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Jacobs, West Virginia political figure; Hubert Humphrey campaign worker (1960), discusses his job as state Co-Chairman for Hubert Humphrey and John F. Kennedy's popularity throughout the state of West Virginia, among other issues.

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William L. Jacobs – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

WILLIAM L. JACOBS

July 6, 1964

Holiday Inn Motel, Parkersburg, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: Mr. Jacobs, would you say a few words as to how you first became interested in the campaign of Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] in the state of West Virginia for the Democratic nomination?

JACOBS: Well, at that time I genuinely believed that Hubert Humphrey was the better qualified man, that he had shown more leadership in the United States Senate up to that point than John F. Kennedy had, that he was an extremely competent and qualified individual. I had the opinion then and I still retain that opinion that he was the ablest man in Washington.

By that I don't mean to say that I didn't think that John F. Kennedy was also a very

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able man, but of the two, and when the choice narrowed down to the two, I selected Senator Humphrey and supported Senator Humphrey. I had heard him many times on television and various interviews and was very much impressed by what he had done and what he had said and the leadership he had exerted in the Congress.

YOUNG: Would you say something about your own particular position in the Humphrey campaign?

JACOBS: My job in the Humphrey campaign was as state Co-Chairman for the Humphrey forces. I was assigned the task of attempting to win support for Senator Humphrey in the northern half of West Virginia, in the northern counties.

Unfortunately, the only asset with which I was equipped, other than the tremendous ability of Senator Humphrey himself, was a telephone credit card. I was supplied with no funds whatsoever to put on any kind of a drive but I did use my telephone credit card to call people across the northern half of the state, various lawyers with whom I had been associated and various Democratic leaders

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that I'd come into contact with. I'd formerly served as Wood County Democratic Chairman and, in that post, had met a great many Democratic leaders across the state.

I'd used that to what advantage I could in Senator Humphrey's behalf by way of the telephone and by way of short trips financed solely by myself.

YOUNG: As the primary campaign developed in West Virginia, do you think that West Virginians divided along ideological lines in terms of possible future platform policy or was it more a matter of personalities and personal leadership?

JACOBS: I don't think it was divided upon ideological lines at all. I think that was a very minor part of the thing. I think the thing that won for Kennedy in West Virginia was the tremendous organization that he built up and of course the financial asset which he had and utilized to the maximum, and the lack of financial assets which Senator Humphrey had.

If anything, I would say the principal

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factor was that of an excellent organization which had been developed and fully established before the Humphrey forces ever got under way.

I know I repeated ran across people in my contacts who told me but for the fact that they had already been contacted by the Kennedy people and had already committed themselves that they would at least certainly approach the thing from an open mind and would possibly have given us some help. But we were out-organized, out-financed, and, as events developed, it became quite obvious that the Kennedy personality, the personal magnetism that the man was gifted with was attracting followers.

YOUNG: Did you feel that the other members of the Kennedy family were important in the campaign?

JACOBS: Yes, yes. I definitely think they were, with some minor qualifications; but, by and large, I think the Kennedy clan, as it's been referred to, was extremely helpful to him.

I remember one night I was scheduled to speak on Senator Humphrey's behalf out in

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Calhoun County, in Grantsville, West Virginia and Edward Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] was to appear on behalf of his brother that night. I'm sorry to this day that I didn't have an opportunity to engage in a debate with Mr. Edward Kennedy. I would have considered it an honor at that time and would consider it an honor yet today.

YOUNG: Mr. Jacobs, you mentioned to me before we started our tape recording that you were featured prominently in a national news magazine in the middle of the primary. I wonder if you would care to repeat that story?

JACOBS: Well, yes. It was a kind of embarrassing mention in a national magazine for me.

What happened was during the course of the heat of the campaign a reporter for *NewsWeek Magazine* by the name of Ben Bradlee [Benjamin C. Bradlee] came to my office one day. And we sat and talked for, oh I'd say, probably, an hour during which I extolled the virtues of Senator Humphrey, exuded confidence about the outcome of the West Virginia primary, and tried to paint as rosy a picture as I knew

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how of the Humphrey chances in West Virginia and of Senator Humphrey and so forth!

