

Hulett C. Smith Oral History Interview – 6/17/1965
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Biographical Note

Smith was state chairman of the West Virginia Democratic Party (1956-1962); commissioner of the West Virginia Department of Commerce (1961-1963); and Governor of West Virginia (1965-1969). In this interview, he discusses the 1960 Democratic primary and general election campaigns in West Virginia, press coverage of West Virginia during those campaigns, and economic development programs in West Virginia during the Kennedy Administration, among other issues.

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Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	First interactions with John F. Kennedy
2, 21, 37	1960 Democratic primary campaign in West Virginia
12	1960 general election campaign in West Virginia
18	Effect of national politics on West Virginia
24	Smith's political activities during the Kennedy administration
28	Economic development programs in West Virginia
33	Media coverage of West Virginia in 1960

Oral History Interview

with

GOVERNOR HULETT C. SMITH

June 17, 1965
Charleston, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: This is an interview with the Honorable Hulett C. Smith, Governor of West Virginia. The interview is taking place in the Governor's office in the State Capitol Building on June 17, 1965. During the 1960 campaign the Governor was an active candidate for political office as well as an observer of the West Virginia political scene.

Governor, would you tell me of your first contact with the late President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] in West Virginia politics?

SMITH: My first occasion to come close to the late President Kennedy was during the 1956 Democratic National Convention. At the time I was State Chairman and was participating in the Convention. He was nominated as a candidate for the Vice Presidency and subsequently was defeated by

[-1-]

Senator Kefauver [Estes Kefauver]. Most of that period was strictly in the knowledge of just a fine young man who was somewhat restrained. His assistants in that particular Convention were better known to me than others. Following that, the next contact that I can recall with Senator Kennedy was in the fall of 1958 when we in West Virginia were involved in a campaign to elect two United States senators. We were successful. My recollection of Jack

Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] goes back to Parkersburg, at a dinner of the Jeffersonian Club. At that time he was the principal speaker, and I felt that he was easy to talk to. In fact, he was much easier to talk to than Mrs. Kennedy was at that stage of the game. He was inquiring about West Virginia, although it was strictly as someone who was helping in the campaign for the election in West Virginia.

In 1959, early in March, as State Chairman, I received an inquiry asking if I knew of anyone in West Virginia who might be interested in being

[-2-]

an effective worker by surveying the political scene for Senator Kennedy, should he become an active candidate for the nomination for President. At that time I was serving as a member of the National Committee's Advisory Committee on Political Organization along with Claiborne Pell and Paul Butler [Paul M. Butler], who was the National Committee Chairman. We were all interested in making plans for 1960. I was particularly involved in the matter of having precinct organization schools. We embarked upon a program of teaching political organization and revitalizing political organization under a program outlined by this Committee with the help of Neil Staebler and others. As 1959 went on, sometime in June or July, the National Committee sponsored a series of schools—one at Bethel, Maine, and one up in Michigan—on political organization. Accompanied by Bob McDonough [Robert P. McDonough] and Bill Snyder from Beckley, I went to this school on organization at Bethel, Maine. There, of course, was the nucleus of persons who at that time were showing

[-3-]

considerable interest in Senator Kennedy's candidacy, and who later became part of his Administration. Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and Neil Staebler and Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], Sam Brightman [Samuel C. Brightman], and some of the other Michigan organization people were present, including Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey] and the others who became leaders in the Kennedy campaign. At that stage of 1959, however, it was not discussed at great length.

The next occasion was when Senator Randolph [Jennings Randolph] had a meeting in Brooke County. Senator and Mrs. Kennedy came down and were entertained at the Elks' Country Club. This meeting included those who subsequently became really active in the Kennedy campaign in northern West Virginia—Judge Pryor [Ralph E. Pryor], Dick Barnes, Al Chapman [Alfred Chapman]. Bob McDonough, of course, was there. By that time he was actively looking for an organization and recruiting people into the building of an organization.

