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Biographical Note

De Paulo was a campaign organizer, Citizens for Kennedy in West Virginia. In his interview he focuses on the issues of religion and anti-Catholic sentiment in West Virginia during the 1960 presidential election, among other issues.

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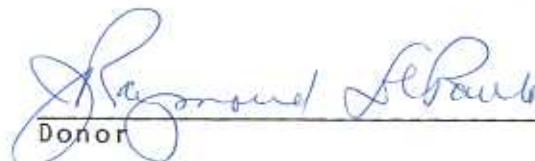
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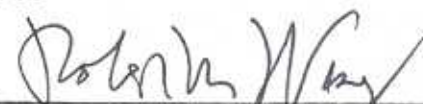
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J. RAYMOND DE PAULO

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Oral History Interview

With

J. RAYMOND De PAULO

February 19, 1965
Beckley, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: Mr. De Paulo, will you tell me how you first became interested in the primary candidacy of Senator Kennedy in West Virginia?

DE PAULO: Well, probably the first thing that got my interest in the campaign was the telephone call from Harry Hoffman of the *Charleston Gazette* in 1959, long before Senator Kennedy announced his candidacy, and at the time when there was a good deal of speculation around the country as to whether or not the country was ready for a Catholic as president of the United States. Harry and I have been friends for many years, and often he would call me in Beckley to discuss how we felt about various projects and stories that the *Gazette* was sponsoring at the moment. These were generally off-the-record conversations, and he maintained that confidence all through our many conversations.

This conversation we were having this day was also an off-the-record conversation, as long as we were talking about the stories the *Gazette* was carrying at that time. In the middle of the conversation he said, "Oh, by the way, you're a Catholic; how do you feel about a Catholic for the United States?" No, he said, "Would you be interested in a Catholic being president of the United States?" And I said, "No more than I would be interested in a Baptist being president, or a Presbyterian, or anybody else." We discussed the subject a little bit and he asked me, "Do you think there would be any religious overtones for the campaign?" I said, "Yes, indeed. It's my thinking that they would make 1928 look like an ice cream social."

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Shortly after that conversation was finished, and I thought no more of it until a few weeks later. My daughter came home from a high school church meeting and said that our pastor had mentioned to her that I had been quoted in a national magazine, *Newsweek*. I did not recall ever having talked to any such magazine or any such reporter. I thought she must have been mistaken and I called I believe it was Father Mascioli [Joseph Mascioli] at the time, and asked him what he was talking about. And he said, “Yes, we received our copy in the mail today and” he said, “you are not only identified by name, but by profession, and you’re commenting on the election.” And I said, “Well, if there is one thing I know absolutely nothing about, it’s an election.” But having gotten my curiosity aroused, I immediately went out and bought a newspaper. It seems that *Newsweek* had, through its correspondence all over the United States, conducted a survey. Across the front of the magazine was the big banner line, “Do the Catholics want a Catholic for President?” They dissected the country into its various areas and gave an opinion survey.

The opinions were generally treated as: a doctor in Miami, Florida said thus and so; a lawyer in Seattle said thus and so; a truck driver here this is how he felt about it. And then it said, “Ray De Paulo, a baker in Beckley, West Virginia said...” And then it ended up with a quote that, “this election or campaign would make 1928 look like an ice cream social.” Well, that precipitated quite a lot of comments, mostly con; it also precipitated quite a conversation with the various officials of our company that I was representing at the time. Frankly, I was right upset, because at that time Senator Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] meant little or nothing to me and I wasn’t a particular fan of his. As a matter of fact, I believe if I had analyzed it pretty closely, I would have been a little bit anti. But at any rate, that was the beginning.

YOUNG: I’d like to go back to the statement that it would make 1928 seem like an ice cream social. Could you analyze your various reasons for feeling that way?

DE PAULO: Yes. There was nothing in my relationships with the people of Raleigh County and the area up there that would make that statement so. However, my wife and I were actually the only Catholic couple in the social group that we frequented. We never by word or action or deed had ever been in the least embarrassed; the subject had never been discussed. However, the fact that there were many other people who financially and from every other yardstick could be in this social group, and weren’t accepted—they had been there all their lives and we as newcomers had come in—sort of gave me the impression that there was this undercurrent.

YOUNG: Well, Ray, could you say another word or could you buttress your feeling of this undercurrent against a

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Catholic candidate with more specific examples?

DE PAULO: Yes, I can. Beckley, of course, is a little town of about twenty thousand, more or less, in southern West Virginia. The Catholic population, we have one church, four hundred families.

YOUNG: Would that be a church for the whole county?

DE PAULO: One church for the whole county, although there are little missions out but no established church in the county. I would say that there is a population of a hundred and fifty or sixty thousand in Raleigh County, and probably a thousand Catholic families in the area. As Senator Kennedy's intention became more and more known, it became a conversation piece at all the gatherings and one thing and another.

YOUNG: Well, you were mentioning earlier about the political activity in the town; would you put that in, too, for the record?

DE PAULO: Yes. Beckley is a very politically conscious town. At one time we had a governor and a congressman and a senator from Beckley at the same time. And for years the congressional seat for the district was held by a Beckleyan. Senator Kilgore [Harley M. Kilgore] had held the senate seat for many years. Senator Byrd [Robert C. Byrd] came along shortly after from Sophia just outside of Beckley. Beckley dominates Mount Hope, too. So politics is the life staff, next only to coal in that section of the country. In these gatherings the national political situation was very much the subject of conversation. It's predominantly Democratic politics. All the young men and some candidates in the Democratic party said openly that they didn't think they wanted to support Kennedy, and they gave as their reason that it was hard enough to win an election without the added handicap of a Catholic. And they very definitely considered it a handicap.

