

**Alfred Chapman Oral History Interview—2/15/1965**  
Administrative Information

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**Biographical Note**

Chapman, a delegate from West Virginia to the Democratic National Convention (1940-1964), discusses the 1956 and 1960 Democratic National Conventions, his part in organizing the 1960 Kennedy for President campaign in West Virginia, and anti-Catholicism, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

with

Alfred Chapman

February 15, 1965  
Wheeling, West Virginia

By William L. Young

YOUNG: This is an interview with Mr. Alfred Chapman of 629 Main Street, Wheeling, West Virginia. The interview is being recorded on February 14, 1965. In 1960, Mr. Chapman was a delegate to the National Convention in Los Angeles. He represented West Virginia and was a delegate-at-large. Mr. Chapman, would you begin at the beginning and tell me when you first became interested in the political fortunes of Senator Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

CHAPMAN: Yes, sir. The first time I had the honor of meeting President Kennedy was in Chicago, 1952, at the National Convention at the time that he delivered the address nominating Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] for the president of the United States. From that time on we have become very close friends. We have kept in close contact with each other. Then in 1956, we again had the privilege and the honor of swinging the West Virginia delegation for the President, at that time for the nomination of the vice president on the second ballot over Estes Kefauver.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, were you a delegate to the 1956 Convention?

CHAPMAN: I was a delegate-at-large to this Convention.

YOUNG: From West Virginia?

CHAPMAN: From West Virginia. Prior to that I had been a

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delegate. The first convention I attended was in 1944 as a district delegate. Do you want that in there?

YOUNG: Sure. Yes sir, any information that you have.

CHAPMAN: As a district delegate. At that time, Senator Harley Kilgore [Harley Martin Kilgore] was the Senator from West Virginia and chairman of our delegation. West Virginia had the honor of making the first move in the breakaway from Henry Wallace [Henry A. Wallace], who was a candidate for the vice president, and swung behind Harry Truman [Harry S. Truman] in the year of 1944. I have attended every Convention since this year, making the total of six Conventions.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, how were you first attracted to Senator Kennedy in the 1956 campaign?

CHAPMAN: In the 1956 campaign his brother Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] came to the West Virginia delegation with the then-governor of Ohio, Michael DiSalle [Michael V. DiSalle], and Frank Venally, chairman of the Belmont County Democratic Committee, of Bellaire and asked me, after the first ballot was cast in the 1956 Convention in Chicago, if there would be any chance for West Virginia for John Kennedy for vice president. I took the matter at that time with our deseated Senator Matthew M. Neely. He advised me that, "By all means, Al, I think that the Senator is very brilliant, a man that would make a very good vice president and a man that this Convention could be proud to elect." I therefore made the canvas of all the delegates from the West Virginia delegation which, in the year of 1956, we had twenty-eight delegates. All twenty-eight were in favor of voting for Senator Kennedy for vice president over Estes Kefauver.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, was it Senator Neely's support that pretty much threw the delegation to Senator Kennedy?

CHAPMAN: That's right. At that time the Senator had been asking the chairman of the Convention, the honorable Sam Rayburn, for attention. He was not able to get through to him as the chairman would not answer his

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telephone on the podium—on the platform. He wouldn't answer it. Therefore, the Senator sent the Honorable Robert Mollohan [Robert H. Mollohan] to the platform to advise the chairman that the Senator from West Virginia would like to speak to the chairman regarding moving our vote from Estes Kefauver to Senator Kennedy for vice president on the second ballot. At that time he did not recognize the Senator yet as he was in the midst of watching the proceedings in the state of Oklahoma in the fight amongst the delegates between Estes

Kefauver's forces and Senator Gore [Albert Gore, Sr.]. Do you see? Then Oklahoma took a vote right on the floor, and they decided to switch from Kefauver—no, from Senator Gore to Kefauver who was the original choice. Tennessee followed suit, and that put Mr. Kefauver in the running as the vice president in that Convention in 1956.

YOUNG: You say the West Virginia vote was unanimous.

CHAPMAN: Yes, it was unanimous. But West Virginia was not recognized, and the West Virginia votes could not have been cast—the twenty-eight votes for Senator Kennedy—at that time as the chairman would not recognize the West Virginia delegation. He was too interested in the fight that was going on between the Kefauver forces and the Gore forces in the state of Oklahoma delegation. After the nomination was made for Kefauver, and he was elected by this Convention after Oklahoma and Tennessee decided to go for Estes Kefauver, the Senator from West Virginia, the Honorable Matthew Neely, sent me to the steak house where Senator was staying and the suite of rooms he had. I went up there and explained to the Senator at that time that we were sorry, but that we were not recognized. We were ready to switch the twenty-eight votes from Estes Kefauver to Senator Kennedy for the vice presidency of the United States on the second ballot.

I, at that time, told the Senator, I said, “Jack, don't worry and don't take it too hard because four years will soon roll around and God knows, maybe you'll have a chance to run for president of the United States.” Those were the words that I spoke to him. His brother, Bob [Robert F. Kennedy], was in the room. Hi brother, Ted, was in there at that time. They both heard me make that statement.

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YOUNG: Do you think that the early support of West Virginia then may have given Senator Kennedy some indication that religion would not be as much of a factor in the next four years as others might have anticipated?

CHAPMAN: That is correct because the delegates that were at the Convention in '56 were very broadminded. Not only that, but the proportion of the delegates in there at that time, 80 percent were Protestant. When you get 80 percent that were Protestant to support a Catholic candidate, that was an indication that, regardless of the man's religion, West Virginia would be for him.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, do you remember any discussions within the delegation about religion in 1956?