[-4-]

I don't recall that Jack Kennedy came back into West Virginia again for any political event after that date until his appearance here when he actually paid his filing fee in February of 1960. Immediately after he announced, the organization had Bob McDonough as the more or less ringleader, Dr. Ward Wylie, Senator from this state at the time, who became chairman

of the Kennedy campaign; along with Lars Tierney [Lawrence Tierney, Jr.] of Bluefield and, Joe Condry [Joseph P. Condry] and Anne Hearst. As I recall, it was in that February that Matt Reese [Matthew A. Reese] came into the Kennedy organization, and the organization started to build toward entering into the primary. At that time I became a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Governor. As State Chairman, my path crossed Jack Kennedy's many times, but we weren't really able to keep up entirely with the progress of his campaign except in Raleigh County. However, I did run into him here in Charleston during the last two weeks of the primary. But in Raleigh County,

[-5-]

Jack and I were together at a big rally in Beckley. There, his cohorts in charge of that area were Grant Stockdale and Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith, II], who later became the Senator from Massachusetts. They worked with the late John Ward who was then a candidate for county court; he was a former sheriff. I guess at that time John might have been the sheriff. They established a campaign headquarters and operated in that part of West Virginia—Raleigh and Wyoming Counties—with these two from Massachusetts spearheading it. They worked with Ray DePaulo [Raymond J. DePaulo], who was in Beckley at that time, and John Pachuta. There was still a feeling of not knowing who this young man was, what his ideas were, what he was attempting to do. Was he really trying to use West Virginia? Just what was involved? Some of the political leaders at the time, including the late Arthur Koontz, who was then National Committeeman, felt that as far as the political situation in West Virginia was concerned—with our own gubernatorial election and senatorial

[-6-]

election—it might have been in the best interest of West Virginia politics if we had neither Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] nor Senator Kennedy in the presidential preference primary. There was considerable discussion at one time with several members of both of the staffs. I recall meeting Rein Vander Zee, and Bob Barrie [Robert Barrie], managers for Humphrey. The discussion centered around whether they would or would not enter the West Virginia primary. I don't think anyone knew what the decision would be until after the Wisconsin results were in, although there was an organization being built by certain members of the Democratic Party. Others, who were in opposition to Kennedy, were not necessarily for Humphrey, but perhaps in the back of their minds, they were thinking that they would like to support Senator Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson]. Of course, at that time, too, there was some discussion as to Senator Symington's [Stuart Symington, II] chances at the Convention. And a considerable number of those who had filed by that time, or were starting to file for delegates

[-7-]

to the National Convention, were Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] supporters. My efforts in that primary period were concentrated entirely upon my own ambitions to become the Democratic nominee for Governor. I attended meetings with Senator Kennedy and meetings

with Senator Humphrey. The limelight was shifting quickly at that stage of the game from a matter of West Virginia domestic or statewide issues of importance to a battleground of national importance. When the Wisconsin primary was over, there were four or five weeks left until the May primary in West Virginia. During that time the entire picture of the West Virginia Democratic gubernatorial nomination changed. Originally, there were five candidates for the nomination who had filed. Senator Beam, as I recall, was the first to drop out. He was followed by Harry Pauley [Henry R. Pauley], who was the Speaker of the House of Delegates. The race became really a two—way battle between Governor Barron [William W. Barron] and me. The strategists for both camps, I think, used similar tactics. Both major

[-8-]

gubernatorial candidates, and the two vying for the presidential nomination preference, were looking for strength where the strength was. I know that in counties where I had a political organization of some strength, the tendency would be for both presidential camps to woo our supporters. Where I found that Senator Kennedy or Senator Humphrey was strong, our people would try to woo their assistants in those particular counties.

The election basically turned, I think, on the fact that the Kennedy forces in West Virginia were better organized, and had developed much stronger alliances with the basic strength of the Democratic Party at that time in the major Democratic counties. In the last two weeks when President Kennedy himself was campaigning, he was able to win West Virginia on his own personality. He sold himself to the people; they became enthusiastic about him. You could see the election changing. The combination of personal magnetism plus the organizational strength—the

