

James P. Aylward, Jr. Oral History Interview – 7/10/1967
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Biographical Note

Aylward, member of the Missouri delegation to the 1956 and 1960 Democratic National Conventions, discusses the 1956 and 1960 Conventions, the 1960 presidential campaign in Missouri, and (William) Stuart Symington's role in Missouri and national politics, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

Of

James P. Aylward

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James P. Alyward, Jr.

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Oral History Interview

with

James P. Aylward, Jr.

July 10, 1967

Kansas City, Missouri

By Larry Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Mr. Aylward, what was your first contact with John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] or involvement in his career?

AYLWARD: His career, or knowing him personally?

HACKMAN: First his career, let's say.

AYLWARD: My first involvement with him in his career was in the 1956 campaign. That was out at the Chicago convention.

HACKMAN: Right. Could you talk about Kennedy's effort in relation to the Missouri delegation when he made the race for the vice presidency?

AYLWARD: Well, that was strange in that as far as we personally were concerned, the delegates, there was no effort made to contact the delegates. All the efforts seemed to have been made by some of the Boston delegation with Tom Gavin [Thomas J. Gavin] and Harry Truman [Harry S. Truman]. And of course, at that time, neither Tom Gavin, or Harry Truman were delegates. Harry Truman could have been a delegate at large, but he refused to be a delegate because at that time he was for

Averell Harriman [William Averell Harriman] against the favorite son, Stuart Symington [(William) Stuart Symington]. Of course, we were very much for Stuart Symington for president. So there was no contact, as far as I know, of the

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Missouri delegation by anybody from the Boston delegation in behalf of John F. Kennedy for vice president. As a matter of fact, we were somewhat in the dark. Everything that was done in the Missouri delegation for John Kennedy was inborn. It started within the Missouri delegation and it spread out. And I think it could have been a lot greater than it was if we had some stimulants, but we didn't. We had no contact with the Massachusetts delegation, except on the floor, they sat next to us at the convention.

HACKMAN: Who in the Missouri delegation was in favor of Kennedy, and do you remember for what reason? Was it strictly personality, or were any issues involved?

AYLWARD: No, those that favored Kennedy--and there are only one and a half votes cast for Kennedy if you remember, after we got into this fight with Hennings [Thomas C. Hennings, Jr.]. That means three delegates would be for him. The only ones I remember were myself, Jim Tom Reid [James T. Reid] from Kansas City, and--what's this fellow from Greene County, Missouri? I know him real well, too. His name skips me, but he's been rather influential in Greene County politics. As a matter of fact, I think he was influential in getting John Kennedy to go down to the Jefferson Jackson Day dinner after the 1956 campaign. And he was for him. Now, I think we could have gotten others to go along if we could have encouraged them to show the tremendous, you know, encourage them that Kennedy was going to make this tremendous showing. They didn't believe it. Nobody anticipated it. They thought it was all, you know, somewhat glamour and it wouldn't get as far as it did.

HACKMAN: What were your own reasons at that time in working for Kennedy, do you recall?

AYLWARD: The same thing that I guess most everybody has told you, that once you get to know this fellow he was a dynamic personality; he was unusual and different from most people and I thought he had ability, and integrity and know how and I thought he'd make a good vice president. I especially like the youth angle, too. He always seemed to have the ready answer for you.

HACKMAN: Do you recall in your work for Kennedy in the Missouri delegation what particular objections other people might have expressed toward him at that time, what the issues would have been?

AYLWARD: Well, I think the most objection against him was Tom Hennings. Tom Hennings was at that time, unfortunately, the chairman of the

Missouri delegation and he was brooding over a feeling of ineptness somewhat because he wasn't the presidential candidate from Missouri and Stuart Symington was.

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This got so bad that at one time we had an outright clash on the Missouri delegation caucus with Richard Nancy [Richard R. Nancy] from Jefferson City. All over this bitterness; and he was willing to step down and let him take over, you know, and that kind of stuff. He was against Kennedy, outright against Kennedy, and didn't want to see him nominated. As a matter of fact, he tried to commit the delegation before it ever went to the floor that it would be for the present vice president, Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], whom they thought was a real good friend of the Missouri delegation. Gibbons [Harold J. Gibbons], who is also in the teamster movement, was very much for Humphrey at the time, and they spoke outwardly for Humphrey.

HACKMAN: You mean Gibbons wasn't for Kennedy or wasn't for Humphrey?

AYLWARD: He was for Humphrey at that time. There wasn't anything pro-Kennedy at this time in the Missouri delegation. There was no reason for it to be. Nobody had even visited us or talked to us about it. And the only sentiment that came up.... I had mentioned about Kennedy, you know, and I'm pretty sure that William E. Camp, who was then the mayor or the past mayor of Kansas City, had just read a book written by Kennedy, and he told the delegation--I remember this--how much impressed he was by that book. Of course he recommended that everybody read it and he says, "I could tell you that I thought that this young man would be qualified." But, as it was, he was going along with the rest of the delegates.

So Hennings told us to meet on the floor and if any of us--as of then he was decided that he was going to commit the delegation for Humphrey, but if any of us wanted to change our vote.... He was assuming everybody was voting this way because everything got in a mess here because they were trying to move over to the convention floor. And he said, "Yeah, I'll assume that everybody is for Humphrey unless when you get to the floor you immediately notify the secretary," which when I got to the floor I immediately notified the secretary. So did Jim Tom Reid. We tried to get others to change their votes at the time. We thought we had somewhat like four and a half votes, and I think we could have had that many.

