

William B. Richardson Oral History Interview – 7/10/1964
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Biographical Note

Richardson was the county chairman of the Kennedy for President Campaign in Wood County, West Virginia (1960). In this interview, he discusses the 1960 Primary campaign in Wood County, West Virginia, the religious question in the primary campaign, and the New Frontier social and economic programs, among other issues.

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William B. Richardson

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Oral History Interview

with

William B. Richardson

July 10, 1964

Parkersburg, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: This is an interview with attorney William B. Richardson, recorded in the Holiday Inn Motel, Parkersburg, West Virginia, on July 10. Mr. Richardson, would you tell me of your role in the Kennedy primary campaign?

RICHARDSON: Well, I was selected to be John F. Kennedy's county chairman of the primary for Wood County, West Virginia.

YOUNG: When did you first become interested in Kennedy as a candidate?

RICHARDSON: This is really funny. In 1956, I'll

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never forget it, I was in New York City and heard the Democratic Convention, and at that time I wanted Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] to beat Kennedy, but I was very surprised at Kennedy's vote in that campaign. I became interested in Kennedy shortly thereafter and read a lot about him and was very much interested in his philosophy, et cetera.

YOUNG: What were your first contacts with either the Kennedy family or the President himself?

RICHARDSON: The first contact I remember was with Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy], in Parkersburg in the Blennerhasset Hotel, and I thought Bob was razor sharp and got right down to business. Mr. Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] was there also, and I thought Mr. Sorensen—and this is no disrespect to him—was a little bit fuzzy on how to win a campaign. But Bob knew what to do in my opinion.

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YOUNG: When did you meet the President then for the first time?

RICHARDSON: I met Kennedy, I believe, in Parkersburg, in 1958. He came here to the Chancellor Hotel for lunch, and we were having the Big Red Band, which is a local band, to lead a parade, and the band was late. I went over to meet Mr. Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy], and I said, “Mr. Kennedy, we’re late, but I would suggest we wait for the Big Red Band because everybody likes it here in Parkersburg.” And he said, “Don’t start this parade until the Big Red Band comes.”

YOUNG: Did you meet the President then on subsequent occasions?

RICHARDSON: I can’t remember. The next time that I recall meeting him face to face was in Parkersburg at the Elk’s Club at the start of the West Virginia campaign,

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shortly after the Wisconsin Campaign.

YOUNG: Would you describe in detail some of your duties as county chairman?

RICHARDSON: My duty as county chairman was to try to whip up as much enthusiasm, which we didn’t have any difficulty for Kennedy, however, we had several parties. We had an ox roast—Mr. Hoff [William Bruce Hoff] helped sponsor the ox roast. I was to run the office here in Parkersburg on Market Street, see that the campaign materials got out, and generally talk up President Kennedy—Senator Kennedy then.

YOUNG: Well, did you observe in the primary campaign any difference between Senator Kennedy and Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] in terms of political ideas, political theory, or was it largely a campaign based on personality?

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RICHARDSON: Senator Humphrey has a lot of friends in West Virginia, but comparing the two men I would say that in West Virginia, locally, Senator Kennedy had a much better command or seemed to get people's attention with ideas and very forceful phrases and words—people seemed to really be dedicated to President Kennedy if they were on his side, and be very much against him if they were not.

YOUNG: Well, those that were very much against might be very much against for what particular reasons?

RICHARDSON: I would say in Wood County primarily because he was a Catholic, and there were some people who thought he had not had enough legislative experience—that he was a sort of a playboy and had no experience. But I would say primarily in West Virginia, Wood County, on account of he was a Catholic.

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YOUNG: Well, was this anti-Catholic feeling general among all Protestant denominations, or was it limited to several or a few?

RICHARDSON: I would say that it was somewhat of a general feeling, but it was whipped up among some of the Baptists in Wood County, Methodists, members of the Church of Christ. We had several calls from the ministers. I would say it would be the so-called hierarchy of the various churches here in Wood County.

YOUNG: You'd mentioned to me before we started the interview that you were yourself a Baptist, and I believe a member of the Masonic Fraternity, and indicated that you had had some contacts and difficulties with even some of your personal friends and Masonic Brothers.

RICHARDSON: Yes, when the announcement came in the newspaper that I was appointed his

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campaign chairman, several prominent people called me on the telephone and told me to get out of this campaign; that they would see I wouldn't get any law business and would do everything they could to hurt my law business. At first it scared me for two or three days—or bothered me. Then this made me extremely angry due to the fact that I've lived in Parkersburg all my life and knew everybody, and people knew me. I really got down and did everything I could to help Kennedy after that initial difficulty.