[-9-]

long-range plan starting back as far as 1958—was beginning to pay off in ways that insured that he would win. Late Sunday before the primary I had a chance to talk with Senator Kennedy in the Daniel Boone Hotel. He was leaning over the counter where the bell stand is now. He was rather discouraged; the polls were apparently not reflecting the feeling that I had. At that time Governor Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff], John Bailey [John Moran Bailey], and the whole echelon was here. Their polls had indicated that I didn't have a chance. I felt, at that point, that they were looking for strength where strength would be, which would be the only practical thing to do—and that the move was being made to strengthen ties between the Barron candidacy and the Kennedy candidacy, and that the organization that had been developed both by the Barron team and the Kennedy team was going to make it turn out about the way it did. Despite that, the official pollsters were not bringing back that kind of information that was shown in some of the earlier polls. In January,

[-10-]

1960, I participated with Senator Kennedy's group in having a Lou Harris poll made in West Virginia. It showed that he had much greater strength than anyone had anticipated. It

probably was encouraging to his strategists that he really had a chance in West Virginia—that the religious issue was not going to be the main one, nor were many of the other things that later became part of the history of the campaign, according to people writing in retrospect.

After he won the presidential primary in West Virginia, he had won the majority of the West Virginia delegates to the Convention. I was still the State Chairman. We had the delegates, and all of us tended to unite behind his candidacy. The organization of the delegation to the Convention was based on the recommendations that were made by Bob McDonough and me—the selection of those who were going to be members of the Resolutions Committee; those who were going to be recommended as Chairman of the delegation. Dr. Wylie, who had been the chairman for Kennedy,

[-11-]

who was chairman of the delegation. Al Chapman, also a Kennedy man, was the secretary. I went to the Convention as an alternate to Judge Bailey who was unable to attend and who had been a Kennedy supporter. In Los Angeles we voted (as I recall) fifteen votes for Kennedy, one-half for Symington, two votes for Stevenson, and one vote for Johnson.

After the nomination, we came back and began the organization for the general election. We established a headquarters in the Nelson Building here. The State Committee arranged for two separate Citizens for Kennedy-Johnson headquarters which we financed and helped support. There was a united effort made to elect the entire Democratic ticket. In certain areas of the state there was still some anti-Kennedy feeling in the Democratic Party. The religious issue started to pop up again; something that looked as if it had been buried in the primary in West Virginia was being promoted very strongly by outside groups. I suspect every voter in West Virginia was besieged

[-12-]

with different types of hate literature. There was a great amount of anti-Catholic literature. Some of the border counties that Jack Kennedy didn't carry in the general election was due in part, I think, to influences from out of the state. This is natural. This happens when people live in one state and work in another. Some of the church groups in West Virginia made an active effort to defeat Kennedy because of the religious issue. That issue was probably one of the causes of the President running a little behind the state ticket in the general election. Of course, it was never really analyzed, and I don't think anybody really cared to analyze it after it was over. I don't believe that any of the top echelon of the Democratic Party had any doubts that the Kennedy-Johnson ticket would carry West Virginia by a substantial margin and that West Virginia would vote for him in the Electoral College.

The main event of the campaign in West Virginia, as far as the President at that time

[-13-]

was concerned, was the Conference on New Jobs and New Growths. Bill Batt [William L. Batt] and I were co-chairmen of that conference. We organized and supported a major rally

for President Kennedy on the 19th of September at the Civic Auditorium in Charleston. We had invited all of the speakers from out of the state as well as in the state to talk about a program of providing new jobs and new opportunities. It was from that meeting and from President Kennedy's personal observations during the primary that many of the later developments came about, and the efforts we were trying to establish on the state level, as far as Democratic politics and programs were concerned, started to be formulated. He made a very good impression at the meeting. There was a speech that followed. It was a double-barreled effect, as I recall. We had a special fund-raising dinner in advance at the Daniel Boone Hotel; another dinner followed that. Some of those who had paid a hundred dollars to have a special dinner with President Kennedy were a little

[-14-]

disappointed that he didn't get to stay at that dinner as long as he had originally planned.

There was another occasion that brought him here. He came down in 1959 for the Young Democrats. It's hard to remember these dates, but I think it was 1959. There was an unusual picture taken on the occasion. It is unusual in that Mrs. Kennedy's blouse is buttoned wrong. It is one of those treasures that you find as you look through pictures in which you are with the man during the campaign. But I was thinking again about the one in '59. We met him.... We flew down in the *Caroline*. Mrs. Kennedy was with him when he flew down to the Wellsburg-Wheeling area in 1959 (August or September). We had quite a reception for them at that time.