During the course of the discussion it came out that I was a former newspaper man myself. I'd been associated with the local papers and with the Charleston [Charleston, West Virginia] papers and WVU [West Virginia University] athletic publicity a number of years ago. And at the conclusion of the interview, when Mr. Bradlee got up to leave and shook hands with me, he was saying how much he enjoyed talking with me and so forth, he said, "Now Bill—" (and by that point we had reached a first name stage)—"just off the record, just between you and me, what is your honest appraisal of the situation?" And I said, "Well, now, I've already told you that. I think our chances are excellent. The campaign is going well. We have the best possible candidate for the presidency," and so forth.

He said, "Well, now, I realize that's for publication but just off the record, just between the two of us and just as two members

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of the Fourth Estate, and you know that members of the Fourth Estate don't breach confidences, just confidentially and off the record, strictly off the record, how do you feel? What's your honest appraisal?"

So I, finally, after five or ten minutes of this type of conversation, said "O.K. Strictly off the record. What we've been running into, at least in my opinion, is the fact that of the two men Senator Humphrey seems a little bit harder to sell. For some reason I get the impression that people don't take him quite as readily and as easily and quickly as they do to

Senator Kennedy. And the campaign is not progressing as well as I had hoped. We are extremely handicapped by a lack of finances and the Kennedy campaign is so well organized and well-oiled that it's going to be close!" I'd earlier in the course of the interview told him that I thought we were going to win by a substantial majority.

He shook hands and left the office and I thought nothing more of the interview until the

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telephone rang at the office and the girl buzzed me and I picked up the phone and the voice at the other end said, "This is the"—I think it was—"the *Wall Street Journal*." I think that was the first one to call me, although two of three called me. The man on the other end of the line said, "Mr. Jacobs?" I said, "Yes, sir." And he said, "Do you have any comment to make with respect to the explosive paragraph in the *NewsWeek* article?" And I said, "What explosive paragraph in what *NewsWeek* article?" And he proceeded to read the thing to me. I hadn't even seen it. It wasn't even out on the newsstands yet in West Virginia. And the paragraph quoted things which I had said in this strictly off the cuff, strictly off the record discussion with Mr. Bradlee!

Well, it was probably, maybe, a year after that, at least six months to a year after that, and I was sitting in a hotel room in Charleston, West Virginia and I picked up, just by sheer chance, a copy of a

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Washington newspaper. And I saw in there a Washington society column, which again I just read by chance because I never read society columns but I saw the name "Kennedy" mentioned, and the lady reporter was telling the story that since John F. Kennedy had been elected President, he and Jacqueline [Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis] had attended very few private social functions, but possibly a half a dozen or so in which the guests numbered a dozen or so couples, that they were sworn to secrecy, that no one was to reveal that the President and the First Lady had been there and so forth.

But among those who had hosted, or at least attended, I believe it said hosted, such very private affairs was one Ben Bradlee, a former neighbor who lived in the same block or possibly next door to John F. Kennedy and his family when they were residents of Georgetown! I still to this day get a little chuckle out of that affair!

YOUNG: Well, speaking of personalities, many of the writers, political analysts that have been

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summarizing the West Virginia primary since 1960, commented on the role of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jr. [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.] in the campaign. Was he in Wood County [Wood County, West Virginia], or did you have any contact with this campaigning?

JACOBS: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. has been in Wood County. I met with him. As a matter of fact right here in this very area where this interview is being taped, but that was after the primary.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr. was used by the Kennedy forces largely in the southern coal mining areas of West Virginia because of the magic of the FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt] name. I think he was a definite help to the Kennedy forces in the southern West Virginia coal areas which is, of course, a predominantly Democratic region of West Virginia.

YOUNG: Much has been said about religion in the campaign. I wonder if you would comment, first of all, on religion as an issue in Wood County and Parkersburg specifically; and after that if we might not go on to the general

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subject of religion in the primary in the entire state of West Virginia.

JACOBS: I think that religion was an issue. Not in the ordinary sense. I think that the Kennedy forces capitalized on the religious issue. And it was the religious issue that caused me to gain even more respect and admiration for Senator Hubert Humphrey than I had previously had.

I sat in, of course, with Senator Humphrey on a number of closed door, smoke-filled room sessions in which we'd planned the West Virginia campaign and during the course of those discussions, every time the subject of religion was brought up, and any effort by any of the Humphrey aides to utilize the religious thing Senator Humphrey always said, both privately as well as publicly, that he would not in any way use or capitalize on the religious issue.

