

Richard K. Donahue Oral History Interview – JFK #1, 11/1966
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Biographical Note

Donahue, Staff Assistant to the President for Congressional Liaison (1961-1963), discusses his work on John F. Kennedy's (JFK) 1952 and 1958 Senate campaigns and 1960 presidential campaign, and JFK's involvement in Massachusetts and national politics during that time period, among other issues.

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Richard K. Donahue – JFK#1

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First of Four Oral History Interviews

with

Richard K. Donahue

November, 1966
Boston, Massachusetts

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Let me start out by asking you when did you first meet John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

DONAHUE: Sometime in 1950 or '51. He was then a congressman. It would be early in 1951, I'm sure, because he was campaigning in a rather less than obvious way for the Senate. He was making speeches to service clubs and things and moving around. I met him in Lowell [Massachusetts].

STEWART: Did you know many other members of the family before that?

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DONAHUE: No. I had met them but, I mean, I couldn't honestly say that I knew them.

STEWART: You, I assume, were aware of his 1946 campaign for Congress. Do you recall any of the impressions of either yourself or other people outside of Boston when he was first elected to Congress?

DONAHUE: I remember my father had a very distinct impression that he had a very, very great future. Of course, I think my family identified with the

Kennedy family as we were growing up because we were seven and they were nine. When the Ambassador [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] was named to the Court of St. James I probably was probably twelve years old, but I have a clear recollection of it. So that when he first announced in

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1946 this was something of some discussion in the family, and I think we were all secretly pulling for him but we made no contribution in any way.

STEWART: Was your father active in politics?

DONAHUE: No, he's a lawyer, too, but he's knowledgeable about some phases of it.

STEWART: How did you initially become involved in the senatorial race?

DONAHUE: At the time that I first met him I had been elected to the school committee in Lowell on stickers. It was an interesting campaign in a way. It was a forty-eight hour campaign just before the election, and I won, and it got quite a bit of statewide publicity. So when he came into the area some people who were friendly with him asked if I would

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meet him, and so the first time that we met he talked about running for the Senate.

STEWART: This was in 1951?

DONAHUE: Yes. He talked about, you know, what my judgment was and my judgment was that he probably couldn't win. I suppose it was like a lot of other people; I advised him to wait for Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall], all of which advice he evaluated very kindly and, you know, didn't do it, much as I advised him, or thought I advised him, not to run for president. But he asked if I'd be interested in helping him, and I was very interested in doing it because of a lot of things. He was, you know, a real good-looking horse.

STEWART: Did he talk at all about the possibilities of running for governor at that time?

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DONAHUE: No. After that there were talks back and forth about whether he would run for governor or the Senate, but I didn't understand it as well then as I understood it now, that once you're in Washington you're Washington-oriented and if you're in the state you're state-oriented. I think that senators have great contempt for governors and governors great contempt for senators.

STEWART: Then you definitely had some reservations about his chances against Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge]?

DONAHUE: Oh, yes. It was a very bad contest for a lot of reasons. There was no contrast. They were both relatively young. They were both from attractive backgrounds. Neither one of them had any color of a scandal or anything of that

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nature. Without contrast, and there was nothing that you criticize Lodge for. As a matter of fact our campaign against him was kind of phony, but it just was going to be, you know, you like me better than you like someone else. It wasn't an easy fight by any means. Lodge was always very strong. I think the fact that he had knocked off David I. Walsh left some marks among the Democrats that Kennedy could be successful. That was in the very earliest days.

STEWART: Did you see this particularly in Lowell or were you....

DONAHUE: I saw it at first in Lowell because there was not much disposition to have a great disaffection with Lodge, although the President was a very

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attractive fellow and attracted people relatively easily as contrasted with, or course, Paul Dever [Paul A. Dever] at that time. It still was not a very easy fight. Then as we started moving around the state, you know, it just never did get to be easy.

STEWART: How were you involved after this? Were you involved at all before he made his actual announcement in the spring of...

DONAHUE: Oh, yes. In the earliest stages of it I did some work in lining up these sort of non-political appearances to service clubs in various parts of the state. Wherever we had contacts, offering some advice and trying to get people in various communities to act as secretaries or to act with the secretaries and working with them. That

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would be in the spring and early summer.

STEWART: Of '52?

DONAHUE: '52, yes. No, it started earlier than that because in the winter there was a whole swing of these non-political appearances. Then, as it started to

develop into some type of a system, I became active almost on a daily basis.

STEWART: Then at the time of the announcement you were in Lowell?

DONAHUE: Yes. We were working in the Lowell area at that time specifically concentrating on that organization. That was not a particularly good town for him because the newspaper was heavily indebted to Lodge.

STEWART: For what reason, do you recall?

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DONAHUE: Well, yes. For a very good reason. The paper's owned by three boys, Costello boys. Lodge had gotten them all commissions and kept them out of war, and so they had a very firm commitment to him, and it was a matter of a tremendous amount of concern to see if we could persuade them in any way. They just would not be moved. And, in addition, there's a very large French population which was very strong for Lodge because of Father Morrissette—Father Armand Morrissette is an Oblate priest who has spent a lot of time in Lowell, is very, very obviously for Lodge, and campaigns. He's one of the few clerics, I suppose, Catholic clerics that campaign. So he was a real pain in the neck, a thorn in our side. So it was an area of a lot

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of concentration.

STEWART: As far as organizing the campaign in its early stages in Lowell, were you the secretary for the organization?

DONAHUE: There was a little bit of a fight over that which actually came out later. His original secretary was named Jimmy O'Dea [James H. O'Dea, Jr.]. He was a state representative at the time, and I had agreed to work with him. He and I had been friendly for a great number of years. So at first Jimmy was nominally the secretary. We had a whole series of projects to start with. Our first project was going to be the tea, because one of the earliest teas that was run was run in Lowell. I guess, in, say, early July there were calls from Boston as to where

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the headquarters was and do we have the phones in and we did that. Jimmy happened to be out at Cobbett's Pond [Windam, New Hampshire]. I went out to see him and he said, well, you know, he'd taken care of it and it would be taken care of and all that, and nothing was done. So eventually I went and did it, and we got that set up. Then we had to start organizing

for the tea itself, and I think that we did about as good a job as anybody in the state did at that time.

But as a result of my overzealousness and lack of information there developed quite a degree of bitterness between Jimmy and myself. He felt that I tried to put together an organization that was going to be helpful to me, and I was naïve enough to be, at that time,

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innocent. If I had thought of it I might have.... But in any event we first put the tea together, then we started on the telephone campaign. Then we used the sisters a great deal. We tried to use them in the French section, knocking on doors and things of that nature. Then, of course, we did the tabloids and we got them all out.

STEWART: Who in the Kennedy headquarters were you mostly associated with?

DONAHUE: Well, sometimes with Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy], a lot of times with Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien], and a whole series of other people used to call, and, of course, my wife [Nancy Donahue] who worked in there at the time.

STEWART: Your wife worked in the headquarters?

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DONAHUE: Yes.

STEWART: Do you recall any particular frictions that came up as far as the Kennedy headquarters was concerned? Conflicting instructions or anything?

DONAHUE: Oh, yes. That's like any campaign. We had a problem in our area which was similar to a problem that you have all over. How closely would you identify with the Dever people, for instance? This is kind of a classic thing. Well, we wanted to get a public headquarters opened. The only one that was available was a Dever one. In this instance we made a marriage, because some of the Dever people would be very helpful to us. In a lot of places it didn't happen. We did that.

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There was a fight over whether or not we would use it, would open it, or anything else. It was a fight that Bobby resolved. He said, "We'll go ahead and do it." We had an awful lot of quarrels about money, which was not unusual. We had a lot of quarrels about material, but you always have quarrels about materials—you know, where it was coming from, what it was going to be. The scheduling problem, you know, was constant. "He will be there," and then, of course, he doesn't show up. Or you plan it, and then the schedule changes. It was about average for a campaign.

STEWART: Do you remember anything unusual about the success you had in getting people, in getting volunteers to work?

DONAHUE: Yes, it was really fantastic. All the

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girls, I'm sure, have told you that the techniques for the teas and things have been much, much modified. We did a very, very elaborate job in that way, in that we asked various people to suggest names of those would be interested in coming. We got names from every different source. We put them on cards. We cross-indexed them. We went to tremendous lengths to get into areas that, quite frankly, the people who were working it... Just strange areas. You see, we just dove in.

Then we were extremely elaborate in the way we put it on. We borrowed, I suppose, twenty-five or fifty sterling silver tea services, and we went very big on flowers, and we did a great deal with an orchestra or a string group and rugs and, you know, all kinds of stuff. It

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was amazing. It was absolutely staggering.

It was on a Sunday and I think that we probably put through five, six, seven thousand women. And the interesting thing was that it was not a political rally to them when they came, and it wasn't when they left, because they all came dressed as if they were going to church. It was really amazing. The type of volunteers we got were basically who were not involved normally in politics, and they're always the best because they may not know exactly what to do, but they work best and work the longest and they were terrific.

STEWART: What geographical area did.... Did it just cover Lowell?

DONAHUE: No, this was northern Middlesex County. There's a whole series of towns—Billerica,

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Dracut, Chelmsford—a whole bunch of them. We served as an area for that.

STEWART: What issues, if any, were of major significance in the area, or were there any?

DONAHUE: Not really in terms of issues. I suppose that the greatest influence was the fact that he was becoming known, and so that instead of starting off as equals and developing an issue between them, the fact was that *he* became known, what *his* record was, what his background was. You had a tremendous pride in the

area among Irish Democrats particularly, that evolved very, very naturally once they got to know him. At that time Dever had bombed at the convention. He was very much in disfavor. Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] had very,

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very little appeal for Irish Catholics. Truman [Harry S. Truman] at the time was really at a low ebb. It was very hard for a Democrat to hold his head up, for a lot of them. So this was sort of a rallying point for those who wanted to keep some sort of level of decency, a margin of decency.

STEWART: Did you have any contacts at all with Taft [Robert A. Taft] Republicans who were just so thoroughly opposed to Lodge?

DONAHUE: Some, but we had a very, very active citizens for Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] movement, as a matter of fact probably the most active Republican campaign we've had in the area I can remember before or since. There were some. I've always been suspicious that we didn't

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get any of their votes. I think they may have complained about it. I can't honestly say that we ever had any volunteers come from the group. We got a lot of encouragement from them, but I rather think that they stayed at home or voted Republican in a reluctant way.

STEWART: You mentioned the *Lowell Sun*. The *Lowell Sun* is normally a Democratic paper?

DONAHUE: It claims to be independently Democratic. Of late years it has fallen more and more into Republican hands, in the sense that it's been endorsing Republican candidates. Although, gee, as late as 1958 the President was still.... I must say they did endorse him in 1960, but he was forever trying to win them to some sort of support. I think that

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from a news standpoint they weren't necessarily unfair. They were biased but they weren't unfair. From an editorial standpoint they weren't very fair at all.

STEWART: Were any other papers in the area that....

DONAHUE: There's no other major paper that covers as large an area as they do.

STEWART: The whole problem of textiles as an issue, I assume, wasn't of any significance because Lodge had....

DONAHUE: I suppose, you know, he always talked about it, and the hopes for rebuilding the area were always subject of his speech, but in terms of why people were for him or against him, I don't think that any issue cut into him for long.