In the 1960 fall election some problems tying together the National, State, and Kennedy Committees efforts developed soon after the return from Los Angeles. I recall a meeting that Syd Barksdale, who was the publicity director, and I had with Larry O'Brien and others.

[-15-]

We were trying to get the organizations tied together. There was some feeling at that stage of the game that those who had been for Kennedy in the primary were really trying to take over and run the state election campaign. It was one of those problems that arises in many states, but it didn't develop into a major problem although it was a source of irritation at times. Con [Con Hardman] can remember some of the questions we had at the time in regard to following the plans of the National Committee and Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson Committee and our own State Campaign for our own problems in electing not only a Governor but Board of Public Works and legislature, as well as having every major county office up, too. Looking back, all the problems seem to be so minor in detail now. Of course, it could have been a major crisis at the time. One time an argument developed about who was to pay the postage on some mailing. Bob McDonough, Syd Barksdale, the campaign people, Senator Randolph's staff, and I resolved that problem

[-16-]

without too much trouble. We had the usual organizational problems such as: Who will get the bands here for the big rally? But it went on with a great deal of success.

From that time on, the campaign moved into the national picture as far as the presidency was concerned. I believe his speech in Houston followed that, and then the debates. I really don't know that the debates had the impact in West Virginia that it must have had in other states. Of course, everyone felt as if Jack Kennedy had gotten the best of Nixon in all the debates, but whether or not it had any determination on the vote would be problematical. The difference between his and Governor Barron's majorities would primarily have been the determined attack made upon his religion. This was especially true in the border counties of Cabell, Wood....

YOUNG: Governor, if I may interrupt a minute, you've already mentioned that the main show of the national primary became more important than the

[-17-]

West Virginia issues and frictions developed. Could you indicate any other way in which you feel a national preferential primary may affect state politics, or the way in which the West Virginia political scene in the May primary was complicated by a national election?

SMITH: It was complicated very easily because, immediately, with the presidency being at stake and the advent of the national news media here, and the domination of the news by national issues or issues being promulgated by these two candidates, the issues that were really local, West Virginia problems were subordinated. Well, if you'd look back at the platform that I was running on in 1960 in the primary and Governor Barron's platform, why, the issues that we had at stake just absolutely disappeared from the scene. At that time I was advocating a constitutional convention; it just died. We had what we called "Operation Opportunity" to provide new jobs through state programs and the building of a north-south highway which was a major issue at that time—who

[-18-]

could build it the best or fastest or what might need to be done; reorganization of state government. These things just disappeared. A speech on that would.... You'd get about so many inches. But the fact that the national news media were feeding the networks actually resulted in the local issues dropping right out of the picture completely. It went all the way down the line. They had a televised debate here between the two, Humphrey and Kennedy, that was towards the latter part of the days of the primary campaign. The organizational funding of an organization that was necessary got to be a matter of people who were.... I mean, your plans, that you'd started, if any, as a candidate, or any political organization had started to put together, why, the emphasis shifted. As far as who was going to be nominated for Governor or who was going to be nominated for the United States Senate, this became entirely secondary.

I would think that a battle of that nature, again, in any future primary in West Virginia,

[-19-]

would certainly dominate the scene to the point that, no matter who the candidates were for this office, they would have a very difficult time projecting their own image and being recognized as individuals—rather than as just another "somebody" running for office at that time. I got a great kick out of Vice President Humphrey speaking to the Young Democrats during the Inauguration Week festivities this January. He relayed a list of names of people now and asked if anybody recognized any of the names. Oh, I suppose, the name Marshall meant something to you. To me it did, anyway, but the other names were just names. He went on to explain that they had all been Vice Presidents. So you find that the star of the show makes the difference in the election. When the main event is going to be the presidential preference primary and the strong issues are being raised in the presidential preference primary, why, it's going to make the state election come down the line considerably. I think this was particularly true in the 1960

[-20-]

primary, because in the 1964 primary the presidency was not really involved; there was no presidential preference primary at all on either side, except that Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] filed as the only one on the Republican side. But the primary then was strictly a state issue. It didn't revolve about anything else at all. We didn't have any of the overlying issues, other than the fact that I think everybody was supporting President Johnson at that time. So there wasn't any battle for delegates; there wasn't any organizational problem. It was a matter of strictly a state party primary.