I am morally certain that Senator Humphrey kept his word which he had given publicly and his word which he gave to us

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privately. The Kennedy forces, in my opinion, used the religious issue. They capitalized on it. They stood up and said, We're being down-trodden because of religion. You people of West Virginia are holding Senator Kennedy's religion against him and you oughtn't to do that." And it turned the thing around psychologically to where it was used, in my opinion, as a very definite tool on behalf of Kennedy. In Wood County, I don't think the religious thing played too prominent a part. Wood County, I guess boastfully one would say, is one of the more enlightened counties of the state. We are not particularly in the so-called "Bible belt." We have a pretty independent electorate—pretty much of a thinking electorate. And I don't think that religion was too much of a factor one way or the other in the campaign.

On a state-wide basis, I think religion was a factor; but I think it was a factor which the Kennedy forces turned to their advantage. In Wood County, Senator Kennedy

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lost the county by 7,500 votes. But I don't think it was a religious issue, particularly. I think that, probably, the religious issue hurt Senator Kennedy some in Wood County, not because the people in Wood County were particularly duped by this approach. I think that there was that much bigotry, probably, shown. I think it influenced it that much because Senator Kennedy had been to Wood County several times before the primary. He had been planning. You could see it building. I had been to a number of receptions here in Wood County before the primary. I remember meeting one morning for breakfast with Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] that Kennedy had sent here. So the ground work was laid well in advance by the Kennedy forces, not only here in Wood County, but all over the state of West Virginia.

YOUNG: In your own particular county, then, you would not list religion as a major factor in terms of Kennedy popularity or unpopularity?

JACOBS: I think it was a factor. I think, for instance, that the fact that Kennedy lost this county by

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7,500 votes, that religion was a factor in that.

YOUNG: You are speaking of the primary now?

JACOBS: I'm speaking of the primary now. Well, I'm sorry. I'm not speaking of the primary. That was the result in the general. That was the result in the general. I think it definitely hurt him in the general.

The county was close, according to my recollection, in the primary. Yes, the religion was a factor in the general. I'm sorry.

YOUNG: O.K. Thank you. Mr. Jacobs, could you mention any other Kennedy techniques which you felt acted against your particular candidate, Senator Humphrey?

JACOBS: Well, there were several of them. One I remember in particular because it involved me in particular, was this thing which I previously mentioned about the Ben Bradlee *NewsWeek* interview. In a number of speeches after that Bradlee write-up in *NewsWeek*, Senator Kennedy, without mentioning my name, said that if he had a chairman such as Senator

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Humphrey had, he'd have fired him a long time ago! He used it to full advantage to try to help sell the Kennedy candidacy.

Another thing which they used were the PT boat emblems. They must have given out many, many thousands of those! You could see those things everywhere. It seemed like every

time we turned around the Kennedy people were throwing some kind of a great big feed or ox roast type of thing at which they were feeding the public! They capitalized to the maximum on the financial assets which, at least from the standpoint of the Humphrey people, appeared almost overwhelming. I remember, for instance, one of the last times before Senator Humphrey went on the air for a state-wide telecast the poor guy had to dig down in his own pocket to come up with the money to pay for the telecast before he could go on the air! And I'm satisfied it came out of Senator Humphrey's own private pockets. We just didn't have it and we had not had much luck in raising money in West Virginia.

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And the Kennedy war record which was unquestionably an illustrious one—what he did was certainly a feat of the utmost heroism—was capitalized on to the fullest extent, and the fact that Senator Humphrey had not been in the service, while, that was not played upon by the Kennedy forces, left a certain void in the discussions in that area which no doubt hurt us.

YOUNG: I wonder if we might not talk about economic issues for a moment if you are quite willing. In 1960, how would you describe the economic condition of Wood County? In that election year was it a depressed area? Was it fairly prosperous? Was it vulnerable to appeals, possible promises of government aid from either candidate?

JACOBS: Well, we here in Wood County, fortunately then as now, are a little bit better fixed financially than in a good part of the state of West Virginia because we're in what some people call "the Ruhr Valley of America." The Ohio Valley is dotted with industry and

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the people of Wood County are, comparatively speaking, that is compared to the southern coal section of West Virginia, better off financially. So I don't think that the financial or economic question, at least as between Senator Humphrey and Senator Kennedy, was a major factor. I would say that, if anything, the economic aspect of the thing served to keep the race here in Wood County in the primary between Senator Humphrey and Senator Kennedy a fairly close race because we capitalized as much as we were able to on Senator Humphrey's labor record in the Congress of the United States. I know I repeatedly in my talks referred to him as "organized labor's best friend on Capitol Hill." I believed it at that time and I believe it today. He's still organized labor's best friend on Capitol Hill! But organized labor did not come to the forefront in support of Senator Humphrey at that time as I felt they should have.