YOUNG: Were these objections coming from fellow.... Well, they wouldn't come from fellow attorneys if they threatened you on law business, but any professional groups?

RICHARDSON: It came from professional groups—

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one or two doctors, people who knew me very well, who couldn't understand why I was for John Kennedy.

YOUNG: Which denominations in the county would be the least likely to be involved in religious prejudice?

RICHARDSON: That's a hard question to say, but I would say in Wood County we had extreme difficulty in obtaining ministers to give the invocation at these meetings and the benediction. The Episcopal Church here at Parkersburg, whose rector is still Reverend Callahan, would always come and Reverend Harley Bailey, who I believe is a Baptist minister.

YOUNG: You'd also mentioned that one Baptist minister, I believe, had gotten out a blue paper. Is that correct?

RICHARDSON: Yes sir, and it was full of what I consider half truths. These were

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papal doctrines that were put out many years ago—eight or nine hundred—and they were just taken completely out of context. They had just taken one statement, and nothing was said or attempted to try to find out the purpose of why this was put out, just these one or two statements. I would get literature mailed from all over the United States—post cards, letters, anonymous letters—people would stick pamphlets in my pocket. I'd be walking along the street, go to the Elks Club, have my overcoat hung up, and when I got my overcoat on, there'd be pamphlets in it. People after awhile didn't want to seem to come and talk to me directly concerning Kennedy. Oh, some of the people would, but the majority of the poison pen literature—they wouldn't talk to you directly.

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YOUNG: Well, these were pamphlets then that were either produced locally or sent in from the outside by the so-called hate groups.

RICHARDSON: Yes sir.

YOUNG: Did any of these locally produced pamphlets deal with specific issues which are today an issue with respect to the Catholic Church—birth control, parochial school, that sort of thing—or were they of a more general nature?

RICHARDSON: As I recall, they did not. These were very venomous material which had nothing to do with any real specific issues, but just how the Catholic Church, or how these people believed the Catholic Church, acted on matters in the past.

YOUNG: Would you be able to say in Wood County whether the anti-Catholic feeling came largely from Democratic groups or voters

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that would normally be Republican?

RICHARDSON: That's hard to say. I'd say that there was just a religious bigotry that didn't follow any distinct lines.

YOUNG: I am correct, am I not, in the fact that President Kennedy did carry the county in the primary, but lost in the general election?

RICHARDSON: Yes sir. That's true, and that's nothing unusual because Wood County is a conservative county and very few Democrats, if any, carry Wood County in the general election.

YOUNG: This would indicate.... How would you evaluate the issue then of religion with respect to the primaries opposed to the general election?

RICHARDSON: Well, I would say that as the campaign progressed, towards the end of it, Kennedy made, as I recall, three or four very

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excellent appearances. In fact, he said he had the largest crowd in West Virginia here at the ox roast, which was sometime in April or May, which incidentally was on Sunday. We were very leery of having it on that day. But I would say it seemed to break down in the primary because he was a very able man, but it seemed to build up again in the fall.

YOUNG: Other than conducting ox roasts and political rallies, can you describe some of your other duties as county chairman?

RICHARDSON: Well, the only thing I can say is we had an extremely nice headquarters and were to get volunteer workers; we would distribute pamphlets; we'd arrange TV and radio interviews with various people; we wrote letters to people we

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knew—and just a general keeping Senator Kennedy's name in front of the public. He was well organized. In other words, we didn't have to do much on our own. It was well organized. They had been through the Wisconsin campaign, and other campaigns, and they had everything down to the barest detail.

YOUNG: Well, this word "image" has crept into our language: How would you describe the Kennedy image as we approached the primary in May 1960?

RICHARDSON: Well, people at first were hesitant and sort of afraid of him here in Wood County, but once they met him and shook his hand and got a chance to look at him and touch him and feel him, he won them over. I told Kennedy, "Mr. Kennedy, if everybody in West Virginia could get a chance to talk

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with you personally, you'd have no difficulty in winning this election." And that's, I believe, one of the reasons why he kept coming in here, and also because he knew if he could carry West Virginia that due to the fact we're not a heavily Catholic state, he would be in very good shape to carry the Convention, which he later did. But people seemed to.... They wanted to touch him; they wanted to be around him. He had a magnetic.... He had this charm—something like Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] had. People really got electrified when he came into presence. There was no question about it.