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STEWART: You mentioned that the Lodge forces did have a very good organization in the area.

DONAHUE: They were very well financed and did a very good job. It was interesting; it was the same pattern. They didn't have the zeal that the Kennedy people had, just never have. I think the only encouragement you could get when you came to Boston if you were working in the headquarters at eleven, eleven-thirty, twelve o'clock at night, you could look over and the lights at the Lodge headquarters would be out, so you'd know at least you'd worked a little longer that day than they had.

STEWART: In addition to the tea, was there just this one big tea or were there...

DONAHUE: No, we had one big tea and then we....

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This was one of the earlier ones where various patterns were developing. We also found out that it was pretty expensive, and we also found that mailing out the engraved invitations was a marvelous asset but the people who didn't get them felt terribly insulted.

STEWART: Did President Kennedy make any other appearances in Lowell?

DONAHUE: Oh, yes. He appeared probably four or five times at rallies or walking tours, and several efforts with the paper and with the French groups. That was his first public one there, and that was probably his major one. He appeared at a rally three nights before the election, but that wasn't a very significant one.

STEWART: Were these uniformly successful or were

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there any....

DONAHUE: Yes. I think the rally wasn't because it wasn't in relationship to the tea or other things. In that campaign we concentrated housework most heavily

on the tabloid, which we distributed 100 percent. I think it was close to 100 percent—in the whole area, up and down, and on the coffee hours in the home. They were excellent, very, very well done. We had a very big response from the tea for those. From that we got the lists and we did the telephone campaign. I would guess we hit every phone. I don't think we've run a campaign that well since, really.

STEWART: Your efforts through the whole thing were in the Lowell area?

DONAHUE: I was in and out of Boston, but mostly concerned with the Lowell area.

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STEWART: Right. Did he do as well in the area as you expected, or better?

DONAHUE: Yes, he did; again, he didn't do as well in the French areas as he had hoped to, but overall in the other areas he did extremely well. It was a good significant boost.

STEWART: You mentioned this priest. Was he actively campaigning or actively speaking out?

DONAHUE: Oh heck, yes. He's a son of a gun. He's still around. We did everything, for heavens' sakes, trying to get him transferred, but he's sort of a....

STEWART: Was he a parish....

DONAHUE: No, the Oblates have two provinces, the English-speaking Oblates and the French-speaking Oblates. He was just

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very, very close to Lodge, running around, taking him around to all the French clubs and introducing him. Oh, the President would speak about it up until probably before his death. He was still mad at him.

STEWART: You mentioned some further contact you had with the newspaper.

DONAHUE: Yes, every time that he came up he made a particular point of going over and talking to them. They were always, you know, friendly but he could never convince them. We tried doing some advertising with them. At that point he'd given up any hope of endorsement, but we were looking for some news support and it never really developed. As a matter of fact, it never developed, period,

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during any of the times he had conflicts. Of course, after 1960 it was pretty good.

STEWART: Okay, unless there's anything else of significance about the '52 election, why don't we move on. In the early Senate years do you recall some of the contacts that you had with him? This would have been '53, '54, and '55.

DONAHUE: As soon as he got to the Senate he was anxious to put together some organization in his office. We had a series of correspondence about obtaining a French-speaking secretary from the Lowell area for working in his office. I interviewed probably, say, ten or fifteen and I could find a lot of them that were bilingual, but not many of them

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who could spell. It was just one of those things that petered out. Then we had the usual run of requests for various things, appointments to the military academies, and stuff like that. Then there were contacts with reference to the '54 campaign, the state campaign with Murphy [Robert F. Murphy], and I think more or less reluctantly he got dragged into it, but he alleged to be very enthusiastic for Murphy. Unfortunately it was a terrible campaign. In a way, at that time, he asked if we could go back and harness our people and start on getting them up and, you know, you just couldn't do it. We did it. We tried, but we just had no success at all.

STEWART: Using your organization from the '54 campaign for....

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DONAHUE: That's right. For Bob Murphy for governor. It was just a real bomb, and so was he. Let's see, '54 was the time of Furcolo [Foster Furcolo].

STEWART: And Saltonstall.

DONAHUE: Yes. There was the acrimony that went on there, most of which I only know from hearsay and his own expressions. I've heard him express his viewpoints on more than one occasion.

We didn't do a great deal until we started to get into the fight in '56 for control of the state committee. At that time we had some contact with him, and they asked—it may have been Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] but I'm not sure—asked whether or not I thought that Dick Flood [Richard Flood] could win the state committee. And I

[-28-]

said he probably could if he beat me, but he'd have to beat me to win. They didn't know that I at that time was interested. So in the primary I ran for the state committee, and I was elected to that.

STEWART: In '56?

DONAHUE: '56. After I was elected, let's see, probably sometime in.... Well, the election would be in March. Sometime within a week after the election the President called me and, you know, congratulated me on winning and asked me whether or not I was interested in being state chairman. I told him that I didn't think that I had either the time or the ability. He said he didn't much care about the ability part because he was satisfied as to

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that, but if I could take the time, would I be a candidate. I said, yes, I would. I also told him that at that time that he had better be careful because if Jimmy O'Dea found out about it he would go to the labor people who always thought that that I didn't favor them and he would shoot down some support. So he left it that he would do it and call me back. And he did do it, and Jimmy reacted rather typically, as we expected him. Then Jimmy leaked the story to the paper, and then he got Joe Ward [Joseph D. Ward] and some others to say that if I were the candidate that they would do what they could to defeat me.

Thereafter we talked on an almost daily basis, and it was resolved very quickly that

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we didn't have that much support that we could afford to do anything, so we were searching around at that time for another candidate. We came up with Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch]. This doesn't cover a long period of time. It was a matter of a very few days. Then we started working on putting together the votes so we could control the state committee.

I think that anybody who is interested in its history politically feels that this is about the most significant victory that he had prior to the primary victories, because this was the first identification that the President had as a political figure of some strength in his own state. He was always looked at as a pretty young senator until that time.

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And John McCormack [John William McCormack], on the other hand, was looked on as very wise and powerful political figure in Massachusetts. And both impressions were wrong, but we worked just about daily thereafter trying to organize. It's only eighty votes and you've got to come up with forty-one and we didn't have forty-one starting out of the box. We had the famous Mother's Day meeting at—what do you call it? It was the Copley Plaza at that time—where we had the suites of rooms set up, and just about everybody who was on the state committee was invited in to meet him. He really proselytized like a song of a gun. We went on from noon until, well, close to 5:30 or so.

STEWART: What were the big arguments he was

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using?

DONAHUE: It depends on who you are talking to. There were eighty different people. Some of them, all you use is, you know, just sheer muscle. "I want this." I'll never forget Mary Walsh Cass, whose husband, Joe Cass [Joseph J. Cass], was the head of [inaudible] at the time. Mary Walsh was very, very concerned as to whether or not he was going to do right by the Democratic Party. As a matter of fact, that was his last interview. He was alone with most of these people as they went through. As I came into the room he was furious that Mary Walsh Cass would wonder about whether or not he was going to do right by the Democratic Party. I think Kenny [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] was there, or someone was, because he yelled at me

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after had had thrown his jacket against the wall, to get Walter Reuther [Walter P. Reuther] on the phone. We'd decide whether or not we were going to do right by the Democratic Party.

That election itself, of course, was a very, very spirited one. We had had long strategy sessions. Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] came up from Washington. I think it was the night before the balloting we had a meeting in Dick McGuire's [Richard V. McGuire] office. Ted had never seen one of these meetings, and I suppose he thought it was something like the Senate or the House [House of Representatives], and he had prepared very detailed notes on the parliamentary procedure, and what was the function, and who was to make the motions and all that. But, you see, if you get eighty Democrats from

[-34-]

Massachusetts in a room, parliamentary procedure is not always their first concern. But we prepared very well for it. That was at the Bradford [Hotel Bradford].

Just before the balloting the President had a luncheon where we had our people. I think the most we were counting at that time was about forty-three. My memory isn't exact on that. But we knew we had some Trojan horses and we hoped that we also had some in the other camp. Then Bernie Cleary [Bernard F. Cleary] and Peter Cloherty [Peter J. Cloherty] attempted to, or did, break into the door of the ballroom and so what was to be a private meeting, well organized, started off with Agnes Lynch from Woburn [Massachusetts] getting knocked down and.... A lovely meeting.

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STEWART: The police were finally called, weren't they?

DONAHUE: Oh, the police were all over there. The policed were knocked out. But Cleary and Peter at that time probably weighed a combined six hundred pounds. They were just enormous. It was stood off and "Onions" Burke [William H. Burke, Jr.] was, you know, yelling and screaming. He was half stiff anyway. It

was rather comic. But he made a big accusation: We were all getting paid. We all used to kid the President that we won that match and there were no gifts waiting. He made believe that he had to go, that he was rushing over to a wedding in New York. He stayed right around the corner in the car until the balloting

[-36-]

was over.

The balloting was set up pretty well. It's an old ballroom, and myself and Billy Hartigan [William J. Hartigan], I remember, discovered it independently, but it was very successful. You had to vote for either Lynch or Burke with a balloting table. People didn't ballot in their seat. They went to a table and they wrote the name out. There was a mirror right in back of the table, and if you stood in a certain way you could determine how they voted. It was very interesting, because some of the people that you least expected it, you know, gave it to you, and then some of the people who were under the most pressure from the other side, would take their ballot and

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write out Pat Lynch's name and walk up and hold up the ballot and wave it around for anybody who wanted to read it and drop it in the box. Actually after that was over it was a real ten strike. We didn't probably appreciate it so much at that time as we did later on, what an impact it had made.

STEWART: Did the President or anyone else have any reservations or second thoughts, after they started the thing, about whether it was worth it all or not?

DONAHUE: I think we all wondered whether it was worth it all to gain control, but from a practical political standpoint it was the only thing to do. I don't think that he could have ever gone to a convention with a question that he had to clear it with

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anybody. Party organization is a heck of a lot more important in most places than it is in Massachusetts. It has really no substance here, but it does other places. And if you're from New York and you hear that a senator has taken over control of the party organization, you're very impressed with his political.... It isn't really that important here. It's a real pain in the neck, as a matter of fact, always was a pain in the neck.

STEWART: In spite of the fact that this so-called control wasn't as real as it looked at least on the surface.

DONAHUE: That's right. There's no real control, for a whole series of reasons that have to do with Massachusetts politics. It did mean certain things. It gave

you

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privileges insofar as naming the delegates, not at that convention but later on. It means that if there is a party treasury, or money is raised on a party basis, you have some control of where it goes, but basically it represents an expense item. It's like a lot of things. It's one of the things that I think he had an honest intention of doing something about, but there were other things with higher priorities from '56 on that made it ridiculous for him to waste any great effort on it. It was too bad.

STEWART: Do you think the bitterness engendered between him and McCormack at that time was, one, as large as a lot of people have said, and, two, lasted as long as people have said?

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DONAHUE: No, I don't. I think that there's no question that if you take the bitterness between the McCormack staff people and the McCormack people on the committee, yes, it lasted a long time. Personally, between the Speaker and the President, I doubt if there was very much. The Speaker was very much Washington-oriented. He's interested up here, but not greatly. I worked with both of them for three years in Washington and there just never was any bitterness at all.

STEWART: Were you at the 1956 Democratic National Convention?

DONAHUE: No.