There was talk, for instance, that if Senator Humphrey were nominated he couldn't

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be elected. That talk was spread far and wide among the labor forces and I know in the national conventions and conclaves of the labor movement that they didn't come out forthrightly and four-square as I thought they should have!

YOUNG: What is the particular strength of organized labor in Wood County? What are the strongest unions?

JACOBS: Well, textile workers, steel workers...I would say steel workers, probably, are the biggest factor. We don't have too much of the mining unions or Teamsters [International Brotherhood of Teamster]. There are some elements but I'd say steel workers are probably the largest, strongest organized labor group in the county. It is a—because of the diversification of our industry here, we don't have too much predominance of any one particular union here. We had strong units, at that time, of both the AFL [American Federation of Labor] and CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations].

YOUNG: Did you notice any split in labor between the rank and file of the labor movement and the labor leadership? Did one group tend to

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support one candidate at the expense of the other or did they divide pretty evenly?

JACOBS: They were divided to some extent, although I would say that the majority of the support went to Senator Kennedy, largely, in my opinion, by way of directive from the top, that is, from the national organizations which were coming out more strongly for Senator Kennedy than they were for Senator Humphrey. I think on the state level, and I know that on the local level, we had a number of prominent labor leaders who were privately, some publicly, supporting Senator Humphrey in spite of the fact, according to my recollection, that Kennedy had the endorsement of a good percentage of the major labor organizations, at least later on in the campaign.

YOUNG: Mr. Jacobs, do you have any more general reflections or memories of the primary before we go on to some other subject?

JACOBS: No. Nothing in particular. It was a fascinating and enjoyable experience. Looking back on it, I wish we had had two things:

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better organization, and earlier; and more financial resources.

I recall one of my most enjoyable experiences of the campaign, the primary campaign, was taking Governor Orville Freeman [Orville Lothrop Freeman] from Minnesota around on a ten-or-so-county swing around the Parkersburg area. He spoke here on behalf of

Senator Humphrey, and of course, we had Senator Eugene McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] who also came in and spoke on behalf of Senator Humphrey.

But I remember every time we turned around it seemed that the Kennedy people were bringing in another big name nationally to help the Kennedy campaign.

I came out of the campaign with nothing but the very highest respect and admiration for Senator Kennedy and his leadership ability, his administrative ability, his ability as an organizer. He had a tremendous campaign, tremendous people behind him! We were just plain out and out overwhelmed, in retrospect.

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YOUNG: In West Virginia, we occasionally hear about the subject of the importance of renting cars, the importance of the family vote, getting the support of one or two particular families. Is this particularly an issue in Wood County? The hiring of cars? That sort of thing?

JACOBS: Not generally. Although in the Kennedy campaign it was very effective. I know that on primary election day I went around just to see. You can get a pretty good idea of how the election is going by the number of placards you see out and by the number of cars you see bearing a particular candidate's name and stickers and so forth. As I drove over the county at the various polling places I saw just, it occurred to me at that time, more cars out than I've ever seen in my entire life with Kennedy stickers all over them, more than the time I ran for Congress myself and I saw an awful lot of cars carrying my opponent's name to the polls that day! But they were very well organized. The car pools were very, very effective.

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They had a number of—for instance in Wood County—they had a number of very prominent and very active Democratic women who made, literally, thousands of telephone calls! They had one of the best organized telephone call campaigns I have ever seen in my life! I think that every house and home in the county was called a number of times by very zealous, very eager ladies just working down to the wire for John F. Kennedy! They were just fairly entranced by the man and thoroughly believed him to be the best man. And I think that was a very potent force in the thing.

YOUNG: Do you have any more comments on the primary?

JACOBS: I don't think of anything else just off hand.

YOUNG: O.K. Let's move on then. As a representative of the Humphrey forces, how did the Democratic Party in the county and the state close ranks for the general election? Could you speak particularly of your own county and your own position as leader of an opposition candidate in the primary?