CHAPMAN: In 1956, I wish to inform you that there was no discussion whatever that the man was a Catholic, that he was this or he was that. There was no discussion after all. The only discussion was that every delegate felt that he would be the logical man, as he was very brilliant. They felt that they would make a good recommendation to the people of the United States.

YOUNG: Well, in the case that Senator Neely had had no preference and had stayed neutral, do you think the delegation would still have felt that way?

CHAPMAN: No. Senator Neely carried a considerable amount weight amongst the delegates. I must say this for Senator Neely, whom I've known for thirty-five years. This is one time when I approached the question to him, "Senator, what do you think about me taking a poll and seeing if we can switch, because I don't think that Kefauver has got a chance?" He said, "Al, by all means do that." He said, "I'm for him." And he said, "I think that he would make a better man than Senator Kefauver."

YOUNG: Do you have any idea if Senator Neely had been in contact with Senator Kennedy?

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CHAPMAN: No, he had not.

YOUNG: Up to that time?

CHAPMAN: Up to that time he had never been in contact with him regarding being a candidate for the vice president because when I approached him at that time on the Convention floor, he was more than surprised that I was starting to make the movement for Senator Kennedy.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, would you go back and review then just for a minute your own reasons for being interested in Senator Kennedy?

CHAPMAN: Yes. I liked the things that his mother [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] has stood for; the things that she endeavored to do for the people of America, regardless of race or creed, for the mentally retarded children. She had this same misfortune in her own family. Not only that, but to me the President represented a symbol. I've been a Methodist, a member very highly in the circles of Methodism. To be the first in West Virginia in the Protestant religion to stump the state and make the movement for Senator Kennedy would be an indication that many people felt the same as I had.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, would you review your early contacts with Senator Kennedy at that time?

CHAPMAN: After this 1956 Convention, the Senator came to Wheeling to speak at the Virginia Theater on October 11, 1956, speaking for Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kefauver. I must state this, that he advised the then-chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee of Ohio County, Carl Galbraith [Carl B. Galbraith]. He called him on the phone on Saturday from Washington, and he said, "Mr. Galbraith, I'm going to be in Wheeling tomorrow afternoon for this speaking engagement." He said, "There



is one man that I would like to see who will be there in the committee.” Mr. Galbraith asked him who and he told him me. You know, when a man respects you that much that he would like to have your friendship, regardless of my religion and my beliefs, there isn’t nothing in the world that I wouldn’t do for the man of that caliber. A

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man of that caliber is a man that will not tolerate any interference. He’s not a bigot but a man with a hand outstretched ready to greet you regardless of who you could be.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, would you describe your contact then with Senator Kennedy when he came in 1956 in behalf of Adlai Stevenson?

CHAPMAN: Yes. After he walked into the Virginia Theater, Bishop McConnell and myself.... He came off of the rostrum, and he says to me, he says, “Al, I wonder what is wrong that the turnout wasn’t any more than what it is.” I explained to him not to be worried about it due to the fact that many people didn’t go out to rallies or to hear political speeches here in Wheeling, but when they voted they voted the right way. This was no indication in any way that things would not go our way. I told him that, due to the fact that it being Sunday, it was very hard for people to come out on Sunday. He said he was very sorry that they had made this on a Sunday but the county chairman at that time had this set up for a Sunday reception for him to speak at the Virginia Theater. Therefore, we took him out to the Wheeling Park where we met close to two thousand people. He spoke at Wheeling Park that Sunday afternoon after he was done at the Virginia Theater.

We took him to the airport and he got his plane. I occasionally went to Washington, and I met the Senator in Washington. We corresponded back and forth until the year of 1958. The year of 1958 we had a dinner in the city of Wellsburg. Paul Butler [Paul M. Butler], the National Chairman, was the speaker at this dinner. At that time—this was in November of 1958—we went over to the home of the country chairman, John Chernenko [John G. Chernenko], who is now the United States Marshall, and Judge Ralph Pryor [Ralph E. Pryor]. We sat down together and Mr. Pryor said, “I would like to have the Senator at the next Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Dinner as the speaker in the year of 1959 in April. So,” he says, “what should we do?” I had told them to go ahead and sit down and write a letter to the Senator in Washington, advising him of this approaching dinner.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, where was this dinner to be held?

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CHAPMAN: In the city of Wellsburg.

YOUNG: The Franklin D. Roosevelt dinner.

CHAPMAN: Yes, a memorial dinner which is held every year, you see. So they

received the telegram back advising them that the itinerary for the Senator had been completely filled for the year of 1959, and he would not be able to come to West Virginia—only once—or would it be twice. The first speaking engagement he would have would be in Welch in May, and then he was leaving the country for a tour and a rest. Then he might come in the fall into West Virginia, but he would not be able to come to Wellsburg or to Wheeling.

