

J. Lindsay Almond Oral History Interview – JFK #1, 2/7/1968
Administrative Information

Creator: J. Lindsay Almond
Interviewer: Larry J. Hackman
Date of Interview: February 7, 1968
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.
Length: 25 pp.

Access
Open.

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed December 1969, copyright of these materials has been assigned to United States Government.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Biographical Note

Almond, governor of Virginia from 1958 to 1962 and judge on the United States Court of Customs and Patent Appeals from 1962 to 1986, talks about how the Southern governors felt towards John Kennedy. He then begins to talk about Virginia politics of 1959 and 1960. Almond then moves on to discuss his role in how Senator Johnson’s candidacy developed. Almond discusses Senator Kennedy’s visit to the Virginia delegation and how this visit came about. Towards the end of the interview Almond discusses Senator Kennedy’s and Robert Kennedy’s policy on civil rights especially in Virginia. He concludes the interview by discussing the reaction to the administration’s proceedings in 1961 with regards to civil rights.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have

occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

J. Lindsay Almond, recorded interview by Larry J. Hackman, February 7, 1968, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By J. Lindsay Almond, Jr.

to the

John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.
3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.
4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

Signed

J. Lindsay Almond, Jr.

Date

December 3, 1969

Accepted

James B. Rhodes
Archivist of the United States

Date

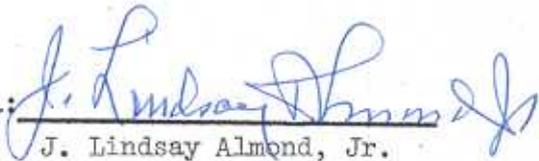
Dec. 5, 1969

GSA JUNE 67 7016

Understanding Regarding the Use of the
Oral History Interview Conducted by the
John F. Kennedy Library
with J. Lindsay Almond, Jr.

1. The interview transcript may be made available, on an unrestricted basis, to anyone applying to use the resources of the John F. Kennedy Library. (This includes journalists and students as well as professional historians, political scientists and other scholars.)
2. Copies of the interview transcript (or portions thereof) may be made and given, upon request, to all researchers.
3. Copies of the interview transcript may not be deposited for research use in other institutions, such as university libraries, public libraries and other presidential libraries, without my written permission.
4. The interview transcript may not be published (i.e. reproduced or printed for sale to the general public) in whole or in substantial part without my written permission until 25 years from the date of the interview.
5. Researchers may publish brief quotations from the interview transcript (but not the tape) and may paraphrase or cite the text without my permission.

Signed:


J. Lindsay Almond, Jr.

Date:

April 6 - 1971

J. LINDSAY ALMOND

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	First impression of John F. Kennedy
2	Selection of a vice presidential candidate
4	Attitude of Southern governors towards Senator Kennedy
4	Segregation
6	Los Angeles convention
6	Kennedy's Catholicism
7	Kennedy's Virginia campaign
8	Appalachian project
10	1960 National Governors Conference
11	Democratic National Convention
13	Development of the civil rights plank in the platform
18	The Southern vote
19	1960 Southern Governors Conference
19	Kennedy-Nixon debate
21	The Nixon campaign
23	Civil rights

Oral History Interview

With

J. LINDSAY ALMOND

February 7, 1968
Washington, DC

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: Judge Almond, why don't you just start off by talking about when you first met John Kennedy, if you knew him before the--let's say 1960--and what your relationship was.

ALMOND: I first met the late President Kennedy when I was a member of the Seventy-ninth Congress. He came to that Congress sometime during the session, I think as a result of a special election. I had very little contact with him until he'd been there same time. On several occasions I conferred with him, relative to pending legislation. From the very outset I was very much impressed with him. At that time he was not a well man, and I think he had some very serious physical difficulties after that. But I remember distinctly, we were discussing some legislation which he and I didn't agree on, and I was struck by his affability, the conciseness of his grasp of things; he'd get at the essence of things. I remember after I'd had several conferences with him and got to know him reasonably well, that I said to my wife--we had an apartment here then--I said, "There's a young man who bears watching." I said, "He is a man of splendid ability and I think he's going to make a great record in the public service." Of course, I didn't think of him ever being President. I thought that probably his vision was on congressional service.

Then I left Congress in 1948 and I had no more direct contacts with him until the presidential campaign was approaching, that is, when he was campaigning in various states as a test of his strength. I ran into him somewhere during the campaign just accidentally and just had a few words with him. I'd admired him greatly and, by virtue of my position as Governor of Virginia, I was the chairman of the Virginia delegation to the Los Angeles Convention. That delegation, as a result of the insistence and influence of Harry Byrd [Harold F. Byrd], the late Senator Byrd, was instructed for Senator Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. I did not have strength enough in the Virginia convention to get an instruction for Senator Kennedy, which I would have preferred.

HACKMAN: You mean back in the state convention or what?

ALMOND: Yes, back in the state convention, which I would preferred. But I went to the Los Angeles Convention, chairman of a delegation instructed for Senator Johnson, and, of course, dutifully, I carried out those instructions because I was bound by them. But before the actual nomination came up in the Los Angeles Convention, I had a few minutes' conference with Senator Kennedy. And I let him know, as I think he already knew, that at heart I was for him but he would expect me to abide by the instructions which bound my state delegation, which he understood. So the Virginia delegation was instructed for Senator Johnson whom I had known in Congress and had a lot of respect for. However, I was most strongly wedded to the idea that Senator Kennedy would have made the best candidate. And I think at that time, sizing up the two men, whom I had great respect for, prospects were in favor of Kennedy for making a stranger and better president. So while I had a great respect and admiration for both men, I was delighted to see Senator Kennedy get the nomination. Then too, I shall always remember his kindness in asking me, among others, to sit with him when the matter of the selection of a vice presidential candidate was being considered after Senator Kennedy had been nominated. And I could name many of the gentlemen in that room.