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JACOBS: I felt that we closed ranks very quickly and very well. Our people didn't feel anti-Kennedy at all! We were pro-Humphrey. And once Senator Humphrey bowed out of the picture, as far as I was concerned, the leadership and the ability that John F. Kennedy had shown and his overwhelming victory in West Virginia in the primary helped convince me that he would make a very excellent president.

I feel that, by and large, all the Humphrey people felt the same way. I remember it wasn't too long after the primary that I was asked to serve as the master of ceremonies at one of our rallies here in Wood County and to say a few words on behalf of John F. Kennedy and it was my pleasure to do so. I felt then and do feel now that he would make and did make a very, very able president, one of our ablest.

Our people did close ranks. Our people got out and worked side by side with the Kennedy people to help elect him. I did so, and recommended to all of my people to do so.

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There wasn't any hesitancy, any reluctance, on our part to support John F. Kennedy. We knew that he would make a good president.

YOUNG: Do you feel that West Virginia voted for John F. Kennedy in the general election largely because it was a traditionally Democratic state, or do you feel that Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] might have carried the state had not Kennedy given West Virginia so much attention in the primary?

JACOBS: Well, the fact that Mr. Kennedy gave West Virginia so much attention in the primary certainly did help here because an awful lot of people in West Virginia felt that they knew John F. Kennedy personally. There were one heck of a lot of people in West Virginia who had met John F. Kennedy personally and talked with him personally, and knew him on a first name basis!

In almost every community of any size in West Virginia you will find a sizable group of people yet today who speak of John F. Kennedy as a personal friend! And that was most certainly a factor. I think that the

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Democratic nominee, regardless of who he was, would have carried West Virginia.

I think that Kennedy's victory in the primary and his personal popularity here offset the religious bigotry element to the point that he certainly fared as well as any Democratic candidate would have fared. Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], for instance, was a very popular man in West Virginia.

There were an awful lot of old line, die-hard Democrats who privately expressed the opinion and the hope that Lyndon Johnson would come out of the convention as the nominee. Even some of those who had supported John F. Kennedy in the primary here, why, their private choice, first choice at that time, in my opinion would have been Lyndon B. Johnson.

As a matter of fact, we in the Humphrey forces, at least I, was hoping that Lyndon B. Johnson would throw his weight into the West Virginia campaign behind Senator Humphrey for the purpose of, ultimately, possibly, nominating Johnson himself, and if that were his desire,

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and it was his desire.

YOUNG: If I might summarize, then, some of the people support Senator Humphrey were actually for Senator Humphrey while others felt that perhaps Senator Johnson would emerge as the nominee from the Democratic Convention.

JACOBS: I think that's true and I think that's true of both sides. In other words, I think the people of West Virginia, and particularly some of the old-line party faithful who got into the primary on one side of the other, that is, on the Humphrey side of the Kennedy side, would have gone for, for instance, Lyndon Johnson had they had an opportunity to do so; but since only the two men were running, they had to choose up sides one way or the other.

And some of them were supporting Humphrey on the theory that a Humphrey victory over Kennedy would thereby promote the ultimate candidacy of Lyndon Johnson, or vice versa.

YOUNG: I know that there is probably no way statistically to prove this, but which held the more

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Johnson men, the Kennedy camp or the Humphrey camp?

JACOBS: I would say probably the Humphrey camp because, as of the time of the West Virginia primary, John F. Kennedy was shaping up by virtue of previous earlier victories as the probable front runner a number of people who were possibly supporting Lyndon Johnson's candidacy got into the thing to try to help Humphrey in effect head off the Kennedy steamroller of which the early inklings were beginning to become apparent. To say that the Kennedy bandwagon was thereby stopped, or at least jolted, on its way, they could point to it and say, "Well, this religious thing would be too overwhelming a thing for the Democratic Party to overcome in the fall election, and, therefore, we should turn to Lyndon Johnson."

YOUNG: Well, do you feel that among the Wood County supporters of Senator Humphrey, or in the state of West Virginia, there was any expectation that Senator Kennedy, if nominated, might select Senator Humphrey as the vice presidential

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running mate?

JACOBS: Some were hopeful of that, I think. He, at that time, appeared to be a pretty logical choice. We had reason to believe that Senators Kennedy and Humphrey were pretty good personal friends, that there was a pretty warm relationship between the two men. Both of them conducted very high-type campaigns here in West Virginia. There wasn't any apparent bitterness or animosity between the two and, when the thing was all over, I'm satisfied that each had an even higher regard for the other when all the shouting had ended and the votes had been counted.