YOUNG: Governor, to go back to the primary a minute, if I may. Did you notice any difference in ideology or platform between Senators Kennedy and Humphrey, or was it more a matter of personality and organization? Did there seem to be any difference in terms of the program each man was promising if he became the Democratic candidate?

[-21-]

SMITH: There was not a great deal of difference between the ideologies or their goals, but these two men are different personalities and had different approaches to the problems and different means of salesmanship—just as President Johnson is different from President Kennedy and different entirely from Vice President Humphrey. They all have their own manner and means of selling themselves. I think that in West Virginia, the strength in numbers and financial support (which makes a great deal of difference in the number of people that you have working for you in any campaign), was a major element in the size of the majority that President Kennedy received over now Vice President Humphrey. Some of the support that Senator Humphrey got was

from people who really constituted token support. I felt that some of them were really trying to use Senator Humphrey as a means of stopping Senator Kennedy to open up the spot for someone else. That's been attributed to Senator Byrd's [Robert C. Byrd] activities in the campaign, that he was really

[-22-]

for Humphrey in the hope that Senator Johnson would be the nominee. I don't know whether that was true or not. The greatest asset Jack Kennedy had in West Virginia was Jack Kennedy.

YOUNG: This is the end of the first reel in an interview with Governor Smith of West Virginia.

[End Tape 1, Begin Tape 2]

[-23-]

YOUNG: This is the second tape in an interview with Governor Smith of West Virginia.

Governor, would you move on, then, and describe your own political position in West Virginia during the Kennedy years, and then, from that, tell about some of your contacts with the White House in that position?

SMITH: Of course, following the general election, my contacts with the new Administration started to move along in the normal pattern. I was State Chairman. Governor Barron had been elected, and he was organizing his new administration. We were in the throes of organizing a legislature; so in the first months following the Inauguration, contacts were rather frequent with different people. The memory of the Inauguration and the Washington snow storm are general knowledge, I guess. We were late to every event that we attended. There was no particular contact directly with the White House at that stage of the game until early in—I guess it was in the early part

[-24-]

of January, prior to the Inauguration, when, with Bob McDonough, who had been the liaison man with the Kennedy forces and been his direct representative in West Virginia.... We had some discussions with the then—National Committeeman John Amos [John E. Amos] and with Governor Barron's staff in regard to patronage—who was recommended for what; how procedures were to be followed.

Basically, we had had our hands full here in West Virginia. The recommendations for federal patronage were being cleared, of course, in the normal procedures, but most of our work was handled by Governor Barron at that time, with Bob McDonough as his representative to Washington. Bob would go up and consult with the various ones that he'd become acquainted with during the campaign—those who were now occupying new

positions in government. It was through this method that the liaison started to be established that enabled the President to take action enabling the sale of the Naval Ordnance Plant...to the FMC [Food Machinery and Chemical Corporation] Corporation to try to get new jobs. And the

[-25-]

ARA [Area Redevelopment Act] came into being....

My contacts, officially, then, were merely as, really, an advisor to the Governor who at that time was the head of the party. And it was through the Governor and through McDonough that most of the political contacts were made with the White House. I accompanied the Governor several times over to Washington. In the early part of it, following the Task Force on Poverty programs or Area Redevelopment that were going on through May, efforts were made by the Governor to supplement his plan for the inclusion of more mileage in the interstate system. Bob McDonough was his chief liaison man with the White House at that time, and also with the National Committee. I came into state government in July as Commissioner of Commerce. My contacts, then, were primarily with the Area Redevelopment Administration and Bill Batt, who had been the Area Redevelopment Administrator, and with those whom we had met on many occasions.