In January of 1959, I had to appear before the Public Works Committee in the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. I notified the Senator that I was coming into Washington on January 27, 1959, and that I had to see him on very personal matters. I received a telephone call from his brother-in-law and a very good friend of mine, Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith], advising me that the Senator would see me on Saturday at 12 o'clock noon—in Washington on January 27, 1959. At that time I was sitting in the Public Works Office meeting trying to get through help for the people of West Virginia in the destituted mining communities. Robert McDonough [Robert P. McDonough] comes to the chambers, walks up to me and sits down at the table where I was sitting up in front by the chairman of the committee who was holding the hearings. He slipped a note to me that they were looking for me at the Senator's office at 12 o'clock. This was about a quarter to 12. I left and went down to see the Senator. The Senator wasn't there as yet. In the meantime, there was a telephone call that came in to me in Senator Kennedy's office from the White House asking if I was in the office. Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] told them, "Yes, Al Chapman is here. Who should we say is calling?" They said it was Jim Hagerty [James C. Hagerty] calling me. I went on the phone and talked to Jim Hagerty, who at the time was the Press Secretary for President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower], inviting me for breakfast Sunday morning at 9 o'clock at the White House with him and Mrs. Eisenhower [Maime Doud Eisenhower] who are very close friends of mine. Still, I'm a Democrat.

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YOUNG: Where had you known the Eisenhowers, Mr. Chapman?

CHAPMAN: I have known the Eisenhowers at official capacity through our company. Mr. Eisenhower and Mrs. Eisenhower are very, very close friends of our president, Mr. Louis Marx.

YOUNG: Oh, that's the Marx Toy Company.

CHAPMAN: That's right. I made their acquaintances through Mr. Marx, and at one time I heard a speech by Mr. Eisenhower many, many years ago in the West. He made a Democratic speech at a Democratic Convention. I've always thought he was a Democrat, but he wound up to be a Republican.

At this time, Mr. Kennedy walked in, and Ted Reardon says, "Senator, we had a call from the White House. They wanted to talk to Al." He says, "Well, good for Al." We went into his office. He says, "Al, you know, this is the first time anyone came to my office and the White House called him to talk to him, especially when they were Republicans in the office." I said, "Well, Senator, they're all my friends, but none of them tell me what I have to

do.” We had a discussion. I brought out to the Senator’s attention that in 1958, I and Walter Walzak, a young man running for a candidate for the House of Delegates from Ohio Country, advocated Jack as the winner in 1960 for president of the United States. I showed him the photographs that were taken out of the files of the *Wheeling News Register* in the year of 1958—signs 4 feet by 6 feet advocating the victory of Jack Kennedy as the president. This was started in the year of 1958. We had a long discussion. He says, “Al, I’m coming to Wheeling and to Wellsburg, West Virginia. I have to be in for a fundraising speaking engagement in Charleston, West Virginia. I will come to Wheeling, if you want me to, at 9 o’clock in the morning and stay with your folks in Wellsburg until about 3 o’clock in the afternoon and meet with all the people in that northern panhandle from both sides of the river.” I says, “Mr. President, that’s the smartest move you ever made.”

YOUNG:            You were talking with Senator Kennedy.

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CHAPMAN:        I was talking to Senator Kennedy at the time. We called ourselves by our first names, and it was a very friendly discussion. Everybody in agreement in this room at that time was very heartened by this suggestion. They felt that it would do the Senator Kennedy a world of good. And it did.

                      I want to say that when I came.... He called up Mr. Chernenko that Saturday afternoon and informed him that he was coming. The people were more than surprised. They were taken by surprise that he was coming. We had at the Wellsburg Elks Country Club more people than the club would hold; the people couldn’t all get to see the Senator. Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] made such a wonderful impression upon the women of this valley and took them by surprise of her personality of which she is marvelous. They couldn’t think of nothing else but Kennedy, Kennedy. Kennedy was the movement. I was more than pleased with the reception because the people that were at this meeting and this buffet luncheon, which numbered over seven hundred, the majority of them were Protestant and of Jewish faith.

                      When people travel a long distance to hear a man and then walk up to him and he greets them with a smile, everything on a friendly basis—there was no politics after the dinner was over and his speaking—they were just like equals as one another. That was the most surprising thing. From that time on, the groundwork was being laid here in the valley for the President. We knew that the ball couldn’t stop, but as it kept going it snowballed. It kept getting more snow and snow and snow, and it was one of the biggest snowballs that ever existed.

YOUNG:            Mr. Chapman, would you say something about your role in the groundwork in preparing the way for the Senator’s entrance into the primary?

CHAPMAN:        We, Johnny Chernenko and I.... As you know, I don’t have an automobile, and Johnny Chernenko has a car. I pay the gasoline. Johnny

was out of work at the time. He drove me on the weekends all over the state. We'd gone to Bluefield; we went to Welch; we went to War, West Virginia; we went to Beckley, we went to Logan where I have friends; we went to Grant Town in Marion County, Clarksburg in starting to lay groundwork and contacting the var-

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ious people that we knew had some influence with the people in the state, in their community, to get on the bandwagon for John Kennedy for president.

YOUNG: This was long before the official announcement of his candidacy.

CHAPMAN: That's right. This was in the year of 1959. We started this groundwork in February of 1959.

YOUNG: Were you working closely with Bob McDonough in this at the time?

CHAPMAN: No, we were not. At that time we didn't have the organization yet. After the dinner that was held at Welch, West Virginia...

YOUNG: This was when he spoke for Judge Christie [Sidney L. Christie] at Welch?

CHAPMAN: Yes, at the Court House.... No, at the school. They were raising money. They had a fundraising dinner up there.

YOUNG: Was it a political fund?

CHAPMAN: A political rally for raising money. Do you see?

YOUNG: Yes.

