

Edith Green Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 06/22/1974
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(1910 - 1987). Representative from Oregon (1955-1975), discusses work with John F. Kennedy in the House of Representatives, on the Kennedy campaign in Oregon, and labor legislation, among other issues.

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Edith Green – JFK#1

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Oral History Interview

With

Edith Green

June 22, 1974
Washington, D.C.

By Roberta W. Greene

For the John F. Kennedy Library

GREENE: Why don't you begin with your earliest recollections of John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] and talk a little bit about your contacts between you when you came to the House [United States House of Representatives] in '55 and when he began to run for president in '59?

GREEN: There may have been earlier contacts but as of this moment my first recollection of any contact with John Kennedy revolved around the 1956 convention. I had on my staff a fellow by the name of Bill Brubeck [William H. Brubeck] who is from William and Mary College [College of William and Mary], I believe; he went to the convention. Bill wanted me to support John Kennedy for vice-president. I had not decided, obviously because at any ordinary convention the delegates don't have any particular voice in presidential nominee. I remember having coffee or lunch with Bill Brubeck and John Kennedy at that time; I don't have any very definitive recollections. Then in 1959, fairly early in the year, John Kennedy got in touch with me and advised me that he was going to run for president and wanted to know if I would be chairman of his campaign in Oregon. I said that I just really had not decided what I was going to do. I did not know him well enough to really make a decision, and I had known Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] much better than I had known John Kennedy. Hubert Humphrey, also, had been in touch with me and had asked me to be his chairman in Oregon; during those early months of '59—and I couldn't tell you what months they were...

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GREENE: You have a date here of May 27, meeting with Senator Kennedy, and I think in this memorandum that you wrote, the memo, the memoir really, that you wrote for the Oregonian [Portland Oregonian] you said that that was when he asked you. Does that ring a bell? Does that sound right? May 27? Would it have been that early?

GREEN: It was early in the year, I know that. I don't know whether that May 27th is the first one or not; I obviously took that out of my calendar. Whether that was the first meeting I had with him, I just don't recall. I do know that Hubert Humphrey—I have a note here, aside here “JFK and Herb Walters [Herbert S. Walters] collide.” I was in the Cameron Building [Cameron House Office Building] with him and they met right square at the door. They had to go sideways to let one in and the other out.

GREENE: It's interesting because when I was told that story by somebody else, they said it was Hubert Humphrey and Senator Kennedy who collided, which kind of embellished it.

GREEN: It was Herb Walters and John Kennedy. I really did try to be fair, because I had not decided. I wasn't playing coy; and what I had told both Humphrey and Kennedy was that I liked them both, that I had not made up my mind, that any meetings that I arranged in Oregon or any names which I supplied one, I would supply the other. I would do it on a perfectly even basis. For some reason, Hubert Humphrey was quoted at least in—I think it was Time magazine or some magazine or maybe more than one—that I had gone back on my word, that I had promised to support him and then had reneged. This was not in line with my intention or my recollection of my actions because I had made it abundantly clear during those early months that I really hadn't decided. Then later I did have a luncheon meeting with Kennedy, and I did make the commitment and I did let Humphrey know that I had accepted the chairmanship for John Kennedy.

GREENE: In your initial reluctance, how much of a factor was Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] or Wayne Morse [Wayne L. Morse]?

GREEN: Adlai Stevenson was a major factor; Wayne Morse was a factor because there were at least three times in the company of other people that I went to Wayne Morse to see what he was going to do in 1960—if he had either presidential or vice presidential ambitions. One visit was with Al Ullman [Albert Conrad Ullman], and Wayne Morse said he had no intention of running for the presidency; one visit was with Edna Scales; one, by myself.

GREENE: You know I must ask you who Edna Scales is. I checked every source book I could find, and I just couldn't come up with that name.

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GREEN: Well, at that time—somewhere in those years she was the vice-chairman of the Oregon Democratic Party...

GREENE: Oh, that's what I thought.