But after we got on the floor and Hennings found out about this and we got into the roll call of the states, he tried to either lose us or dissuade others from voting in behalf of Kennedy. And we caucused, I'd say, at least three or four times within about forty-five minutes to an hour. It took that long for that roll call of states. And the only purpose was, he was trying to convince us or those who were, or where there was some idea of voting for Kennedy not to be for him, that we should go for Humphrey. Or, in the final analysis, when it looked like Humphrey's campaign was over the hill, that we should get on the bandwagon for Estes

Kefauver.

Incidentally, Estes Kefauver's name had come up at the caucus in the hotel before we went to the convention that morning. And one of the things that he was told.... There was two people, one was Jim Pendergast [James M. Pendergast] at the time and the other one was a colonel from the southern part of Missouri, and both of them said if there's anything they didn't want to happen was their vote to be cast for Estes Kefauver. Now that's two votes which had no right to change at all. Of course, also taken care of their votes when he later on, when he started announcing that the whole delegation was for Estes Kefauver, which it wasn't.

I can remember Tom Hennings, Tom Hennings and I--and incidentally, I had been very much for Tom Hennings in his campaign, and our families have been very close friends. But this got into such a heated controversy between Hennings and I that it even got to a shouting contest. And I can remember him shouting in one of the caucuses, he says, "My God, man, can't you see what they're trying to do to the Democratic party out on that floor?" And he told us that this was the end of the Democratic party, that he couldn't even be elected and I'm pretty sure that his election came up that November in '56. Then he started--I'll show you how radical it got--he got off to the point saying that Kennedy was against civil rights, and how were we going to sell that to the Negro? He said that Kennedy voted for Dixon-Yates, and how were we going to sell that to the laborer?

HACKMAN: Anything on McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] at that time, do you remember?

AYLWARD: Not on McCarthy at that time, but there were some other programs that he talked about.

HACKMAN: Agriculture. He had voted for Benson's [Ezra Taft Benson] sliding supports program. Maybe that would have been it.

AYLWARD: It was the agriculture. He said he was against ninety percent parity, and how were we going to sell that to the farmer? Now Symington was somewhat quiet at this time except that they said that some bill, controversial bill at the time. And Symington said, "Well, we'll have to get Monroney [Almer Stillwell Mike Monroney]. I think Monroney'd have the answer to that, and I think that he did vote for it." Well, as it happened, he didn't even vote for that bill. I can't remember that bill now.

But, I later on wrote all this to John Kennedy and the result was the letter that he wrote me. Of course, it was the direct opposite of what he actually had done. He apparently had always been for civil

rights, both in the House [House of Representatives] and the Senate, and he hadn't voted as Senator Hennings had said. But Senator Hennings was trying to sell a deal at that time and he didn't care what he said in order to sell it. That was my feeling.

He tried to lose us because he was making these caucuses--he'd come out on the floor and say, "Let's recaucus," and he'd keep going back and forth. The only purpose to that was to try to lose part of the delegation. So he got on the floor, and I think--oh, I know that Missouri had already passed the second roll call. This was on the second ballot that was being taken for the vice president. And that's when he.... Let's see, Sam Rayburn [Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn] was presiding, and he got the attention of John McCormack [John W. McCormack] I remember that because I was standing right with Hennings, and waving his hand. And he finally gave him attention. He said he wanted to vote, cast his vote, see so Missouri was heard and he cast those votes for Estes Kefauver.

That's when the fight started. That's when he and I--I was demanding recognition and trying to get him to change that call. He said, "Well, you hadn't notified the secretary." And she said, "Yes, he had notified me." She had to tell the truth about the matter. So finally he got up after it had already started, the impetus had started, and he changed that vote and gave John Kennedy one and a half votes from Missouri. These other two votes I was telling you about he gave to Humphrey. Well, actually, we could have had those two votes too for John Kennedy if we had known, you know, been encouraged to do something about this. But we weren't encouraged at all.

HACKMAN: I have heard several places that McCormack might have thought the Missouri delegation was going for Kennedy. Do you know anything about that? You know, there's always been speculation on what McCormack's relationship to Kennedy was at that time.

AYLWARD: I could tell you more if I knew what McCormack's relationship was with Hennings, because I think that everybody that knew Hennings knew that he was dead set against Kennedy. By the same token, I think John McCormack had some effect upon the re-recognition of Missouri when we got in a fight right there on the floor. It was pretty heated at the time so that he got immediate recognition to make a change in that vote call, too, which was after they'd gone a couple of states after that. I couldn't answer that.

HACKMAN: Do you recall at that time if Gibbons's speaking for labor backed Hennings' interpretation of Kennedy's stand on labor, or what...

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AYLWARD: I don't remember him moving from caucus to caucus and I don't think he did. I don't think he was too interested at that time in what was going on. Whatever he'd done had already been accomplished, I'm sure.

HACKMAN: What about the Catholics in the delegation? Was there any sort of

consensus on their part toward Kennedy on the ticket?