YOUNG: This would be for local candidates as well as statewide candidates?

DE PAULO: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. They felt that a Catholic on the ticket would make their job doubly hard. As Senator Kennedy's plans became more and more known, the preachers...And this area is a fundamentalist religion area. We don't have too much of the rattlesnake religion there, although there is a little bit of it. But mostly they're Baptist and hard-shell Methodist, and strictly primitive Baptist is a large denomination up there. And they were very, very vocal in their objections to Senator Kennedy. We sort of expected that from

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them, because they are generally hill people and not highly sophisticated people.

We didn't get alarmed until the city churches took it up, the Presbyterians and others who represented the finest people. I mean finest in the very truest sense of the word, the very closest personal friends and neighbors of mine, in whose home I was welcome and my family was welcome—my children were in and out of their house like their own, and their children in my home—and with whom we had discussed every single problem that confronts someone

trying to raise a family. When we found that their preacher was preaching against a Catholic and against Kennedy specifically, then we became concerned, and it was then that we began to defend Senator Kennedy strictly on a religious basis.

You might say I got into this campaign strictly on a religious basis. I had made my mind up in the beginning that I wouldn't give one bit of consideration to any man who ran for office simply because he was a Catholic. But I felt that the criticisms they were leveling at him were not at Senator Kennedy, they were at a Catholic. And in defending him, I often made the statement that to be against him for any other reason I wouldn't quarrel with. I didn't care whether they didn't like his labor record or his business record or his voting record or anything about him. The only thing I said was, "Don't be against him on account of his religion." That was the only basis on which I defended him.

YOUNG: Well, Ray, I wonder if you would do three things for me: indicate the nature of the more primitive clergy objections; indicate the more sophisticated objections by, you mentioned, the major denominations; and then, if you can remember, give something of your defense of a Catholic candidate.

DE PAULO: The primitive people went all the way back to the very first criticism of Catholics. They revived the captive nun stories, they revived the Inquisition, they had the stores of the machine guns in the church steeples—it was so fantastic as to defy...

YOUNG: To defy logical analysis?

DE PAULO: To defy any kind of analysis. It was unbelievable. I went to many of them, not to just one or two, but to many of them.

YOUNG: You mean you attended the church meetings and...

DE PAULO: No, no. I went to church members and to various preachers and put it on a personal basis. I said, "well now, you know me and I think you like me, because

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we have been together on several projects and you know the type of family I am raising here in this community. And in times past you've indicated you thought they were a pretty good family." I said, "I'm a Catholic and I hope I'm as good a Catholic as John Kennedy is." And they said, "Oh, but you're different," and I would assure them that I wasn't different.

I asked what their objections were. Well, they didn't want this country run from Rome. And they were sure—for instance, they would say, "You can't come to our church." The biggest objection that they have ever had, I believe, was the fact that they believed, and rightly so in this case, that a Catholic was forbidden to attend services in another church. When I tried to explain to them the reasoning behind this dogma of the church, it just didn't sink in. they just weren't interested in any reasonable logic at all. It was strictly an emotional

thing. They were absolutely convinced that the priests' homes were dens of iniquity, and the nuns were largely fallen women, and that none of them were there of their own free will, and they were held captive by the hierarchy. They believed this absolutely, just as they believed the practices of their church. The more sophisticated clergy and their wives, whom I knew very, very well, and who were close personal friends of ours, and are again, and whom I admired very much and still do, and who have been guests in my home and I in theirs... And yet, he and his wife—I'm speaking of one particular man now, because I admired him so much. When he made his first sermon against Kennedy I, of course, heard about it within minutes after it was finished. When we discussed it, he told me he just could not believe this country would be the same with a Catholic president.

He indicated that one of the reasons that made him believe so was that he was in the lobby of the hotel one day when the bishop of our diocese walked in and I met him. I was at another table and as I walked across the room to greet him, he extended his hand. His hand was half-turned so that, should I desire to show my respect by kissing his ring, it was available. But if I didn't, he didn't want to make it too obvious. I took his hand and not too ostentatiously kissed his ring. There were people in the dining room in the hotel, and I felt it was just a mark of respect to my bishop. He had seen it or he had heard about it and he thought that was about as degrading as a man could get. I tried to explain to him the reason that a Catholic kisses his bishop's ring: it was a mark of respect to the Church and in no way degrading or humbling to oneself. He just couldn't see it, he just couldn't see it at all. He made that a major objection. He said that if a Catholic is president, we will all be kissing rings and we'll all be getting our orders as you do, from Rome. I assured him that it had been a hell of a long time since I had gotten an order from Rome. Logic and reasoning were not used at all. It was strictly an emotional issue.

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YOUNG: Can you think of any other specific examples of this sort of thing?

DE PAULO: An interesting observation about this whole thing... Some very dear friends of mine had, unbeknownst to me, this feeling about Catholics. We were extremely close, and all of a sudden I noticed this cooling in our relationship. I guess I was a little but stupid. I couldn't bring myself to believe that it was on account of the Kennedy thing. One evening we met at another friend's home on a community matter. We were discussing this community matter and were in complete accord. And this was in my immediate neighborhood, right within two or three doors of my home. The fellow finally turned to me, and I said, "Well, I'll meet you downtown." And he said, "No, I won't meet you downtown. The reason I don't want to meet you downtown is that right at the moment I'm a little bit upset; I don't want to tell you why or what." Well, when he told me he didn't want to tell me why I immediately insisted. And he said, "Well, you are pushing pretty hard for this Kennedy guy." And I said, "I'm not pushing pretty hard for this Kennedy guy. I'm pushing hard for people who want to be against him to be against him if they want to, but not for the reason they are being against him." He said, "That's the very reason I'm against him."