[-26-]

I, personally, had very little contact with the White House during that entire period. The President was invited down to speak at West Virginia University in June of '61. At that time he had to cancel out to go to Europe on one of his missions over there. We did help prepare a brochure to present to him at West Virginia University which was never really completed except the proofs. It's one that, recently, we offered to Mrs. Kennedy for the Library. We hope that someday that this will be part of the Kennedy Library. It was prepared by our staff and the staff of Governor Barron's office on progress in West Virginia, to show participation and cooperation between West Virginia and the Kennedy Administration. In October of 1961 the duties of Commissioner and State Chairman seemed to be getting to be incompatible as far as all were concerned, and I resigned as State Chairman, to be succeeded by Bob McDonough. From that point ('62 and early '63), I had no occasion that I can recall

[-27-]

of direct contact with the President except for the drafting of some correspondence that involved the Wheeling Ordnance Plant and the flood problems that required some questions to be answered regarding the eligibility of State Office Building No. 3, which was handled by Bob McDonough, Governor Barron, and myself and others just by correspondence. The programs were being affected and were a great benefit to West Virginia. We used them to the utmost. As far as personal contacts with the President, I didn't have any at all until I was at the White House for the beginning of the Appalachian regional program in April, 1963. I think that was the last time that I saw the President personally except for his visit to Charleston on West Virginia Day, June 20, 1963.

YOUNG: You mentioned that West Virginia used the federal programs to the fullest. Would you comment on the reaction among West Virginians you knew to the New Frontier as to whether or not President Kennedy provided West Virginia with the kind of

[-28-]

programs that had been talked about in the primary and in the general election? Then, just West Virginia's reaction to the programs.

SMITH: I think that the President immediately followed up and thought of West Virginia. His first executive order, if I recall correctly, was to increase the food allotment and surplus commodities to West Virginia which we were participating in at that time and needed. I think he was thinking of West Virginia at that time. He was thinking of West Virginia when he was pushing the Area Redevelopment program, the Accelerated Public Works programs — all of those programs were programs that we in West Virginia felt were needed. We felt that the President was for them and that because of his support, they were gaining Congressional support. People in West Virginia basically found that they were of measurable economic value to us. The results of the Accelerated Public Works and Area Redevelopment programs are long-term gains that we probably don't even realize the importance of at this time.

[-29-]

I feel that West Virginians felt as if Jack Kennedy had a special place in his mind—and it must have had; many of his major appointments came from West Virginia. His first Secretary of the Army [George H. Decker] was the President of West Virginia University at the time. This may not have been due entirely to the fact of being a West Virginian. Experience in government, of course, added to it. Cy Vance [Cyrus R. Vance] and Steve Ailes [Stephen Ailes], who were West Virginians, now have important positions in Defense. He recognized his friends in the primary campaign and in the general election—those who were seeking positions in the federal government or in his Administration. I always had the feeling that he wanted to do what he could to help West Virginia.

Certainly, I believe the allocation of Interstate Route 79, which is a north-south road, was probably under the direct instructions of the President. This is, of course, an important link in our interstate highway building program today. The people of West Virginia will have

[-30-]

fond memories of the benefits that accrued to them economically and socially from the effects of the Kennedy Administration. Some West Virginians still feel that he over-emphasized the faults of many of our areas; and that this led to a kind of a complex of accepting these things rather than trying to do something about them, but I think they are in a very small minority.

The tragedy was mourned by, I guess, every West Virginian as the loss of a friend rather than the loss of a President. He's always promised to come back. He did once in a rainstorm and tried to help us in the campaign of 1962 in Wheeling. I visited with him up there for a while on a miserable night. But that's another story. I assume that you have others who can give you better information on that than I. I think that President Kennedy determined to do whatever was possible to help the people of West Virginia as he had outlined in his primary campaign and in the general election.

[-31-]

YOUNG: Governor, while I was changing tapes, you were telling a story about John Amos introducing the President, I believe, at a dinner at the Daniel Boone. Would you repeat that story now?

SMITH: I don't recall it exactly. We had a special dinner for the President prior to the Conference on New Jobs and New Growths. John Amos, who was the National Committeeman, at that time, introduced the President, Mr. Kennedy, as saying that he was the only candidate for President who knew so much about West Virginia since the time that John W. Davis, who was from West Virginia, was the candidate for President. In fact, he even knew where Slab Fork was. Of course, this was a place where Jack had been. Both Jack Kennedy and I were there the same night. It's a coal mining community in Raleigh County where we had some pictures and interviews made together with the coal miners as the shift changed.