GREEN: She's been a long-time friend of mine and worked very hard in Kennedy's campaign. Anyhow, at least three times I asked Wayne Morse if he were going to run, and he denied it absolutely. My recollection is that both Adlai Stevenson and Wayne Morse under the Oregon law signed affidavits that they would not run for president.

GREENE: I think you have to honor them.

GREEN: As is say, I did not consider Wayne a major factor, but part of my reluctance to pledge my support to Humphrey or Kennedy was Adlai Stevenson. I was extremely fond of him, I think he was one of the really great Americans. I worked very hard for him in 1952 and again in 1956. If he had decided that he was going to be a candidate, I probably would have worked for Adlai Stevenson because of the past relations and my admiration for him. However, I did get to Adlai Stevenson, and Adlai Stevenson made it abundantly clear that he had no intention and that he intended to sign that affidavit. But anyhow, Stevenson was a factor, and then at some subsequent meeting Kennedy said, "Will you be the chairman?" And I did make the commitment. However, I also had the agreement that I would not publicly be the chairman for the Oregon campaign until after he had made his announcement which he did not intend to do until after the first of the year in 1960. Then we had some political problems earlier which compelled me to publicly take over the chairmanship. That's a long story. I don't know whether you want to get into it now.

GREENE: Sure.

GREEN: Well, I arranged innumerable meetings with Oregon democrats and Hubert Humphrey and innumerable meetings with John Kennedy. Another friend who was very close was Sylvia Nemer and Sylvia—I'm still very, very fond of her—unfortunately things which had to be done politically within that year certainly broke a close friendship. Sylvia is probably one of the brightest people I have ever known, very attractive, and just superb in organizational abilities. Sylvia's husband [Norman Nemer] was in the pinball business along with property management and other things; pinballs then were legal in Oregon. Let me digress for a minute here.

GREENE: Sure, don't worry about that. [Interruption]

GREEN: Sylvia's husband, Norm Nemer was in the pinball business as well as property management. If you recall the major controversy over the labor bill in 1959 involved the Teamsters

[International Brotherhood of Teamsters] and Jimmy Hoffa and other people on the West Coast. The Teamsters in Oregon were

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making an effort to control all pinball machines; the first person who ever warned me about not being close to the Teamsters was Norm Nemer. I remember that there were several of us together for dinner one night at a restaurant, and he said, “Edith, don’t ask me why, I’m just telling you—stay away from the Teamsters.” And I did try to press some, and he said “I’m not going to tell you anything more. I’m just saying this for your own good—stay away from them.” The Teamsters, you recall, were very much opposed to John Kennedy and very much opposed to Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy]. It must have been about in August, Sylvia had taken on the job publicly of being the coordinator for the Kennedy primary campaign. I think that was the title we gave her—we didn’t have a chairman; we were waiting until January—but the coordinator for the Kennedy campaign and she was very much out in front, and at my request; I think it was in August that we were having the centennial celebration in 1959—the Oregon centennial—John Kennedy came to Oregon; one of the important visits was to go out to this fair or festival to celebrate the centennial. The Oregon Journal on that particular day, came out with a Jack Anderson column on the from page....

GREENE: Drew Pearson, right.

GREEN: ...Drew Pearson, sorry, Drew Pearson wrote it...about the involvement of Norm Nemer and the Teamsters; the article was about the husband of the Kennedy campaign coordinator and the Teamsters efforts to control all pinball machines. I’ve forgotten the details but you must have that in your files. Anyhow, it became abundantly clear that this was going to be a great political liability, to have the coordinator for John Kennedy the wife of a person who was involved with the pinball business and involved with the Teamsters attempt to take them over in Oregon. Even though down in my heart I knew that he was playing very, very honestly and very straight and that, as I said earlier, he was the first one to warn me to stay away from the Teamsters that year. But we felt that this was just the opening shot and that it was not done to hurt Norm Nemer or Sylvia or me. Obviously, the target was John Kennedy. So, we had some conferences. Hy Raskin [Hyman B. Raskin] was very much involved—I think Hy Raskin had one of the finest political minds that I’ve seen. We discussed it: Hy and I and John Kennedy and Bob Kennedy. Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy]—I supposed he had surfaced but I don’t really have much recollection of him in the early part in 1959. The decision was made that we had no choice—that because of her husband’s connections with the pinballs, and the Teamsters, Sylvia had to be removed as coordinator and that the only way to do it with any political grace was to make the early immediate announcement that John Kennedy appointed me as chairman though I really had preferred not to get into it publicly until after January 1. So, I think probably one of the most difficult political assignments I’ve ever had: Hy and I flew out and Sylvia met us at the airport. I had told her we wanted to meet