I said, "Well, how can you be against him and be a friend of mine?" He said, "The very reason I don't want to meet you downtown is because I want to continue to be a friend of yours. If we get down there and start discussing this issue publicly...Everybody knows how I feel about Kennedy," he said. "I'm afraid you and I won't be friends." I said, "Well, I'm just as much a Catholic as he is, and if you don't want to be friends with a Catholic, then you can't be friends with me," I said, "because that's one thing that isn't going to change." I said I might change my hat, my hairdo, or the color of my house, or something like that. He said, "Well, we'll be friends after this is over, but right now I'd hate to put it to the test."

That man's in the hotel here right now, and we're very close friends and I love him and his family, and I'm sure he loves me and my family. But for a period of about thirty or sixty days there, he didn't want a darn thing to do with any of us. Only because he just couldn't bring himself...And he was a life-long Democrat. But he certainly could not tolerate the fact that there was a possibility that John Kennedy might get the Democratic nomination.

YOUNG: Was this a typical reaction among many of your friends?

DE PAULO: Not quite this violent, but it was a pretty general reaction. They equated John Kennedy with the immigrant

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laborer that had been imported into this region years and years ago, and who had always been held in contempt and subjugation, and who had just recently come into their own. They just felt that John Kennedy was the same type of person. His educational background, his financial background, his social background, didn't enter into it at all. As I say, logic and reasoning had nothing to do with it. When they talked about Catholic John Kennedy, they talked about Catholic John Pasciuto, who was a coal miner up on the hillside, and the two were one and the same. They said, "Now, we wouldn't want John Pasciuto to be president;" ipso facto, "we don't want John Kennedy to be president."

YOUNG: Ray, I think you've hit an interesting point here that hasn't turned up in any of the other interviews to any degree. I would summarize it this way, by saying, number one, you had the old fundamentalist Protestant objection to Catholicism, and then an objection based on the immigrants that were brought into the Beckley area in coal mining. What national group were the Catholics that came in for that purpose?

DE PAULO: Largely Polish, some Italians, a few Slovaks; generally Polish people predominated.

YOUNG: They had contempt for them because of their earlier background. And then you indicate that they also had contempt for them because some of them were progressing up into the middle class and becoming competitors for local prestige and honor?

DE PAULO: Not so much that, but mostly they were identified in the union movement, which brings into play the relationship between the coal operators and the coal miners. In Beckley and in that area there was no middle class prior to the middle thirties. There were the very rich coal operators and then there were the coal miners, and the merchants. They merchants became wealthy people. It's one of those phenomena of that area and that time, that you could run a little clothing store in Beckley and become extremely wealthy, or a little drug store, and become very, very wealthy.

YOUNG: Was this because of a semi-monopoly situation?

DE PAULO: Oh, yes. And also because these people came into town on Saturday nights to spend their money. They had to make no heavy capital investments to have a decent store; all they had to have was the merchandise, and the coal miners bought it.

YOUNG: Any kind of store could sell any kind...

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DE PAULO: Any kind of store could sell any kind of thing. So you had the very wealthy and the coal miner. And then, of course, after the unions came along and these people began to get a little more for their efforts, a little more dignity along with a little more material things, and their sons and daughters, in a few instances, came back and were making successes and began to demand more and more, socially, and they began to join the County Club and make their presence felt economically and socially and politically in the area—Kennedy represented all of that to these people, as far as I was concerned.

YOUNG: Ray, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but would this be a correct summary: the old white Anglo-Saxon Protestants resented the upstart immigrant son and daughter, as well as the immigrant himself who did well?

DE PAULO: I'm told that I am too sensitive and too critical on this point – and perhaps I am—but that's my analysis exactly. And I make this analysis at the same time I say that none of that, none of it, was evident insofar as I was concerned, because I posed no threat to any of them. My job as general manger of the bakery there—I came in at a time when this did not represent any of their families or any of their connections. It was an industry all unto itself. There were no local people in that industry.

YOUNG: Was this a national bakery coming in and establishing a branch?

DE PAULO: No, this was a West Virginia concern, a Charleston concern that had been there for many years. It was quite a large bakery; it was the largest in the area. We operated thirty-eight wholesale routes and thus we had access to the thinking and the feeling in all the hollows in Raleigh, Mercer, Fayette, Summers, Wyoming, and McDowell counties. Because we served the company stores, the independent stores, the

pool halls, the beer joints—any place a loaf of bread was sold—our representative was in there two and three times a day, every day.

YOUNG: But you came into Beckley with the blessings of a well established company?

DE PAULO: That's right. And also, I was set right into the middle of the social structure by the president of the company whom I succeeded. He made certain that I belonged to the country club and the Rotary Club, and met the right people. So we went in with all the skids greased.

YOUNG: Well, I'd like to go on to this "holler" business a minute, "up to the whoops and hollers" as we say in West

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Virginia. But to come back to something else for just a minute, how closely was the Catholic church identified with the labor movement in the minds of the merchants and the coal operators?

DE PAULO: Well, traditionally, the Catholic church had supported the position of the workers. There were no individuals as such, that you could point your finger to as being dominant, but it was just the general overall support of the principles of the labor movement that the church generally espoused. In most areas, a predominant number of the members belonged to the Catholic church. And even if they were poor Catholics, they still were identified in the Catholic church. That way, I think, one of the big criticisms in our area.

YOUNG: So, in a general way, the Roman Catholic Church was associated with the movement for organized labor, the United Mine Workers, and so on?

DE PAULO: Oh, yes. In this area, the United Mine Workers.

