governor [William Wallace] Barron. I think Senator Randolph led the ticket; Governor Barron possibly was second; and President Kennedy was third. This time I think that, if Kennedy had lived, if Kennedy had run, I believe that Kennedy possibly would have led the ticket because this religious myth had been exploded. The man had kept and made good on the many promises that he made to West Virginia, and the people were benefiting and reaping the benefit and feeling the effect of his carrying out of his campaign pledges in many areas of West Virginia. So I think that Kennedy would have gotten more votes in the election of 1964 than he received in 1960.

YOUNG: Well, did you notice any reluctance in the fall election of 1960 of the senatorial or gubernatorial or state candidate to be associated with the Kennedy ticket? Were they afraid perhaps that the religious issue wasn't quite dead . . .

LONESOME: Most of them were afraid. They shied away from this religious issue. They ran more or less as a group of individuals rather than running as a team on a ticket.

YOUNG: As a Democratic ticket?

LONESOME: That's right.

YOUNG: Let's come back then to 1963 and 1964. If you picked up any criticism at all of the New Frontier or of the Kennedy program, what kind of



criticism was it likely to have been or did you hear much criticism at all of the Kennedy Administration as such?

LONESOME: Well, you didn't get much in West Virginia, because the man had leaned over backwards to help the people in West Virginia and to carry out his campaign pledges. As a matter of fact, I think that he overdid it, insofar as carrying out pledges in West Virginia is concerned.

YOUNG: You say you feel he overdid it?

LONESOME: Yes, I think he went beyond his pledges, because very often he would declare emergencies and send other relief and support and aid into the state.

YOUNG: Well, if you were to summarize the general effect of the primary in West Virginia, the national attention it attracted, and then the general election in the fall, could you give some summary thoughts of a broad general nature of the significance of all this for the state of West Virginia?

LONESOME: The West Virginians became proud of the fact that our state was heralded as the state that gave Senator Kennedy his strongest impetus in his quest for the nomination for the presidency. The West Virginians are rather prideful people and when this fact was paraded and publicized throughout the state and the nation, they took some pride in it. And they began to say, "Look, look what we've done. (That was a common expression among the West Virginians). We catapulted John F. Kennedy into the nomination for the presidency of the United States."

YOUNG: Was there any feeling that there had been, that the talk of poverty and that sort of thing had been harmful in any way?

LONESOME: No, the talk of poverty more or less was used as a springboard by the Kennedy people. It was used as a sort of strategem insofar as the West Virginian was concerned, because he wanted to keep the Kennedy people on us and he wanted to keep them aware of the fact that they were poverty stricken.

YOUNG: Mr. Lonesome, you have indicated that you would like to say a word about the special relationship of the Kennedy Administration and the appointment of Negroes in government positions and how this may have affected the Negro vote in West Virginia. Would you continue with that, please?

LONESOME: At the very outset of the Kennedy Administration, it was my privilege to recommend to Senator Byrd and to [Robert P.] Bob McDonough that we should have a Negro in the District Attorney's office here in Charleston. Both of them apparently realized the wisdom of this because they both got to work on it, and ultimately C. W. Dickerson was named to the federal attorney's office. I'm told that this is the second time in the history of the state that a Negro has been named to the District Attorney's office. In the early '20's Harry Capehart, a Republican, was named by, perhaps, President [Herbert C.] Hoover. Bernice Martin, from Bluefield, was named to the United States Civil Rights Commission. The point that I am trying to bring out is this, not so much what happened in West Virginia: Here's a man who begins appointing Negroes to jobs on a federal level throughout the nation. He appointed John Duncan as one of the commissioners in the District of Columbia. John Duncan and I went to school together. He appointed Thurgood Marshall as judge of the Circuit Court of Appeals in the New York circuit. He appointed Parsous, Richard Parsous, from Chicago as a United States district judge. He appointed several other Negro judges. He appointed Negroes--it seems as though in every federal attorney's office, there was a Negro as an Assistant District Attorney. The postmaster of Los Angeles County--or rather, ✓ Los Angeles city--was a Negro. The Post Office Department was instructed to implement and to upgrade Negroes. If anything, it was more or less integration in reverse because in many instances, the white person was discriminated against,

and the Negro was advanced over him. So that his effort and attitude towards the employment of Negroes, to my mind, was one of the great things that his Administration achieved, and it has had such an impact that the present Johnson Administration is continuing this policy and program. As a matter of fact, it would be unpopular for them to reverse the trend because it apparently met with such popular accord. I think President Johnson has done well in that regard, in that he has made many significant appointments since the death of President Kennedy. But the point that I am making is this: That President Kennedy started this thing, he began appointing Negroes and opening up doors and insisting that Negroes be placed everywhere. You take the United States Coast Guard Academy. The President went there once, and he didn't see any Negroes there. He said, "You don't have any Negroes in this outfit." You now have Negroes in the United States Coast Guard Academy. You even have a Negro as an instructor there. All of these things indicate the great depth of thinking and feeling on the part of the Kennedy Administration.

YOUNG:                This has been an interview at the Daniel Boone Hotel in Charleston, West Virginia, conducted on July 14, 1964, with Mr. William L. Lonesome, a practicing attorney of Charleston, West Virginia, who played a prominent role in the 1960 Democratic primary and in the general election in West Virginia in that same year. The interview was conducted by William L. Young.