Jack Kennedy left a legacy to West Virginia. His goals are still being sought by this Administration, and probably will be by administrations

[-32-]

to come. I think that there's no doubt that the germ, the seed, of the idea of the War on Poverty, the other economic state-federal cooperative efforts that we're working on today, were probably those that may have been discussed with the White House long before they got into the realm of public knowledge.

YOUNG: Governor, while I was waiting to see you this morning, I picked up a copy of your pamphlet on the Progress Corps. I relate this to the statement you made a little bit ago that some people felt that perhaps Senator Kennedy exaggerated some of the conditions he found in West Virginia, and some feel that he didn't. I'd like to turn to the national news media in that primary and ask two questions. How do you feel the national news media affected the non-West Virginians' image of West Virginia, and then, at the same time, what effect did this national coverage, good or bad, have on West Virginians themselves?

SMITH: Well, I would think that the national coverage of the problems of West Virginia that were

[-33-]

brought out in the primary certainly overemphasized the problems we had, although they were serious. Let me say that they were. But at the same time there was very little balance in the news. Even after that, we were getting articles, "What's Wrong with West Virginia?" instead of people writing up, "What's right with West Virginia?" Even during '62, when I was Commissioner of Commerce and the ARA was getting into full swing, we were having national publications sending writers into West Virginia with distinct instructions: "Go down and get a picture of an abandoned coal mine with a 'shaggy' dog miner or someone sitting in front of it out of work to show how terrible conditions are in West Virginia." This had its effect on West Virginians because they felt that they were reading about themselves. This is a bad thing to do. It's sort of like in a political campaign. You know, you can have a group around that will say that you're winning, and you meet every day with that same group, and it doesn't take you

[-34-]

long before you think you've got it won. Whereas if you'd get out and see some of the other people, you might have a little different impression. This had its effect on West Virginians. They started to believe, I think, to a great extent what they were reading in the paper about themselves. It has taken a considerable effort in the past two or three years through the Commerce Department that I headed and even the first few months of this administration, and the whole campaign in '64, to point out to West Virginians the advantages they have and to urge them to be optimistic rather than to be pessimistic.

I think that you asked about what effect this really would have. I think that, in the long run, it had a good effect on West Virginia. Sometimes it's necessary to examine yourself, and see where you are, and be realistic about it, and not indulge in wishful thinking. The primary campaign of '60 and the general election of '60 and the subsequent ones, I think, made West Virginians themselves start to be cognizant of

[-35-]

their position as individuals in West Virginia—not as part of a certain group. This goes right down to discussions by people who had thought that coal mining would go on forever, and that the economic conditions that coal was able to create for West Virginia during the Depression was able, actually, to keep West Virginia's income up during the Depression years of the early '30's much better than any other states because coal was an essential product, and everybody had to have it. They seemed to think that this would go on forever. Well, it didn't, and yet it was hard for people to realize it. So, I think that in the long run all of these stories that were put out by the national media have had an effect that perhaps is discouraging and disheartening—let us say, the kind that makes your temper boil a little at some of the things that are said about you. But in the overall analysis of West Virginia and its future, I think that it might have been a very fortunate thing that it was brought out at the time, because today there is an entirely different spirit, and most of it is due to the fact that

[-36-]

these programs have been effective to a great extent, and people are recognizing it. As you and I know, you find a different attitude today on what the future holds for West Virginia. Our young people are starting to stay here; we're not looked upon as being hillbillies without shoes and with starving children. These things are gradually being eliminated, I think, from the general public's mind nation-wide. It's going to be a long battle, but they were there (the miners) even before the primary campaign of 1960. The people of West Virginia just didn't recognize that they were being thought of in that manner. So I think it probably had a beneficial effect.

YOUNG: Governor, there's one question that I didn't take the opportunity to ask you when we were talking about the primary. Would you comment on the effectiveness of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. in the West Virginia primary?