YOUNG: We hear a great deal in politics as to whether or not a candidate's popularity can rub off on other candidates. In this particular situation how would you

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evaluate the effectiveness of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., in the campaign?

RICHARDSON: I only met him once in Parkersburg, he met with the Democrat executive committee. He didn't do much around here. He was very effective, as I understand it, in the coal mining areas where his father and mother [Eleanor R. Roosevelt]—where at least his mother—had come down, and he didn't make but only this one appearance here which was very short. He didn't help us at all. He didn't hurt us here at all. He didn't hurt us here. We were glad to have him and the name

Roosevelt is still magic. But he was better, probably more effective, in the southern part of the state.

YOUNG: Well, as a seasoned political organizer two questions—number one, is there a veterans vote, and if so, did the Kennedy

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war record play any role in the campaign?

RICHARDSON: I would say that Kennedy's war record was a definite asset to him here in Wood County. I would say that there is a so-called veterans vote, and these pamphlets the Kennedy organization put out were wonderful concerning his war record. They were very good.

YOUNG: Would you say a word about the people that volunteered to help? Where did they come from? Who were they? And what task did you assign to them?

RICHARDSON: They came from all walks of life. They were very interested in him. They were not Catholics, particularly, they were just local people who came from all economic structures. They helped mail letters, answer the telephone, run errands. They would just do anything—any kind of work that was assigned them.

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We didn't have too much bickering here on the local level.

YOUNG: I've heard a great deal in West Virginia about Kennedy's appeal because of the fact that he stressed economic issues in depressed areas. Would this be a factor in your particular county?

RICHARDSON: Not so much. Wood County has never been hit too hard. We used to have some unemployment, but we don't have the mass unemployment like they do in the southern part of the state and other counties where the coal business is. But people were very interested in these issues, and you could tell when he mentioned these, people really believed he was going to help West Virginia. And he, in my opinion, did more for West Virginia, at least from my observation, than any other president we've ever had to this date.

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YOUNG: What about the opposition in your particular county—the Humphrey forces, et cetera? On what lines was the battle being fought?

RICHARDSON: Humphrey didn't catch on in Wood County too much. It's hard to say why he didn't because I think Senator Humphrey is probably as good a public speaker as I've ever heard. But he didn't seem to catch on—a little too radical, or at least extreme, in this county. He seemed.... He didn't have anything concrete; it was a sort of rich man run against a poor boy, and it did not go over too well here, in my opinion, in this county. He didn't get in Wood County too much. Maybe that was it. And he didn't seem to be organized. Elections are won by organization, and he didn't have much of an organization.

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YOUNG: Did the Kennedy forces at that time feel that there possibly was a liaison or arrangement between Senator Humphrey and then Senator Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]?

RICHARDSON: There was not any that I could perceive in Wood County. Now there were a lot of people for Johnson here in Wood County, and if Senator Johnson had of run it might have made a big difference here in Wood County in the primary.

YOUNG: In other words, if Johnson had been running....

RICHARDSON: What I'm trying to say is I believe Johnson would have been a stronger candidate in Wood County than Humphrey.

YOUNG: More than Kennedy.

RICHARDSON: Possibly. Possibly. This is true, in my opinion.

YOUNG: Mr. Richardson, I see you have some notes with respect to the campaign. Would you

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just go ahead and tell us some of the incidents that happened during the campaign?

RICHARDSON: Well, various things happened that stayed with me. I'll never forget. For instance, the first time that he came to Parkersburg after he was announced as going for the presidency, we had a meeting at the Elks Club where we asked everybody to attend. We had a good crowd. It was 8 o'clock in the morning, and we still had a good crowd; we had about five or six hundred people there. As the meeting was over.... I'll never forget it. The unemployment office was across the street,

and there were probably standing out there ten or fifteen people. I walked out the door with Senator Kennedy, and he said, “What’s that?” And I said,

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“The unemployment office.” He said, “I’m going right over there.” And he ran across the street as hard as he could go. He was in that building about five, ten, or fifteen minutes shaking hands and talking with everybody. He seemed to be extremely friendly with people; he seemed to be sincere in their problems.

I never will forget in one of the parades we had here. We were walking down Market Street—he was walking on one side, and I was walking on the other—and it started to rain. I said, “Do you want a rain coat, Senator Kennedy?” He said, “I never wear one.” I started to put one on, and I took mine off. So we walked down in the rain. I’ll never forget that. That’s the type of fellow he was. The elements

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didn’t seem to bother him; he wanted people to see him just as he was.