AYLWARD: Definitely against. As a matter of fact, Senator Mike Kinney [Michael Kinney], whom you may know and whom I have a lot of respect for--I had a long talk with him about Kennedy and he says, "Why, we could never sell a Catholic to this Democratic convention." As a matter of fact, he sort of upset me this one night when we were talking because I couldn't buy this, and I thought well, maybe he was.... Of course, I realized he was a lot older than I was, and a lot wiser and he'd been around a lot more; but I felt this could have been accomplished. But he was not for doing it. Same way with Leonor Sullivan [Leonor K. Sullivan]. She deeply admired Kennedy, but she didn't think that a Catholic could be nominated. And I think that we could have had Leonor Sullivan's vote. She was very much pro, her sympathy was with us when we got in this contest, you know, with Hennings because she didn't think that was right either, that he would get up there and deliver the whole delegation without giving us some consideration.. I remember some of these personalities, you know, in this conflict; but there were so many of them, why, it's hard to recall at this time.

HACKMAN: Do you remember anything about the St. Louis politician Jack Dwyer [John J. Dwyer] and the group there in St. Louis?

AYLWARD: No, no, I know John. I knew him, but I don't remember any comments by him.

HACKMAN: All right, moving on then from the '56 convention, what contacts, if any did you have with Kennedy, let's say, from the '56 convention up to the '60 convention?

AYLWARD: Well, thereafter I was in close contact with him by mail, mainly. The next time I personally saw him I'm pretty sure was the Jackson Day banquet the following year in which he was the principal speaker.

And, while I attend these every year, he had sent me a telegram and suggested that I meet him at Springfield, and I did.

I went down there with a number of my contemporaries and we met with him and that's the first time I met Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen], another young man I came to admire very much. We met in his hotel room, talked with him, and then he went out to the banquet

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that night. And I waited in the hotel. We were down in the lobby afterwards until it was about, oh I'd say it was twelve-thirty when he came back from--what's that golf course?-- Burning Tree or Burning Oak or something like that. He'd been out to a golf course afterwards with some of the leading Democratic personalities that lived in Springfield and around there who were entertaining he and the then Senator Symington--I don't remember

whether Senator Hennings was present or not, at the time, or whether he had already died. But, he came back with Senator Stuart Symington.

Now mind you, I knew Senator Stuart Symington--if you want to compare them--far better than I knew John Kennedy. And I had worked with this man, Symington, numerous times. And of course, Stanley Fike [Stanley R. Fike] was with him. I remember that. When they came in the hotel... Of course, John Kennedy didn't have to be told, but you could say, well, maybe he'd seen me last. Well, Symington had seen me more often and he should have remembered, too. But Symington had to be prompted by Stanley Fike, you know, as he came in--you know how it's usually done--as to who I was standing there with, we had about eight people with us, young people with us. And Symington said to Kennedy--and I can remember this because it somewhat irritated me in this way--and he said, "Well, this is your most loyal supporter in the state of Missouri." Well, and I had just been through several fights for him in behalf of Symington, you know, and I thought there were other ways he could have put it and still have been diplomatic about it. But, at any rate, Kennedy was--we were talking there with the different men around there and I can remember that he asked me, he said, "Come on, let's get a cup of coffee and let's.... And he taught me a lesson, another lesson that Kennedy taught me--I thought the hour was late and I thought that, well, he was tired and he really was, and I was sincere about it. And I said, "Well, in Springfield there's nothing open at this hour. Let's just take a rain check on it and some other time we'll have coffee. You go on to bed." I was going back to Kansas City later on that morning. I think it was a one-thirty train. So we went our respective ways after a short conversation. But I think if I had to do it all over again, I'd raise the cook in the hotel in order to have a cup of coffee with him. But those are things that happen.

Oh, I saw him again in Washington, I think it was shortly after he was appointed to the [Senate] Foreign Relations Committee. Now, I didn't know at the time that he had this appointment; but I think it was the first meeting. I can remember going to his office, and there were a lot of people sitting around there apparently constituents from either the state of Massachusetts or others waiting in the outside waiting office. And I went in and I handed my card to the girl out front. She had been talking. And then there was a lady in the background whom I now believe to be Mrs. Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln]. But she was back in the background and she had heard the name. She said, "Oh, W. Aylward,

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from Missouri. Just a minute. Senator Kennedy will see you."

She went in to see Senator Kennedy, and he came out with some books under his arms and came to the door just as natural as can be, completely poised, as though I'd been an old college friend of his, you know--this was part of his charm--and said, "Come on, Jim," and put his arm around me. We walked down that hall, and while we were walking down the Senate hall we talked about the situation in Missouri, we talked about Governor Blair [James T. Blair, Jr.] whom he liked and expressed his admiration for. He said, "I like him. I like him because he's straightforward." We talked about Symington's campaign and how successful he was in Missouri, and his relative feelings about his popularity in the state of Missouri. And in my conversation with Kennedy I can tell you that he knew far more, at least I thought he did, about politics in the state of Missouri than either one of the

U.S. senators of that time. He was more knowledgeable about it and his impressions, I thought, were right on the head.

HACKMAN: Do you recall what they were at that time, what feeling he expressed?

AYLWARD: No, but he was interested in how much plurality Symington was going to come up with. See, they came up at the same time in this election. And he was very much interested in that in comparison with his own. Of course, as I recall, at the time Kennedy did have some pretty stiff opposition from the Republicans. And of course Symington had none, which made a big difference to him. We had discussed this, you know. And incidentally, I'll go on further. When we came around the corner after taking and walking down these halls we came in front of this huge room--I remember there were a lot of klieg lights around and reporters and so forth, and this was his first meeting apparently, on that Foreign Relations Committee. And here he was talking to me, a lowly Missourian who wasn't important at all. And this impressed me, too. And he asked me, he says, "Would you want to come on in and listen to this meeting? I think you'll enjoy it." But again, I made a horrible mistake and said, no, I was going back to Kansas City, and I left. I shouldn't have done that. So these are the two big boo-boos I've pulled in my life.