I remember so well that I listened and I didn't say much. And finally there at the end of it, he turned to me and said, "Governor, you haven't said anything and what are your views?" So I was very frank with him and told him that the primary

[-2-]

object was to win that election, that my every effort should be dedicated to that, and that I felt that Senator Johnson would bring great strength to the ticket, especially in the South. I remember saying to him that, "I believe that this matter might be so close that it would well swing on Texas and with Lyndon Johnson on the ticket I'm sure you can carry Texas." Someone said, "What about Virginia?" And I said, Well, I think he can carry Virginia. I know he can if Senator Byrd will come out for him." But I said, "Regardless of what Senator Byrd does, I'm for him and I'm going to do everything I can for him." So after that session we went into another room at his headquarters and somebody asked me to go through a certain door, which I did, and he was in there alone. He said, "I want you to know that I appreciate very much your frankness." And I said, "Senator, the Virginia delegation knows that I'm in conference with you, and they're going to expect some statement from me when I

get back. What can I say to them?" And he said, "Well, you can say we had a very nice conference." And that is as much got from him and all I could report back. But I felt when I left there that Johnson would probably be his selection.

HACKMAN: Speaking of that same meeting, I've heard that, I think it was Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams] from Michigan showed up at that meeting by mistake or something. Can you remember anything about that? What happened when he showed up in what was supposedly a conference with Southern governors?

ALMOND: Well, I remember when Soapy came in. Soapy and I didn't always agree on matters political, but I had a lot of respect for him; I admired him very much. I remember when Soapy came into the room. He kind of bulged in of course, knowing Soapy, that wasn't unusual, but I don't think he was intending to crash it or anything. But he did hang around. It was generally considered that Soapy had hoped that vice presidential lightning would strike him. And he was very much interested in it. I think Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] was interested in it, and several others. Without any reflection on Soapy Williams--it somewhat dampened the conference. I think he stayed there till it was over.

[-3-]

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything particularly about the attitude of some of the other Southern governors toward Senator Kennedy at that point?

ALMOND: Well, I remember Governor Hodges [Luther H. Hodges] of North Carolina and he was very ardently for Senator Kennedy. Governor Ernest Vandiver [S. Ernest Vandiver, Jr.] of Georgia was there, he was for Senator Kennedy. That's about all I can remember. There was nothing there but warmth. All the people there were very, very warm towards him. Of course, he had the nomination and those of us who were Democrats, had we not been for him in the first instance, would have been immediately committed to him. But, at heart, was for him from the very beginning.

HACKMAN: Maybe in light of this you can go back and talk a little bit about Virginia politics in '59 and '60. There was a lot of talk during this whole period about your moving away from the massive resistance policy, or what people labeled that. How did this affect Virginia politics in this period, as far as your relationship with Senator Byrd and the whole full operation of the thing?

ALMONDS: Well, before I ran for governor, I had been attorney general of Virginia for approximately ten years. And, with associates, I handled and argued all of those school cases, all the segregation cases, in the lower federal courts, district courts, Circuit Court of Appeals and Supreme Court of the United States. And I did everything I could as a lawyer—honorably, I trust--to get the Supreme Court to adhere to the separate but equal doctrine which had been announced in 1898, I believe, in the case of

Plessy against Ferguson. I believed that was sound, the Plessey decision. And I fought with everything I had, and lost.

The decision caused very much unrest in Virginia. People were upset about it. And I led the fight as far as I could as attorney general to try to preserve the separate school system in Virginia, even after the Supreme Court's decision. Mine was not a spirit of defiance. I was trying to find some legal avenue of accommodation, knowing full well as a lawyer that I was in a desperate situation to do so. So that

[-4-]

became an issue in the gubernatorial campaign when I ran for governor. Now my Republican opponent, Ted Dalton, now Judge Ted Dalton, a very fine friend of mine, a very able man, well qualified to be governor--a-there ways not too much divergence in our views. But I think I was a more ardent and outspoken segregationist than Senator Dalton was and had that advantage with the people.

When I came in as Governor of Virginia I had been saddled with state statutes which had been enacted during the administration of my predecessor, Governor Stanley [Thomas B. Stanley]. I, as attorney general, had advised him that those laws would not stand up under attack in the federal courts. But notwithstanding that, the legislature, at the behest of the governor, enacted them. As governor, I was under an obligation to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the constitution of Virginia, and the laws of the United States and the laws of Virginia. I had two inconsistencies there. I'd taken an oath to uphold both of them. So having to make a choice, I decided I'd do all I could to uphold the laws of my state. And I did.