YOUNG: Something else that I mentioned a minute ago but I don't think we have gotten around to yet. Did the local Catholic priest play any role in the primary activities, negative or positive?

DE PAULO: Very little or none. As a matter of fact, the only time that the campaign was mentioned from the pulpit was when a visiting priest was there and frankly made an anti-Kennedy sermon. He gave every reason on earth why we should not vote for a Catholic simply because he is a Catholic.

YOUNG: Do you remember some of those reasons?

DE PAULO: No. I remember the sermon very well, but I can't at the moment pick up the specific things, except to say that I was infuriated with the sermon. Among the

things he pointed out was that many times a Catholic is not a good Catholic until he runs for public office or something; then he immediately flaunts his Catholicism in one area and tries to conceal it in another area. And allusions were made to the fact that the Kennedys did not receive a Catholic education. It was, to my way of thinking, an anti-Kennedy sermon. I, of course, was in close contact with our pastor, both as a member of the church and as a personal friend and one who is active in most church activity there.

YOUNG: Do you think this visiting priest came by any design or plan, or was this simply accident?

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DE PAULO: I know that he came there on a routine mission. But I also know that the subject for his sermon was discussed, and it was thought it might be a good idea to discuss this angle of it. The Kennedys were in town three or four days later with a large entourage of the press. Eunice was asking about some of the activities there. One of the coal miners had told a newspaper man that the priest had told him not to vote for Kennedy. He said he told him from the pulpit. Well, of course, that threw consternation through the news corps there. I heard about it and tried to explain to them just what he had said, but it just gives you the idea that the sermon was taken by many of the people there in the parish to mean that they should not vote for Kennedy.

YOUNG: Well, Ray, one other thing that I mentioned earlier: Did you get anonymous phone calls or anonymous attacks because of your support of Kennedy?

DE PAULO: No, I didn't. When I decided to support him, Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith] came on the scene one night. I didn't know Ben Smith from any other Smith. We struck up a very good relationship. He would drive up to the house with the Kennedy markers and loudspeakers all over his car, in an area where there were no Kennedyites. I did ask him not to come over in the car any more. I said, "I want you to come over as often as you can and as frequently as you can, but don't come over in that car," I said, "because the neighbors just think that it's flaunting it in their face, because they know how I feel and I know how they feel." And sometimes he would park across the street in front of somebody else's house, you know, if there were cars in front of my house. It wasn't appreciated, even though they didn't say anything. The neighbors were too fine, too reputable, and too respectable to say anything even though their feelings were well known. But as for getting any calls, no, I never got a one.

YOUNG: Would you identify Ben Smith for the record?

DE PAULO: Ben Smith was the man that was appointed to succeed Senator Kennedy when Senator Kennedy became president. He was a friend of President Kennedy's from Gloucester, Massachusetts. They were, I think, roommates in college and had been friends for a number of years.

YOUNG: How long was he in Beckley?

DE PAULO: He was in Beckley for about seven weeks, and during that time we were in constant contact, daily. He took over direction of the campaign in Raleigh County. I had always tried to operate behind the scenes. As a matter of fact, when I finally decided that I would take part in the campaign, it was as a result of a letter from Bob McDonough [Robert P. McDonough]

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asking me to set up a citizen-for-Kennedy organization along the lines that he outlined. He had a personal note scribbled in ink at the bottom; he said, "Ray, I need not tell you to maneuver any elections you might have so that a Protestant comes out on top." This is probably an interesting observation—in order to get a chairman for the citizens-for-Kennedy, I had to go to the law firm that represented us. They had just hired a young attorney, a local boy, a local football hero; he was a very well known and needed a job desperately. They gave him a job. He accepted the chairmanship as a direct order from the senior member of the firm, with whom I had talked. We had agreed that whether or not Senator Kennedy won the primary or anything else, he was always going to be an influential person in the country, and that he'd be a pretty good friend to have. Lou Scherer [Luther L. Scherer] who was my personal attorney and my very good friend, called young Don Hodson [Donald D. Hodson] in and ordered him to become chairman of the citizens-for-Kennedy committee. On no less than ten occasions between the time of that appointment—I forget the date right now—and the time the campaign was concluded, I had to threaten, plead, and cajole Don into not resigning because it was a hot potato for him. We would have had had a chairman if we hadn't had the economic stranglehold on him.

YOUNG: How about after the victory in the West Virginia primary. Could you comment on the figures, roughly, in Raleigh County in the Democratic primary, and then go on and say a little more about anti-Catholic feeling leading up to the general election in November?

DE PAULO: The majority that was achieved in the primary was substantial, I'm not real sure of the percentages, but I think it was above average for the state, and I think the state was about six to four. I'm not real sure about that either.

YOUNG: Well, we can check those figures.

DE PAULO: But Raleigh County was better than...He ran better there than he did statewide. After the primary we felt that while it was a significant victory, we still were not convinced that Senator Kennedy was going to go all the way, and we didn't want to dance in the streets at that particular time. And also, we didn't know how deep some of the scars were. We knew we were going to have to live there, and we knew that some of the people were going to take Kennedy's victory pretty tough. Actually, the Democrats didn't take it too badly.

When we got into the general election, the Democrats as a political party stuck together pretty much, but it was then that the real venom came out. We didn't see anything in the primary. We didn't know what could be done with the religious issue in the

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primary election. When the general election came along, my offhand remark some months earlier to Harry Hoffman really came to pass, because we saw what real, well-financed smear artists could turn out. They hit us with everything in the book.

YOUNG: Well, have some of those stories already been included in our earlier conversation, or is there new material?