CHAPMAN: I think that was May of 1959. At that time he asked us to be sure and attend the meeting at the Hotel Daniel Boone in Charleston, West Virginia, on Sunday morning—which we did. Those attending the dinner from the northern panhandle were Judge Pryor from Wellsburg, Mr. Michael Gretchen [Michael G. Gretchen], a representative of the United Mine Workers from Windsor Heights, West Virginia, John Chernenko from Wellsburg, and myself from Wheeling were at this breakfast. Bruce Hoff [William Bruce Hoff] from Parkersburg, Bob McDonough from Parkersburg, and several others too numerous to mention. At that time we met to perfect the organization known as the Kennedy Committee in West Virginia. The President suggested

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the name of Charley Love [Charles M. Love, Jr.], Senator Charley Love of Charleston, for the state chairman. We were all in agreement because we all knew that Charley Love was a

hard worker, good organizer, a man of good character and good principles. That was the man that we needed in our organization. At that time a suggestion was made for a field man. I nominated Ralph Pryor, who at that time was the prosecuting attorney of Brooke County, for the field representative, as he was my choice for the campaign chairman, which he accepted as the campaign chairman, for the First Congressional District for John Kennedy for President. Therefore, I made that suggestion and Mr. Pryor stated that he had to refuse it due to the fact that him acting as a prosecuting attorney would not enable him to take that much time out from his duty. We then offered the matter to Bruce Hoff, a wonderful gentleman, well known throughout the state of West Virginia and many states in the United States, to accept the field work. We felt that with his ability he would be able to really build a wonderful organization. Mr. Hoff had to turn it down due to his private law practice and all of his commitments. Therefore, it was then suggested by Judge Pryor, "All, why not have Bob McDonough take the job as the field man and Charley Love as his assistant?" I seconded that motion Sunday morning that he be nominated for that position. That was the setting up of the organization for Kennedy for President in West Virginia.

YOUNG: Do you think the Senator in his own mind at this time had decided definitely that he would enter the primary?

CHAPMAN: No. He would enter the primary, but it was not decided at this time at this breakfast that he would enter and register in West Virginia. Later on in the year a meeting was held at Parkersburg. I was unable to attend this meeting. Ralph Pryor from Wellsburg and Johnny Chernenko from Wellsburg went to this meeting. They represented me at this meeting, that I was in favor that the President should file in West Virginia as a candidate for president of the United States. Many of them were opposed to him at this meeting.

[BEGIN TAPE 2]

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, I think we were talking at the end of

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the last reel about the early decision of Senator Kennedy to enter the West Virginia primary. You mentioned that you were working for his candidacy even before the official decision was announced.

CHAPMAN: The Senator came to Parkersburg. There was a meeting held. Judge Pryor, John Chernenko and myself were to be at this meeting. This meeting was held in order to decide if the President was to file in the state of West Virginia on the ballot. Do you see?

YOUNG: Yes, sir.

CHAPMAN: Before Judge Pryor left for Parkersburg, I informed him most definitely to

tell the Senator if he did not want to sign up and run in West Virginia that I knew of enough friends. We would raise the thousand dollars and file his name in West Virginia in order to prove to the people of the United States that West Virginia only had 2.5 Catholic voters of the Democrats in West Virginia and 3.0 Catholic Republican votes, that we would still get the nomination of the state of West Virginia; the choice would be Jack Kennedy in the primary election for the president over any Protestant.

YOUNG: Would you describe something then of the final decision by the Senator to enter this race?

CHAPMAN: Judge Pryor attended this meeting. When it came down to everyone to express themselves, Judge Pryor said that he was speaking for himself and myself. We were in favor that he enter his name on the primary ballot as a candidate for president of the United States. Do you see?

YOUNG: Yes.

CHAPMAN: Alright. The balance of people attending this meeting—I don't know just who they all were because it's slipped my mind—were not in favor of the President entering the primary campaign.

YOUNG: Their feeling was that the Catholic vote might finish

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them.

CHAPMAN: Might finish...

YOUNG: The anti-Catholic vote, I meant to say.

CHPAMAN: The anti-Catholic vote might finish him. I know that Bob McDonough was opposed to it. His own brother, Bob, was opposed to him entering in West Virginia.

YOUNG: That would be the Attorney General...

CHAPMAN: Yes, at that time.... No, he was running his campaign at that time, but he was the Attorney General. The President decided that he would enter his name. He stated to them that he was going to take his chance on West Virginia and enter his name on the primary ballot in 1960. When I got word of that by phone from Judge Pryor, I says, "Thank God. The man has got courage. He's got to go places. He's going to win."

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, would you then go into a description of your activities prior

to the May primary in 1960; the role that you played and your contacts with Senator Kennedy in that period?

CHAPMAN: The only role that I played was behind the scenes. I helped set up the organizations in the First Congressional District and made tours all over the state where there was help needed. I had, at my own expense, twenty-five thousand statues of President Kennedy made and distributed them not only in West Virginia. I distributed them in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

YOUNG: Did you make these at the factory in Moundsville?

CHAPMAN: We made these at our factory in Glen Dale.

YOUNG: Glen Dale rather than Moundsville.

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CHAPMAN: I received them at cost. Each one cost me 2 cents a piece to make my contribution to the cause to help elect him president of the United States.

YOUNG: Would you say something about the organization which you did set up in the First Congressional District?

CHAPMAN: The organization we set up in the First Congressional District... We set up the first county organization in Ohio County and had John Kamlowksy [John H. Kamlowksy], a young practicing attorney who was also assistant county prosecuting attorney at that time, to run the campaign in Ohio County. He at that time selected Mr. Ed Culley [Edward A. Culley] to be his assistant to get the work laid. When we did all of this and accomplished this wonderful success of generating an organization as spontaneous amongst the people as we had here, we then branched out to Marshall, Wetzel, Tyler, Marion—we took the whole First Congressional District. We had a county machine in each county functioning. We had an organization functioning in each city or village.