One time later on in the campaign he came in here on a Saturday night. That was when he began to lose his voice; he was extremely hoarse. Mr. McDonough [Robert P. McDonough], who I took my orders from directly, and I went to the airport with some other people. Going up in the car, I said, “Bob, I’d like for Senator Kennedy to go through the newspaper office down here. There’s about fifty or a hundred people in there, and two or three of them are related to me. I think we can get him some votes in there, and they’d like to see him, also.” He said, “Aw, he doesn’t feel too good. He’s lost his voice.” I said, “Well, he doesn’t have to say anything—just go through and shake

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hands.” So when we got in the car, I said, “Senator Kennedy, I’d like for you to go down to the newspaper office.” He shook his head and kinda thumped on the table, and I said, “There might be fifty or a hundred votes down there, and I have a couple cousins down there I think would really help you.” He said in a real deep voice real husky voice, “Let’s go.” And he went through down there and was there for about an hour and seemed to really enjoy it once he got into it.

The ox roast we had on Sunday I’ll never forget. We didn’t know whether it would go at all on Sunday. It happened in the city park in April, and it was a real cold day—unusually...

YOUNG: Excuse me, if I may interrupt you, you’d said in private conversation that there

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was some doubt about the advisability of having the ox roast on Sunday. Could you comment on that?

RICHARDSON: The reason why is we never had any political meetings here on Sunday. This is a highly Protestant town, and we didn't think people would go for it. We were afraid it wouldn't draw any crowd. We went ahead with it anyway because it was the only day we could get, he had so many other schedules. And he came in there, and that city park was jammed. They had people there who were Republicans and Democrats. This was right towards the end of the campaign and I began to get the feeling right there that he was going to win this thing. But a funny thing happened right before he got ready to leave. He had to be in Weirton or Wheeling that night, and he

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hadn't even begun to shake everybody's hand there. This is the first time I met Mr. O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien]; he kept coming up to me and saying, "We gotta leave. We gotta leave!" And I said, "Let him stay here and shake these hands." Mr. O'Brien, I never will forget it, said, "We've clocked him, and he can only shake so many hands an hour. And if he'll stay here ten more hours, he couldn't shake all the hands." So I said, "Let him shake them as long as he can." So they stayed about another half hour, but he hadn't shaken 50 percent of the hands. But as the car was leaving out, people would come up to the car and look into it and try to touch the car and try to touch his arm. He had this magnetic ability or attraction that few people have.

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I never will forget this incident: About a year ago I was up to Pittsburgh, and he was there during the same time the Pitt-West Virginia game was on. He was there in Pittsburgh on a political mission. He came down the street, and I ran out the street, and I said, "How are you, Mr. President?" He was in a parade, and he looked right at me—I'll never forget it—and he said, "How are you, Bill?" I thought that was unusual because he hadn't seen me for two years. Now there might have been some other Bills there in the crowd, but he looked right at me, and I thought that was very unusual.

But this person, or Senator Kennedy, when he was killed, murdered.... I sat by the TV—my wife and I—and I cried for three days over that thing. I was

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forty years of age when that happened, and I never had anything strike me as hard as that did. My mother died about a year before that, and this really got me. I thought it was a waste of time, talent, and I felt so sorry for the United States and Mrs. Kennedy—the whole country. I just didn't think it could happen here. I really didn't. I remember being in the Philippines in World War II and hearing these guns go off and people getting murdered on the streets after

the war was over. I thought we were beyond that, but I'm not sure now. This has been a great shock, an emotional experience I'll never forget.

YOUNG: I've had people that I've talked to that have said the saying in West Virginia after the victory in the fall of '60 was:

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“At last we have a West Virginian in the White House.” How did Senator Kennedy's eastern accent and mannerisms strike West Virginians?

RICHARDSON: When I first heard Senator Kennedy with that Boston accent—of course, it's completely different than ours—naturally, I didn't like it. But once you get on to it, it doesn't seem right when you hear the president of the United States now without it. What I'm trying to say is that everybody liked him—everybody at least admired him if they didn't like him. Even after he became president some of them didn't, but they admired him in his press conferences that he had with the press. I think to me that is what I probably miss most because, being a Wood Countian, you never get the chance to go around Washington

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very much, and I enjoyed hearing his repartee with the press. I think he enjoyed it and I think the press enjoyed it. He always ended up a tough question with some kind of joke or comment, which I believe people really enjoyed.