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her, and we had dinner together. We carried the message that I was going to become the chairman, that we had changed the plans. She is very bright and she obviously knew and I'm sure she was hurt. In fact, I know she was. Those are some of the political realities. The important thing, which we tried to explain to Sylvia, was that we were all interested in the same goal of getting enough votes for John Kennedy to win the primary and that we had talked about it, thought about it a great deal, and we felt that in order to win that this was one of the things that just had to be done and we hoped she'd understand. I believe I was more hurt than Sylvia, because she had been a very dear friend—personally, politically.

GREENE: Well, yes, the centennial I think was—I don't have the date, anyway I do have the date down and it was around then.

GREEN: Well, it was after that but anyhow, I then took over the chairmanship in September or October, 1959.

GREENE: If her husband was the one that warned you away from them he must have also realized how damaging any link with them would be for Senator Kennedy. It seems like they would have understood.

GREEN: Well, Norm may have. Sylvia, I think, never did, and to this day there is tension even though I really am extremely fond of her and would have gone to quite some length to restore that friendship. Anyhow, that's what happened: a political heartbreak.

GREENE: Well, let me ask you—back up just a little bit and go over some of the things you've talked about. For one thing, in discussing the '56 convention, I came up with the information that Oregon felt bound by the May 18 primary to go for Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] for vice president and perhaps it was something in the nature of the Oregon primary; I didn't understand that, because as you said, I always thought the vice president was considered the president's choice. Do you know why the delegation did that?

GREEN: If you recall, Stevenson threw the convention open for the V.P. I had forgotten the delegation's action. I'd have to check. Have you checked on the votes?

GREENE: Yes.

GREEN: Were there any votes for Kennedy for vice president?

GREENE: I think the whole delegation went for Kefauver.

GREEN: I've forgotten. Under the Oregon law, in my judgment, the popular vote is binding only on the presidential candidate, but we may have met and discussed it. I

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don't know if...

GREENE: I thought perhaps he had come in second and, you know, that determined it or something.

GREEN: No, no, that's not true. It would just be a—they felt morally committed or there were enough of the Kefauver supporters that we just didn't think we'd want to have an open fight, didn't feel it was worth getting in a fight about. At that time, you know, I really did not know Kennedy to any great extent. The Oregon law says that, back in those days, you had to sign an affidavit that you would support the candidate who won the Oregon primary for president; the whole delegation then was bound but occasionally there was some slippage but very, very seldom. They ordinarily don't...

GREENE: It was only because it was vice president that it raised some questions.

GREEN: I do not think there's anything in Oregon law. It must have just been as the result of a caucus action—a moral commitment that that's the way the majority felt, the majority of Oregonians because Kennedy had not campaigned in Oregon and Kefauver had. He campaigned very, very extensively, both in '52 and '56.

GREENE: Well, when the conversation that you described with Brubeck and Senator Kennedy about the vice-presidency in '56—would that have taken place at the convention or prior?

GREEN: Uh, uh.

GREENE: At the convention. So, to your knowledge there was no discussion of him as a possibility before the convention.

GREEN: I don't recall any in Oregon, though we may have discussed it informally, but I do not recall any special discussion.

GREENE: Okay, let me ask you some questions about what his reputation was on the House [United States House of Representatives] side and particularly regarding you as a member of the labor committee [House Education and Labor Committee] and him as a member on the other side, the comparable committee [Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee], how he was regarded by those people on the

committees and also by people in Oregon because of his association with the investigation up there.