YOUNG: Were these county Kennedy organizations separate from the regular Democratic organizations?

CHAPMAN: Every one was separate. There was no connection with the county organization. In many counties we have run up against people very much against Kennedy. We had it here in our own Ohio County—very much opposed. We were smeared, we were laughed at, we were ridiculed that we didn't know what we were doing.

YOUNG: What was the basis of the ridicule and the smearing? What were the charges leveled against you most frequently?

CHAPMAN: That he was Catholic, and Catholics didn't have a chance; that I ought to have been ashamed of myself for pushing a Catholic for a high office of president. To me religion didn't designate anything because the Pilgrims came here from Europe, from England, to get away from the religious persecution.

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YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, a minute ago while I was changing the tape you mentioned that you yourself were personally attacked by this. Would you describe that that you were telling me?

CHAPMAN: I was. Yes. The wife had received phone calls nearly every day in the week for the whole entire year of 1959 and 1960. Even after I came back from the Convention, I was attacked very brutally. She would receive telephone calls telling her to look out the window, that two men in their white coats were coming to get me with a strait jacket. She said, "What are you talking about?" "Well," he says, "he's a nut. He's an idiot. He belongs in a nut house because he's supporting Jack Kennedy."

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, did you ever know who made these phone calls?

CHAPMAN: It was very hard to trace the calls. Very hard.

YOUNG: Did you have any educated guesses? I don't mean names of people, but the general sources of this kind of feeling?

CHAPMAN: Yes, I could say who I think was doing it, but it's no use bringing this up. I don't think the President would want us to bring this out now.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, in addition to this unofficial attack on you for your support of a Catholic candidate, did the churches or clergy in the First Congressional District take any stand officially? Were there sermons or anything?

CHAPMAN: Not that I know of. But I know that the various Methodist churches and the Baptist churches did not advocate one way or the other how the people should vote. That I can say because in my own church, which is one of the oldest Methodist churches in Ohio County—the North Street Methodist Church of which I am on the official board and one of the stewards—the people were very nice to me through

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the entire time that I was supporting the President. Everyone in our church was very glad to get a statuette in the President when it was handed to them. We got some of them to work for us in the primary election of 1960 in May to plug for Jack Kennedy. We had signs made



saying that they were Methodists, and they were supporting Jack Kennedy for president. “Won’t you go along with us?”

YOUNG: Where did you display the sign?

CHAPMAN: On the sides of the cars. On many occasions I have received literature anti-Catholic. This letter was mailed to me on August 10, 1960, from Moundsville, West Virginia. We have an idea who sent this, but we couldn’t pinpoint it.

YOUNG: What is the title of the pamphlet right there that you are holding?

CHAPMAN: One is “Maria Monk” (anti-Catholic). “Abraham Lincoln Assassination Announced Twelve Hours Before It Took Place.” “Popery, the Devil Masterpiece: It is Anti-Christ and Paganism, the Catholic Religion.”

YOUNG: These were sent to you anonymously in the mail.

CHAPMAN: Sent to me anonymously. “Romanism Exposed.” There was no return address, only that it came from Moundsville, West Virginia. Here it is; you can see it. After I returned from the Convention in 1960, the *Wheeling Intelligencer* ran a full-page picture of me returning home, and the reception we received after landing from the jet at the Pittsburgh Airport. The people of the First Congressional District had three bands to meet us, the delegates, and were happy with the choice of Kennedy and Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson].

YOUNG: This is your return from the Democratic National Convention?

CHAPMAN: That’s right. These pictures were cut out from the newspaper and sent to me: that I was a traitor to the American government; that I left the

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United States for Italy—which had nothing to do with our president because he was a Catholic. That shouldn’t have had anything to do with it.

YOUNG: You mean this was vengeful mail that was sent to you after you came back?

CHAPMAN: That’s right.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, you have given a pretty thorough rundown here. Is there anything more about the primary that you would like to put in the record

before we move onto the general election—any more activities of your organization? This one question of course always comes to mind: what about the Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] opposition in Ohio County? Was it very strong?

CHAPMAN: Hubert Humphrey is a very good friend of mine. I know his relatives in the southern part of Charleston, West Virginia. I have to say this. I liked Hubert, but I couldn't be for Hubert. He didn't have what it took, in my estimation, to be a president.

YOUNG: Did he conduct an active campaign in this district at all?

CHAPMAN: He did. He conducted a very vigorous and hard-fought campaign. I'll have to admit this, that he had us shaking for awhile as we began to lag a little. After we realized that we better get a move on us, we started working harder and harder in order to carry this district, which we did.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, if you were to summarize, what did you think were the chief reasons for Senator Kennedy's victory in the First District?

CHAPMAN: He was forward; he was honest in every statement that he made; he appealed to the people the same as Woodrow Wilson appealed to the people in 1912.

YOUNG: Did there seem to be any difference between the two

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senators? Did you notice any difference in platform? Or was it largely a question of personalities?

CHAPMAN: Between Humphrey?

YOUNG: Yes, sir. Between Humphrey and Kennedy.