Then the crash came. My own supreme court knocked those laws out. As a lawyer I knew all the time that no governor or no public official could defy the law of the panel. I knew from past decisions of the states, that a governor who acted beyond law was acting as an individual and not as a governor, and he was subject to being restrained by law, by injunction, and if necessary by contempt process. I then tried my best to reconcile those views, which were honest and legally sound as things had transpired, with Senator Byrd's thinking. I had a conference with him in Washington; I sought conferences with him elsewhere. I could not get him to reason. He just said, "We can't do it. We've got to stand our ground no matter what comes and we cannot have any integration in Virginia." And I finally said to him, "Well, Senator, I have gone to the end of the road. I have done everything I can with the exception of violating the federal law. I can't do that as governor." So from that conference our relations became more or less strained. Then sometime after that I decided the only thing to do was to call the General Assembly of Virginia

[-5-]

in extra session and submit my program to them, one of accommodation to the law to ameliorate the effects and shock of it as much as possible, but at the same time try to build it on a legal basis, a sound legal foundation. And then I made an address before the General Assembly in Virginia outlining my views. And the roof fell in as I knew it would. And from

that time on, I regret to say, because I respected him very much, the relationship between Senator Byrd and myself was very cool.

That subsisted when I went to the Los Angeles convention as chairman of the Virginia delegation. I remember conferring with Senator Kennedy after the nomination at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. He came down to call on Senator Lehman [Herbert H. Lehman] of New York. He called me and said he was going to be there and he would like to see me. And, of course, I was delighted and I had a talk with him. And told him then, I said, "Now you have the nomination. I feel that you're going to be elected. I do feel you have a desperate and a very hard fight." And I remember telling him about the issue of Catholicism that was raised in the campaign between Al Smith [Alfred E. Smith] and President Hoover [Herbert C. Hoover]. I was a much younger man then, a young lawyer in Roanoke, and I campaigned actively for Governor Smith. I just could not allow my judgment to be influenced by what a man's religion was. I'm not a Catholic, but I respected Governor Smith's religion as I respect the religion of every person. So I led that fight in my part of the state as a young man, in the western part of the state. Of course, we took an awful licking. But I remember, getting back to it, telling Senator Kennedy that would be a phase that would cause some trouble in Virginia and in the South. And it was my hope that he'd meet the issue head on. And I'm sure that it will be recalled that during that campaign the senator as the nominee for the presidency of the United States met with a ministerial association in one of the Texas cities.

HACKMAN: Houston.

[-6-]

ALMOND: Houston. It was a masterful performance. I listened to it, saw it on television and listened to every word of it. He didn't dodge a single question. And that helped him tremendously with many people of my faith and of other non-Catholic denominations with whom I talked afterwards. They were very, very much pleased with his frankness and the fact that he didn't dodge the issue. To me that was a terrific help. I thought that was a masterful performance. Then I think my next contact with him, personal contact, was when he came to Virginia over in Alexandria, I think in October right after the nomination.

HACKMAN: Late September or early October, one or the other.

ALMOND: Yes. And it was my honor to introduce him, and I did. He was very warmly received and I had an opportunity to talk with him then. He knew that I was going to do everything I could. Now may I say this--and that's for the record, too--I had tremendous admiration, and still do, for Bill Battle [William C. Battle], who was very close to President Kennedy, but I didn't like the way the Kennedy campaign was run in Virginia. Bill Battle thought that we shouldn't do anything that'd run the risk of offending Senator Byrd. Well, I agreed with that. But I said, "Senator Byrd is not going to support Senator Kennedy." Bill hoped he would. So much of the campaign was somewhat pussyfooting. I wanted to come right out and make it clear, Byrd or no Byrd, that this gentleman was a nominee of the Democratic Party, he was our candidate for president, he

was amply qualified for great leadership and to lead an aggressive, all out, knock-down fight to carry Virginia. And in speeches I made I didn't pull any punches. And I was warned several times, "Now go slow. Go slow. Don't offend Senator Byrd." And I said, "Well, I'm sorry about Senator Byrd, I'm for Senator Kennedy, not only as a man but as a nominee of my party and I'm just not going to pull any punches." So I spoke, oh, various places in Virginia. We didn't carry Virginia, much to my regret. He made a great race in Virginia. And I believe today that had Senator Byrd come out for him--I certainly would have united with him with what little influence I had--that Senator Kennedy would have carried Virginia. I think that was a difference. And much to my regret he didn't. But, thank God, he did carry

[-7-]

Texas and some other states where he had a tough fight.

When he was giving consideration to his cabinet and many other problems that he had, I conferred with him, oh, twice, or maybe three times on the phone. I'm sure didn't have any influence, I think he wanted to do it anyway. But I did strongly endorse Governor Hodges for secretary of commerce. I remember he knew that Senator Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] and I were very good friends, and I had said something commendatory of Senator Ribicoff. And on another occasion he called me and said if he hadn't done so he wanted make it clear to me that he was most grateful for my help in the campaign. Just a friendly conversation. And then I think I conferred with him about twice in his office, the president's office, while I was governor. I don't remember just--but probably something of not too much importance. I was with a committee of governors, who called on him relative to some aspects of the Appalachian project. I remember that Governor Dave Lawrence [David L. Lawrence] and I stood together on that, and most of the other governors, about four of them, had a contrary view. They asked me to make a statement before the president. Governor Lawrence and I had worked up a brief that went over the situation. I handed it to him and said, "Mr. President, everything I have to say is in this brief if you'd care to see it." That's all I said. He leafed through it with amazing rapidity, to me. And he laid it down, and I think he knew everything that was in it. I had written it, and he knew more about it than I did. I was on several occasions amazed at his quick grasp of things. You didn't have to go into details and explanatory dissertation when you were discussing things with him. He'd get right into the meat of it. And I was very much, very much, impressed with that.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything specific about that meeting of Appalachian governors, about what the split was? You said some people felt differently than others.