GREEN: Now are talking about 1960 or 1956?

GREENE: Well, just his whole reputation leading up to the presidential thing—I'm really not...

GREEN: Back in '56.

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GREENE: Right.

GREEN: I don't think there was any feeling because he really was not discussed as a presidential candidate. I was a comparative newcomer, you must remember too, in '56; I came to the House in '55. I was aware that there were some members who did not like him, some members who felt that he was lazy and that he had not done his homework when he was a member of the House. But, on the other hand, there were people who liked him very much too, people who had known him and worked with him. Torby MacDonald [Torbert H. MacDonald] was one who liked him very much, and Torby and I were very good friends. We came in at the same time. So, I just was aware that he had friends and enemies which everybody in the House has.

GREENE: Well, what about after the '56 convention when his reputation in the McClellan [John L. McClellan] investigation [Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Fields] started to emerge?

GREEN: I think that Bob Kennedy was more involved in that than John Kennedy. I do not recall that any of the disfavor toward Bob had then been transferred to John Kennedy. Now, it may have been more in the Senate or there may have been more of that feeling over there, but I do not recall it. We were very much, of course, involved in that major labor bill in 1959. I remember one trip that John Kennedy asked me to go out to Oregon with him on the Caroline, and I said I could not go.

GREENE: It's in your memorandum, yes, for the Oregonian.

GREEN: I just could not possibly make the trip. We had this labor bill coming up and—my background was not in labor law—I'm not a lawyer to begin with—so it was something on which I had to spend a tremendous amount of time; and I said that I've just got to stay and work, and it was then that he made arrangements for Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan]...

GREENE: Is that who it was? I wondered who it was.

GREEN: ...to go out to the first stop. I remember that Ralph and I worked on the liquidation on the plane; Ralph was trying to give me two years of labor law in a few hours' time.... Seriously, it was very helpful; was very much involved, of course, in the Kennedy, the labor legislation. On the House side, there was the Kennedy bill, and then Jimmy Roosevelt [James Roosevelt] was the one who was really the sponsor of the Teamster amendments, the Teamster list of things to be in the bill, and Wayne Morse was the sponsor on the Senate side of the Teamster's bill. We had some violent arguments that year; that was my first really rough legislative involvement where they really take you apart. There were five of us

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on the House committee, Carl Elliot [Carl A. Elliot], Jim O'Hara [James G. O'Hara], Stew Udall [Stewart L. Udall], Frank Thompson [Frank Thompson, Jr.] and myself who were considered swing votes. I don't know who first coined the phrase, but we were called the "faithless five." We were all really pro labor pretty much, but we decided first of all that the bill was not the bill that we wanted to support. We did not like Graham Barden's [Graham A. Barden] bill nor the Teamster's bill. We were more interested in one which was more nearly like the Kennedy bill. We had argued as I recall, for months over the hearings; debating it and trying to draft legislation with all of the amendments that were being offered, and with terrible political pressure. I had a call, it was in the evening, it must have been somewhere around six o'clock; Jimmy Roosevelt called me, and he said that he and some other members of the committee and some labor people were over in the Congressional Hotel [Washington, D.C.], would I come over and join them to discuss the labor bill; I said "Sure." So, the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations] and their various affiliates were there, and they were not asking—they were demanding—that we filibuster so that this "time certain" for the vote would be postponed until the following week. Previously, I had said to the labor people that you do not have enough votes on the committee, or on the floor for the bill you're advocating; you're going to have to compromise and you're going to have to make some changes in your position and you ought to be doing it. Their rejoinder, as it was on other occasions, "Oh, we've got the votes, so relax, and we're not going to make any compromise." Then it was the night before the morning on which we had set the "time certain" for the vote that they were demanding that we prevent that from happening; I said to them over at the Congressional Hotel that I would not do that, I had made a commitment to my colleagues, that we've been arguing on it for months and that I intended to do what I could to bring it to a vote. I remember one of the labor lobbyists came over and sat beside me and said, "Edith, we supported you in your campaign in Oregon and, by God, you're going to support us now!" And I said, "Well, by God, I'm not," and walked out of the room. Later Zagri [Sidney Zagri] who was Hoffa's mouthpiece, was in the office. He was telling me what I was going to do, and I remember telling him to "get the hell out." So it was a very, very rough time. Archibald J. Cox came to Washington as the advisor to the five of us.