HACKMAN: Were you corresponding with him, or with his office at that time?

ALYWARD: Every time that I had any ideas in regards to his ability to control votes in the state of Missouri, I expressed them. Or, when it came to some national issues--afterwards I never wrote to the president directly, I always wrote to Ted Sorensen afterwards. Now this was after he became president. I'd write to Ted Sorensen, and I expressed my feelings on some national issues. Ted always--we corresponded back and forth on it.

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HACKMAN: Moving on further then, we'll say after Symington and Senator Kennedy were both elected, reelected in '58, how were you involved in Senator Kennedy's plans in 1960? Or were you at all involved with Symington's efforts in relation to 1960?

AYLWARD: Well, by that time I was pretty much involved in the Kennedy effort. As a matter of fact, I wanted to see him be nominated the next presidential nominee of our party, the Democratic party. I think Symington knew this, because I had a call one Sunday from Stanley Fike. He told me that Senator Symington was there, and he said, "Jim, he wants you to go into the states of Kansas and Missouri and Nebraska and make some speeches and contacts in his behalf." And of course the only reason for this call was to put me on the spot. I still feel that. But I begged off, and told him that I couldn't, that my legal commitments didn't permit it. He told me that there would be an airplane made available for me--incidentally, that airplane was

Charles Curry's [Charles F. Curry, Jr.] airplane. And the fellow who replaced me and did make these speeches and take this trip was the present United States district attorney, who is Russ Millin [F. Russell Millin]. He did make the speeches and make the trip; I didn't.

I did work in behalf, in contact with numerous of my friends in the state of Missouri whom I knew would be the delegates, talking about Kennedy and so forth. As a matter of fact, none of this was in the open. There wasn't any open aggressive campaign because I don't think Kennedy wanted that. I had talked to him about this. He didn't want any clubs formed, you know, Kennedy clubs of any kind. And I can remember going to the state convention that year. The only committee I was interested in was the rules committee. Now, I was not a delegate to the convention, but my uncle, Frank W. Aylward, was. And one of the things that I'd asked him to see was that he'd get on the rules committee. And I attended the rules committee sessions with him.

The one thing that I think we accomplished which was important, or proved to be important later on, was they had this unit rule up again and it had been drafted so that the Missouri delegation would stay with Symington under the unit rule, come hell or high water. That was it. We got that amended to the point that, if at any time, the delegates saw that there was no longer any chance of Symington being nominated then they could, and would be released from the unit rule and could vote for whomever they pleased. This wasn't even noticed until we got to the Los Angeles convention. And, if you remember.... Well, you probably don't remember, but there were a lot of members of the Missouri delegation who were very reluctant to even accept John Kennedy's recommendation for vice president, and they were going to stay with Symington regardless.

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This unit rule came up and was read several times because they couldn't believe that was the way it had been drafted. But it was. And that's how the delegation was able to vote as it did. And, again, I admire Governor Blair because, if you remember, he jumped on the bandwagon. In Los Angeles he declared Missouri for John F. Kennedy. And he didn't have a total vote either, you know. I mean.... But everybody hadn't been solicited. But he knew the general tenor of the feelings of the delegation and he also was an astute enough politician to know where Missouri should be, and he just automatically did it. And there was never, I never heard any outward opposition to it. It was just done in a different type manner than Hennings had tried to do in 1956.

HACKMAN: At that state convention in May in Jefferson City, I guess, was there much talk at that time or expression of reluctance on the part of some people toward the unit rule?

AYLWARD: No. See, apparently all the resolutions had been drafted--I know they had been drafted in advance for all of these. I guess that's normally done. I've done that at a Young Democratic convention before, but that's to get everything ready and going. But there was some opposition to changing that unit rule. I forget who the chairman was at the time of that rules committee. There was some opposition, but it died because we had sold the majority that Missouri should be released in

case, you know, so that they'd be in a position to a patronage with whomever the president might be. We'd gotten involved in this before. That was under the James Reid campaign and Roosevelt [Franklin Delano Roosevelt]. So they were ready to accept this advice, only because they had experienced this once before.

HACKMAN: What do you recall about former President Truman's role at that time? I know he said he didn't want to be bound by the unit rule, and there was some talk at the time, I believe, of kicking him out as a delegate if he wouldn't be bound by the unit rule like everyone else.

AYLWARD: I had nothing to do with that state convention except that I was a dyed-in-the-wool Senator Symington man for presidency at that convention, very much so, and traveled around the state trying to stir up this sentiment. So that I wasn't prepared to do anything about the unit rule if I had attended the rules committee at that time. I don't know whether they had used this same rule without the amendment at the 1956 convention. It wasn't even necessary. Everybody stayed with Symington.

HACKMAN: I'm talking about '60 now.

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AYLWARD: Oh, you're talking about '60.

HACKMAN: At the '60 state convention. This came up as Truman.... Maybe you don't recall that, but I recall seeing mention of it or hearing mention of it.