[-8-]

ALMOND: Well, Governor Lawrence of Pennsylvania definitely, for whom I had great respect, was, well, probably more progressive than I was. I'd say I was a little more conservative than he was. But he and I took the view--and I was agreeably surprised to get his support--took the view that the states ought not to lean too heavily on the federal government, these states involved in the Appalachian project; but first

in a spirit of cooperation they should do everything they could to alleviate those conditions, even to the extent of bearing some of the fiscal burden, and not expect the federal government to do the whole job. And well, I was a good friend of the governor of Kentucky, and the governor of Georgia was there and probably their states--and the governor of West Virginia--were more affected than my state. They seemed to want the federal government to do the whole job. That was the only difference that I recall in the philosophy of handling this thing.

HACKMAN: Well, let me go back over a few things that you've touched on and maybe go into them in a little more detail if you can remember. You said you had a fairly close relationship with Governor Ribicoff. Can you remember how this developed? He had been working, I believe, as far back as '59, at the Governors' Conferences on behalf of Senator Kennedy. Did he attempt to get your support?

ALMOND: Well, I don't know. I think he knew how I felt. But we did discuss the question and I knew of his tremendous admiration for Senator Kennedy. Then he and I served on, at least two Governors' Conferences, on the resolutions committee. And Abe Ribicoff is a man who when he undertakes a thing, he works at it, he doesn't fool with it. As a matter of fact, preparing resolutions, amending resolutions--he and I did practically all of the work. I got very close to him and developed a tremendous respect for him. But I knew--it may have come out of conversation--but I knew of his fine, high sense of respect for Senator Kennedy. I knew that the relationship was very close.

[-9 -]

HACKMAN: How did your own role in relation to Senator Johnson's candidacy develop? I remember at the time of the national Governors' Conference in '60, I believe the one that was out at Glacier National Park, that supposedly there was a struggle taking place between the Johnson people and the Kennedy people...

ALMOND: Right.

HACKMAN: ...and Ribicoff was mentioned for Kennedy and I believe Governor Price Daniel and yourself were supposedly working for Johnson. Can you remember what efforts you were making out there?

ALMOND: Well, I didn't make it. I knew what the situation was in Virginia with reference to Johnson and Kennedy, and I went along with Price Daniel on it. I don't recall that I did anything constructive for or against either one of them. At heart, all through it, I felt that Senator Kennedy would get the nomination and I hoped he would get the nomination. I wanted to be in a position to do what I could to advance that. But, as I told you, in my role as Governor, chairman of the delegation that was instructed for Senator Johnson, my hands were tied until after the nomination. But I do recall what you bring up there about the Governors' Conference at Glacier National Park which immediately preceded the Los Angeles Convention.

HACKMAN: Right, right. It was the end of June.

ALMOND: Price Daniel was very active trying to drum up some open support for Senator Johnson.

HACKMAN: Was anybody working in Virginia, or would it have done any good--it was probably very naive--on behalf of Senator Kennedy? Was Bill Battle making efforts with anyone or would this have been useless at that point before the Convention?

[-10-]

ALMOND: Yes, yes. Bill Battle was very active and did a lot of gospel, and was very loyal to Senator Kennedy, and exercised considerable influence; it was a big help. But Bill Battle knew, as I knew, that Byrd was going to have that delegation instructed for Johnson, which was unusual even for Byrd because usually the Virginia delegation went to the national convention uninstructed unless it was instructed for Byrd. But I think now, with all due respect--I mean no disrespect to Senator Byrd--I think he felt that to get that delegation instructed the way he wanted it instructed, Battle's hands would be tied and my hands would be tied. And while Battle worked very actively in and out of Senator Kennedy's headquarters in Los Angeles, but what he did was no wise inconsistent with the position of the Virginia delegation because all of us knew where Bill Battle stood. There was no pussyfooting about it. He was for Kennedy heart and soul. But even before that convention, before we went to Los Angeles, Bill Battle was very active in Virginia and very influential--and his father was former Governor Battle [John S. Battle]--and I think helped the Senator tremendously.

HACKMAN: Was there any Kennedy sympathy within the delegation other than yourself And....

ALMOND: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, in a minority sense. But substantial, substantial Kennedy strength within the delegation especially--I don't know if I could name any of them and maybe should not--but especially those from southwest Virginia and the northern part of the state. Yes, a respectable division there who would support him and were glad to see him get the nomination.

HACKMAN: I've heard that there was some talk or some discussion at that time about what the Virginia delegation would do after the first ballot or as things developed. Had you thought about this or how long you would stay with Johnson?

ALMOND: No, except this: I had said to most of the delegation in the private approach that if it became apparent during the process of the balloting that

[-11-]

Johnson could not win that I was going to make an effort to switch the delegation to Senator Kennedy. I knew that there would have been a division. I know even then that I would be faced with the fact of ironclad instruction binding them to Johnson. But I was going to try to make the fight and Battle would have helped me and at least divide it. But we had no chance to do that. You remember how it turned out. It got in to the Virginia roll call and it was cast for Johnson.

HACKMAN: It was Wyoming that made the vote.

ALMOND: That's right. They decided it.

HACKMAN: Why, do you know, did Senator Byrd decide not to come to the Convention? He thought it would have been a waste of time or what?