Certainly Kennedy, by being a presidential or a potential presidential candidate, was the obvious target; he drew the heat and the wrath away from others. He was the lightning

rod. Anyhow, we voted the bill out of the committee and then, when we got to the floor the Landrum-Griffin bill [Labor Management Reporting and Act of 1957] was immediately offered as a substitute. The control of the debating time went out of the hands of the chairman of the committee and went out of the hands of Landrum [Philip Mitchell Landrum] and Griffin [Robert P. Griffin], and it was approved by the House. To this day I have always had at election time, labor people with whom I've met say,

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“We're not going to support you because you vote for Landrum-Griffin.” And I said, “Look, we've gone through this every single year since 1959, and each year I've told you I voted against Landrum-Griffin bill on the floor and the record is there and why don't you change your tune?” But they've had that impression because I was then one of the “faithless five” in the swing vote for the committee bill which was a compromise bill between what labor wanted and what the Teamsters wanted and the Kennedy bill. I thought our compromise was in the public interest.

GREENE: You should send them a copy of the record...

GREEN: Oh, I've sent them hundreds of copies of the record...

GREENE: Obviously, they don't want to change their minds.

GREEN: No....

GREENE: How much was he hurt in Oregon by the Terry Schruck [Terry D. Schruck] investigation and related matters, or was Robert Kennedy primarily the lightning rod for that?

GREEN: Wayne Morse is and always had been, very pro labor, of course, as I said earlier, on the Senate side he was the spokesman for the Teamsters with their amendments to the 1959 Labor Bill. The Machinists [International Association of Machinists] financed tapes which Wayne Morse made against John Kennedy which were used across the country. The Teamsters (largely because of Bob Kennedy on the McClellan Committee) and the Machinists were very anti-Kennedy.

GREENE: You mentioned them anonymously in your Oregonian thing. I wondered what union it was.

GREEN: I should have reread the article. It was the Machinists. Terry Schruck and I had been very good friends.

GREENE: He's still the mayor, isn't he?

GREEN: No.

GREENE: He's not?

GREEN: No, he did not run again. He served for fifteen or twenty years, I've forgotten. We have a young man by the name of Neil Goldschmidt who followed Terry. He had been a member of the city council for two years and then ran for mayor. But Terry's health has not been good. He had shrapnel war injuries. He's been hospitalized three or four times with back trouble from the war injuries.

GREENE: So, he just didn't run again, is that it?

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GREEN: No, he did not.

GREENE: That must have been '72 because I looked it up until then, and he was still mayor.

GREEN: Right, right, '72. But Terry, of course, was adamantly opposed to John Kennedy for president. And there would be countless people who were very, very close to Terry Schrunk who would oppose John Kennedy; so it was a major problem. There's no question yet, it's always a question as to what extent you can transfer votes. Terry Schrunk was always elected by very large majorities. Yet everybody who supported Terry Schrunk did not automatically vote against John Kennedy because of Terry's being called back to Washington before the committee. I felt that was very unfair to Terry Schrunk. I never did believe the story that he picked up this envelope with money in it. That was pure fabrication. And it was one of the reasons why I was slow and reluctant to support Bob Kennedy in '68.

GREENE: Did you ever discuss this with either one of them?

GREEN: Oh, I discussed it many times with John Kennedy. I don't think that I really discussed it with Bob Kennedy. He knew and I knew that the Schrunk people were actively working against him.

GREENE: What was John Kennedy's reaction?

GREEN: I think it was a pragmatic approach; those were the facts.

GREENE: You didn't plant any doubts in his head, then?

GREEN: In John Kennedy's head about...

GREENE: About whether or not Schrunk had actually taken the money.