STEWART: You had nothing....

DONAHUE: No, because we didn't have control of the delegation. I wasn't a delegate and I had no real reason to go. I know that I talked to the President before he went. I had asked him about newspaper stories about

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rumors that he might be a favorite son or something like that. He seemed at that time not very, very concerned about it. He thought that it would be a nice place to get some publicity. He was very pleased at the role he was taking, but he didn't seem to me to be a real hot horse.

STEWART: Then you weren't involved at all in the whole vice presidential bid?

DONAHUE: No.

STEWART: Okay. What role did you have in the '56 presidential campaign here in....

DONAHUE: Well, at that time we started out, Larry, Kenny, and myself, together with Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith], were probably the only people working full time. At that time we were developing the presidential pattern as it is. The normal function of a candidate in Massachusetts, and in most

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states, is to go where the function is. If there's a big party in Pittsfield [Massachusetts] you make that. If there's a rally the same night in Haverhill [Massachusetts] well, you fly back to that. Well, we knew very early in the business that he was not going to spend much time in Massachusetts. In total I think he spent seventeen campaign days, so that what we...

STEWART: No, wait a minute. Excuse me, I was asking about the '56 presidential campaign.

DONAHUE: Oh.

STEWART: That was Stevenson.

DONAHUE: Oh, I was talking about '58. Fifty-six.... He did the dirtiest thing to me that I think that he ever did. He called one day and he talked to me and he said that Kenny O'Donnell was going to call me. Kenny said, "The President's got a marvelous idea. Jack has a great idea. This Stevenson thing isn't going worth a darn. It's a dog and he thinks that he wants

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to be clearly on the record. So would you spend your time at the headquarters. Call all of our secretaries all over the state and throw the entire statewide organization to Stevenson."

Well, I started out. It was over across the Common [Boston Common] here at the headquarters. It was probably about as insulting an experience as I've had. It was just terrible. I'd call very, very good secretaries, I mean really good, top fellows and say, "Well, Jack is very anxious that we all do something for Stevenson. Can we get a headquarters open and do that?" They guy would say, "I'm not sure I'm going to vote for him." "Well, my wife will kill me if I do anything for him." I was just appalled. And the organization down there for Stevenson—I remember Sam Beer [Samuel H. Beer] and a whole bunch of others—they apparently had two hot places, Brockton [Massachusetts] for what reason I'll

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never know, and Newton [Massachusetts]. Every day they ran a function at either Newton or Brockton. This was the only place that they could get anybody to admit that they were for Stevenson. I just spent an awful lot of time, an awful lot of aggravation. I complained to him

about it and he laughed. He just thought it was the funniest thing that ever happened. But he was not here practically at all at that time. He did a staggering amount of time around the country.

STEWART: Kennedy did?

DONAHUE: Yes.

STEWART: Stevenson came—what?—once or twice?

DONAHUE: Yes. He came once. He was really snakebit. He came once to.... Now that was in '52.

STEWART: He had a function in Mechanics Hall in '56, wasn't it?

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DONAHUE: Well, he had one.... Yes.

STEWART: It was televised?

DONAHUE: Yes, I remember that, but that one.... I'm trying to figure because Dever was on the podium, and that would make me think it would be '52. But I remember very clearly Mechanics Hall was set up. It was our one splurge. There was to be an hour program, and a half-hour statewide and a half-hour nationwide. Dever was leading off the half-hour pitch statewide. Of course, the hall was blackened, and sure as blazes, there was a rustle at the back of the hall. All of a sudden the spotlight came, and James Michael Curley came right in. All I could think of was, "Poor Dever, he got blown off at the '52 convention and here he was making a pitch." Just awful.

Then the night before he had the rally at the Statler [Hotel Statler]. That's when he made the speech about Eisenhower not living out his term. We had a hell of a

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job that night just filling that small hall. It was a pretty good crowd, about, say, a thousand or fifteen hundred, you know, but the night before an election for a fellow who could be president, it was a terribly bad....

STEWART: Were you the only person that was involved more or less full time?

DONAHUE: Pretty much. I mean the other people were.... Kenny was in Washington. Larry didn't.... Maybe he voted for Stevenson. It's really unfair for me to say what he did, but I know he didn't do anything around here. I'll be frank to say I don't think many other of what we consider our people did a doggone thing.

STEWART: Do you recall, did you have any notion or ideas then that in four or eight years you people might be going through the thing, so therefore it might be wise to develop some real active interest in it?

DONAHUE: I think we probably were thinking, you know, not

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quite, at least in my impression.... My impression was that it wouldn't be in four years. It was clear in my mind that some day we were going to take the run, and so I was interested in the campaign from a very mechanical standpoint—how they did things, how they set things up, what happened when the candidate arrived, how he moved, and whether the police cooperated, and all of that stuff. I suppose I just didn't have the foresight to recognize it'd be that quick. That was my real only interest in the campaign. By that time, I guess I met Stevenson three or four or five times, and I just wasn't carried away with him. I thought he was much better than Eisenhower.

STEWART: Moving on, then, to the late Senate years, as far as his work in the Senate was concerned—we'll get into the '58 campaign later—what contact on senatorial matters did you usually

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have?

DONAHUE: Not too much. The normal thing would be, the usual delegation that would wait on you to ask you to contact him with reference to a piece of legislation that was pending, or someone was calling about some favor that they wanted him to do, occasionally setting up appointments for people who were in Washington—mostly constituent-type problems, substantively nothing, really.

STEWART: Moving on then to the '58 campaign, how did you first become involved in that? What was your role at that time?

DONAHUE: In the earliest days, before there was a headquarters and everything else, he had said that he wasn't going to spend much time in Massachusetts. He was very concerned about how well he would do. There was a rash of talk at one time that he would have no opponent, which didn't make any sense at all. Then when he got

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Celeste [Vincent J. Celeste] then the question came—not that he'd win—but as to how best to beat him the most, bearing in mind that he wouldn't spend time. His time was basically going to be concentrated campaigning for others, putting money in the bank. So that's when

we started working on the plan for the developing of a presidential type campaign within the state.

I was the first, I guess, advance man, and I think probably the only advance man in that campaign. I did two things. I was treasurer of the committee, which I just came across the other day, the Committee to Improve Massachusetts and its Citizens—really an amazing thing. The worst of it was, we never raised a great deal of money anyhow, probably forty or fifty thousand dollars. And we never had the luxury of having a

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rubber stamp. I'd be endorsing the check—Committee to Improve Massachusetts.... It was an awful.... But that was something that was a real conduit.

In addition to that, I spent almost all the time on the advance part of it, trying to set up and develop the [inaudible] among our people to put the thing on, and then get it done. It went extremely well, as a matter of fact. We were very pleased with that campaign.

STEWART: Was there much turnover in the secretaries between '52 and '58?

DONAHUE: No, not really. Some of them for one reason or another had illness or something like that, but in terms of numbers, no, because in the interim I think we had one or two secretaries' meetings. I remember there was one at The Meadows, and there was one at the Parker House, there was one at—I can't think of it—my impression is

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it was someplace in Boston. There'd be basically a luncheon or a dinner. He would talk, give him a chance to talk about what he was doing, and sort of kidding and conning with them, and keeping up some of the contact with them.

STEWART: Then you were out of just the Lowell area?

DONAHUE: Yes, I put no time at all in the Lowell area.

STEWART: Who was....

DONAHUE: George O'Meara [George F. O'Meara]. Well, Larry Laughlin [Lawrence R. Laughlin], that's it. George and Larry. '58 was the first time that.... Larry had worked in the '52 campaign, and then I brought him in and put him with George. They handled various....

STEWART: It's been said that there were often problems of finding enough for the great number of volunteers who showed up to do.

DONAHUE: Oh, no. Some of the people, you know, who

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complain about that don't know that there are a lot of things that you can do with volunteers. There were great numbers of them.

The biggest blow that happened in the entire campaign was when Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] got engaged. When he was in the headquarters down here on Tremont Street, it was absolutely obscene. The girls would be in there working. They'd do any damn thing. You know, stamp envelopes, you got them so that they were sealing envelopes forty-seven times. You'd take them out back, have them unstuff them, and stuff them. But he did the most tactless thing. Right in the middle of it he announced his engagement and it had serious effect on the volunteers.

STEWART: Was this true all over the state, this wealth of volunteers and things they would do?

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DONAHUE: Yes.

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2]

STEWART: The presidential campaign had actually started before this 1958 senatorial fight. Why don't we start at the beginning, when you first did anything as far as the presidential campaign was concerned.

DONAHUE: Okay.

STEWART: Do you recall just when...

DONAHUE: I think the earliest things that I did were in the '58 campaign with reference to contacts that we had with people in other states both about his schedule and then about his speaking, and about follow-ups on them and forwarding names. That's probably the earliest time that I remember doing work on stuff that was not directly related to Massachusetts.

Thereafter I remember in Washington doing work with Ted Sorensen on the primary requirements in the various states, analyzing the stuff that he collected,

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and seeing whether or not there were changes. I did some writing on my own to the various secretaries of state and tried to fit the analysis into a pattern. That would be some in '58, '59.

STEWART: Well, you were then involved in the selection of the primaries?

DONAHUE: No, I would hesitate to say that. I was aware of the requirements in all of them. I was very much, of course, for New Hampshire because it was so obvious. I was very much for Wisconsin. I didn't do enough thinking about West Virginia. I thought more or less that it was possible. I really took other people's word for West Virginia. I had never been there before in my life. I was high on that. I had some little thought about Indiana. I had some thought that we would do better there than we did. I think that my judgment in most instances was bad,

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you know, with reference to what....

STEWART: What were the big things you were looking for, and what were the things that you were most concerned with in evaluating the situation as far as primaries in these different states?

DONAHUE: Catholics.

STEWART: This was overriding everything else?

DONAHUE: Pretty much. That's, you know, really oversimplification, but there was very, very keen concern for that. Other things—whether or not there was anybody in the state that was basically friendly to us. You really have to discard New Hampshire because there was no way you could lose that. In Wisconsin, I think that to some extent we overestimated what strength was there before we started. In West Virginia we certainly underestimated it. In Indiana it just never developed into the fight that we anticipated that might develop. It seemed to be a Symington [Stuart Symington, II] fight. It just

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never was, but it was not a very pleasant.... The worst place in the world as a matter of fact. But I think that if you have to say that, you know, there was one consideration, you could say it was where the Catholic population was.

STEWART: Were you at this time vice chairman of the...

DONAHUE: State committee, yes.

STEWART: State committee when...

DONAHUE: '56, I was elected....

STEWART: Oh, oh, in '56. You stayed on as that...

DONAHUE: ...until my term ran out. I was reelected in '60, and then I didn't run again in '64.

STEWART: I see. Which of the primaries were you involved in?

DONAHUE: New Hampshire, Wisconsin, West Virginia, that I was physically at. Those were the ones there.

STEWART: Let's start with New Hampshire.

DONAHUE: New Hampshire, I didn't really have to do too much. It's not too far for me. I spent some

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time in Nashua, a little time in Manchester, merely just talking to the people up there about what we conceived to be our system. Some of the people, the Dunfeys for instance, in New Hampshire, are people who are from Lowell, are high school classmates of mine and longtime friends, so I spent some time with them.