ALMOND: Well, he hadn't been to several preceding Conventions. I can't answer that except this: He wanted to hold himself in reserve to see which way the cat was going to hop, I suppose. But I remember that he went to Switzerland; he was in Switzerland during that Convention. His son came, young Harry Byrd, who's now in the United States Senate. But I don't recall him taking any part in any of the deliberations of the Virginia delegation.

HACKMAN: One of the things that came up, I guess back at the time of the state convention--a selection of a new Democratic National Committeeman. Kellam [Sidney S. Kellam] replaced, what, Joe Switzer? Was that his name? Do you remember that?

ALMOND: Fred Switzer [George Frederick Switzer].

HACKMAN: Fred Switzer.

ALMOND: Yes.

HACKMAN: Was there any controversy over that at that point or was this....

ALMOND: No, no, no. No controversy there.

[-12-]

HACKMAN: I believe you arrived at the Convention at Los Angeles in the middle of the week before the Convention got started.

ALMOND: That's right.

HACKMAN: Were there any specific states that you worked with on behalf of Senator

Johnson at that time or any that you were assigned to specifically?

ALMOND: No.

HACKMAN: Can you recall what your role was in relation to the development of the civil rights plank in the platform that year? I believe you made a speech about it on the floor and were especially concerned about an endorsement of the sit-ins which would probably have created some political problems in Virginia.

ALMOND: A speech on the floor of the National Convention?

HACKMAN: Right.

ALMOND: I don't recall that I did. I don't recall I did. I think the only speech I made on the floor of the Convention was seconding Johnson's nomination for Vice President.

HACKMAN: Right. I know you did that. Was there any discussion of the possibility of a Southern walkout over the civil rights plank after the civil rights plank came out fairly strong?

ALMOND: Yes, very minutely. I won't name them, but at least two advocated that. They got nowhere with it at all.

HACKMAN: Within the Virginia delegation, or just other people you know?

ALMOND: Yes. Yes. But they couldn't get it off the ground.

[-13-]

HACKMAN: Right. I believe you were saying at that time that you were going to strongly resist any attempt to walk out.

ALMOND: That's right.

HACKMAN: One of the things that came up was this challenge of one of the Virginia delegates by Goode [Virgil H. Goode]--he made the challenge and it was Frank Vaughan or Vaughan. It was something like that. I believe you were pretty instrumental in persuading this--smoothing this thing over. Can you remember what your role was there?

ALMOND: Yes. I felt that if they, oh, in short, kicked Frank Vaughan out.... There was one other. I can't think of his name.

HACKMAN: There was a Graham Morrison, who was Goode's lawyer, who wasn't actually

a delegate but who was sticking on this thing and didn't want to give up. And as a matter of fact, I believe he held out longer than....

ALMOND: Yes, I think he did. But I got over to one or two members of the credentials committee, I think, of the National Convention, who passed on it, and asked them not to force them out--let me handle it if I could. And I was able to get Vaughan to say that he would support nominee of the Convention. He didn't, but he made me that promise. And there was one other one. And I said, "Unless you do, I'm not going to snake any fight before the credentials committee at all. Go ahead." And I told them that I thought, and I told them in good faith, that I thought I could handle that. And what he had promised to do.... Whoever was instrumental inside just dropped the thing and didn't go through with it.

HACKMAN: I had heard that the Kennedys were working pretty hard to keep this thing from blowing up.

ALMOND: Yes, yes.

[-14-]

HACKMAN: I just wondered if you'd talked with any of them at that time.

ALMOND: No, I didn't talk with either the Senator or Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy], but I knew from Bill Battle what their attitude was about it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything specifically about Senator Kennedy's visit to the Virginia delegation and how this originated? Did he ask to come or did you ask to come or how did this develop?

ALMOND: No. He didn't visit the Virginia delegation.

HACKMAN: Oh, I thought he had been scheduled to visit it and then it was put off and later he came by and talked to them.

ALMOND: Yes, yes. Something happened and he didn't get by. They had scattered. He came to the Beverly Wilshire Hotel to see Senator Lehman. Senator Lehman was not too well.

HACKMAN: This is the one you were talking about.

ALMOND: And I had an opportunity to talk with him and several members of the delegation. But I don't believe he made a formal appearance. Something happened, he didn't break it himself, but something happened that he couldn't make it.

HACKMAN: You were talking about that meeting of Governors, then, when we were talking about G. Mennen Williams being there and so forth. Were you talking with anyone in the Johnson camp at all at this time about the possibility of him accepting the vice presidency? Did you talk to Rayburn [Samuel T. Rayburn] or Price Daniel [M. Price Daniel] or any of these people?

[-15-]

ALMOND: Sam Rayburn, I was devoted to him. Sam Rayburn called me--and I certainly don't want to misquote that great man--as best I can remember and indicated in the conversation that he was somewhat upset. He didn't want Lyndon to accept the nomination and asked me if Senator Kennedy had by any chance mentioned it to me. And I said over the phone, I said, "Mr. Speaker, you know how I've always stayed with you and how much I believe in you, but I want to see the Democratic Party win this election and I personally think--and if I have an opportunity to see Senator Kennedy (that was before I'd seen him) that I must tell him--that the big thing is for Kennedy to win and that I think Lyndon Johnson would be a strong asset to that end." And he said, "Well, maybe so," or something and changed it. But he let me know that he was not too enthused about it. I hope I'm not misjudging him, but I got that impression. It may be that subsequently he changed his mind.

HACKMAN: Yes, I think that's what a number of people have said, that he did change his mind on it. Can you recall how you were asked to make that seconding speech for Johnson or how this developed?