GREEN: I suspect that I did though I do not remember. It never made sense, because this was a raid when there were many people around—you'd have to be out of your mind to think that Terry Schruck would go over to this lamppost, or whatever in heck it was, and pick up an envelope with money in it in front of TV cameras and the crowd of people who had gathered. You know, if he were going to take bribe money, he could certainly do it in a less flamboyant less "public" way. I just never thought it made sense, and it was one of the unfortunate allegations.

GREENE: What is your understanding of why Morse finally did run against Kennedy?

GREEN: Well, I think that—since these won't be opened for twenty years or so—I think Wayne has a tremendous ego that just has to be massaged continuously. And I think it accounts partly for his running now for senator after he has been twice defeated.

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This year he saw it as a way for the people of Oregon to do public penance for their past sins, to publicly confess that they had made a mistake in 1968 when they elected Bob Packwood [Robert W. Packwood]. He has as much as said it in those words. In 1959 and '60, Wayne Morse was strongly backed by the Teamsters who hated Kennedy and by the Machinists. They, obviously, wanted some other candidate and were spending lots of money. They appealed to Wayne's ego. I'm sure that Wayne saw himself very clearly as a person who had more ability and more logic than John Kennedy, and that he would make a great president. Also, let's go back to the 1952 Republican Convention. In 1952 Wayne was a Republican, and when the Republicans met prior to the '52 convention, Mark Hatfield {Mark O. Hatfield} secured the position—on the platform committee—which Wayne coveted. Wayne also felt that he was the best candidate for vice president. I had been told that he had reason to believe that Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] might well choose him as his running mate in 1952 as vice-president. It was because of the disappointment and disillusionment and the political problems that he then switched to Independent, and then he switched to Democratic. I think that the events of 1952—wanting, expecting to be the vice-presidential candidate and the labor bill of 1959 when AFL-CIA and the Teamsters opposed violently, the Kennedy bill—may have had much to do to influence him to run in 1960 on the Democratic ticket. He felt he was just as capable as anybody else or more capable.

GREENE: But you don't think it was a personal kind of thing against John Kennedy?

GREEN: There was no love lost between John Kennedy and Wayne Morse. They were not friends, and Wayne.... Well, in the early days of '59 when I asked him if he were going to run for president he absolutely said "no"; there was no equivocation at all. Yet, I knew that he felt very strongly that John Kennedy was not the person who should be president of the United States. And I don't know whether you have the clipping, but I remember his statement after John Kennedy was nominated at

the convention, saying, “Well, I’ll vote for him, but I’ll hold my nose when I do it.” I believe a picture demonstrating his views accompanied the statement.

GREENE: Now that you mention that I remember that, that’s right. I haven’t seen that recently; that’s right.

GREEN: Then, there was the very strong antagonism of labor to John Kennedy—that was a violent opposition, and Wayne was very, very close to labor, and his support, politically, was based in the labor movement.

GREENE: When you say, again in your article, that labor opposition began to surface in July, and you said especially that of the nation’s two largest unions nationally...

GREEN: The Teamsters and the Machinists.

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GREENE: The Teamsters and the Machinists; that’s right. It was the Machinists who financed the Wayne Morse tapes used nationally against Kennedy. The centennial, by the way, was August 1 through 3, according to your notes and my notes, so this incident with Mrs. Nemer was earlier?

GREEN: No, shortly after the Oregon centennial celebration.

GREENE: Was it fairly soon after that, do you think? I should have been able to find the date when you announced to be his coordinator, but I couldn’t; I couldn’t find it anywhere.

GREEN: I just do not remember, but I would think it would have been September or early October because we felt that Drew Pearson article was just the opening shot, and we had to remove this obstacle. Also, Drew Pearson and Wayne Morse were very good friends.

GREENE: What do you remember about that centennial period, the visit he paid? I know you told me on the other tape about the—well, maybe you didn’t; maybe I’m only remembering it from your article—about the dinner when he came in and such an icy reception, “some people like him and some don’t,” and that was the end of the introduction.

GREEN: No, that was the introduction for John Kennedy at the labor convention. That was something I shall never forget. It had nothing to do with the dinner.