But very, very early—as a matter of fact, before New Hampshire—I was in Wisconsin. I don't remember the date of the New Hampshire primary, but I know I was in Wisconsin the first week in February. I spent some time in Milwaukee and then I went up to Eau Claire in the Ninth District. I spent most of my time in the Ninth District until I came back to Milwaukee and finished up the campaign in the First District. No, that's not right. It was the Fourth and Fifth Districts.

STEWART: What were you spending most of your time doing?

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DONAHUE: Well, in Eau Claire you do a.... If you're in a district, you did exactly what a coordinator would do any place. Well, you start with a district and you break it down by geography, and you break it down by political enrollment, which you can't do there but.... Then you start with your biggest area and you attempt to get a chairman there a get a committee going, and you go from [inaudible] to the least. You attempt to schedule the candidate in. You attempt to put in a telephone campaign and a tabloid campaign. You make contact with the newspapers and the radio stations. You attempt to get all the free publicity you can. It's an organizational job, that's all. Then, of course, you finish up with election day activity. I had to interrupt the time I was there

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to come back and do a little work, for about a week, in Massachusetts, and I went back out and the Fourth and Fifth Districts which looked pretty good for us in Milwaukee, but they had no provision for election day activity and strangely enough in Wisconsin they don't do

what we consider election day activity. The people just didn't know what to do, so I spent all my time organizing for that. A few rallies in between, and then setting up the election day activities.

STEWART: Did you encounter any problems, do you remember, getting, so to speak, acclimated to ways and means of Wisconsin politics?

DONAHUE: Yes, it was very, very hard. They were terribly naïve in terms of eastern things. I remember Pat Lynch just came out primary day. Pat's a wonderful guy and all that, but at that time there's not really much

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he could do and he does talk a lot. I had a lot of things I wanted to do, so I gave him a section of the city with a chauffeur and I said, "Pat, I want you to go out and look around and tell me what's going on." He came back in by noon and said, "My God, you wouldn't believe it." He said, "They're stealing the election." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well," he says, "They've got this way.... They bring in the ballots," he says, "And there's no way.... They don't count the discards." You get a Republican and Democratic ballot, you vote one and you discard the other. This is Milwaukee. There's just not accountability. "My God," he said, "You bring five guys from Boston in here, and we'd win the whole thing. This is terrible."

Their campaigns apparently are mostly, they write a letter and wave to the crowd, and call someone up and put an ad in the paper. In

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terms of the organization that we were used to they did none of it. Even with a fellow who was politically active you had to spend an awful lot of time just explaining the nuts and bolts, because we've always fancied that we're pretty good mechanics at trying to hold on to what you can do in a campaign to get your message across. But we had a terrible time in Wisconsin.

I think the great shock that I had, and I'm sure that a lot of others had, was that we had a candidate that nobody knew. It was, "Never mind John Kennedy for president. First, let me tell you about John Kennedy," and then maybe, "I think he'd be a pretty good fellow for president." Of course, we had, and especially in that tier of the Third, Sixth, and Ninth [Districts] on the western border of Wisconsin, and the Tenth which bordered on Minnesota, Hubert

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Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] is very, very well known. In the Ninth District, for instance, he had been in there and spoken at their fundraising dinners, and he was a very popular figure. He could bring his gunmen in for a small ride in an automobile, while the people that we did bring in, which were not in great number, we had to bring them in from the East.

STEWART: Do you recall any real resentment by local people to your....

DONAHUE: Oh, yes. And I think that they felt that when we said that we wanted something done that we were kind of pushy, and that we didn't understand them. I think every place you went it soon developed into a lot of other things. They'd say, "Well, I know that works in Massachusetts, but I want to tell you something. It doesn't

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work here." And the most classic comment they'd say all over the country, no matter where you go, they say, "Well, I want you to understand something. It's a little embarrassing but I think you should understand it. We know how it runs in other places but we have something here that's pretty bad. We have factions." And, you know, factions were something new to everybody. They thought that it was the only place in the world that they existed. It was always slightly uncomfortable, because you were always pushing harder than they thought they should go, and you were always saying, you know, "Do as I say," slightly unpleasant, but actually you developed some very, very good and long friendships as a result of it.

STEWART: Do you remember any real goofs that you or anyone else made as far as the factions

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were concerned?

DONAHUE: Not too much in Wisconsin. In West Virginia we got down to where we were.... Well, I can remember some real goofs. In Wisconsin the factions were not so important really as it was just getting the people to do what we said would be successful. I honestly think today that we would have won the Second District if they had done a telephone campaign. But they just didn't do the telephone campaign and we lost the district very closely. We lost the Ninth pretty widely.

STEWART: You then were very active in West Virginia.

DONAHUE: Well, I went right from Wisconsin to West Virginia. I spent all my time in Kanawha County. It's the biggest and we figured the most swing. It's right in Charleston. We felt that we would be made or broken there. Quite frankly, when we got there we figured we were broken.

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anyway. It was, you know, terrible. I worked almost constantly with Larry O'Brien there. We did go outside of there from time to time. Mostly we stayed right in Charleston and the

people came to us. It was Bob McDonough [Robert P. McDonough] and Matt Reese [Matthew A. Reese, Jr.], and Kenny was traveling with the candidate most of the time.

STEWART: Do you remember any major problems that you personally were involved in trying to....

DONAHUE: Well, we had the problems about the money. We had a lot of problems about that. You know, a lot of people don't really understand the use of the money in West Virginia, but for West Virginia or for any state nobody gives a damn who's president. As a matter of fact they have very little concern of who's governor. They're very vitally concerned at who's assessor or sheriff.

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They're one term offices that are very powerful and very rich. They're very sophisticated politically, and they're full time at it. They crowd their slate. They slate everybody. One faction slates against another faction.

They use a lot of election day money. They don't use election day money for buying votes. They use it in a different fashion. They use election day money for keeping their organizations alive by hiring people to work a day in the election. There's no question in some of the counties they use some half pints. Some places they use a lot of two-dollar bills. But the vote buying as such is not.... As a matter of fact, I have someplace a total breakdown of all the election day money used by our faction in Kanawha County. I think the total figure for the county that day was thirty-six thousand dollars. Our

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contribution was only sixteen thousand, which was a big hit for them because they don't have many people down there but it wasn't even half of the money that was used.

We had never worked with this before, until we came to West Virginia. There was a lot of cloak and dagger about it, and there were a lot of national press and they were all running around, you know, talking about the election day money. They didn't really understand it. So we had all the money up in Larry's room and we had sort of a system of giving it out. I must say we had made some deals. We really didn't know who we were dealing with sometimes, but they were very fair people. The only guy who really fouled up in my opinion was Sarge [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.]. Sarge violated the first rule of the game. He was trying to buy both sides, and if you try to get slated both ways there's a hell of a chance that

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you get slated by nobody. He found out about election day money and he kept calling for more. I think I had to go down twice to give him more. He was the only place where he handled the election day money. Other than that we handled it out of Charlestown and we didn't spend that much money, really.

STEWART: Were you involved at all in the itinerary?

DONAHUE: No, Kenny O'Donnell did almost all of that. We had so doggone many sheriffs and judges and everybody filing through, and trying to keep a record and also trying to keep a watch over our own people. It's one thing, you know, in retrospect, you say, "They're wonderful people," but when you meet someone for the first time and you make a commitment for five or ten or fifteen thousand dollars, then you deliver it to them, you don't give a dime, because you don't know whether the

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guy's straight or not.

On election day in Cabin Creek [area in West Virginia], we got hit with an awful lot of Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] money which was for Humphrey. We had trouble tracing it back, but it was Johnson money that came in. They were vastly.... They were paying about twelve bucks a vote. I remember I had a big argument with Bobby about it that day. He was saying, "God, we'd better match them." I said, "Cripes, it's four o'clock in the afternoon. We haven't got that amount of money and we haven't the machine we could get it out." But really all he had was a few boxes. I had been out in Cabin Creek that day, and there was no question we were getting beaten badly in some boxes. The prices they were paying were outrageous. But what we had was, basically, we had the machinery which was all we wanted in the first place, and our machine was better than their machine in that it was

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more complete. But if we had made our commitment earlier.... Problem was, more of these people were auctioning it off. They were very fair about it, but once the auction was closed you had to pay. I think that Humphrey's biggest problem was that he didn't at that time have the money to close the bargain. There was no philosophical problem about which way they'd go. Well, that's not really right. When we first started they thought he'd be a drag on their tickets and I think they tried to price us out of the market. As he campaigned more, he became something of an asset to them in their opinion. Of course, I think that for anybody, this has got to be the greatest thrill you'll ever have in politics. I mean, it was just staggering.

STEWART: Did you see any other evidences of Johnson

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activity here?

DONAHUE: Well, he was working through Congressman Slack [John M. Slack, Jr.] at that time. There was nothing that we really came across. There were some

suspicious, but this one, for a series of reasons through a series of people—admittedly I discovered it about 3:30 or 4 o'clock on election day—but it was, boy, as clear as elephant trunks.

STEWART: Are you convinced that Humphrey truly was for himself in the whole primary?

DONAHUE: I think there's no question, of course, he was for himself in Wisconsin. He has never been a big money raiser in Minnesota. His money comes from New York, and I think that an awful lot of New York liberals who were very anxious that John Kennedy not be particularly successful because they never

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felt very comfortable with him, gave him conditional money. And I think that he had sold himself in Wisconsin for the West Virginia thing. When we did as well or as badly—depending on how you analyze it—in Wisconsin, I think that he felt that he might have a shot.

Certainly if he walked into West Virginia, you know, a day or two days after Wisconsin, it had that bitterness on that Catholic thing, just unbelievable. I just can't describe how extreme it was when we first got there. You know, it was only a period of, say, April 6 to May 10 or whatever—I forget the primary date in Wisconsin—but I'll never forget the primary date in West Virginia. Only within that short period of time did the thing turn around. It was the wildest, craziest, dizziest thing that we've ever done, just unbelievable. If we had any afterthought

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we'd never do it at all.

STEWART: What did you do after West Virginia?

DONAHUE: Let's see, I went out to Oregon which was nothing. Nobody did anything, sat around the hotel room and discussed how high was up. I came back, and then I went to California to the Convention [Democratic National Convention], probably a week or two early. I forget the date of the Convention. But I was out there a week and a half, two weeks, early, and that time I worked with Larry and Kenny all day on all kinds of things. Different delegations, trying to put together all the deals, and get stuck together at night and get unstuck by breakfast.

STEWART: Can you give a few examples?

DONAHUE: Well, Pat Brown [Edmund G. Brown], that's an example. You start with Pat. Our people in California, let's see who was.... Well, some days

everything was fine. Larry.... Back up a bit. Long before, when the decision was made, which I

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didn't participate in, not to go into the California primary, Larry had worked a very good bluff on them all and had put together on the delegation just about everybody of any moderate feeling for the pPresident that they could get. So we started out reasonably strong. Pat Brown one day would be very clear that he was going to announce that he was going to vote for the President. The next day someone would say something about Stevenson and there was no question he was going to throw it open. Well, we were chasing people like Dan Martin [Clarence D. Martin, Jr.], Stanley Mosk—all of whom had meetings and had commitments, and all of this stuff. Some days you'd get them and then Pat was all set, and then some days you couldn't get them, and then Pat couldn't control those he could have, and you get that. We had the Indiana delegation. You had the

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problem of what Frank McHale [Frank M. McHale] and McKinney [Frank E. McKinney].... They were obviously not for us. They were on the delegation. They were committed to vote for us on the first ballot. What trouble were they causing in that delegation? And the New York delegation, those nutty liberals, when they slapped down Herbert Lehman [Herbert H. Lehman] and, you know, how much did that take away and were these people going to run and hide? Oh, gee, you just go over them one by one. There's a problem every hour on the hour. This guy's going to do it and this guy's not going to do it. Then, of course, David Lawrence [David Leo Lawrence] was trying to raise ruptures in the Pennsylvania delegation. He was always a Stevenson man, and he wasn't going to stand still for.... And Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams] had almost all of his delegation, but he had four or five that were going to wander off

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someplace. You'd run around trying to see if you could calm that down. Then the mechanics and the handling of the convention, how do you do this, and how do you do that, the communications, just something like that.