DE PAULO: I doubt that there is anything new. It's the same old stories amplified, printed on better paper, given wider circulation, published in hardback books instead of paperbacks, by men in suits instead of sweaters, and with just a little more sophisticated presentation.

YOUNG: Well, Ray, I'd like to ask you about the sources of this smear material, but I see we are running out of tape.

BEGIN TAPE I SIDE II

YOUNG: Ray, as we ended the last tape you were talking about the fact that the anti-Catholic propaganda seemed to be so much worse in the general fall election. And you indicated that it was well financed and printed on better paper and got better distribution. Would you comment on the sources of this material?

DE PAULO: Well, of course, the sources were unidentifiable. The Republican party as such denied completely any knowledge of any of the material. Much of it came from well-known southern sources. We couldn't identify it except that it always seemed to tie in with the general theme of the Republican campaign. We made no accusations about its source, but whenever a particularly large outcry and objection was made to Republican headquarters and it got a little sticky, why, it ceased to appear. So we felt rightly that they probably did not bring it in themselves, but with enough heat they could stop it.

YOUNG: Well, did the anti-Catholic feeling in any way get involved in the large Negro community in Raleigh County, and the Negro vote?

DE PAULO: The Negroes in Raleigh County generally supported the Democratic ticket, although there was a real sizable Republican vote there too. The anti-Catholics had sold the Negro population. Outside of a few professional politicians among the Negro community, we weren't doing a bit of good with the Negroes. As a matter of fact, they were in the midst of a big rally one night, and a well-known Negro preacher of

some stature was making quite an anti-Catholic harangue. We heard about it and didn't know how to stop it. Grant Stockdale, a Florida real estate broker who was up in West Virginia, in Beckley specifically, helping Kennedy, was with us. He finally decided that he might have

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an idea of how to stop it. So he grabbed a camera that was in the car and got in the little building and started to fight his way through this mob of people, and it was real hard to get through. We had been plagued with all the national magazines and all the national news media and were getting nationwide publicity all over, and quite a few of the people were succumbing to the lure of the press. So he held his camera over his head and began to shout, "Life magazine, Life magazine, let me through." This completely Negro audience just fell back and let him get up to the speaker, who was in the midst of his tirade. He said, "I'm from Life magazine and I'm trying to make a deadline. We want some pictures and an interview of you," he said, "but I'll have to have it right now. It's got to get out in just a couple of hours." And so the preacher and the audience very obligingly stood by while he snapped, or supposedly snapped, several pictures and then asked if he could conduct the interview in a little more privacy. He took him into a back room and went through a bunch of questions that he duly noted, writing down the answers.

He finally got around to asking the preacher if he didn't think that it was a little bit out of character for a minister of the gospel to attack another American and another religion in the way and in the tone that he was. He mentioned that he represented a firm and a foundation that made substantial contributions to various endeavors. As a matter of fact, he had the wherewithal right then to make a contribution to a worthy cause of the ministers, but he certainly couldn't do it if they found out that he was preaching against another American in the manner that he was. He said, "Now, of course, if you saw fit to quit talking about another American like that," —never referring to Kennedy by name, always as "another American"—he said he was sure that he could get him a nice contribution. As a matter of fact, he happened to have two hundred dollars right then, that he could make available for him. The minister felt that he could stop his attacks on Kennedy for that; he felt that was the Christian thing to do and he was glad to have seen the light.

With that much success, Stockdale, never one to stop short of complete victory, began to point out some of the virtues that John Kennedy had. He said it just so happened that he had another fund available, that some people who were interested in this young American who was trying to erase the inequities between groups in this country...He said that he felt sure that he could justify making a contribution to the minister who would help in that work. The way to do that would be for him to start speaking in favor of Kennedy. He said he just happened to have two hundred and fifty dollars that he could contribute to somebody who would espouse that cause. After due deliberation, why, the preacher felt sure that for two hundred and fifty dollars he could begin to point out the virtues of John Kennedy, and did. And we didn't have any more trouble with him the rest of the campaign. But it cost four hundred

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and fifty dollars.

YOUNG: You mentioned earlier that the Negro community seemed to divide over Kennedy. Was this a division based on age? Or if not, what other reasons?

DE PAULO: Politics, generally, and the religious question. The Republicans were against him. Well, this being in the primary, the people—the colored people—who were against Kennedy were all laboring people. They felt at first that he represented a threat to them. And then the religious thing came in and they just weren't...They're fundamental Baptist, too, generally speaking, just were scared of Catholics as such.

YOUNG: In other words, the Negroes shared the anti-Catholic prejudice as a basis for being anti-Kennedy?

DE PAULO: Yes.

YOUNG: When you said, "threat," did you mean threat in an economic sense?

DE PAULO: That's right.

YOUNG: What was the feeling there?

DE PAULO: Well, that in any economic recession, these are the people that were going to push the Negroes out. The Negroes lose their jobs first and these are the guys that would be getting them.

YOUNG: I don't quite understand, Ray. You mean the jobs then would go to what other group?

DE PAULO: The people on the lower social scale. The Negroes felt they occupied the lowest level, but just above them came the Catholic laborers. So that if business got bad or the mines shut down, the first people they got rid of were the Negroes and then the people who would take their jobs coming down the ladder. Just the same as going up the ladder, coming down the ladder would be this group of people represented by the Catholics.

YOUNG: Well, do you have any way of analyzing how the Negro vote went in the primary in Raleigh County?

DE PAULO: Yes, we checked it very closely. It went completely for Kennedy.

YOUNG: In other words, Republican Negroes voting in their own primary we wouldn't include, of course, in the statistics;

but the Democratic Negroes did go for Kennedy?

DE PAULO: Yes, completely.

