

A. James Manchin Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 07/29/1964
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Biographical Note

A. James Manchin (1927-2003) was a West Virginia political figure, a worker in John F. Kennedy's 1960 Presidential campaign in West Virginia, and the State Director of the Farmer's Home Administration from 1961 to 1970. This interview focuses on the 1960 Democratic primary in West Virginia and West Virginians' views on the Kennedy administration's policies, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

Of

A. James Manchin

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Oral History Interview

with

A. JAMES MANCHIN

July 29, 1964
Clarksburg, West Virginia

By William L. Young

For the John F. Kennedy Library

YOUNG: Mr. Manchin, will you tell me how you first became interested in the possibilities of Senator (John F.) Kennedy as a presidential candidate?

MANCHIN: Of course, my interest goes back, Mr. Young, to 1946, when John F. Kennedy was first elected to the Congress of the United States. And then I read his book Profiles in Courage. As a school teacher I used that book as a text, and it was always amazing to me that the most important thing in John F. Kennedy's whole life was courage. And when they began to talk about him in 1956 as a vice-presidential candidate, then I knew truly that here was a man who could become president of the United States. So 1960, when they were talking about him running and the possibility of coming into the West Virginia primary, I joined hands with Judge (Robert E.) Hedrick and (Robert P.) Bob McDonough, and (James F.) Jim Haught, in a small room, and from that point on we did everything we could to see that John F. Kennedy would become president of the United States.

YOUNG: Well, as the primary campaign in West Virginia developed, what was your specific job?

MANCHIN: Of course, my specific job was traveling all over the state of West Virginia. I had no particular area. I was in charge of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.'s itinerary. I arranged speaking engagements for him. I introduced the president's brother, Teddy (Edward M. Kennedy). I introduced Bobby (Robert F. Kennedy). I introduced the president himself throughout the state of West Virginia. So my big job was to get crowds together, to get people together,

and do the introduction of the various candidates.

YOUNG: You did the introducing from the platform, yourself?

MANCHIN: I was the man who introduced President Kennedy, the now Senator Teddy Kennedy, and the now Attorney General Bob Kennedy, throughout the state of West Virginia.

YOUNG: Well, did you tell me before we started the interview that you were responsible for setting up Kennedy county organizations, in some instances?

MANCHIN: I did that, too. I did organize some of the southern counties and my own county of Marion.

YOUNG: Well, what kind of approval or disapproval did you meet with as you went into these counties? Could you give me your reaction in specific counties with respect to the ease or difficulty in setting up Kennedy organizations?

MANCHIN: Oh, we had no trouble in Marion County. We had a group of people very much interested.

YOUNG: Marion County is where Fairmont is.

MANCHIN: Fairmont is the county seat of Marion County. But take for instance Taylor County--I had a very difficult time. I must have made three or four trips there before I could find an adequate chairman, and I don't think we ever did find a good chairman that would take the responsibilities. I had the same problem in Lincoln County. And incidentally, Mr. Young, Lincoln County is one of the few counties that we lost in the primary.

But the big problem would be that people would not want to get involved in a presidential race. The local politicians were concerned with one thing, and that's control of the county courthouse. The White House was too far-removed, so a lot of them didn't want to get involved. Now that was one point. Another point would be that they were afraid of this religious issue and what it might do to the local candidate. So in the final analysis it was difficult to get the people to work on this project, because of their direct local interest; they felt that the White House was just a little too far away for them.

YOUNG: Well, I think you told me a story, before we started the interview, about an experience in Lincoln County. Could you repeat that?

MANCHIN: I've had two experiences in Lincoln County that I'd like to tell you about. I selected a man to be our county chairman down there. He was very happy to accept the job, he took the literature, everything seemed to be going along fine. About three weeks later I returned. It was late at night. I had just introduced John F. Kennedy in Logan County, West Virginia. I was exhausted, so I thought I'd stop by and visit with this individual. He saw me coming up the steps, he locked the door, and he hid behind the couch. I began to knock on the door. I said, "Please, please let me in, because I'm completely exhausted. I just want to talk." He refused to let me in. So, as I was leaving, I saw that on his truck he had about four big signs for Hubert Humphrey.

YOUNG: Did you ever find out why he changed his mind?

MANCHIN: I had no idea. Of course, he was a local politician running for office, and that might have had something to do with it.

YOUNG: You said you had another story.

MANCHIN: I introduced the president's brother, Teddy, in Lincoln County, on the steps of the courthouse there. There was a band playing, and Teddy wanted to know the name of that band. I just assumed, being in Hamlin, that it was the Hamlin High School band. So I said, "Teddy, that's Hamlin High School band." So in the process of his speech, he said, "I wish to commend the Hamlin High School band because I think that they play excellent music and they are one of the finest bands I've heard in the state of West Virginia." The band director jumped up and said, "We're not from Hamlin, we're from Guyan Valley, we don't like Hamlin, and we don't think we're going to vote for your brother." And Teddy turned to me and said, "Jimmy, you're fired; we don't need you anymore." So I almost got out of the campaign before I got started.

YOUNG: Well, did you accompany Senator Kennedy, then, as he went around the state? Could you tell me about some of your experiences with him?

MANCHIN: Well, down in Greenbrier County, three things that I shall never forget. We were in Ronceverte, West Virginia and the local groups were supposed to make arrangements for us. When we got there, there were no arrangements made. The principal of the high school was very much interested in John F. Kennedy, so he brought the band out. But other than that, that was the only thing organized.