STEWART: How did you work in considerations about the second ballot, or subsequent ballots, assuming that you had people pretty well secure at least on the first one?

DONAHUE: Well, what we did with every delegation was analyze them on first ballot strength, second ballot strength, and thereon. We felt, oh, long before the actual balloting day that we had it on the first ballot. But you had a situation like Meyner [Robert B. Meyner] in New Jersey, where you had people like Mayor

Kenny [John V. Kenny] and, you know, those people who just hated Meyner anyway. They were very, very much for Kennedy. They wanted to cut his throat. Well, that was

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second ballot strength, because although I'd be less than candid if I didn't think that we felt that on the first ballot he just couldn't stand the heat. Those fellows are really mean. When they start putting on the pressure it gets pretty rough. We had pockets of second ballot strength around, although our first ballot strength always added up to enough it seemed. This was the whole story.

Then when the delegations started to move into town, then we had people working with each delegation. And we had daily reports on them, and you could keep a better watch on them. But there's always some flare-up, there's an emergency. "So and so is, you know, going to move off and take everybody with him," or this that and the other thing. And you're always putting out fires. As the convention gets under momentum communication becomes impossible.

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Nobody knows, you know, "Where's this guy?" and, "Where's that guy?" and, "If I could only get the message to him at this time he'd do this and that." It really gets to be kind of a weird drama.

STEWART: You were working strictly with O'Brien throughout the whole thing?

DONAHUE: Yes.

STEWART: Were you with the candidate at all during the Convention?

DONAHUE: During the Convention, probably four or five times. Mostly with delegates. I can think of only one conversation that didn't really deal with individuals, and that was just about what my assessment was of a couple of free delegations, which I at that time thought were very good. But most of the stuff was hit-and-run. I had telephone conversations with him, but they were mostly rifle shooting at that time.

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STEWART: You were out with delegations primarily?

DONAHUE: Uh huh.

STEWART: Were you at all involved in the selection of Johnson?

DONAHUE: No.

STEWART: When did you first hear of it?

DONAHUE: Shortly after it happened, but I wasn't at all involved. As a matter of fact we had smugly gone to bed. We had all put our heads—well, that's Kenny, Larry, and myself—and we were satisfied that it was Stuart Symington. You know, that was it, and there wasn't any doubt about it. And I was surprised.

STEWART: Did you have any role in placating the few rebellious people?

DONAHUE: Well, there was no placating. I had been doing an awful lot of work with the Michigan delegation, and they were just frothing at the mouth. You know, Soapy was up and yelling and screaming, and there was no placating there.

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In our own delegation distinguished.... You know, Arthur [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and James MacGregor Burns and some of those guys were yelling, "Sellout," and all that. But rather than placate them, we immediately, you know, geared up to make sure we had nailed down everything that we had, and that these guys would go along. It didn't take.... Well, it took some time but a fairly quick survey indicated that the pockets of rebelliousness were....

STEWART: Just how did you take this survey?

DONAHUE: Well, you know, you call a leader in a particular delegation and ask him for what his assessment is. We talked, of course, to our coordinators, who were working with them, to get a reading, you know, very quickly. Sometimes you talk to individuals. It was a tempest in a teapot, really.

STEWART: What was your immediate job after the convention?

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DONAHUE: Well, I came back here again about a week, and then I went to the national committee, and I started on organization of the various states. We started a system for, we attempted to put our program of developing an organization into all of the states. Now, it's a little more cumbersome on a national level than it is on a regional or a state level, but what we were trying to do was to tie in our formula to some level of success around the country. I was concerned basically with the industrial, well, upper tier, the northeastern states—New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, and Florida.

STEWART: Florida?

DONAHUE: Why, it was a very interesting reason, because the fellow who was working as the coordinator for one state happened to be working for the other.

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That was Joe Tydings [Joseph D. Tydings]

STEWART: Joe Tydings, yes.

DONAHUE: So since I was watching over Joe one place. I might as well watch over him someplace else. I did work also in North and South Carolina. But Georgia, for instance, is a totally different kettle of fish. You don't do anything there. I mean, you don't do as we did. What I'm talking about basically is using our coordinator system, whereby we put a guy in each state.

STEWART: Who else in that operation.... How was the rest of the country divided up?

DONAHUE: Well, Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] had the rest of the East, I would say, and most of the West was done by Teddy out of Los Angeles. Ralph and I worked for Larry. We had, in addition to that, various divisions within the national committee with which we were concerned—the Young Democrats, the Senior Citizens Committee, civil rights

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groups, labor, veterans, and whole hosts of others.

STEWART: That were split up, you mean?

DONAHUE: They were like little committees within the committee, and they were responsible to us for their direction on their policy and their development. Our concept of any campaign is that you use a lawyers' committee or a doctors' committee or a veterans' committee merely to interest a group, but it's not to allow them to function on their own. It's like a side show at a circus. It's designed to attract them into the main tent and the idea is to channel all of their energies, but give them whatever identification they need to keep themselves going. Nationality groups are most typically concerned with this type.

We had the first job of finding coordinators, training them, and getting them out, setting up communications with them

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getting the feedback, the information, make some assessments, and then tie it with Kenny on the scheduling, and see what was worthwhile and what wasn't, what do you throw back and what do you keep.

STEWART: As far as these states were concerned, what were the biggest problems you felt initially to getting the whole thing organized?

DONAHUE: Well, there was a concept.... I think that some people felt that we could use a citizens-type committee, which just never got off the ground. It's something a Republican can do, and a Democrat has a heck of a job doing. But it was marvelous that it didn't get off the ground because wherever they had anything going, if it was any place good, it caused an awful lot of trouble. Obviously, there's a lot of factions in any state, and the reason that we would have a coordinator in there is to be sort of a referee,

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and it would be our communication to find out how much we were being kidded and how much we were being conned. It gave us a great buffer to say that, well, "Clear it with him," and then get his assessment. It eliminated—it doesn't eliminate all of it, of course—but a lot of the direct contact and the squawks about, "This guy's been named chairman and he's a bum," and, you know, all of that.

We had terrific problems of getting chairmen, citizens' chairmen. It was a long and running feud. We'd have a lot of problems over materials, terrible problems over materials. It comes as a great blow when you say, "Yes, we'll send you the stickers when you send us your check." You can get a pretty good assessment of the professionalism of the politics

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within the state when you had some feedback on things like that.

There'd be enormous foul-ups that go on in any campaign. The stolen civil rights literature. It's one of the classic stories of all time. Some innocent person working in the civil rights group got a telephone request from what was alleged to be a dear friend of ours in South Carolina who was going to do a lot of work with the Negroes and wanted one of our big Negro brochures. This guy, of course, went and sent ten, fifteen, twenty thousand. Of course, it was to a Republican and they were going to distribute them, so we had a man break in and steal them. We didn't do it but it was accomplished in any event. But, I mean, it could have been a disaster. But you have that type of thing all the time.

STEWART: Do you feel.... I think Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger]

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says in his book that in August the supposed well-oiled machine was diffusing.... This was, of course, during the congressional sessions.

DONAHUE: Well, it was terrible. It was, you know, just an absolute.... I don't know how to really describe it. It just wasn't functioning well. It was tough because the candidate wasn't available. He wasn't available to move. He was tied to Washington. We really didn't have any assessment before the nomination as to what the national committee had to offer. It was a unique thing for a national campaign to use the national committee. Usually they let them run off and die. It was tough as blazes on dough. It was tough on materials. It was, you know, a real bad breakdown. We just didn't have the people to do the things that we wanted done. You know, night after night we'd sit around, "God, we must know somebody we can trust with Indiana or West

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Virginia," and you just can't come up with the bodies. It never ceased. I mean, the President had the problem when he got elected, had the problem the day he died. You just never can get enough good bodies to put around. So this was just all the time. While he was tied to Washington it was difficult to generate a great deal of excitement. He's not moving around, that means the politicians aren't moving. Even if their candidate just runs around and drops in on a town and gets some activity.... Boy, it was terrible.

STEWART: When, if at all, do you feel it was running smoothly?

DONAHUE: Oh, it wasn't as bad as I say, during that time in terms of organization because we were putting things together. It didn't show at all. It started to show in the early weeks of September when there was some orderly flow,

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when we had established systems. We had established systems whereby we took coordinators and trained them, putting them through all the headquarters. We had all of the various committees functioning so that they knew within certain ranges what was expected of them. As soon as the first coordinators' reports started coming back, you could get some feel for how good or how bad it was. And then, of course, as soon as the candidate could leave we really started to get some feel for it. Then obviously, the debates were the great, marvelous, wonderful zing, you know, everybody needed to get going.

STEWART: Is there anything specific you recall about that, either your involvement or any specific feedback on it?

DONAHUE: Well, I think the debates were probably the result of one of the better plays of time. I'm really sure the President is the only one who deserves

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any credit for it. For a lot of reasons we didn't want to debate Humphrey in Wisconsin. It was very, very bad to debate him there because it's an old populist state, and the question is, do you get to the left of him? You couldn't get to the left of him at that time, and if you did get to the left of him you're murdered someplace else. So we hedged and hedged and hedged and hedged and refused and, you know, looked pretty lousy doing it. Then in West Virginia, of course, he started the same cry. There we really needed them. We needed the exposure. We needed everything. His brand of liberalism wasn't exactly the most popular thing down there. It was very advantageous.

But from that came the questions that were put to Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] as to whether or not he would be willing to debate. He was, you know, very glib in saying he'd be delighted to debate.

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The President, also, at that time said that he would be delighted to debate, which really set the format for the one thing that he knew that he needed. I think that it wasn't a bad judgment in Nixon's mind at that time that early in the game to say that he had no problems about it. But I'm sure, in retrospect, of course, it's like everything else, you have twenty-twenty hindsight. The President knew Nixon. I mean, he knew he wasn't any great whiz bang, but the average American didn't know that. They assumed that this man who could stand off Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev] in a kitchen, you know, would be murder. So he just got into that position.

And then I do remember all the negotiations that went on about the debates, because we would have rather desultory strategy decisions about, you know, the debates. Finally it was the height of insults when we'd sent Leonard Reinsch [J. Leonard Reinsch] to negotiate. Well, Leonard was only the fellow about the

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lighting and the make-up and, you know, what kind of a studio. They had a real brain trust. They had had Leonard Hall [Leonard W. Hall] and fifty-seven other experts. They could find a million reasons.... I think at that time they felt that basically any time you put two guys side by side like two fighters in a ring and one doesn't fall down, he looks like he must be somehow in the same class. I think that in the mind of the average American they weren't at all in the same class after the Convention.