GREENE: Excuse me, I must be confused then.

GREEN: We went to a Seaside for the state labor convention.

GREENE: That was the third of August?

GREEN: I guess. Yes, yes.

GREENE: It was the end of the centennial.

GREEN: Rosy McDonald [Joseph D. McDonald] was the president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. It was his job to introduce Kennedy. It was in the hotel, and the room was packed. When we came in it was just the most frigid atmosphere I had ever experienced. And Rosy, I think his exact words were, "Well, our next speaker, some people like and some people don't. I give you Senator Kennedy." And there was just the required applause, you know just perfunctory. Kennedy threw away any prepared speech and just talked off the cuff. It was one of the best speeches I ever heard him give. He knew it was of critical importance. But he also was mad that he would be treated in that sort of way. After all, they had issued the invitation. I strongly suspect that Wayne had put a lot of pressure on the labor people by this time, telling them what an SOB Kennedy was and if they had any brains, they would stay away from him. But Kennedy really gave a great speech in terms of what his goals were and labor's goals, working laws.... I recall after the icy introduction and the frigid atmosphere, that he did

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receive a standing ovation. We had rooms in the hotel for the reception afterward. Many, most of the labor people came up, and an awful lot of them.... I think that, without any question....

GREENE: Turned it around.

GREEN: ...was one of early critical times in the campaign and one of the turning points.

GREENE: Do you remember talking to him about that afterwards, what his personal reaction to the whole thing was?

GREEN: Sure we did: quiet elation.

GREENE: I was wondering how a thing like that happens. It seems later in the campaign the advancing was so sophisticated that that kind of thing almost couldn't have happened. Do you remember anything about how the preparations for that kind of an appearance and....

GREEN: Well, there weren't the advance men who stage these phony rallies and stuff which I detest. There was none of that. One of the things that really attracted me to John Kennedy, and discouraged me in terms of Bob Kennedy, was the phoniness and the gimmicks, and he would never go out and wear an Indian hat on a reservation or something to just get his picture on page one. He just absolutely would not. Advance men did show up later in John Kennedy's campaign but in the early stages we met him at the airport, and there perhaps would be two or three people and the press, a half dozen of us around him—that was it, two or three reporters and three or four supporters. There are pictures to prove it.

GREENE: Would that be this late, too, as late as August do you think?

GREEN: Yes, August, 1959.

GREENE: Really? I would have thought by then that... No? Do you remember that dinner at the time of the centennial, which would have been the same trip out there, August 1?

GREEN: No, I really don't. I have this not, but...

GREENE: And the reception there? Those things don't.... The convention is the big thing.

GREEN: I remember having a—if I don't have it later on—I guess that August 2 was the reception that I had for him to invite leading Democrats to meet him at the home of my in-laws. It was a huge success. We had hundreds of people who came and went. I have an airport picture in the dining room, maybe then or twelve to greet him.

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GREENE: What do you remember, outside of the labor community which we've discussed, what kind of a response were you getting in your efforts to build support for him in Oregon in the early days?

GREEN: Well, the state AFL-CIO convention won a lot of support for him because a lot of individual working men who had been opposed suddenly decided they would support him.

GREENE: Outside of the labor community? The immediate labor community?

GREEN: No, in the labor movement. A lot of those people became strong supporters of his—the working union members—as a result of that speech. We visited towns and villages. We had coffee hours and introductions at

the reception and through other meetings we increased the number of active supporters. He had a natural support of Catholics, at least many of the Catholics, because there was a strong feeling at that time when others tried to make a religious issue against him that he was going to have the Pope take over. Any action like that would bring the reaction, so one of the strongest and broadest based segments of support was in the Catholic community. When we went to the Catholic schools or we went to a convent (and the sisters of course were all in their long robes and veils in those days) there was great enthusiasm. And then among my own political allies and my own supporters, I tried to make it possible for as many of them as quickly as possible to know him because Hubert Humphrey was obviously working too. I have another appointment coming in.

GREENE: Do you? Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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