CHAPMAN: Yes. Between Humphrey and President Kennedy there is as much as there is as between day and night. I'm not saying that Humphrey isn't a great man. He's a very brilliant senator, but to my estimation he was lacking considerable amount of knowledge that it would take to be a president. I couldn't see him nohow. I explained to him why I couldn't be for him. He came to my home here when he was in Wheeling, and I told him, "Senator, I'll be for you if you carry the state over our candidate. I'll be for you if you win. But," I said, "I can't understand how you can win due to the fact that the majority of people in my estimation are going to be for Jack Kennedy because he has something. He has that appeal to the people."

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, you've indicated that Senator Kennedy had political appeal.

Would you say that the voters distinguished between the two candidates in terms of any kind of policy? Or because they were both Democrats did there seem to be little difference?

CHAPMAN: No. The people here in Ohio County seemed to think that if they would elect Jack Kennedy and what Jack Kennedy was advocating, it was the thing that they wanted. They wanted a man to bring what he was going to do for America, for the people. His platform, his policies, what he was advocating, was all different from what Humphrey was advocating.

YOUNG: Can you think of anything that Senator Kennedy advocated that had particular appeal in this part of West Virginia? We don't think of this section as being part of the coalfield Appalachia. Is there anything in the Kennedy program that was directed to you?

CHAPMAN: To eliminate poverty.

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YOUNG: The poverty appeal had some effect here then?

CHAPMAN: That's right. That's right because at that time the mills were moving out. Wheeling Steel had moved into the state of Ohio due to taxation. The people here were left with their homes and no employment. The factories were shutting down. The mines weren't operating steadily. Therefore he came with an appeal that he would try to help the people in the state of West Virginia, and wherever it was necessary in the United States.

YOUNG: Well, then you think that poverty did have an appeal to them as a political issue?

CHAPMAN: That's right. Yes.

YOUNG: Were there any other factors that you might want to add in terms of the primary victory?

CHAPMAN: No. I think everything was covered because it would be too numerous to mention. All I can say is that it was beyond our human expectation in the primary when we found that he carried such a tremendous vote in the primary of May 1960, when he got the state vote.

YOUNG: You, then, were somewhat surprised by the size of the Kennedy victory?

CHAPMAN: I was because I figured that he would run by.... I advocated that he would run by half that amount. It really surprised me.

YOUNG: You still felt that he would be victorious?

CHAPMAN: I still felt at that time he was victorious; that he would win.

YOUNG: But it would be a narrower margin.

CHAPMAN: It would be a more narrow margin than what it was.

YOUNG: Okay, Mr. Chapman. Let's move on then to the

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period between the primary and the general election. What did you do in that period with respect to the candidacy?

CHAPMAN: At that time after the primary election, we set band and found where our weakest spots were to remedy them. Then we got busy on telephones and started contacting people throughout the different parts of the state to start getting organized and starting up workshops where we could benefit by getting the people more educated in what we were heading for in the general election in the fall so when the general election would roll around, we would be ready for it.

YOUNG: What were some of the weak spots?

CHAPMAN: In quite a few sections in the state. At the general election, they were all beginning to fall in, and fall in very nicely, as we made the proper contacts with the people in these various communities to go along with us. As you know, in many communities where the leaders were in charge of a campaign, the people were very critical of them. Do you understand?

YOUNG: You mean the professional politicians in some areas were criticized.

CHAPMAN: Yes, that's right. The people did not like them from past experience. That is what I think hurt Jack, in many cases, in the primary—why he didn't do better, you know, in some of the precincts in the primary. It was due to the people that jumped on the bandwagon and wanted to be in on the show. After we found these out and we started the movement going, had them go back and take a back seat, and let someone else get into the front, it brought the people in.

YOUNG: You mean you think he was hurt a little in the primary by the support of some of these people if the professional organization.

CHAPMAN: That's right. People that the people did not cater

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to or did not like.

YOUNG: Going then into the period after the primary, did religion continue to be an issue between May and November? Did your wife still get the...

CHAPMAN: No. Continuously we received telephone calls and letters that were written in longhand. Some were mailed from Charleston. I received one that was mailed from Beckley. A couple of them came from—let's see....

YOUNG: This was even up until the general election?

CHAPMAN: General election.

YOUNG: How did you feel about the possibility of the Senator carrying the state in the fall?

CHAPMAN: After the Convention, I knew that the delegates came back home, and every delegate was enthused. They were going out there to help; they worked harder; they built, by precincts, committees to get out from house to house to get the vote.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, before we started the interview, you mentioned that you did a great deal of floor work as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

CHAPMAN: That's right.

YOUNG: Would you describe some of that, please?

CHAPMAN: I worked amongst the delegates in the state of Wisconsin as that is my home state. I was born and raised until I was twelve years old in the state of Wisconsin—in the central part in Stevens Point. My home county of Portage went first time in the history of the state for any Democratic president in the primary.

YOUNG: Did you work any other delegations?

CHAPMAN: Yes, I worked amongst the Pennsylvania; I worked with

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North Carolina; I worked with Kentucky. I got a kick at the Kentucky delegation where Hap Chandler [Albert B. Chandler] told me in Los Angeles, he says, "Al, you stop catering to our ladies here in Kentucky because you can't get

any votes for your boy, Jack.” But I got them. I got seven votes. When the first ballot was called and Kentucky was called—the state of Kentucky was called on the first ballot in 1960 in California—they said, “seven votes for John Kennedy.”

YOUNG: How many votes in all of these delegations do you feel responsible for changing? You mentioned seven in Kentucky. Could you make a quick guess as to the total number?

CHAPMAN: I would say that the delegates I contacted, who were all my friends—many of them were attending conventions since 1944—was 139 delegates I knew that were for John Kennedy unless they were contacted and interviewed and through old time friendship would have gone for Johnson for president.