Of course, as soon as that first debate happened you had a real great feel for.... I mean, the enthusiasm started coming back through the phones then. The others didn't really make any impact at all. I mean, I think all they did was reinforce the first judgment that people had made.

STEWART: What specific things were you asking people in each state to send back to you?

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DONAHUE: Oh, we had data reported weekly. We wanted to know what they were doing on registration first, what they were doing on organization in terms of headquarters, what they were doing on literature in terms of distribution, what they were doing with reference to their seniors' committee, their veterans' committee and Democrats' committee, all of the nuts and bolts. Then we would ask them for their comments as to what is making an impact in their state, what is not making an impact, what do you think that you need, and if you had one thing what would it be. Of course, a tremendous amount of telephone contact, but we'd sit at the end of a week—I forget whether it was Monday morning or whatever the heck it was—and read fifteen or twenty, twenty-five states' reports. You get a pretty good across the board, because these guys were basically fellows who were politically astute.

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and everything. They knew what they were doing.

STEWART: This was your primary means of communicating with them, plus...

DONAHUE: Yes, plus, of course, no end of contacts with the political leaders. We were always knifing for a little edge. And you get fairly good reports from the tour. But the tour was inaccurate always because they always have crowds. People are always cheering, you know, and no one looks bad when the people are cheering. I know Kenny used to think that we were prophets of gloom and doom, and we used to think he was on LSD or something, but, you know, you can't blame him. They were going from seven o'clock in the morning and, you know, people are jumping and screaming and all of that, and we'd say, "Well, you know, they were jumping and screaming for Nixon, too." It was just two

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different perspectives. I was on the tour myself for a few days. Cripes, you lose your perspective in five minutes. Nothing but cordons of police and sirens, and cheering crowds and bands.

STEWART: How, if at all, were you involved in funneling ideas or suggestions for speeches?

DONAHUE: Oh, some, depending upon the source of them. We had Mike Feldman's [Myer Feldman] whole operation there. They would frequently talk to us about, you know, what we heard or what we felt and all of that. Sometimes we'd talk to them. Kenny would talk to us very briefly and ask what our people felt was making impact and what wasn't. There wasn't any real issue in the campaign. When they were talking about Quemoy and Matsu, Kenny was saying, "What the hell do the average American and two Chinese waiters...."

STEWART: Then you don't feel you contributed anything

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of any real significance...

DONAHUE: ...to the issues?

STEWART: Yes.

DONAHUE: No.

STEWART: Not at all? You did go on one tour?

DONAHUE: Yes, well, I did a day in Chicago, and then I did the last two days on the tour. I was in Chicago. It was one of the early ones. I was in Chicago on my own. And then I did some time in the field myself, left, and go to see where we could, in some of the states. I went to Michigan, Illinois, Indiana. Then I went down and did the Maryland, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida.

STEWART: Were you all at all involved in liaison with the Johnson campaign?

DONAHUE: There wasn't much. Whatever there was.... Well, as a matter of fact, I was, I suppose, as directly involved as anybody could be,

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because Earle Clements [Earle C. Clements] had the office next to mine, and he was supposedly our point of contact, but we really didn't have much.

The swing through the South, great story. I hope Steve Smith told it because he's the only one who can tell it. Great story about the brochures and the foul-up and all that stuff. But Steve tells the story about Johnson calling him up and saying,¹ "Now, Steve, I was majority leader but I'm the candidate for vice president. He's my president, too. And Steve," he says, "You know, I don't mind. I got off the plane and I look around. Now I'm up for vice president, a pretty big job. I come on over here and then I see those signs, and all the signs say is 'Kennedy.' Now, I don't mind and Kennedy.... But that Johnson fellow—that's me, you know. I was majority leader. I'm

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not on those signs either." And of course Steve....

STEWART: Wait a minute. [End Tape 1, Side 2] Okay.

¹ Imitates Johnson's accent

DONAHUE: And he said, "I keep going along. I don't see nothing about that Johnson on there. Now, I'm with that President. He's my president, but I just thought that I was on the ticket and I might get with it." So Steve got real embarrassed because we really didn't have any Johnson material. We had Kennedy material, but we didn't have even Johnson's picture on it. So he called the printer, and he got a rush, rush job of Kennedy-Johnson stuff and we flew the stuff all the way out to wherever he was. I think it was Indiana or someplace. He called up Steve and he said, "Now, Steve, I'm on the ticket, you know. I'm the vice president. He's my president. I told him he's my leader. I'm going to follow him wherever he wants. But," he says, "Last night, Steve, I got to a town. We got

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out and there were big, beautiful signs. They all say Kennedy. There's no Johnson ones." Well, Steve said, "My God, what could've gone wrong?" So they had obviously misdirected it.

They finally got the fellow again and they got some stuff, and they had a special charter and they flew it out and they got it there and all that. And sure enough, Johnson called up again. The substance of it was that they put the stuff up so fresh that it all blurred and Johnson was left without anything [Laughter].

He had a whole bunch of people that were hanging around. They really didn't know what they were doing. He operates much differently from the President. He delegates no authority. There was nobody who had the power to make a decision. And he was very concerned, of course, about winning Texas and winning the Senate seat in Texas. So

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if you had some time, you could suffer through Earle Clements. I just honestly can't think of two coordinated things they [Kennedy and Johnson] did during the whole campaign.

STEWART: Did you get all involved in the things in Massachusetts and New England?

DONAHUE: Oh, there was nothing to get involved in. I mean, the real question here was to keep the people quieted down so....

STEWART: I mean the local...

DONAHUE: The local fights?

STEWART: Right

DONAHUE: We just made a very quick judgment that Joe Ward was a jerk. We had a conversation—it must have been after the Massachusetts primary—that he

had to be the stupidest man that ever ran for governor of Massachusetts. Here was a guy running for governor with a fellow by the name of John Kennedy his own state. If he

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wasn't going to carry Massachusetts he wasn't going to carry anything else. And Joe Ward was spending all his time publicizing Joe Ward. Now, any guy who wouldn't know enough to buy all the Kennedy-Ward.... There wasn't a Kennedy sticker in the state. There wasn't any Kennedy material. We couldn't afford to put it up here. And that fathead was opening independent offices and, oh, it's just unbelievable.

I don't know if you've ever.... You know that Murray Levin [Murray B. Levin] who's written a couple of books? I don't know the man. You know, he wrote a book about the 1960 campaign which is probably the worst book in terms of anything you could imagine. He devotes a total analysis to how the thing was won and lost and there isn't five lines devoted to why Ward didn't run with Kennedy. The only issue in this damn state at that time was,

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you know, how close could you get to Kennedy, and he never did. We just....

STEWART: He never tried?

DONAHUE: Ted Reardon was up here. Now Ted would be your better judge of it, but I remember having conversations with Ted, tentatively things. We weren't going to spend any money in Massachusetts, obviously, on headquarters or anything else. I think that our first profferings of coordinated effort were rebuffed. We figured we were going to win it anyway, so the heck with him.

STEWART: What about O'Connor [Thomas J. O'Connor, Jr.] running against Saltonstall?

DONAHUE: Well, we had another fish to fry. We really weren't too concerned. I think that typically an awful lot of stuff was read, or read back, or misread, as to what the intention was but, my heavens, that was not exactly one of the prime concerns.

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STEWART: You've mentioned this whole matter of supplies a few times. Were you more involved in this than anyone else?

DONAHUE: No, it's just that if you are doing business with people who are in the nuts and bolts of politics, everybody's screaming for stickers, pins and all of

that. Dave Hackett [David L. Hackett] did it all. Dave had the magnificent responsibility of ordering and getting it, and selling it and getting it out. But no matter where you went or where the President would go they'd say, "Where are you going to get some stickers?" You just got so you get bugged by the idea of it. But I would hear about it, I swear, fifty-seven thousand times a day. And every state functions differently with reference to it. Michigan was ideal. Michigan goes ahead and they buy a certain number of whatever they want, they allocate it by districts and they

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give an honest distribution. Every place else, if you sent ten thousand stickers they'd stay right where they were. They wouldn't be distributed at all.

STEWART: Going back even to the primaries, this whole matter of relations with the press, what guidelines, or what was your approach, as far as talking to reporters?

DONAHUE: Well, it's the same, you know, standard you use all the time. You tell them something. Whatever you tell them, you tell them the truth, but you don't tell them all that they want to know. Obviously we would use different smoke lines at a time. That way we'd feed them stuff out. But, you know, a good national press reporter, you can't con him on a long-term basis. What you can do is you can deal with them very fairly, and answer just the question that he asks you, and you don't volunteer anything more. And he can never

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find you lying because you don't. Because you never tell him all of it. Because you don't get to tell him all of it.

STEWART: But you personally, and people around you, were quite accessible usually?

DONAHUE: Oh yes. They're an awful pain in the neck, because during a campaign, you know, a guy's going to do a big three-part series, and he'd want to spend a couple of hours. You obviously don't tell them what you're doing. You tell them what you appear to be doing, and you just don't go beyond that, that's all. And then, of course, towards the end of the campaign, everybody and his brother is calling up every day. You know, "How are you going to go state by state?" "Do you mind if I run through fifty states with you?"

STEWART: It could be quite a headache, I imagine.

DONAHUE: Yes, well, it is. They're, you know, of two

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types. If a guy is a professional, if he's in the business, he may be against you. But with very rare exceptions they aren't total son of a guns. Then a guy who is not in the business a long time just doesn't have any word himself. He doesn't understand it. He understands that everything that he hears he can print. Most guys who have any real background you can talk to them either on an off the record basis, or a not for attribution basis, or a background basis. Or anything like that.

STEWART: As far as the financial end of it, what was your involvement?

DONAHUE: Thankfully, none. Steve was the money man, and although I talked to him a lot about recommendations about spending money, I was not in the business of raising it or dispensing it. That's the one part of politics I really most despise.

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STEWART: So, yours was strictly the organizational?

DONAHUE: Oh, sure. I had some dealings with people who gave money, who for one reason or another came through me, but all I did was bring them to someone who would take it.

STEWART: What about these committees you were mentioning at the national level? How effective do you think, generally, they were? Did they do what you thought they would?

DONAHUE: Well, some of them did. The Senior Citizens group was good.

STEWART: Who was in charge of that?

DONAHUE: Blue Carstenson and Jim O'Brien [James O'Brien]. They were darn effective. The Young Democrats—Dick Murphy [Richard J. Murphy] was the head of it—were very good. The Veterans [for Kennedy-Johnson] were exactly what we expected them to be. They were more or less token.

STEWART: Who was in charge of...

DONAHUE: Jack Gleason [John S. Gleason]. He was [inaudible] asked

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to do a certain thing and he did exactly what he was asked to do. The Civil

Rights [Division] group was, depending on who you talk to, either, you know, very successful or tragic. On the whole they were good, but they had some real wild men, and I mean real wild men.

STEWART: For example?

DONAHUE: Well, they had Adam Powell [Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.]. And they had Adam's bag man in there. There was a long negotiation about whether the Reverend would or would not appear and what his performance would be and all that. Louis Martin [Louis E. Martin] was there. Louis was the one constant. Louis has, you know, excellent judgment, and he was by far the best. But like any group, they got oriented only to their particular problem and that is the total problem, and so they tend to want to force into the candidate to, you know, do something in their area. I don't think that it's sufficient to say that the President's calls were enough

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to tip the balance. I think that you can take fifty-seven different things and say that any one of them was so significant. If we only win by a hundred and fifteen or something like that, we can't discount anything.