AYLWARD: No, I think he was talking about '56—when he was for Averell Harriman?

HACKMAN: No. But again in '60 at Jefferson City he wasn't willing to publicly endorse Symington at that point, although he did later, and some people thought he was going to leave himself open, maybe, to support Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] as the only possible way to stop Kennedy.

AYLWARD: Well, I can't answer that.

HACKMAN: All right. At the convention itself, in '60, what were you primarily involved in out there?

AYLWARD: There was some rump caucuses at that convention by the Missouri delegation. And we had a couple of them. I was surprised to see how many of the delegates were actually for Kennedy. I was glad to see it, and I thought it was astute on their part; but I was surprised, this being Missouri, and I

knew that Symington wanted that nomination, too. All of these people that were for Kennedy expressed that sentiment. Of course, everybody, including myself, was willing to stay with him as long as he had a chance. But, once that chance was gone we wanted to be able to shift and shift fast. And that was the whole reason for these rump caucuses. And, of course, the rump caucuses were without the chairman. Jim Blair didn't participate in those at all. They were called by some other person. I don't remember who it was at the time. But they all knew who the various Kennedy men were because we were all there. And somebody had to organize this, you know. At least they knew that much. And I saw Kennedy once, I think, during that campaign. I ran into him in the Statler Hilton. We talked for a short while. And I talked to Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy]. But Bob Kennedy wasn't too interested in the Missouri delegation, and I didn't know why. He just thought he had it sewed up and he didn't care too much about Missouri.

HACKMAN: Nobody was specifically in contact with the delegation then?

AYLWARD: Yes, there was. There was somebody. They had somebody in contact with all the delegations. Nobody in specific contact with the delegation, as such, no. But there was somebody in contact with this rump caucus that was held from time to time. I forget who that was, but he was out of St. Louis.

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HACKMAN: Did this group ever go to Symington in an effort to get him to withdraw?

AYLWARD: No. Never did. As a matter of fact, I can remember John McCormack went.... Well, Symington withdrew. When he saw that he was losing, he withdrew from the floor. He wasn't even around to be seen. You couldn't see him in the delegation. He wasn't on the floor, he wasn't anywhere. But Stanley Fike was there, and John McCormack came down from the floor and asked Stanley, he said, "Where is Symington?" I can remember this. And he said, "Well, he's not here. He's back at the hotel," or something like that. And he said, "Well, would he get up and deliver the delegation to Kennedy?" They asked that he do it, and he wasn't about to do it. But he told McCormack that he couldn't get hold of him at that time, that he would try. Well, these rumblings went on and Jim Blair was very much aware of this because he had heard it just like I'd hear it. And Jim Blair did it himself. He didn't wait any time. He just delivered the delegation over to John Kennedy. And McCormack hadn't been talking to Jim Blair either.

HACKMAN: What was the reaction on the part of the strong Symington people when Kennedy won the nomination? Do you remember anything specific?

AYLWARD: Acceptance. They didn't think that necessarily he could win, especially Tom Gavin. And I had a long talk with him. He separated

me from the fold there just because he wanted to tell me his ideas of what Kennedy couldn't do, you know, and how terrible it would be if Johnson was his running mate. And I remember this at the time, too. And, of course, Johnson was the other man that we wanted in Missouri and that's what happened.

HACKMAN: What about Symington as a vice presidential possibility? Was there ever much discussion of this in the Missouri caucus?

AYLWARD: Oh, definitely. And especially out of Tommy.... Oh, out of St. Louis...

HACKMAN: Carpenter?

AYLWARD: No, no. He's a member of the House. Tommy....

HACKMAN: Parson? No, that's Mike Parson.

AYLWARD: No, no, no. This guy's been around for a long time. Sort of a heavy-set, jovial fellow, moves about rather rapid, very friendly, pretty influential, member of the

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House from St. Louis. He was definitely, he thought we should have died with Symington all the way—president and vice president, and never changed. And he expressed his opinion. Incidentally, he and I had a conflict. And he's a very good friend of mine, and I can't think of his last name. He's a better friend of my father's [James P. Aylward, Sr.]. He comes in between the time when my father was active in politics and when I became active. But we had words over that. But the older heads and the wiser heads determined that we would go for Kennedy's choice for vice president. And that's what happened, although there were some caucuses over it, a couple that I remember.

HACKMAN: Were there any specific objections toward Johnson as the candidate?

AYLWARD: You mean in the delegation?

HACKMAN: Right.

AYLWARD: No. No, there were none. It was just that they thought they should stay with Symington, and that was it. Just fight it out for him. I think that they felt that if we had been more vigorous in our campaign for Symington that somewhere along the line he could have made vice president, at least, out of that convention.

HACKMAN: Did he ever express any feelings...

AYLWARD: Never did. Never did.

HACKMAN: Moving on from the convention, then, to the campaign...

AYLWARD: I can tell you this. You say, "Did he ever express any feelings?" Do you mean on the vice president or on the...

HACKMAN: Right, on the vice-presidency.