ALMOND: That's for the vice presidential nomination.

HACKMAN: Right.

ALMOND: No, I don't know who asked me to do that. I was glad to do it. Of course, everything was sealed then as far as I was concerned. I don't know whether it came out of the Johnson camp. Someone asked me to do it. I certainly couldn't have done it without being requested to do so.

HACKMAN: Right. Maybe you can go back to the campaign in Virginia then. Did Bill Battle or yourself make any efforts, personal efforts, with Senator Byrd during the campaign or anybody else from the Kennedy camp that came down and talked to him that you know of?

ALMOND: Well, I certainly didn't. I didn't have the right rapport. I'm sure Bill Battle was in touch with him. I don't know that, but I infer that from

[-16-]

some things that I do know. Bill had high hopes that the Senator eventually would come out and endorse him, and he was very careful not to offend him. I felt that he would not. I wanted to see Kennedy carry Virginia and I felt that the only chance he had was an aggressive, hard-hitting campaign.

HACKMAN: Was anybody else in the state working on behalf of the Kennedys from outside of the state? In most states they sent in someone from outside. I don't know if Battle was close enough so that he handled the whole thing, the whole direction, or if they had someone else.

ALMOND: No, except Bobby came in the state a few times. Bob spoke there. And I think I introduced Bobby on one occasion there in Richmond. I don't recall anyone else from outside. I made a number of speeches; I spoke at Atlanta, and I know I made five speeches in Florida one day. I went down to make one and they had five lined up and I made them all. I think I spoke somewhere in Winston-Salem, was it, North Carolina. But I don't recall any outside speaking for him. Though Battle conducted--he was head of it--and he conducted a very shrewd and very able campaign. My only criticism--and I think he knows this--is that I thought it just wasn't hard hitting enough. Of course, the time had come when you couldn't pull punches in a fight like that.

HACKMAN: Can you remember making efforts with any of the other political figures in the state to try to get them to come out and support either Senator Robertson [A. Willis Robertson] or any other congressmen or any of these people?

ALMOND: Oh yes, yes, yes, I talked to several of them. Senator Robertson was scared to death--a fine gentleman, a good friend of mine, but he's afraid of Byrd's shadow. And I never will forget an event--if Senator Kennedy were living I know he wouldn't want me to tell this. When I introduced Senator Kennedy over in Alexandria, Willis Robertson, United States Senator, had hitched a ride over there with Kennedy and Johnson. And he had an old slouch hat on pulled down over his face so nobody could see

[-17-]

him and looked like he was trying to hide. And time to take pictures, I said, I said, "Wait a minute. I want to get our friend Willis Robertson up here. Let him be seen." And somebody said, "Don't do that, he'll drop dead." And I don't think Senator Kennedy said anything, but he really chuckled. But Willis wouldn't do anything. At heart I'm sure he was for Senator Kennedy and for the ticket, but he was afraid of Byrd. I guess that's going into history, but I'm going to tell you the truth about it. Willis was afraid to move unless Byrd gave the "nod." And that's been the trouble with Virginia politics for a long time. And that's why I broke with him. I just, I couldn't go along with that.

HACKMAN: Was that pretty much the situation with all the other political people in the state? Or are there any that stand out in your mind as....

ALMOND: Well, I won't say with all of them, but with many of them, many of them. They'd wait for the word from Mount Olympus, you know, before they'd budge. And I went along with that for a long time.

HACKMAN: A lot of the Republicans were saying in that period that if Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] beat Kennedy in the state, you'd be a dead duck politically. Did you feel like you were taking a great deal of pressure on it?

ALMOND: Well, that didn't cross my mind. I knew that as a result of my position on the school situation and my position in the Kennedy campaign, I wouldn't have the support of Senator Byrd for any future advance that I might wish to make. But that didn't bother me. I could have gone back and practiced law and, I think, made an honest living. And I didn't ask Senator Kennedy for anything myself. Of course, Byrd opposed me for this position here, as you know.

HACKMAN: Right. You had urged Senator Kennedy to select Lyndon Johnson as his Vice President. How well do you think this worked out in terms of the Southern vote? Was he effective, particularly in Virginia? I think he made several trips into Virginia?

[-18-]

ALMOND: I think it was a help; I think it was a big help. Now, in his own right, independently of the Vice President, Senator Kennedy had a very strong following in Virginia. I think Lyndon Johnson augmented that considerably. And I think it was a big help. And I think that, had Senator Byrd come out and said, "These are the two men," and endorsed both of these openly, I'm confident that Senator Kennedy would have carried Virginia.

HACKMAN: One of the things, I believe early in the campaign Vice President Johnson held a big meeting out in Nashville, a sort of a Southern unity conference. Did you go to that? Can you remember if you were invited?

ALMOND: No, I was invited. That, I think is... Buford Ellington [E. Buford Ellington] was Governor then and I was invited. I couldn't get to it. No. No.

HACKMAN: Why don't I turn this thing....

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

HACKMAN: Also, do you have any memories of then Southern Governors Conference in '60 that was out at Hot Springs. You were the outgoing chairman, if I remember correctly, and Price Daniel, then, was selected to succeed you, particularly....

ALMOND: Yes. During that convention was the memorable Kennedy-Nixon debate.

HACKMAN: Right, right.