STEWART: What other committees were there?

DONAHUE: Let's see, the other committees.... They were the educators. They didn't do a tremendous amount.

STEWART: Who was the head?

DONAHUE: I really don't know. Ralph did most of the business with them. I didn't. The Nationalities Division, if you listen to them, they did everything. I did most of the work directly with them. I think that they had some measure of success. There're still areas in the country where people want to be identified as Poles or Lithuanians. It's the worst jungle I've been involved in in my life. You just can't consider all the middle Europeans middle Europeans.

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Oh, talk about factionalism. They do get to be a bother in terms of dealing with them as individuals, but they are all volunteers. They do raise their own money. They do carry on a function. And I suppose in terms of the foreign language press, whatever value it has, they're effective.

STEWART: Were there people in many of these committees who had had the same experience in other campaigns?

DONAHUE: No, not really. Except for the Nationalities Division, almost all these people were first timers, I think. They had probably been on the fringes of various things, but in terms of heading them up they were all people that for one reason or another we had picked.

STEWART: Did you personally ever stop and think that you were somewhat inadequate because you hadn't done this before?

DONAHUE: No, it wasn't really that much different. It

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was different in the sense that we didn't always know, you know, all the places, but at least in my experience a halfway knowledgeable politician in an hour can give you broad brush strokes of an entire state. If you have any concept of the state both geographically and population-wise—all the stuff that you can do yourself with a blue book from the secretary of state—and then you start putting some flesh and bones on it, it doesn't take too much time to get the patterns. Now, you don't have a great deal of control in a campaign. What you try to do is give it some direction, but control you never have. Oh, sure, sometimes you'd wish you could go out and bat around the field and get a little more play from it, but we didn't have too many alternatives. We didn't have too much time.

STEWART: What about the whole religious business? How....

DONAHUE: Oh, we had that committee. Boy, that committee

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was a big functioning committee. What the heck was that called [Community Relations Committee]? And Jim Wine [James W. Wine]. And Jim Wine finds that he became an ambassador. They had a storeroom full of anti-Catholic literature that was absolutely staggering.

STEWART: How, if at all, were you associated with those people?

DONAHUE: They used to report to Ralph—our desks were side by side—so I talked to them or Ralph talked to them. I think that we thought of it a little more bluntly than they did. We felt we had more going for us as Catholics. If we had to take our druthers we would have been Methodists, but he wasn't and we had an awful lot going for us. Of course, it was one of the things we were concerned with on a regular basis from the guys in the field. It was just absolutely *the* overriding issue of the campaign. I think that nobody.... Historically, they have to downgrade the religious issue, and they have to

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start talking about other things, but in the middle of it and the people who have fairly vivid recollections who were in the field and saw it, it was just almost a Catholic, anti-Catholic thing. It was just tremendous. But, in the overall plot and scheme of the campaign, this is why you were going to end up with the American dream. And this was where the euphoria of the campaign cut through, and the American dream was cancelled. I think if the American dream had been given, the margin would have been substantially higher. But the people on the tour thought that they were winning big.

STEWART: Were you always conscious in appointing coordinators and getting people to work in the field as to how they'd fit religiously?

DONAHUE: No, we never gave it any consideration. The fact of the matter is that most of the people we knew happened to be Irish Catholic. It

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wasn't always, but there were an awful lot of them and a lot of places they were going they would probably not be received, but we just didn't have that great battery of people to do it. I don't think that in politics as a profession, or, I mean, in the professional side of it, you really are concerned about an individual, because you're really talking about, well, a slab of meat on the chopping block. There's not a great deal of passion or warmth involved.

STEWART: As far as O'Brien, of course, being the overall coordinator here, how would you describe your relationship with him?

DONAHUE: Well, we've been close, you know, since '52. I think that in a lot of these things I think exactly as he does, and that we've had a very, very good rapport, we work pretty well. We argue, of course, and did, but we're pretty much of the same line. Of course, we've spent so much time

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together that we do think interchangeably on a lot of things.

STEWART: As far as involving him in things, I assume there was no set pattern at all? It was just a matter of who was available?

DONAHUE: No, actually he had things he was doing. Ralph had things he was doing. I had things I was doing. Bobby had things he was doing. You did things, and at the end of the day normally, say, about eight or nine o'clock at night, we'd sit together and review what fire was going on—there was always one—and what had been done and what the assessment of tomorrow would be. I think you just go off.... Well, Larry and I frequently ate together. And you just start out another day.

STEWART: Did you have any days off at all during the whole thing?

DONAHUE: Oh no, no. Oh heavens no. That's one thing that kind of appalled us when we first got there.

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I think the first Saturday there was no switchboard operator at the national committee. And we sometimes had trouble getting them in on Sunday. Of course, I suppose it's their job. They work five days. But for us, it was our life. You know, we weren't going to get another turn at the wheel and so we worked seven days. Well, there wasn't much else to do. Neither Larry or I had my family there anyway, so it didn't make any difference. My heavens, you couldn't ever get even half caught up with what was going on, and there were always.... I mean, you have the internal feuds within the committee that were causing trouble, and a whole lot of that junk. And you had some of the Johnson people. There was the classic confrontation between A.B. "Bud" Luckey who was a Johnson man and Robert Francis Kennedy who was a Kennedy man.

But there was a swing, oh, probably in September of 1960 of four cities, Nashville,

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Atlanta. I think it ended up in Shreveport. I've probably got the three of them wrong, but I remember it was Tennessee, Georgia.... I didn't go it. John Seigenthaler, who is a heck of a guy, was working directly for Bobby all the time. Early in the thing there was a schedule thing. This was one of the typical type things. There weren't many of them, but we had very little to do with Johnson. There was going to be a series of regional conferences. John came to me—it was supposed to start, say, on Sunday.

John came to me Tuesday or Wednesday and said, "This regional swing and the Johnson organization and all, what do you know about it?" I said, "Nobody's spoken about it. I don't know. What do you know about it?" He said, "I don't know." So about Thursday he came back to me. I know it was going to start, say, on Tuesday. He came back and said, "Do you know anything about it?"

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What have you found out?" And I said, "Well, there's going to be these meetings. The Johnson people are going to have a duplicate of everybody that we have. They're going to have a research man, they're going to have a materials man (which was a big fight with them), and they were going to have all kinds of functioning. A duplication of our organization at the national committee, only it's going to be on the Hill [Capitol Hill]." He said, "What do you think?" I said, "I think it's crazy, but it doesn't bother me." And he said, "Well, you know, they've got Bobby scheduled to go on it, and so what should we do?" I said, "Well, I suppose one of us ought to find out about it." Well, we didn't.

But in any event it came to be Sunday. The reason I remember it was Sunday is because there were probably only about five or ten of us in the whole thing. And John said, “God, you know, Bobby asked me last night about

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this thing and I just see that they’ve put an order in for a plane.” I said, “Well, geez, John, how much is plane going to cost?” I think it was a twenty-six thousand dollars or some fabulous amount of money. He said, “Who’s in charge of it?” I said, “They tell me that it’s A.B. Luckey, Bud Luckey.” “Well, let’s get him on the phone.” So we dug up A.B. “Bud” Luckey and he said he’d come down.

The Democratic National Committee wasn’t a particularly lavish headquarters, but the best office there was, Bobby had, I suppose, or as good as there was. And we were sitting in Bobby’s office, and finally A.B. “Bud” Luckey deigned to come in. He was a fresh son of a gun. He came in in Bermuda shorts and he had kind of dark glasses on. A.B. went and took Bobby’s seat. “Now what is your problem?” “Well,” he said, “gee, we don’t know too much about it. Bobby’s supposed to leave on Tuesday.

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What is it?” “We’re having a meeting.” “Well, who’s going to go along?” Well, apparently it seemed that every one of our top men—Larry was going, Dave Hackett for materials, Mike Feldman for research—they were all supposed to go, and the Johnson counterpart was going to go with them and somehow learn about the campaign. John and I were getting sick as blazes because we could think of.... “Who’s going along?” He had a manifest that had about sixty-five people including everybody of theirs had a secretary to go with him. Pretty good—how was paying them? [Inaudible] We finally said, “Well, maybe Bobby could go.” And Bud said, “Well, you know, that’s a pretty good thing. You know, sending Bobby Kennedy down the South is like waving a red flag in front of a bull. Oh, that’s going to be murder going to be murder. Johnson, he’ll take care of that.”

So I later heard the sequel. George

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Smathers [George A. Smathers] was in charge of this whole thing. It went through the Tennessee stop and it was apparently very successful. No one ever asked a question about civil rights to embarrass Bobby. They went through the Atlanta conference and no one.... It was wonderful. They had a luncheon and Bud Luckey was sitting at a table with George Smathers and Bobby Kennedy. Bobby said to him, “Well, George, I think this thing’s going to go very well, very well, and I’m very, very pleased.” But I want to tell you one thing. It’s not going to go very so long as that son of a bitch is involved. Everything he’s told me has been a lie.” And I’ll never forget, after we were in the White House it seemed I spent an inordinate amount of time getting Bud Luckey fired from various positions in government because Bobby just was not.... Well, John had said to him, “Bobby, I don’t think you’d better go. It’s like waving a red flag in front of a bull.”

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But those, oh gee, those terrible problems of what are you going to do with the labor people, and the labor people aren't being represented on the platforms of the various meetings, and they aren't being clued in. Or the Negroes feel they were left out in Detroit. You just had those, day after day, hour after hour.

STEWART: You did make that final swing through New England with him?

DONAHUE: Yes.

STEWART: What were your reactions....

DONAHUE: Well, you know, it was particularly thrilling. We had a function that we were doing. We were really up here to set up the election returns at the Cape [Cape Cod, Massachusetts] for election night. We were really dogging it for a day and a half because, apart from Kenny or some function, there's not a damn thing that anybody can contribute on the tour. By that point

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no speechwriter contributes anything because he doesn't give the speeches. So really, for a day and a half we picked him up in Providence [Rhode Island] and went to New Haven [Connecticut] and up to Manchester [New Hampshire] and Burlington [Vermont].

STEWART: Things were pretty well wrapped up in Washington by then?

DONAHUE: Well, yes. There was nothing you could do with anything, you're gone. It was terrific. And strangely enough, although no one ever sees much of it, I remember the speech in the Garden [Boston Garden] the night before the election. I think it was one of the, you know, big thrills you could get. My wife joined me. I hadn't seen her for some time. She was rather pregnant at the time, about six or seven months. I was with Teddy White [Theodore H. White]. The crowds were just staggering, just unbelievable. We were supposed to be in the party. We'd come over in the buses and all of that, and we were wondering, well, if we were all going to get trampled to death. And to hear the roof come off

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that Garden. I mean, just never no hockey game, no basketball game, nowhere has there ever been such a noise. And his speech was the same speech he'd given all along. I remember being directly pushed up against the stage, probably two bodies between mine and the stage, and he right over, and look up at his hands as he held them and see they were cut and puffy, you know, with the fingernails and the infection, and he was really a bit punched out. But

still, and I suppose not great oratory, and maybe it was just because he was doing it all the time anyway, but adapted to that crowd it was, as opposed to the bomb, you know, the one at Faneuil Hall which was better if he didn't give it, or as opposed to the one he did in Manchester which was a, you know....