AYLWARD: No, but I can tell you this, and Stanley Fike expressed this before the convention--Symington said, "We'll never know how close it was," because he still thought when he talked that he could have had that nomination in California. And this I can't understand. I'm sure that he was convinced when he talked to the Missouri delegation that he could have had that nomination for one or two reasons, and he missed. And he was upset about that. And now, again, this is why I think there was such strong feeling in the Missouri delegation to stay with Symington, because they felt, those that were Symington supporters at that time thought the delegation let him down because they weren't aggressive enough or dynamic enough. And, of course, that's not the way it's done anyway. I think Kennedy had the convention sewed up, and he moved about as confidently as one could, confidently and competently. I don't think Symington knew what it was all about. He didn't. He was lost. He was surprised. The mere fact that he said this indicates to me that he didn't know how the convention had been going.

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HACKMAN: Looking back, then, just a minute to the previous spring, what do you know about how the Symington effort in other states was organized? What could you see as far as its effectiveness?

AYLWARD: I don't think it was effective at all. I don't think it was too well organized. The mere fact that he called me at that time and asked me to make.... That's not organization work, that's asking to do certain things in certain states. I'd worked for Symington before and then made some contacts in state delegations--like I can remember talking to the governor of Maryland. You remember when he ran for nomination in the '56 campaign? And we'd gone out to some states like that and I thought we had done some pretty effective work. I guess Symington had, too. But, this wasn't organization work. There wasn't any organization at all. I think the only time he put any organization in his efforts is when he got to LA [Los Angeles] and where did he pick up Clark Clifford [Clark McAdams Clifford] , somewhere along the line? And did he pick up Bill Boyle [William M. Boyle, Jr.]? I think he did somewhere in that time. I think Bill Boyle was with him.

HACKMAN: In Nebraska?

AYLWARD: No, I'm talking about the former national chairman. He was an ex by

that time. But I think he'd expressed some opinions for Symington. But this was the only organized effort, and it was done in the last couple of weeks, that I could see. I mean a couple of weeks before the convention.

HACKMAN: All right, then, moving on into the campaign, what role did you play in the campaign in Missouri?

AYLWARD: Well, as I had told you before, I wanted to organize county clubs for Kennedy. And apparently after he became nominated for president then there was a complete change, and it seemed Ted Sorensen was out of the picture and the man that was important then was Bob Kennedy. And Bob Kennedy saw entirely different--at least he's the one that I blame--if you want to call it blame or otherwise, or give him all the credit, too--for the change in Missouri because as far as Kennedy was concerned, I was out. Bob Lyons [Robert Lyons] from Kansas City whom I was told was selected by some national committeeman out at Connecticut who had been a friend of his or something, who had suggested him as the chairman. What they were trying to do, apparently, was to get somebody who was detached in any way in politics to head up the Kennedy-Johnson club. But I'd been called by our county chairman who was then Jimmy Williams [James L. Williams], and he told me, he says, "Jim, I've got a note here from" I don't know who it was, somebody, he told me, from the East--" The Kennedy-Johnson Club is to be formed and they want you on the board. You'd be on the board." But he told me that Lyons and so forth was going to be.... Well, I was never asked to be on the board. He just told me about this and that I would be contacted by Lyons. But I was never contacted to

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be on the board and I was never contacted for anything in regards to Kennedy thereafter in the state of Missouri.

HACKMAN: Well, that volunteer group, that wasn't set up through the regular Democratic organization though, was it?

AYLWARD: It was set up through the Kennedy-Johnson place out in Washington, I'm sure, because they used their same stationery. I'd get letters out of Washington, and any letters I got from Lyons, which would be along with a lot of others, were on the same type stationery. So I'm sure this came out of Washington, D.C. I'm talking about the Kennedy-Johnson organization out of Washington, D.C.

HACKMAN: What about the Democratic party in the state, especially the strong Symington supporters in relation to the presidential ticket that year, was there any problem in getting these people to work for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket that you could see?

AYLWARD: No, no. But there was some strong sentiment against Kennedy even

down to the Bible Belt. There was an article up here in the paper, I remember, because I wrote Kennedy about it, explained to him what the Bible Belt section was in the state of Missouri, and explained to him why this sentiment occurred in Missouri. This was the type sentiment that seeped out, of course, and it was all on Catholicism in Missouri. I can remember at the time telling him that I thought he'd win in Missouri. And I predicted his plurality by more than he actually got--but it was close enough--because I thought it'd be somewhere between forty and seventy and, as you remember, it was less than that. But at least he did carry Missouri. But of course, if you remember, the governor carried it by far more at the time. And the only reason was, there was the religious sentiment in the state of Missouri.

HACKMAN: What about the other candidates for state office? At that time Dalton [John M. Dalton] was running for governor and Long [Edward V. Long] was running for senator. How did they identify with the national ticket, for example?

AYLWARD: I don't think they wanted to identify. As a matter of fact, Dalton wouldn't sit on the same platform with Kennedy. He didn't want to identify at all. Now, I don't remember much about Long because he can detach himself and you would never know about it. He's got other reasons to be in Washington or something. But the governor, he's pretty much on that platform when presidential nominees are around. And he wasn't. He wasn't. He had asked to be relieved. I know this had happened on a couple of occasions. He just wouldn't show on the same bill.

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HACKMAN: Did you ever have any contact with a fellow named Phil Des Marais [Philip H. Des Marais] that the Kennedys had working in your area?

AYLWARD: He was supposed to contact me and never did. I had a letter from Washington saying that he would contact me. Incidentally, that letter came from the present postmaster general. And he wrote me and said this man would be in contact with me; but he ever contacted me. I don't know where the drop down was there. Somewhere in the communication there was some. So I didn't serve on the Kennedy-Johnson club and I was never contacted by Des Marais. Of course, I did everything I could in behalf of Kennedy. Anytime I was asked to give a speech which would have been local or anywhere in the state, I did it. And, of course, that's about all I can say. I did as much as I could in my own way.