YOUNG: What were your chief arguments in working for Kennedy among your old friends at the Convention?

CHAPMAN: I tried to explain to them to let the religious issue be a dead issue but to look to the future on what things could be accomplished.

YOUNG: Did you find that many of them had previous thoughts that religion would be an issue?

CHAPMAN: That’s right. There were quite a good many of them that were against that.

YOUNG: How were you able to convince them that you thought religion wouldn’t hurt the President’s chances?

CHAPMAN: I told them, I said, “I’ve been your friend for many years.” I says, “I’m a Protestant. I’m still for a Catholic. Now if you’re going to vote against Jack, then you’ll be against me.”

YOUNG: Do you have any other stories, Mr. Chapman, about

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the Convention that would be interesting? Any contact with the candidate himself?

CHAPMAN: Well, the candidate was going to speak to the West Virginia delegates on Thursday, the day after the nomination at the Convention Hall. Due to him writing up his acceptance speech, they were not able to have the interview with him. But his brother Bob, who later became Attorney General, came and expressed deep appreciation to all the delegates in West Virginia for their support to his brother, John Kennedy.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, what contacts did you have with the Senator after he became President? Were there any contacts or meetings with him later?

CHAPMAN: Oh, yes. There was very many meetings that we had together—only lasting for five or six minutes. I knew he was a busy man, and I stayed away. Most of my contacts with him was by letter or phone.

YOUNG: Could you mention any of the issues or any matters of business that you had to get in touch with him about?

CHAPMAN: Yes. One of them was that we would like to have a hand in selection.... Would that be proper?

YOUNG: Yes, certainly.

CHAPMAN: In selecting different officers. I brought this subject up that we would like to have John Chernenko of Wellsburg for United States Marshall, John Kamlowky of Wheeling, West Virginia, to be Assistant United States District Attorney for the Northern District. That is all that we asked for. In the meantime, we did not press him until we were informed that the so-called political leaders here in the district were grooming certain gentleman for the office. These men were enemies—or weren't friends—of the President, did not turn a hand to help him. They actually worked against him and ridiculed him. Therefore, I felt that the men that worked hard, were capable, should be given the chance and op-

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portunity of holding office.

We took it up with him, and he had the senators make the recommendation, which they did. John Chernenko was appointed United States Marshall for the Northern District. John Kamlowky was appointed assistant United States Attorney; Judge Pryor and I were in favor of Bob Maxwell [Robert E. Maxwell] from Elkins for United States District Attorney—which was the choice of Senator Jennings Randolph—who was a very brilliant young man. He was appointed United States District Attorney. He resigned after serving, I believe, two years as United States District Attorney. John Kamlowky was then appointed by President Johnson as the United States District Attorney for the Northern District of West Virginia which he is now holding.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, did you have any contact with the President on matters of policy dealing with the War on Poverty? Any arrangements of that kind?

CHAPMAN: No, I did not. The only suggestions that were ever made when he started making the program as soon as he became president. I expressed all my views to my good and dear and personal friend Larry...

YOUNG: O'Brien?

CHAPMAN: No.

YOUNG: It wasn't O'Brien.

CHAPMAN: In Bluefield.... Tierney.... Yes, Larry Tierney [Laurence E. Tierney, Jr.]. He carried my views to the President, as he used to go to Washington at least once a week and spend several days which I could not do due to the fact that I had to be here at the point.

YOUNG: Let's move on then, Mr. Chapman, to kind of a summary of the Kennedy years. Do you think had the President been the candidate in 1964, he would have won by an even greater margin in West Virginia and in the First Congressional District?

CHAPMAN: If he would have lived he, in my estimation, would

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have carried every state in the Union. It would have been the complete fifty states that he would have carried. I advocated forty-two states for President Johnson in 1964. This is on record with the *Wheeling News Register* that he would carry forty-two states. I was wrong; he carried more.

YOUNG: What do you think the people in your congressional district liked best about President Kennedy as president? Which of the Kennedy programs seemed to be the most popular? What I have in my mind....

[BEGIN TAPE 3]

Mr. Chapman, we've worked out way through the primary and the general election and were talking about President Kennedy's possible victory in 1964 had it not been for the tragedy of Dallas. Can you remember, or could you suggest, any specific items that particularly pleased the voters of the First District in West Virginia, or on the other hand, any indications or dissatisfaction with any of the President's programs—either way?

CHAPMAN: The people began to realize that they had a man who could foresee things way ahead of anyone else that's ever been in office due to the fact he advocated, just before the tragedy, the reduction in income tax for the working people.

YOUNG: Do you think that was important in this district?

CHAPMAN: That was important in this district, very much so. Because if you look at it



from the standpoint of employment in this district, every dollar that the people can save helps them to clothe their children a little better, buy them things they couldn't otherwise get for them. That program has done a great deal.

Another program that he advocated was the medical care which has been fought by the American Medical Association. He had a great deal of opposition to this. Locally, I know that the doctors were all against it as I have many doctor friends. But the people were for it, and the people began to realize that he was a man that they needed in their twilight years. I've had many school teachers who have retired explain to me that, "Mr. Chapman, we've never voted on a Democrat

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ticket in our lives, but if John Kennedy ever comes up for president again, we're going to have to vote for him because that man does not designate any group or faction. He designates them all. And you know, with what we receive, we feel that he's on the right road with the medical care bill."

YOUNG: In addition to tax reduction and Medicare, can you think of anything else?