SMITH: The Roosevelt name, of course, is still magic in West Virginia. Frank Roosevelt is a very popular

[-37-]

man in his own right. When he came into West Virginia, I traveled with him a couple of times during the primary and, also, during the general election. His forthrightness in his support for John Kennedy as a capable man had a great deal to do with his winning the support of the people in the coalfields of West Virginia who remember his mother [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] and, also, remember the name Franklin D. Roosevelt in the years when things weren't so good.

You mentioned earlier about whether his attack on Humphrey's war record was of any effect. You know, I had never remembered that until you asked the questions, so, if I'm any judge, I don't think that it had any effect at all. Certainly, I don't have any idea whose idea that was.

YOUNG: Governor, there's been some curiosity as to whether the West Virginia primary had any effect on the many West Virginians that had migrated to Ohio for jobs, particularly in the Akron area. The two states are related somewhat politically

[-38-]

because they share a long border. Could you comment on this?

SMITH: I would say that in the general election that the campaign that was waged in Ohio—the bitter attacks upon religion in the areas on the border of West Virginia—actually affected West Virginia's result much more than any pro or adverse effect that West Virginians moving into Ohio would have had on the Ohio results. Most of those men that moved to Ohio to work maintained their voting residence in West Virginia. I would think that their vote might have been part of the differential that I mentioned earlier between the vote for the Governor and the vote for the President.

YOUNG: Where were the Ohio attacks on Kennedy most likely to be effective in West Virginia? In other words, where was the spill-over?

SMITH: The spill-over, I felt, was in Cabell and in Wood Counties—that's the Parkersburg-Marietta area. That's where the labor forces are really one and the same. People live on one side of

[-39-]

the river and work on the other and travel back and forth consistently. I think this is where they made a big effect in the vote in Wood County. Of course, this is one of those problematical questions. The President lost Kanawha County for some reason. I think it was probably due to the religious issue at that time too.

YOUNG: This is the end of the second of two tapes, an interview with the Honorable Hulett C. Smith, Governor of West Virginia. The Governor in 1960 was a candidate in the primary election for Governor on the Democratic ticket. The interview was conducted in the Governor's office in the Capitol Building on June 17, 1965, by William L. Young.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-40-]

Hulett C. Smith Oral History Transcript
Name Index

A

Ailes, Stephen, 30
Amos, John E., 25, 32

B

Bailey, John Moran, 10, 12
Barksdale, Syd, 15, 16
Barnes, Richard W., 4
Barrie, Robert, 7
Barron, William W., 8, 17, 18, 24, 25, 27, 28
Batt, William L., 14, 26
Beam, Senator, 8
Brightman, Samuel C., 4
Butler, Paul M., 3
Byrd, Robert C., 22

C

Chapman, Alfred F., 4, 12
Condry, Joseph P., 5

D

Davis, John W., 32
Decker, George H., 30
DePaulo, Raymond J., 6

H

Hardman, Con, 16
Harris, Lou, 11
Hearst, Anne, 5
Humphrey, Hubert H., 7, 8, 9, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23,
38

J

Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 7, 12, 21, 22, 23

K

Kefauver, Estes, 2
Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 2, 4, 15, 27
Kennedy, John F., 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16,
17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 28,

30, 31, 32, 33, 38
Koontz, Arthur, 6

L

Lucey, Patrick J., 4

M

McDonough, Robert P., 3, 4, 5, 11, 16, 25, 26, 27,
28

N

Nixon, Richard M., 17

O

O'Brien, Lawrence F., 4, 15
O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 4

P

Pachuta, John, 6
Pauley, Harry R., 8
Pell, Claiborne, 3
Pryor, Ralph E., 4

R

Randolph, Jennings, 4, 16
Reese, Matthew A., 5
Rein, Zee Vander J., 7
Ribicoff, Abraham A., 10
Rockefeller, Nelson A., 21
Roosevelt, Eleanor A., 38
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 38
Roosevelt, Franklin D. Jr., 37, 38

S

Smith, Benjamin A. II, 6
Snyder, Bill, 3
Staebler, Neil, 3, 4
Stevenson, Adlai E., 8, 12
Stockdale, Grant, 6

Symington, Stuart, II, 7, 12

T

Tierney, Laurence E., 5

V

Vance, Cyrus R., 30

W

Wylie, Ward, 5, 11

Ward, John, 6