ALMOND: Someone called me from headquarters and asked me to listen in on that debate. I don't know who it was that asked me to listen in on that debate and give my appraisal of what happened. And I remember when the subject first came up I was all out for Kennedy debating Nixon. I was confident that Kennedy could take care of himself in any such contest, no disrespect to Dick Nixon. So we had a television in our room and I told my wife, a very ardent admirer of Senator Kennedy, and I said, "We don't want

[-19-]

any company in our room." I said, "I'm chairman of this delegation. We're going to listen to that debate." And we did. Jack Bell--he was one of the reporters--asked me, he said, "Did you listen to that debate?" And I said, "Yes." "What do you think?" And I said, "Well take it down. I'm going to get in touch with headquarters." I said, "Jack Kennedy has won the presidency of the United States." And I said, "The biggest mistake that Nixon ever made politically was going into that debate. The contrast to me was so drastic. Kennedy's grasp of the situation, the questions that were asked, his knowledgeable approach to a solution and the frankness and it was terrific." Now of course, I was partial. But I heard others say that who didn't care so much one way or another, neither for Nixon too strong or Kennedy too strong. And I think the opening of that debate, that first debate, was the turning point in the campaign.

HACKMAN: I think a telegram came out of that that was sort of a telegram of endorsement, or praise, of his appearance in that debate, which was signed by all the Southern Governors, I believe, except Ross Barnett. Can you remember how that originated, or who got that going?

ALMOND: I think my wife had something to do with it. I'm not sure. But I didn't originate it. But I do recall that it came up. Now, probably Luther Hodges could have. I was so thrilled over the result but I certainly didn't originate it. I was right busy too, as chairman. But I think I signed it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any of the people who you said were, maybe, it didn't matter which way it went, who were particularly excited? I had heard that Governor Faubus [Orval E. Faubus], who was pretty well sitting on the fence at that point, was impressed. Do you remember that at all?

ALMOND: I heard that. I knew that he was somewhat cool. I thought he was. Then, I heard that he was very much impressed with it and thought that Faubus had changed his mind. I didn't discuss it with him.

[-20-]

HACKMAN: Can you remember how the election of Price Daniel to succeed you developed? Was there anything to what was reported at that time, that it was sort of a show of solidarity behind the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, was it just a logical selection, do you think?

ALMOND: Well, I think both aspects bear some relation to it. Of course, I was outgoing chairman. I didn't try to dictate it, but I was for Price who'd been good to me. And I think that both of those aspects had some controlling influence in the selection of Price Daniel.

HACKMAN: One of the other things that came up at that conference: I believe Governor Barnett [Ross R. Barnett] of Mississippi was pushing the idea of using independent electors which Mississippi then did. Can you remember anybody else being attracted by that idea or was there any....

ALMOND: I think Ross Barnett--he had very little, if any, support. My recollection is somewhat hazy, but I don't think it got anywhere at all. He discussed it and it was just accepted, you know, and everybody knew Ross.

HACKMAN: How important to the outcome of the election were the Democrats for Nixon-Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge]? The group was particularly strong around Richmond, I think.

ALMOND: Very important. Very weighty. Very weighty. Had some very influential people there, and people who will contribute financially to the campaign. They had a lot to do with it.

HACKMAN: Did Nixon conduct a particularly effective campaign in Virginia from what you could see?

ALMOND: No, but my recollection, he made one speech and I might mention that for history. I was Governor of Virginia and the committee there wanted him to speak from the Capitol steps. Well now, that was all right, except I couldn't afford to disrupt the whole state government. I said, "Certainly nobody would object to him speaking from the Capital grounds." Of course, the Governor had control over

[-21-]

that. I said, "I certainly wouldn't mind, but speaking from the Capitol steps, and with the business of state going on, and.... No, we're not going to do it." So some of the Nixon crowd, especially the so-called Democrats for Nixon, got very irate about it. But I still think I was right. I don't know whether I ought to tell this or not, but he spoke on the Capitol grounds near the statue to Edgar Allan Poe. And after he left somebody came--one of the Capitol police came by there, and this old gentleman was sitting at the foot of Poe's statue. The policeman said, "Did you hear Mr. Nixon's speech?" The old gentleman said, "Yes, but quoth the raven, 'nevermore.'" So, that's the tale they tell you. You get that everywhere.

HACKMAN: That's pretty good. Well, let's see. There was a letter that, was it E. Blackburn Moore wrote about--I believe it was a letter to Bill Battle about asking him what Kennedy's policy would be on appointing Negro judges in the South. Do you remember anything, getting involved in that at all?

ALMOND: Oh, yes. I didn't get involved in it, but I was disgusted with it. This is for the record: I think it's a very underhanded thing for Mr. Moore to do. The implication was that if Kennedy were elected President, he would appoint a Negro to the federal judiciary in Virginia. If you ask me, I think he just concocted that out of political skulduggery. But I remember it coming up. I introduced Bobby Kennedy when he spoke in Richmond and that came up from the floor. And I remember Bobby handled it, I thought, splendidly. He said that he felt sure that if Senator Kennedy was elected President, the matter of the judgeships would be handled in the usual way on the basis merit. And somebody popped up and said, "Well, who will he consult?" He said, "Naturally, he would wish to consult with the senators who have to vote on confirmation and I'm sure he'd consult with the Governor, whoever the Governor was." Bobby handled it so masterfully, it just died down right there. But Moore did.... I don't know whether he wrote the letter or Byrd, but that was certainly--and had some effect, had some effect.

[-22-]

HACKMAN: Had you talked to Senator Kennedy or to Bobby Kennedy at that point about what his policy would be in relation to civil rights, particularly in Virginia?