YOUNG: Now, do you have any idea if many Republican Negroes crossed in the general election?

DE PAULO: In the general election the Negroes voted predominantly for Kennedy, because by that time his philosophies were well understood. The Negro leadership around the country and in this area was predominantly for Kennedy.

YOUNG: Well, you had the help, too, didn't you, from some prominent state Negroes as well as out-of-state Negroes?

DE PAULO: Yes. Oh, yes.

YOUNG: I have interviewed Bill Lonesome [William L. Lonesome], of course, and I know about his work. Could you mention any of the national figures that came into Raleigh County?

DE PAULO: As I say, I tried to keep out of the general day-to-day things, so I didn't have any contact with them. Although I knew they were in town and on some occasions met them, I didn't become acquainted with them.

YOUNG: Well, let's move on to something else. I think we might as well follow the religious question clear through before we go back to some other issues. The fundamentalists and the more enlightened, presumably middle-class people who had anti-Catholic prejudices—did the president convince them during his years in the White House that they had no reason to fear? Was there some tapering off of this feeling? Did it continue or grow larger?

DE PAULO: When Kennedy assumed the White House, in West Virginia he could do no wrong. Every action that he took was completely, wholeheartedly supported by an over-whelming majority of West Virginians. As for the anti-Catholic feeling, I believe that in all but just hardcore cases—even those were mellowed and would make an exception in this case. He completely wiped it out for Kennedy. Now I don't believe he wiped it out completely for any one else.

YOUNG: Well, you anticipated my next question. I was going to ask this: had he run again in 1964, you feel religion wouldn't have been an issue?

DE PAULO: Oh, it wouldn't have been, not in West Virginia. Had he run in '64, the religious issue would not have been

raised. Not the first time.

YOUNG: But you indicate here with a kind of twinkle in your eye that this might not rub off on other Catholic presidential candidates?

DE PAULO: That's right, that's right. Kennedy is not, or was not to West Virginians, just another political candidate. I'm not completely objective on the subject, but I feel that many West Virginians felt that Kennedy was---well, I don't even have the words to express it—more than a person. He was a thing to West Virginians, he was a phenomenon, he was part of us. A large group of West Virginians refer to themselves as “the West Virginia Kennedys.”

YOUNG: Well, you would say, though, that any future Catholic candidate probably wouldn't have the same amount of vitriol.

DE PAULO: No, I think the barbs have been taken off the hooks.

YOUNG: Ray, while we may come back to this topic inadvertently later on, do you have any final statements or stories or anything of interest with respect to Catholicism as an issue in the primary or the general election?

DE PAULO: No, not at that particular time.

YOUNG: Okay. How active were the Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] forces in your area?

DE PAULO: Quite active. For one reason or another, though, they were ineffective. And this is surprising because they comprised the knowledgeable politicians of the area. We didn't have a politician with us. The only politician we had—and he is a good friend of mine—came to us strictly because his partner was in charge of the Humphrey forces. Knowing there was a bunch of amateurs running the Kennedy campaign, he decided to come over into the Kennedy camp so that they both could control whatever money was put into the campaign.

YOUNG: Is he a lawyer?

DE PAULO: No.

YOUNG: When you said “partner,” I just wondered.

DE PAULO: No. He has since died. He was a local politician in the real estate business.

YOUNG: Well, how about the effectiveness of the Humphrey people in working with organized labor? Presumably Humphrey did get some labor support in the state—which may in a sense have been not labor support, but anti-Kennedy support..

DE PAULO: How they managed to foul it up I don't know, but they did. Now, in Raleigh County we had Dave Kennedy [David T. Kennedy] on our committee. Dave was effective in neutralizing some of the effect the United Mine Workers had. The rest of the labor people were all for Humphrey, but they were very ineffective. How active they were I don't know. They had big rallies but no spirit; nothing ever came of it.

YOUNG: What was the position of the United Mine Workers?

DE PAULO: As far as I was concerned, they were very pro-Humphrey.

YOUNG: Was their pro-Humphrey support a pro-Humphrey support, or was this perhaps possible support for some other candidate? In other words, the important thing was to beat Kennedy, and then we'll worry about who get the nomination...

DE PAULO: I think it was pro-Humphrey, as far as I am concerned. But I don't find too many people that agree with me. I think they liked Humphrey's liberal attitude. Certainly they weren't for Lyndon Johnson.

YOUNG: What did the people that disagree with you on this say?

DE PAULO: They just say that the only thing the big labor boys were trying to do was to beat Kennedy. I didn't go along with that at all. I thought that labor would have loved to have seen Humphrey...Although I do think they were shooting for the vice presidency. I don't think they thought he could go all the way, but they were trying to build him up.

YOUNG: What other labor is there in the Raleigh County area other than the miners?

DE PAULO: Nothing of any consequence, although the AFL-CIO does have representation there and the electrical workers union have a small plant. But the mine workers are the dominant union, and district fifty, the united construction workers—which is the Mine Workers Union, they are the voice of labor in southern West Virginia.

YOUNG: Well, Ray, did there seem to be any real difference between a Kennedy future platform, Kennedy policies, and Kennedy political philosophy as opposed to Senator

Humphrey on the same subject?

DE PAULO: No, absolutely no difference. The only thing there was, if anything: Humphrey was a little far out on some issues. On the specific issue at the moment, the race issue, Humphrey was way out. And it drew some fire.

YOUNG: “Way out” in terms of Raleigh County?

DE PAULO: Yes. Yes, that’s right. I’m speaking in terms of Raleigh County and of southern West Virginia.

YOUNG: Was the term “radical” used in describing Senator Humphrey?