HACKMAN: Did you see any effects as to what Des Marais might have had in Missouri, organizational?

AYLWARD: No.

HACKMAN: How well do you think the Kennedy-Johnson campaign was conducted

in Missouri?

AYLWARD: I don't think it was conducted very well.

HACKMAN: What mistakes were made?

AYLWARD: Well, I think they could have been far more aggressive in selling Kennedy to all of the state of Missouri. Once you can convince all of the state of Missouri on this Catholicism issue and get over it, I think that you've got the victory a lot greater. And one of the places you must go to start this--and I told this to Kennedy--is at Columbia, Missouri, which is the seat of education in the state of Missouri. All these little towns in the state of Missouri realize this and they'll listen to anything that comes out of Columbia, Missouri, like that. And I think that maybe if there'd been some organization work around this, where Kennedy would have been in appearance and something done, that his Victory would have been greater. He depended solely upon Kansas City and St. Louis for that vote.

HACKMAN: Were you making this type of suggestion to the national office?

AYLWARD: No, not to the office; I did it to Ted Sorensen strictly, I was never in contact with the national office.

HACKMAN: Looking at the results of the election, was religion the overriding issue, or...

AYLWARD: I think it was, in Missouri. I think it was in Missouri because I heard a lot of real complimentary statements made of Kennedy. For instance, I can remember a young delegate at the 1956 campaign who is a good friend of mine and who is an outstanding Democrat, Jim Farley [James Farley] from Farley, Missouri, and I

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can remember at that time he said, "How could we vote for Kennedy? We're Methodists." Now, that's the only reason. Jim Farley is an astute young man, intelligent. But this shows you how strong the religious issue was in Missouri. And the same way among Catholics. Catholics didn't want him because they thought that it would affect their religion in some way and put it out front as a shield and be constantly attacked. So they didn't want him. In Missouri, I'm telling you, I know a lot of Catholics that voted against him who are normally Democrat. So, you see, it again shows the ability of Kennedy if he could.... He had to pick up somewhere those votes that he lost from some of the Catholics. I don't know how predominant this was, but I know that it did exist, this feeling among Catholics that they didn't want, you know, a Catholic in the presidency.

HACKMAN: As far as the Negro vote, particularly in Kansas City, do you know if

anybody on behalf of the Kennedys worked with any of the younger Negro leaders? Or did they primarily work through the politicians here in Kansas City to get the vote, or was there any....

AYLWARD: I think it was primarily through the politicians. They worked through the organized clubs.

HACKMAN: Do you have any specific memories of Kennedy's visits to the state, or did you attend those when he came in to the Kansas City area?

AYLWARD: Yes, I was over at that.... I had a rough time even trying to get near him at this convention when he appeared that night, and the only reason why I even got close to him was because of Jim Williams. I called him, I said, "This is one hell of a thing, I can't even get in the convention hall." And he said, "Well, there's something wrong," you see. And I couldn't. I couldn't get a ticket out of the Kennedy-Johnson organization here or anything else. So Jim William did. He told me that, I think it was Dick Brown [Richard Brown] would have a ticket and to go to such-and-such a place. And I went there, and there was a ticket, and my wife and I went in on the floor. That was a tremendous ovation they gave him. It really was. You could see how everybody was just alert and ready for this type of a candidate, here in Kansas City. I mean it really was tremendous and I was proud that in some way I had something to do with that man finally obtaining that objective, although I didn't get to even get close to him that night.

HACKMAN: That's all the questions I have unless you have any conclusions or any later connections with Kennedy or the people around him.

AYLWARD: Oh no, my connections after that.... I can tell you this.... Well, will you turn that off a minute?

HACKMAN: Sure.

[Interruption]

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AYLWARD: ...restrict it.

HACKMAN: Oh, we will. Let me reverse it and get it on the other side.

[BEGIN SIDE TAPE I, SIDE II]

AYLWARD: I can remember after Kennedy became president and I had aspired at that time to be the United States district attorney in Kansas City.

There had been some letters written in my behalf of people who knew Sorensen and Kennedy. Sorensen had written back that the President had written a letter to his brother in my behalf, but that I should realize that if the deadlock was ever broken between the two United States senators, that his program and policies were very important to him--and I understood this--and that he would have to step aside and let the events take their course.

Right after the convention when we came back to Kansas City, I made an appointment with Symington and flew down to St. Louis to talk to him about getting this appointment. And at the time he told me that I put him in a very embarrassing position. I asked him why, and he said, "Well, Russ Millin has been staying at my house for the last several days." And he says, "Your father was very influential in my ever being a member of the United States Senate and I appreciate that. But I'll tell you what I'll do, Jim, I'll do this. I will submit both names to the President of the United States and I'll go along that way."

Now when he told me that, then I thought maybe I had a chance because I believed him. That was a mistake because I knew at the time, and he knew my relationship with John Kennedy because we discussed it. He said, "I know of your relationship with John Kennedy. But don't you forget, I'm a far closer friend of his brother Bob's than you are." And he told me that at the time. And I said, "Well, I won't even discuss that with you because I barely know him."