ALMOND: No. No.

HACKMAN: Any other problem?

ALMOND: No. No.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything about the way the Kennedys operated with the Negro vote in Virginia, or what your opinion of that was? They had some fellow, I believe, Oliver Hill in Richmond was working for them in their civil rights section or something.

ALMOND: Yes. Yes, it's my recollection he got a good Negro vote, which I'm glad to see

him get. Yes, Oliver Hill, a Negro, a very able Negro, a lawyer, whom I had fought in desegregation cases. I had a lot of respect for him. And they had a very good Negro organization. My recollection is they had a good Negro vote.

HACKMAN: Now, you were talking about going through the regular routes and consulting the senators and yourself on judgeships. How did this work out? Now, after Senator Kennedy won the election there was a lot of talk that since Senator Byrd hadn't supported him that you would be the man most consulted on federal appointments in Virginia. Did this work out satisfactorily as far as you were concerned, or did they listen to Senator Byrd after the Administration came in 1960?

ALMOND: I don't recall of any contacts with President Kennedy after the election with reference to judicial appointments in Virginia. I was well satisfied that there was close rapport between President Kennedy and Bill Battle. I think Battle or Kellam was the National Committeeman. I was perfectly content to let them handle it. I don't know what contacts there might have been between the President and Senator Byrd. Well, I'd had several conferences with Bill Battle about it, but I was satisfied

[-23-]

that he advised me. My term as Governor would have run several more years, that's why I let Bill Battle, because I knew the President knew him well and had pretty good confidence in him.

HACKMAN: What was the reaction to the way the Administration proceeded in '61, while you were still Governor, in the area of civil rights? The Justice Department brought up that suit. I believe it was the first time the Justice Department had been a plaintiff in a suit like that concerning Prince Edward County schools. Do you remember that?

ALMOND: Yes, I remember that. I think it was incumbent upon the Administration to exercise the leadership it did in the field of civil rights, and while I might not have agreed personally with all aspects of it, I certainly could on no grounds justifiably criticize the Administration. I thought the Kennedy Administration was modest in civil rights views. I did not think it was overly extreme. I don't think it went near as far as President Johnson has attempted to do.

HACKMAN: Did they talk to you at all before they brought a suit like this into Virginia?

ALMOND: No.

HACKMAN: Or any other actions they took in Virginia?

ALMOND: No. No. No. And there was no reason for it. It was part of his program and I respected his actions.

HACKMAN: How did your own appointment to this position develop? When did this originate and come out?

ALMOND: It's right hard for me to say. I think Bill Battle first brought it to attention of the President. I never did. I talked with the President two or three times, or four or five times maybe, but I never mentioned it to him. He did ask me what I intended to do. "I haven't got any set views."

[-24-]

He seemed to be concerned and I told him, I said, "I suppose I'll go back to Roanoke and practice law when my public service is over." But I don't recall the President ever mentioning that he would like to appoint me to judgeship or offer me a judgeship. Bill Battle talked to me. We talked about the fact that Senator Byrd would oppose it and I said, "I don't want it bad enough to embarrass the President, because Senator Byrd is chairman of Finance Committee of the Senate and I would assume the President wants to get along with him if he can." And that's as much as I know about that. I had been for Senator Kennedy, I'd helped him all I could. And I wouldn't have dared to base it on a proposition that you owe me something. I don't think he would have respected me if I had. I wouldn't have respected him if he didn't feel bad about it. I just wouldn't approach him on it. I'm mighty glad to have it and I'm mighty pleased with. I'll always remember him for his goodness and kindness.

HACKMAN: Did the Administration get at all involved in the elections at the time you were going out, the elections for the next governor in Virginia?

ALMOND: Not that I recall. Not in the open. There was certainly no issue publicly.

HACKMAN: That's all I really have, I think, unless you have anything...

ALMOND: No, I certainly have enjoyed talking with you.

HACKMAN: ...you think that we missed on....

ALMOND: I know you'll want to read that and edit that. I don't care to see it again. You do with it what you think is right.

[-25-]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

J. Lindsay Almond Oral History Interview
Name List

Byrd	Byrd, Harold F.
Johnson	Johnson, Lyndon B.
Williams	Williams, G. Mennen
Humphrey	Humphrey, Hubert H.
Hodges	Hodges, Luther H.
Vandiver	Vandiver, S. Ernest Jr.
Dalton	Dalton, Ted
Stanley	Stanley, Thomas B.
Lehman	Lehman, Herbert H.
Smith	Smith, Alfred E.
Hoover	Hoover, Herbert C.
Battle	Battle, William C.
John	Kennedy, John F.
Dave	Lawrence, David L.
Gov. Ribicoff	Ribicoff, Abraham A.
Gov. Battle	Battle, John S.
Kellam	Kellam, Sydney S.
Fred	Switzer, George Frederick
Goode	Goode, Virgil H.
Bob	Kennedy, Robert F.
Senator Lehman	Lehman, Herbert H.
Sam	Rayburn, Samuel T.
Price	Daniel, M. Price
Senator Robertson	Robertson, A. Willis
Nixon	Nixon, Richard M.
Buford	Ellington, E. Buford
Jack Bell	Bell, Jack
Gov. Faubus	Faubus, Orval E.
Gov. Barnett	Barnett, Ross R.
Lodge	Lodge, Henry Cabot
Moore	Moore, E. Blackburn
Oliver Hill	Hill, Oliver