YOUNG: Earlier you talked at great length about the anti-Catholic feeling in Wood County. After the President's election, we would presume that the Republican Catholics would have supported Mr. Nixon [Richard M. Nixon]. Do you think that this feeling of ill will continued during the presidency, or did President Kennedy prove to local anti-Catholic voters that he would not allow religion to interfere with matters of state?

RICHARDSON: I never will forget I talked with a red hot Democrat—several of them before this thing—and they said they wouldn't vote

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for him. A lot of Democrats wouldn't vote for him, in the primary.

YOUNG: Because of the religious things?

RICHARDSON: Then after it was over with about a year, I talked with these people, and they said we're ready to go for him. I believe this religious issue is still here, don't get me wrong. But I believe that President Kennedy, at least the way he acted with his religion, did not worry people after they saw him act. He did exactly what he said he'd do.

YOUNG: In other words, none of his policies once in office seemed to have any...

RICHARDSON: Religious overtones.

YOUNG: Upsetting local voters. Let's move on to something else. If you were to summarize in general the reasons for the President's victory in the primary in West Virginia, taking the state

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entirely, what would you list as the most important factors in his statewide primary victory?

RICHARDSON: I guess as a so-called politician, I would have to say organization.

YOUNG: Anything else?

RICHARDSON: Issues, naturally, but organization. First, last, and always they were organized. They didn't spend too much money in Wood County. Regardless of what the papers said, they didn't because I know. But they were organized, and they didn't have any lost motion whatsoever.

YOUNG: Other than organization could you list any specific issues that you think were important in the primary?

RICHARDSON: I think people in Wood County, in West Virginia particularly, felt that under the previous administration they were not getting a fair share of their tax

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dollars returned. And Kennedy came in—this was a depressed area, people moving out in the southern part of the counties, southern part of West Virginia—and they really believed that Kennedy was going to do something about it. He talked about these issues, and he really sold the people down in the southern part of the counties. Up around here he would talk about different things that were not quite so pinpointed. He would talk in more or less generalities and more or less on a high level around here. But down there he'd talk bread and milk to them. That's what they wanted, and that's what he gave them.

YOUNG: You've already discussed the reaction to the President in terms of religion. Would you indicate the reaction of Wood Counties, and West Virginians in general, to the New Frontier, to the President's program once in office?

RICHARDSON: You know that's a funny thing. The New Frontier is.... I never thought Kennedy was as radical as people painted him. This may come as a great surprise to some people; in fact, I thought Kennedy was a conservative. I'm not sure about the Medicare. I believe he was concerned with it, but I'm not so sure that he really wanted that plan. I think Kennedy was more, as I recall, interested in human beings as such and giving them the right and the privilege to do things. I think Kennedy was very much in favor of a civil rights bill, I think he felt very strongly on these things. I'm not saying he didn't feel strongly on Medicare, et cetera. But maybe I don't feel strongly about it. Maybe that's the difference. I feel I guess maybe you have a tendency to

[-33-]

identify yourself with things that you feel with. But I never felt that Kennedy was a wild-eyed liberal as he was pictured. I thought that he was left to center, but he wasn't any socialist. I think he really felt bonafidely concerned about people's problems.

YOUNG: When you say left to center, we have to decide where center is, don't we?

RICHARDSON: That is a relative term. He was a liberal, there's no question about that. But I don't think he was the same type of liberal—and this is no disrespect to anybody—that Hubert Humphrey was, if there is any distinction. These are words that we have great trouble with. Even the press does.

YOUNG: Well, knowing your own state as well as you do, how do you feel about the Kennedy civil rights program? Did West Virginians

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in general react favorably or unfavorably?

RICHARDSON: I would say that the civil rights program in West Virginia was.... We had not the problems that they do in other states due to the fact, for instance, in Wood County we have very few Negroes. We have a county of roughly 76,000, and I doubt if there are 1,500 Negroes. We integrated here without any problems whatsoever. As I understand there are still several establishments, but most everybody went along with it. We had a real good football player the first year, and up at the high school there was a colored boy. And that solved it so far as I'm concerned.

YOUNG: What would your observations be about that part of the state which

does have a higher density of Negroes?

RICHARDSON: They probably have some few problems

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down there. This is another thing that people believe. They're brought up, and it's awfully hard to tell somebody it's wrong if they're brought up a certain way. This will all come, in my opinion, where we see a lot of education, and it will never be solved overnight. But it is a step in the right direction, in my opinion. But they'll have problems down in the southern part of the state.