There was still this hope among a lot of Humphrey people, after the primary victory here, that if Kennedy were nominated Humphrey might very well be the vice presidential nominee.

YOUNG: Mr. Jacobs, would you comment, then, on West Virginia's reaction to the presidential administration of Senator Kennedy and the New Frontier itself and to any special favors

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that may have been returned to West Virginia.

JACOBS: Well, I think that the people of West Virginia, almost to a man, felt that they had a really close friend of West Virginia in the White House when John F. Kennedy was elected. John F. Kennedy, as you know, referred to West Virginia many times as the state closest in his feeling and warmest in his heart, second only to his native state of Massachusetts! And I think that we West Virginians are proud to think that we earned that distinction. I personally can't claim any credit for it, having worked for Humphrey, but I think that the state of West Virginia and the primaries certainly, if there was any one that catapulted John F. Kennedy into the White House, it was certainly his victory in West Virginia!

So, the people of West Virginia felt that they had a real friend there, the people of West Virginia felt that John F. Kennedy was living up to his promises to the people of the state; he injected new hope, in my opinion, into the people of West Virginia,

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into the life stream of West Virginia. I believe that he was helping to revitalize the depressed areas of the state, he was showing genuine concern for the people of the state, he came back here not long after he was elected President to thank the people of West Virginia.

We just felt that we had come as close to have a West Virginian in the White House as we have come up to this time and we were, by and large, the people of West Virginia, were whole-heartedly behind the New Frontier.

YOUNG: You may remember that in the Congressional election of 1962, Republican papers and Republican politicians in the state of West Virginia charged that Kennedy had taken the victory from West Virginia and not lived up to his promises. Could you be specific—although you have listed a number of things—could you specifically list any more items that West Virginians considered to be special Kennedy programs for the state? I think you mentioned the North-South highway a few minutes

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ago in private conversation. Things of that nature.

JACOBS: The highways were a principal thing; the depressed areas legislation which he was supporting, in the fields of contracts with West Virginia industries and companies and firms; in the area of seeing to it that our people and our companies were getting at least their fair share of such contracts; in the area of federal projects in West Virginia. There were many ways in the whole scope of things in the economic field and the human rights field. I personally feel that there was a real feeling of rejuvenation in the whole scope of activities.

We were being helped, I believe, financially and in every other way, by John F. Kennedy. I personally feel that he most certainly did live up to his promises to the people of West Virginia and would have continued to live up to his promises.

I feel that Lyndon Johnson, because of his pledge of allegiance, so to speak, to the

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Kennedy program, that President Johnson is carrying forward that same genuine interest for West Virginia and its problems.

YOUNG: I think your statement that West Virginians felt that at last we had a West Virginian in the White House was interesting in light of the fact that in some circles Senator Kennedy might be pictured as an easterner with the strange, foreign dictation, the Harvard [Harvard University] accent perhaps representing inherited wealth, that sort of thing. Did you find any reaction to this image in West Virginia?

JACOBS: Way back in the early days of his many visits to West Virginia, I heard frequent comments about what we considered his unusual manner of speaking, but as the people of West Virginia became more and more acquainted with him we began to forget that he had a Harvard accent or whatever you want to call it. As a matter of fact, his voice, his manner of delivery, his appeal, many people in West Virginia likened it to the dynamic Roosevelt appeal. Many people in West Virginia referred to him

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as a second FDR.

Of course to the people of West Virginia Franklin Roosevelt was the Great White Father! The people of West Virginia almost worshipped Franklin D. Roosevelt and even to mention another man in the same sentence with him was paying the highest tribute. And he was regarded in that light, in that vein, by the people of West Virginia.

YOUNG: I think there is general agreement that West Virginia was in the headlines in a way that it had seldom been before, perhaps since the days of Daniel Boone which we may not be likely to achieve any time in the near future. Do you have any comments or big, broad generalizations dealing either with the pre-primary, the primary, the general election or the New Frontier? These seem to be the obvious divisions, I think, in approaching the whole Kennedy era in our state.