CHAPMAN: Employment for every man in the country. I must say this: from the time that Jack Kennedy became president, there was a few people that advocated we were going to have inflation. We were going to have a recession. We were going to have every doggone thing imaginable. But I want to state this: I have been employed as an executive of Louis Marx and Company coming from the city of Chicago. I left the General Electric Corporation to come here thirty-one years ago. I must say that this is the first time in thirty-one years that our factory—after Jack Kennedy became president in 1961—operated all year through without shutting down for any let up of seasonal production. With the tax reduction that he had started before the tragedy in Dallas, which was carried out by President Johnson, I must say that the boom of prosperity in America is on its way. And it was through his foresight for him to get surrounded with men of the caliber that he did in his Administration to keep him posted and to show him the best way to keep the country on the move. We are now working twenty-four hours a day in our plant. We employ right now seven hundred people which we never did before. Before John Kennedy went in office we only had a maintenance crew of fifteen men for the month of January and February, and we'd start up in March. Now we have seven hundred.

YOUNG: What, largely, does your plant manufacture, Mr. Chapman?

CHAPMAN: We manufacture plastic and steel toys around approximately twelve hundred different varieties of toys.

YOUNG: Mr. Chapman, with your continued interest in politics would you describe your role and your observations in the 1962 congressional race between Congressman

Bailey [Cleveland M. Bailey] and Congressman Moore [Arch Alfred Moore], and President Kennedy's appearance at the Wheeling Island Stadium.

CHAPMAN: I was called into Washington and asked to a meeting which I attended at Bailey's office when he was congressman of the Second District. I was asked if I could take and organize the entire district into committees in each county in the district. I took it upon myself that I would take the old First Congressional District and organize it as I did not know too many leaders or people of influence in the other six counties in the old Second District.

YOUNG: I would like to inject for the record, Mr. Chapman, something which we both know. Because of congressional reapportionment, West Virginia lost one congressman. As a result, we have the unusual situation of two incumbent congressmen running against each other, Congressman Bailey and Congressman Moore.

CHAPMAN: That's right. Therefore, I came back, and I set up with organization with the help of Judge Pryor in the south. As you well know, Judge Pryor and I have always worked very, very closely together. Due to the fact that it was getting too large for us to contribute our time to it, we had Congressman Bailey secure the services of Jack Whiting from the State Executive Committee from Charleston to be the campaign manager for the First Congressional District. Still and all, we had an overall committee for the First Congressional District of outstanding businessman, industrialists, labor leaders, and people of rank and file who served on this committee, which was the general campaign committee, to function as one group, as a united unit. Due to the fact that Cleveland Bailey in my own mind was one of the greatest congressmen that the state of West Virginia ever sent to the Congress.... He has contributed many laws on the statue books of the Congress benefiting the younger generations and the children coming up following this generation into the world for the betterment of education.

YOUNG: Can you mention then how President Kennedy became involved in the campaign?

CHAPMAN: We decided that it would be a good idea if we could get President Kennedy to pay a visit to West Virginia in order to meet with the people that put him in office, that helped carry the state for him. And they wanted to see him—which they did. Many people have stood in the rain, the down pouring rain, along the road from the airport. Even the nurses at the North Wheeling Hospital stood in their uniforms soaking wet when the President came by. They wanted to shake hands with him. That I've never seen ever happen to any other president that ever came to Wheeling, even Harry Truman didn't get that kind of reception. When he arrived at the stadium, the people

were setting there in a down pouring rain. That is a tribute to a man to come here and have the people stand and sit in the down pouring rain to hear a president of the United States speak on an issue. We felt that him coming here might be of some help to our man, Cleve Bailey, who was running for election in the First Congressional District. But I must say this much, the people themselves loved Kennedy. The vote against Bailey was not against the President. Let us get that on the record. That was not against the President because there was propaganda growing that Cleve Bailey was getting old, and he was too old to serve. They felt that he might not be able to serve out his term of office. That propaganda got spread by the Republican people and by the Republican politicians: "Why vote for a man that is nearly dead on his feet? Then you will be without a representation in Congress."

YOUNG:               So that the President's personal popularity in any sense couldn't wear off in this case on the candidate.

CHAPMAN:           That's right. No, sir, the President's popularity grew bigger and bigger day by day, as the days went by.

YOUNG:               You did notice—I think you said earlier—a decline in the anti-Catholic feeling the longer the President was in office.

CHAPMAN:           That's right. The anti-Catholic feeling in my estimation has completely disappeared in America—completely. I know that. I only look forward

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to now this one thing. I will promise you that I only hope and pray that Almighty Lord will bless me with my health that I can live to 1968, and we will see Edward "Ted" Kennedy the new nominee for the president of the United States. To us people, the majority of the people in the state of West Virginia who have met Ted personally, who have personal contact with him, that had it in Wisconsin, that had it in Minnesota, had it in Ohio.... He will not have trouble in carrying the delegation due to the fact that he is next in line for his brother, Jack.

YOUNG:               Mr. Chapman, as we bring this interview to a close, do you have any final memories or anecdotes or anything you care to say about your contact and your experiences with the late President?

CHAPMAN:           Yes, I had very personal contacts with various presidents. For instance, one of my closest president friends that I've had that I went to Washington—I had to be in Washington to see him every time I went there—and that was Harry Truman. The only thing I can say that I've lost a friend like many millions of people in America that have lost a friend that was dear to them. I only can say this much: May God rest his soul because he was a godsend, a prophet the same as our Lord sent Christ upon the earth to save the people.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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