STEWART: What about the question?

DONAHUE: Yes, that was a real dog.

STEWART: White, of course, has the classic comment you

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made, the one about the Massachusetts people up on the platform.

DONAHUE: Teddy is much more articulate and literate, but the fact is they just.... It was a stake's horse and a bunch of platers, you know, and just the difference was so.... And yet, I knew every one of them there, and I know exactly.... They never thought he was any different. They just thought that somehow he had a little gimmick in there, you know, and if they could just.... Maybe it was the way he held his head or something. Cripes, so few of them ever recognized, I think in their own minds, the tremendous amount of class he had compared to them. It was staggering.

But that was a good night in the sense that it was over in one way. And then we had to get all the work done the next day. It was getting set up in Bobby's house. It's amazing. Of course, at

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that point, I had talked to him very, very little during the campaign, a very few number of times and very perfunctorily. You know, the problems of, first, the voice, and he was pretty testy. And yet election day he wasn't at all.

STEWART: Is that right?

DONAHUE: He looked good. We were fairly well in shape. We had all of our lines in. we had all of our contacts made around the country, and we had the girls lined up. We had, I think four, five, or six girls down there, and Ralph and I had two controllers at the end.

We got a report from Kansas about 4 o'clock. It was murder. It was a broken box, not much you could do out there. It was murder. We were running a little behind Stevenson. And I remember walking out on the lawn, and he was just walking around by himself, and asking how things were going. I told him a couple of lies about how things were going because the only hard report.... I had a lot of reports

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about.... I made up a couple of stories which weren't totally inaccurate, about the fact that the voting turnout was heavy in a lot of the cities, and it was raining in some of the farm areas, but I never told him about Kansas. I didn't see any point in that because, as Shakespeare

[William Shakespeare] says, "The bearer of bad tidings is frequently the author." But he was really relaxed. He was in and out of the house while I was doing some other things there, and we chatted about a couple of places in the country that he felt that he was doing very well in. He asked me about my assessment as to how well....

There was a large conflict in the group, it was a very real conflict, about Mayor Daley [Richard J. Daley]. The President always thought the world of him, got along with him, and Bobby could never get along with him, and, I hesitate to say it, but in many ways was afraid of him because Daley is a regular booter. He doesn't discuss

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things. He doesn't argue with you. He just says things, and what he says he means, and what he means he does. But Bobby was fed an awful lot of material about how the registration was terrible, and, you know, you get with Roy Reuther running around here with.... Oh, the [National Voter] Registration Committee is a committee I forgot to mention and they were pretty good and they really did quite a bit of work. But they were always complaining that Daley didn't do things this way. Well, Daley does things his own way. He doesn't have to have any lessons from anybody from Massachusetts. And I was, at first, convinced of the idea that he had been not doing what he said he was going to do. I was out there about three weeks before the election, and he explained to me that ten days before the election they put out their material. Ten days before the election they do this that and the other thing. At that time, I was coming from Midway [Airport], which you don't do any more, and I came back

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in there a week before the election, and my heavens, everything he said, every town that had Kennedy.... Every car, every board.... But he just did things his own way.

The President talked about whether or not he thought he was functioning well. He complained about some of the difficulties of the tour, some of the things he wished we'd been able to do, and all that. But he was very calm, you know, and....

STEWART: Do you remember any of the things he did complain about that he...

DONAHUE: Oh, he didn't like two particular things. He was always the type of man that did not like physical contact. You could always tell whether anybody really knew him or not, depending upon whether they went and attempted to.... Well, nobody ever wrapped an arm around him in his life, you know, attempted to grab him by the arm. I mean, you just never, never, never touched him. He just didn't like it. And he also did not like to be

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interrupted in doing what he was doing. He could, you know, freeze you to death with his stare if he had to. I think that the hotel room sequence which goes with every tour, where the so-called larger calls have to have the private séance, started to drive him right out of his mind because those guys do tend to get.... They press the play and he was bothered by that.

I think he was just also bothered by some of the physical difficulties of the tour. It's such a difference with the Secret Service and without them. You know, with all of the army of people that you have, you just couldn't protect him physically from the pushing and hauling and tugging that he was taking. I think that [inaudible].

But he was also a great competitor. We were cutting up Nixon a bit, and he was chortling about how he thought that—more or less back to the debate idea—you know, he really knew he was pretty good. He always loved a statement, a reply statement, that seemed to have

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a little zing in it. I think that I was rather surprised that he could remain quite as calm as he did. I must admit I was calm, but I was just exhausted. After all, I wasn't on the ballot.

STEWART: So what did you do the rest of the night?

DONAHUE: Well, we started immediately. I talked to John Bailey [John Moran Bailey] and John said that.... Now let's see, what time do they close? Seven.

Kentucky closes the earliest. We had an indifferent report from Kentucky, and then we had some scattering of rather indifferent reports. Then we got Bailey through to him. I forget all the sequence of it, but I remember I got John on the phone. I told him, gave him the phone, and he said, how are we doing, John?" And he was saying, "Who's this? Who's this? Who's this?" He said, "Oh, for Christ's sake, it's the candidate." John had a broken machine, and John's broken machines were accurate. We had the state by

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a little over a hundred thousand. But John's projection then which looked good.... Then within a short time the TV started spewing out all that junk about being way ahead.

It was funny because in the.... There were two.... There was sort of a sun porch living room in Bobby's house, then the real living room, where we were set up was in the sun porch side. We had all of our key precincts, all of our key areas that we thought. We had Lou Harris [Louis Harris] running up and down the stairs. People who were not really.... Spent a lot of time.... Some of the family members were on the other side. Of course, they were watching TV and they were in high glee, and we were biting our fingernails because, well, it's just a question of numbers. You have to get so many to win. Connecticut we had to win big, and you couldn't count on that. Philadelphia you had to win big, [inaudible] and we won in Philadelphia big to take Pennsylvania. But then we started getting down

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to the nuts and bolts of it and it was just terrible. We were leaking, and there was just a little bit leaking all the time, and the leak was just enough to keep you behind. Later in the night, you know, a little tension started to set in because, although I never really thought we could lose—mere stupidity, more than anything else—I just started to lose confidence that we could make it big and confidence that we were going to be good, and then you just want to win.

New Jersey got to be very, very crucial I remember, and we talked on there. I took calls, and we talked through a guy.... But the problem was, at that time.... As I remember, I think we were leading by about thirty thousand votes, and the votes that were out were in southern New Jersey, and I wanted to know where they were going and there was no way you could get a handle on it. It was Hudson County. Essex County and [inaudible]. They could tell you

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within four, but down there nobody had a handle out. They started to say, “Well, you know, we’re going to be all right.” And you just don’t give an answer like that to the President. “How do you know? Who have you talked to? What does he say? What were the figures?”

I had a secret bet all the way through with Ralph Dungan. I always thought that Delaware was the sleeper in the whole country. I had spent some time in Delaware. I was very encouraged. I forget what Ralph’s sleeper was. Ralph’s sleeper was a real dog, anyway. But he and I had a bet and Delaware came though.

Then Mayor Daley started playing the checkers game that you have to play in Illinois. They talk about vote stealing, which is outrageous. They stole more votes in southern Illinois than we could ever imagine. There is no requirement. All you have to do is count, in a given precinct. You’re not required to feed them all back in.

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And he holds out his big precincts always. He lets them shove theirs in, and he keeps his out because they.... Well, there’re all kinds of reasons why they do. But they have limited registration in southern Illinois. They register two days a year, and what they can do and they have done in the past in some of those towns is announce that the registration was yesterday. There’s no way you have to publish, or anything like that. That to me was one of the vicious canards that ever came out of the campaign.

But then poor Teddy was on the spot. We were moving across the country and the results were moving and....

STEWART: Were you keeping much ahead of the television at this time or....

DOANUE: Yes, somewhat. We would be spotty. The television would be much more complete. But we were looking for areas that we thought would be good. The hell with the television. They want to report

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South Dakota, they can report all South Dakotas. We knew we had nothing going there. We got a quick flash from Indiana. “You’re down 350,000.” Yeah. You don’t bother to call anybody back out there. You’re not going to make it up. But where you do have some life, and when it got down to as you moved across the country we didn’t have enough, and Teddy’s area was now coming in. Poor Teddy was starting to get it in that typical Kennedy fashion, from Bobby and the President, you know, “Can’t you call....” I got a call from Teno Roncalio. Wyoming was gone, and because there was that few people, I remember I wrote out a note, called Teddy over and gave it to him. Because if I announced it in the room, poor Teddy would have been.... You know, they personalize everything. Teddy was there, he should win it. Teddy didn’t win it, Teddy failed.

As we went through pretty much it, you know, was just going to be a squeaker.

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It was interesting. The President stood right in back of me when Nixon finally came on, and he acknowledged that Nixon was doing exactly what he would have done. He said, “I wouldn’t concede if I was in that position.” I don’t remember him saying what Pierre says he said, but that doesn’t mean he didn’t say it. There’s a very good chance he said a lot of things. Phones were buzzing every now and then, he was placing calls, I was placing calls. Then he just very, in a rather.... It was kind of a tough thing. He went out, had to go home. We closed up shop for the night. We were more willing to spend the night there, but we didn’t. We started back first thing in the morning. Then by the morning we had.... Illinois was wide, and there was no problem. At least we were satisfied there was no problem.

But it was interesting. We

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went down to the Armory [Hyannis, Massachusetts Armory] it was all set up. Now a lot of the reporters, some of them going way back to the primary days, had been antagonistic. They weren’t particularly friendly. But by now they became rooters. And I remember Teddy White, the great dispassionate Teddy White, was watching a ticker tape and talking about it. He was saying, “Does Daley know how to handle this? Have you talked to Daley? Are you sure that Daley knows what he’s at?” [Laughter]. For crying out loud—what do you want? I had said to Teddy the day before the election, “Gee, Teddy, if Kennedy loses what about your book?” And he said, “It’s going to be a marvelous history book” [Laughter]. All of them, Phil Potter [Philip Potter] had a lot of arguments with him on it. Geez, they became.... We were satisfied. We knew it was locked, but we couldn’t tell them. If they didn’t know it was locked, let them watch the tape. And they were rooters at that point. Then he came to

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the Armory and made his acceptance, and then he invited us back to the house the next day. I guess it was the next day.

STEWART: He was still pretty calm about it?

DONAHUE: Yes, he was really tired. He was really dragging, much more so than it appeared to me at that time. He had a real good temper. He got out some real mean remarks. He was very, very sharp and short. Nobody could ever accuse him of being a gentle man to work for or with, but he's a fair guy. He's not mean, but damn frank. It was interesting because just before we left for Hyannis, say within four or five days, a fellow from the secret service had come over and I had talked to him and I had explained to him who would be around and who would be there, and what they'd do and what they wouldn't. The thing that staggered me was that, when I arrived thereafter, a secret serviceman called me by name and that was it.

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A guy I never saw before. I assume they had pictures, not saying where they got them or what, because at this time—this had to be very close because we had not announced to anybody where he would spend election day. It was a fairly logical decision but it wasn't announced. Then immediately we started on a meeting. We had a meeting with....It was just the first meeting.

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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