DE PAULO: Yes. Unfortunately, the very first speech he made in southern West Virginia, he made some very liberal statements with which I happen to agree. But press reaction and general reaction did him no good, and he was labeled a radical. Our most effective weapon from there on, the only thing we had to say, was to refer to him as a radical—which was done repeatedly. He just couldn’t shake the brand.

YOUNG: Well, if you were to summarize the reasons for the Kennedy victory in your area, what were the four, five, or six major reasons that Kennedy won?

DE PAULO: Well, I think the best speech he made—outside of the Houston speech to the ministers down there—was made from steps of the Raleigh County courthouse. Unfortunately, I am told there are no scripts, no tapes, no nothing. We met him at the entrance of the turnpike with a busload of newspaper people during the time he was having some trouble with his throat. He got in our car and we started driving the three or four miles in to town. We were going to have the meeting in the courthouse square in front of the courthouse and we blocked off the street. We didn’t know whether we’d have a crowd or not; we thought we might have. We tried to get the schools to let out and they wouldn’t do it.

On the way in, he told us that because his throat was feeling bad, he didn’t think he’d make a speech. Don Hodson and I were with him—Don Hodson was the young man that we had prevailed upon to be county chairman—and we said, “Oh, great God of mercy, you’ve just got to make a speech.” He said, “Well, what will I talk about? What do they want to hear? What should we hit? What are they saying? What can we do?” We said, “Well, let’s give them the old...” It was right at the time when there had been so much made about how poor West Virginia was, and how depressed we were, and everybody was

giving him hell about going back home and letting us solve our own problems.

It was the first time that he sort of turned the needed a little bit and started referring to the pride of West Virginia. It was the very first time that he started with his quotations of how many West Virginians were in the army, how many were in World War I, their experiences in World War II—the things West Virginians had to be proud of.

I had gotten to the point where I was afraid to be seen with him because I was having some troubles, inner company troubles. So I got out of the car a little ahead of him and let him go on up, and then he got out about ten paces ahead of me. He walked into the back of the crowd, and we would have to tap people on the back to let them know that he was there, because he liked to shake hands going through the crowd. He finally got up to make his speech. He had no prepared script and didn't know what he was going to say, nor did we.

He started off with an allusion to Franklin D. Roosevelt, and some old farmer or coal miner standing there—I was right next to him—said, “Well we need another Roosevelt, but I don't know whether this is the guy or not.” And I would venture to say that there were seven or eight hundred or maybe a thousand people in the square when Kennedy started talking. I wandered through the crowd and got over to the end. I was with a newspaper man whose name I don't recall; he was with one of the metropolitan papers. I was trying to point out who some of the people were, what hollows they came from, and so forth.

Kennedy got on to this thing of pointing out the good points about West Virginians, starting out with the West Virginia *Montani Semper Liberi* and dwelling on that.

You could see the heads beginning to nod—first one guy would be agreeing with him—and he seemed to catch the spirit of it. He saw that he was getting through, and he kept on and kept on. He started out to talk for three or four minutes; he announced that he had a sore throat and couldn't talk too long. He hadn't been speaking but about three or four minutes when he hit the vein, when you could look over that whole group and see the heads nodding all over in unison. He just warmed to his task, and to my mind and to Ben Smith's mind we have always said that was the best speech of the campaign given anywhere. Because he absolutely struck the keynote for the rest of his campaign.

This was about three or four weeks before the end of the campaign, and at that time I would have given you two cents for his chances.

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He continued to use that thing. Now I don't know whether he stumbled on to it, whether it was deliberate or whether he planned it that way; but I do know that in Raleigh County we had not a bit of trouble from that day on.

YOUNG: You mean even some of the anti-Catholic feeling dropped off?

DE PAULO: From then on in the primary we didn't hear it. He wiped it all out on that one tour. Well, he spent the day there. He did his most complete and effective work on that one trip.

YOUNG: Anything else in the speech that had special appeal?

DE PAULO: At the moment I can't think of it, but it was all about the pride of the mountaineers and what West Virginia was doing. I have often bemoaned the fact that no one taped it or took notes; no one recognized it as being the masterpiece that it was, until you got to seeing the results it achieved.

YOUNG: Well, did Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. come into Raleigh County and Beckley?

DE PAULO: He was here, but he was never used in Raleigh County; he was used in Wyoming County and Summers County. He may have made one or two appearances, but no major appearances in Raleigh County. He was very effective where he was used, however...

YOUNG: Ray, do you have any other general information about the primary or anything else about your association with the Kennedys that you would like to include?

DE PAULO: Well, on a not too bright note; it was very pleasant being on the winning side, politically speaking. Sometimes being on the winning side means being on the losing side elsewhere. During the campaign—during the primary and the general election—I was general manager of the Purity Baking Company in Beckley and Welch, West Virginia. We operated about fifty wholesale routes in all of southern West Virginia. It was no secret, even though my activities were kept unofficial, that I was quite active in the campaign, and my company didn't like the idea. It mentioned it to specifically. I chose not to follow their advice that I get out of the campaign, because I felt that I was not hurting the company and it was something I wanted to do.

So after the election was won, I tried not to crow about it, and didn't. But when your friends start getting appointed to high places and you're asked about them... Of course, I admitted

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they were friends of mine and that I knew them, that I was talking to them, that I was writing letters to them, and that I was pleased with their success. Upon occasion when I was in Washington I let it be known that I did see them and enjoyed seeing them. On one occasion when I was privileged to see the president, I was asked about it, and I made mentioned of the fact that I had seen him and was real proud of it.