So, I had been visiting--back at the inaugural, at the time, I went back in to see both Long and Symington. And Long said, "Come in here a minute." He talked to me alone and he says, "What is Symington telling you? Is he telling you that he's for you?" And I told him the whole darn story. And he said, "Well, that isn't true. He isn't even for you. Go up there and ask him now." He told me who he's for and said, "Now, Jim, I'll tell you quite frankly, I'm for Bill all first. But I was for him and committed a long time ago. But," he said, "I'll be for you second if anything ever happens, and I'll tell you that now and I'll stay there." And I believed him.

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So I went up to see Symington and he was most cordial and he invited me in. He had Stanley Fike come in with him. He said, "I told you in St. Louis that I was for Russ Millin and I couldn't be for you," and that was a damned lie. He didn't tell me that in St. Louis and that's what irritated me with Symington. So, then there was deadlock, see, and I knew this.

But how they got the deadlock broken was because Senator Long wanted Gibson [Floyd R. Gibson]--you remember Gibson was the one who stepped aside in the Missouri delegation for Long to be appointed as the senatorial nominee when Hennings died. Now the reason why Gibson did this is because he was Catholic, and he thought that if there was a U.S. senator a Catholic and a president a Catholic running on the same ticket, that that ticket would be definitely defeated in Missouri. So he stepped aside for Long. Well, Long wanted to repay him for this kindness and he wanted him to be a United States judge. So, Symington, seizing this opportunity, told him that he would go for his man for United States judge, Gibson, if he would go for Russ Millin, Russ Millin, for United States district attorney. That's how it was made.

I told Ted Sorensen I understood and I completely stepped aside at the time. I had talked to Byron White [Byron R. White] about this appointment to the United States District Attorney's office, too, in Washington when I had been there, just before it was actually made, and a number of people like that.

Oh, also, I can tell you this, that I think I still feel that I was influential in this respect in getting the Kansas delegation interested in Kennedy because Tom Corcoran [Thomas G. Corcoran], who is the present national committeeman from the state of Kansas, is a very good friend of mine. And I can remember I wrote to Kennedy introducing Tom Corcoran at the time suggesting, you know, that he get in touch with him when they were going to bring him out to Topeka, Kansas.

Well, Tom and I had talked about that meeting up there and that he'd like to have Kennedy. So I made these contacts and eventually Kennedy did go to Topeka, Kansas, if you recall. And again, I brought a delegation from Kansas City and we met up there in his hotel room, and he was very friendly. They couldn't--it's hard for them to believe this, how close they were to greatness, you know. And here was a man, hell, he was dressing and just as commonplace as anyone else, and talking and kidding around there with all of us sitting in the room. Tom Corcoran, as you recall later....

Oh, incidentally, there's another Aylward in politics in Kansas and that's Paul Aylward [Paul L. Aylward]. Well, Paul Aylward and I are distant cousins. Paul Aylward happened to be the Symington campaign

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chairman in the state of Kansas. Paul and Tom and I had discussed this before, you know, as to who he was going to be for: Kennedy or Symington. I can remember Paul saying one time, "Well, regardless of whether it's Symington or Kennedy"--and I don't think he had made up his mind, at least he hadn't disclosed it to us--he said, "Either one is going to be a good man, and it's going to be one or the other of them,"--you know, as far as he was concerned.

But in this campaign in the state of Kansas there were two people, two important people--and this shows you how politics is effected as you go along. One was Clint Kamega [Clinton Kamega] and the other was Nate Stein [Nathan Stein]. They were definitely Symington men and they were working in the Kansas delegation. And Tom Corcoran and they were constantly at odds. Well, Tom Corcoran wanted Kansas on the bandwagon in the '60 convention just like Blair wanted Missouri on the bandwagon. And Clint Kamega and Nate Stein were trying to prevent him from getting to Paul Aylward. He didn't want to openly commit the delegation unless he had all his adherents, you know, a little bit different from Blair's technique. But then maybe he had other reasons. He knows more about his own state. But he asked that Kansas pass for the time being. And I can remember this. But he and Clint Kamega damn near had a real fight on the floor just because they were trying to prevent him from getting to Paul Aylward. Nate Stein was part of it, too. And, as you know, Nate Stein later got one of the outstanding commerce jobs here in the state of Missouri, which again shows you there's a man who openly opposed Kennedy--he has ability, I'm not denying this--but he was rewarded because of the powerful influence of a United States senator. The way all of this has happened convinces

me that, so far as your state is concerned, your United States senator is far more powerful than the president of the United States, because he'll step aside every time and acquiesce him his wishes.

HACKMAN: Were you at all involved with the Kansas delegation?

AYLWARD: Oh numerous times, back and forth, through Tom Corcoran. I expressed my opinions, what I thought about Kennedy. He would introduce me to some members of the delegation and Kennedy would come up and we'd talk about that. I remember meeting Stewart Udall [Stewart L. Udall] at that convention, too, and it was while I was with some of the Kansas delegation. We were out at the Donkey Club, I think, they had on the back of the convention hall where I think Coca-Cola, or somebody made Coca-Cola beverages available or something like that. So we were out discussing it when I met Stewart Udall. And he was talking in behalf of Kennedy, too. So this, as I say, is the way I worked in behalf of Kennedy mostly, through this. It's more or less the drawing room technique. But if I had an opportunity, I never turned it down to speak in his behalf.

HACKMAN: Okay. That's fine. That's all I have.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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