YOUNG: If we continue the discussion of President Kennedy's presidential policies, which of the President's economic policies do you think were most valuable to West Virginia, or did West Virginians react to most favorably or unfavorably?

RICHARDSON: I'd say that they were more concerned about unemployment in West Virginia and this Food Stamp program. He said he'd

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do something for these people in the southern part of the state, and he did. He put in this Food Stamp program, which was a big help to them. Now, I would say that bread and milk—the basic necessities of life.... He thought West Virginia wasn't getting a fair shake, and that's what he sold the people in West Virginia on.

YOUNG: Outside of the motel in which we're sitting, I noticed construction was going on for a new highway. Which of the federal highways is this?

RICHARDSON: This is Interstate 77.

YOUNG: And at the present time the famous north-south highway has also been authorized. What has been the general reaction to this program?

RICHARDSON: People in West Virginia believe that these programs are about fifty years

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late, and we think that when these highways get into West Virginia, many of these provincialisms.... We have fifty-five counties in West Virginia. Very mountainous—not where we are right now. But I think that some of this provincialism, et cetera, is because of very poor transportation facilities. I believe when these roads are put through here, a lot of this provincialism will die.

Do you believe that this provincialism in any way affected the Kennedy primary or general election?

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes, it's awfully hard to.... When you get in West Virginia, you have to talk different to the people down in the southern part of the state, southern part of West Virginia, than you do up here around Parkersburg. We are a

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different type of people—Clarksburg—and you have to point your campaign particularly to those problems. I'm certain that when Kennedy came here, I believe he realized that the Wood County economic situation wasn't as dire as other parts of the state, and he would talk about his war record here and things like that, which people were very interested in, and what he was going to do. He kept saying, "We're going to get the state moving." I heard that all the time. And up here in Wood County we thought we were moving pretty well. In other words, that's the only way I can answer it. I don't know what he did specifically in these areas.

YOUNG: What criticism, if any, was there of the New Frontier or the Kennedy Administration

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on the part of Democrats that might normally support the President?

RICHARDSON: Well, after they got in, naturally there were some criticisms around here about the parties they were having over there, et cetera. However, I thought that was not bona fide. Most people thought.... I would say in Wood County, people were afraid of Medicare. The majority of people that I know didn't like Medicare. That's what you heard a lot. The trouble of the campaign, you know, you have a tendency to run in your own circle, and you get certain ideas and opinions. Actually you're only talking to 1,500 people, and you think it's a trend, and it's not. You have to be very careful of that. There's 76,000 people in Wood County, but the economic and social groups that I run in, they're more afraid of Medicare.

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YOUNG: Other than social life perhaps in Washington and Medicare, were there criticisms of any other aspect of the Kennedy Administration?

RICHARDSON: Not that I can remember as such. Everybody had the feeling that he was doing a pretty good job. They didn't like him—I mean people still didn't like him. You got that die-hard Republicans, which we have plenty of in this county. But I think people more or less thought he was doing a pretty good job. He didn't hurt business any. The stock market went up. Some of them didn't like the way he talked to steel at one time, big steel. But far as I could see the criticism, if any—well, the criticism in this area—was mostly, I would say, Medicare. People didn't understand it, thought it was doing pretty well the way

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we were. The doctors and professional groups were definitely against it. A lot of lawyers were because they thought it would be a step in maybe some kind of a plan for lawyers.

YOUNG: Mr. Richardson, would you summarize or complete your remarks with respect to the late President and your contact with him and the program?

RICHARDSON: Well, I'd say that President Kennedy really challenged the people in West Virginia and throughout the nation. I think as the campaign started they were afraid of him being a Catholic—at least in this area—and after they got to meet him and know him and felt like they knew him, they weren't bothered with it as much. The issue was still here, but it was fomented by a small, very vocal, group of people being mostly

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Masonic bodies, probably, and churches. But I would say that they were very pleased with him once he got in there, and he did do for West Virginia what he said he was going to do. I enjoyed working with him. I felt after he was murdered I'd lost a dear friend. It was a great loss to me personally. You just feel when you meet somebody like that and get to know him.... In other words, this was the first time I ever felt that I ever knew the president of the United States personally. It's an unusual feeling. I'm sure other people did, and that's the one thing I can say: I enjoyed it.

YOUNG: This has been an interview with attorney William B. Richardson of Parkersburg, West Virginia, recorded at the Holiday Inn Motel on the morning of July 10, 1964, William L. Young.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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