At the time I was president of the West Virginia Bakers' Association. We have a convention at White Sulphur Springs ever year. The president of the association dominates the convention, and I fully intended and expected to dominate this convention. At a meeting of the board of directors of the West Virginia Bakers' Association, we were talking about securing a speaker for the final banquet. I was trying as hard as I could to be modest and not make any suggestions about it, since I was presiding. I was waiting for suggestions from the floor. Finally, the question I had been wanting to hear was asked. They said, "Well, Ray, can you get is somebody from the administration?" I said I thought I could. They said, "Well, what kind of final meeting we'll have depends on who we get." I said, "I'm not real sure,"

although I had previously talked with Ben Smith and Grant Stockdale and Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] and was assured that, barring unforeseen complications, Bobby Kennedy would be my speaker at the convention. I didn't want to divulge this, but I told them that I was sure that I could get a speaker from the administration. They said, "Well, if we get a high-enough-ranking one, we'll revert back to the old banquet style and have the banquet." I felt that I could say that we would have someone of cabinet rank. Of course, they immediately said, "Well, in that case, we'll go all-out and have a final meeting with all the trimmings and make it a showpiece." I agreed to provide the speaker,

I might add that during this time I was very much aware of the fact that the usual internal political squabbles in the company were going on. The president of our company was going to be forced to resign in January 1962 due to company policy. He had picked his successor, who many of us believed was not qualified. In the line of succession I was next, and directly behind me was the son-in-law of the president; and directly behind the son-in-law was his son, so I very readily recognized the position I was in and knew that it didn't behoove me to create too many problems.

So after the election of President Kennedy...I believe I was the only one in the company that voted for him. I believe I can almost positively say that at the management level I was the only one that voted for him. Had he lost, I believe there would not have been any resentment; but when he won, they just couldn't stand it. As a result of that and other reasons—but they hung their hat on the political thing—I was called in in May 1961. As I was walking down the hall to the president of the company's office I received a telephone call from Washington. During the course of our negotiation

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to get a speaker for our banquet, the civil rights thing in Mississippi came up when Meredith [James H. Meredith] enrolled in Mississippi. Bobby Kennedy said that he would still come to the convention, but he didn't want me to be put in a position of advertising that he was coming, and then with this Mississippi situation he just felt that he ought not to announce that he was going. If I would take it on a basis that he would come if he could at the last minute... Well, we couldn't do that, so they had arranged to get Orville Freeman for me. As I walked down the hallway this day, there was a telephone call from Secretary Freeman's office telling me that he would speak at my convention in July. If I would give him a letter with the time, date, and incidentals, then the plan was that several of the White House staff, friends of mine, were going to come down with him. He said he was agreeable, and all I had to do was write him a letter giving him all the details.

I hung up on the phone very pleased and happy, and walked two more doors into the president's office. After about forty-five seconds of conversation, he informed me that he had something to tell me; he didn't quite know how to say it. I told him that it was my philosophy that the best way to say anything was in the fewest words you know how. So he said, "Well, if that's the way you want it." And I said, "That's the way I want it." He said, "Well, I am going to make a change in Beckley tomorrow morning." I might add that never in the ten years that I managed the plant had I ever been called on the carpet for any single infraction of any rule or any management policy. Not a single solitary time had I ever had an action of mine or an expenditure of mine questioned, or earnings or the union contract questioned.

This was the first word of criticism I had ever received from any member of the company. And at the time I just chose not to fight it; I accepted it and walked out.

YOUNG: Do you feel you lost your job, then, primarily because of the political activity?

DE PAULO: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, he asked me if I was interested in the reasons why, and I said, "Not necessarily." I said, "What difference does it make?" He said, "Well, you might be interested in knowing that a lot of us feel you were busy taking care of Kennedy when you should have been taking [care] of Purity Baking Company."

YOUNG: Did Secretary Freeman come to the banquet, and did you preside?

DE PAULO: Well, naturally, since I was no longer in the baking business, I resigned as president of the association shortly after; and since I never wrote the letter to Freeman, he didn't show up.

YOUNG: Was that the end of your career in the baking business?

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DE PAULO: Well, I went to Philadelphia to run a large bakery up there. I decided that I wanted to stay in West Virginia, so when this opportunity in the Area of Redevelopment Administration presented itself, I came back. And I'm very happy that I did.

YOUNG: Ray, any final thoughts about the Kennedy years in West Virginia?

DE PAULO: Oh, yes. I think that the biggest thing that he did for West Virginia—outside of financial contribution that he insisted on being made, with all the interstate additional highway miles that he gave us, with all the money in area redevelopment he put in here, with all the money in the other programs that he insisted come in to West Virginia—he caused the people of West Virginia to look at themselves. And a lot of us don't like what we see and resent what we saw. I have always regarded his years in the White House as sort of hair shirt years; he wouldn't let us get complacent. No matter what we did, he always showed us where we could and should have done a whole lot better.

I have often made the statement that I hope I never feel about another man the way I felt and feel about him. In the De Paulo family, one of the closest things we have in our whole family relationship is the Kennedys. We were not a political family; none of us have ever been messed up in politics. We thought it was something alien. And now the entire family is political—my wife, my children, myself. We feel that he pointed out and showed us what can be done—although he was a torment to our minds. There weren't many days that you could sit back and relax and think, "Oh, how wonderful." There was no great consensus with him. I don't know what history or what the great thinkers will say of him, but I think as

far as West Virginians are concerned, he made us analyze ourselves. He pointed out many of the areas that we ought to be looking at and I think we are now.

YOUNG: Ray, since you did come back to West Virginia in area redevelopment, I presume you are a native?

DE PAULO: No, I came here from Colorado in 1936, but I married a native and fathered four, so that makes me pretty much a native.

YOUNG: You are not really a carpetbagger then?

DE PAULO: No, I'm not.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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