JACOBS: Well, I...there were a lot of people who felt that the picture of West Virginia which the national and international news media gave

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was not a true picture. I didn't feel that way. I felt it was a reasonably true picture, a fair picture. There, unquestionably, are areas of West Virginia that are in the heart of the depressed areas of the country; there are areas in West Virginia, like here in Wood County where we are fairly affluent. We can't complain about the economics in this area of West Virginia. I don't think it was an untrue picture. By and large, I think that the primary campaign in this state was a real boon to this state.

I remember back in the days when I was in the service in World War II when I said I was from West Virginia and they'd say, "Where are you from? Richmond [Richmond, Virginia]?" We don't run into that, we West Virginians, anymore; and I think the primary campaign and all the national attention that was focused on West Virginia in that campaign, helped bring to the attention and the realization of the American people that there is a state by the name of West Virginia, that we aren't just an off-shoot or branch of

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the state of Virginia, that we are a separate and independent state. I think it helped us in many ways.

I'm thankful that the primary campaign did take place here. I'm thankful that a man like John F. Kennedy won in the West Virginia primary, although I'll concede that at that moment, in the heat of the times and passions of the times, that it was a rather bitter pill to swallow because of my position in it! I'm thankful that he won. I'm thankful that he was nominated, that he was elected to the presidency. I feel that the people of West Virginia were bigger and better people as a result of it and that we, as a state, took a real, giant stride in the right direction through the candidacy and the election of John F. Kennedy.

YOUNG: Mr. Jacobs, to return to the primary just once more, would you comment on the sources of financial support and the sources of volunteer labor for both the Kennedy and the Humphrey campaign in the state of West Virginia.

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JACOBS: Well, of course, in commenting on the sources of the Kennedy support, financial and other wise, I'm strictly speaking as an outsider and the impression that I got as an outsider. In commenting on the sources of support, financial and otherwise, of the Humphrey campaign, I'm speaking as one who went through the experience.

The Humphrey financial support was virtually nil. There wasn't much money raised in West Virginia on behalf of Senator Humphrey of which I'm aware. There wasn't much money that came in from the outside to help Senator Humphrey in West Virginia of which I'm aware. Throughout the primary campaign, and up until the last days of it, I had held the deep-seated hope that perhaps the Lyndon Johnson forces and the Lyndon Johnson financial support would come into the primary campaign on behalf of Senator Humphrey with the ultimate goal of advancing the Lyndon Johnson campaign by heading off or stopping the Kennedy steamroller which had begun to develop in the Wisconsin primary and his other earlier sort of

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uncontested victories.

From the standpoint of an outsider, the Kennedy financial support and volunteer help which was unquestionably on both scores tremendous, the volunteer help I observed here in Wood County came from people whom I wasn't even aware were Democrats up until the time of the Kennedy campaign.

I've been a life-long Democratic Party worker here in the Wood County area and the counties surrounding Wood County in West Virginia, and some of these people had never before taken any active part in politics of which I was aware, and I think I would have been aware of it had they taken an active part! I believe that they were motivated by seeing the prospect of a Catholic in the White House for the first time. I'm not knocking them. I'm glad it happened. I think it should have happened a long time before—to break down that religious barrier. The idea that a person should be barred from the White House because of religion was just

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basically wrong and basically un-American. But I believe that that was the deep-seated motive of a lot of these people like these Kennedy volunteers. I'm not criticizing them for it. I'm just trying to appraise the thing analytically and impartially.

I think, too, that a lot of the Kennedy financial support came from persons who were similarly motivated. At least that was one of their motives. I'm not saying that those people didn't support John F. Kennedy because they thought he was a tremendous man. He was, unquestionably, a tremendous man. He had been unquestionably a very able United States Senator and turned out to be a very able United States President. But that was a factor in my outside opinion which helped motivate them.

They contributed financially very heavily; they contributed of their time very heavily. They were persons who did not normally take an active part in political campaigns. Some of them continued their

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interest in politics since then, but I think that its germination stage was brought about by the Kennedy candidacy and the prospect of seeing the religious barrier finally broken with respect to the White House. I think it was a very commendable thing.

It was an unfortunate circumstance from the standpoint of Hubert Humphrey in the campaign, however.

YOUNG: This has been an interview with Mr. William Jacobs, an attorney in Parkersburg, West Virginia who served as state Co-Chairman for the Humphrey campaign in West Virginia in the spring of 1960. The interview was conducted at the Holiday Inn in Parkersburg, West Virginia, on July 9th, by William L. Young.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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