So what to do? We had no platform. But there was a cow truck that had come in to the railroad station. They had taken out the cows. There was still manure in the bottom of the truck.

But we pulled that truck up to the platform. John F. Kennedy got on top of the hood; I got on after him. I introduced him there from the platform that had cow manure on the bottom of it--and incidentally, none of us were responsible for putting it there--but little children were gathered around, and I think that was one of the true lessons in democracy. Here is a distinguished United States senator from Massachusetts aspiring to be president of the United States, and it didn't disturb him one bit to be speaking from a platform which was a cow truck.

YOUNG: Did you have any other experiences of this nature?

MANCHIN: Well, there's one thing that I'll never forget in life's awful experience. We ran into these same situations everywhere we went, that there wasn't too much organization. So we had to get a chair, and I introduced the next president of the United States. He got up on that chair and he looked at me and he said, "After that introduction, I think maybe the wrong man is running for president; you should run for president." So, I'll never forget that; you can understand that.

And another point was in Huntington. I was to introduce Teddy there, and Senator Kennedy on the lawn of the Cabel County courthouse. After that I was to go to Montgomery, West Virginia and I had to have a car. So I asked one of the assistants there in the campaign if I could have a car, and he said, "No, we don't have any cars for you." So after I'd introduced the president and introduced Teddy, and we were walking down the street, the president said, "Well, how are you, Jimmy? Everything going fine?" I said, "Well, everything's all right." I addressed him as "Mr. President," even then. I said, "Things are going fine, but I want to get to Montgomery, and I don't have any car." He turned around to one of his assistants and he said, "You make sure that Jimmy gets a car, and sure that he has enough money, that he has something to eat, and that he has a place to stay."

So you can see how that certainly would touch a person. Here I was just a little schoolteacher, and here was a man of the caliber of John F. Kennedy that was deeply concerned with the welfare of everyone around him, no matter how big or how small. I think that is the true test of a man. It's not how you treat the people above you that counts, how you treat the people below you. This was a true test of John F. Kennedy's character. So those were the three big things that I shall never forget.

YOUNG: I'd like to go back to something you said a minute ago: that you frequently had difficulty at the county level because local politicians were more interested in the courthouse than the White House. And then many feared the religious issue. Were there any other reasons for local reluctance, that you ran into?

MANCHIN: Those were the two basic reasons. They liked John F. Kennedy. Of course, no one that had ever met John F. Kennedy could say otherwise; there wasn't a problem there. There wasn't a problem of some differences between--maybe someone wanted to support Lyndon Johnson (now President Johnson) or Hubert Humphrey; that wasn't the issue. The big thing was that I have found that people said, "We're interested in who's going to be the circuit clerk; we're interested in who's going to be sheriff; we're interested in who's going to be the judge--and if we get involved in something like that we may lose our county. And we don't want to do that; this is closer home to us." Now, I believe that that was the big underlying factor.

YOUNG: Well, did you find in any cases that the Humphrey organization had gotten there first?

MANCHIN: Very seldom. Very seldom, because there were a lot more people out working for John F. Kennedy. I don't mean paid people, I mean strictly volunteer people. I was a volunteer myself, I was a schoolteacher. Oh, I may have run into one or two cases where the Humphrey people were there first, but in most instances we got there first and Humphrey got there second, and in some counties they organized for Humphrey. But I would say once again, to recap, that a lot of people were afraid of what it would do, what John F. Kennedy's religion would do to the state ticket, what it would do to the governor or senators or our congressman or our local people. And, number two, people were more concerned with the local problems than they were in getting involved in the national problems.

YOUNG: Let's turn, then, to two other subjects. I'll ask you two questions, and then we'll try to sort them out. Since you followed Senator Kennedy all over the state, could you comment on the different appeal that he made in different sections of the state--because West Virginia, of course, is a state with three or four if not five or six major sections--and then after that, go into the effect of the president's religion in the campaign? Or would you take his appeal to the various sections of the state, first, if you could?

MANCHIN: Well, I've heard that, that where he'd be in a

section of the state which was predominantly coal mining, he'd appeal to the coal miners; where there was predominantly business complex that they would do that. But in all my travels with him throughout the state of West Virginia, the main issue that he drove home was, "Let's put West Virginia on the road; let us move West Virginia." And to me this was a basic appeal. He thought that under eight years of the previous administration, the state was stagnant, they were not moving ahead, the country was lagging behind.

He thought there wasn't enough industry in West Virginia, he thought they weren't getting their share of defense contracts, he thought that we were being ignored on the national level. And this was the big thing, the major issue that he always stressed: "Let us move West Virginia." And really, Mr. Young, this was an appeal to the businessman, to the coal miner, or to the farmer. This was my experience and I traveled with him throughout the state of West Virginia. And of course, he would talk particularly about some problem that we were facing in the coal mining industry as the result of mechanization--because that was the main audience. Not because he was making a special appeal, but he felt this was the kind of thing the people would be more interested in at this time, because this was the segment of people he was talking to.

But I don't think that it was just making an appeal to a coal miner in this section, and then saying something different to a man in another section, to try to play down one over the other. I think that he was basically concerned in keeping West Virginia from going any further into the poverty pockets, and to really move forward. This was the basic appeal he made all over the state of West Virginia.

YOUNG: Well, would you say something about your role, then, in setting up some of the speaking engagements for Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.?

MANCHIN: Well, I worked in Boone County; I set up many appointments there. I set up some appointments in Marion County. I would call some local people and ask them if we could arrange a nice meeting to bring the name-sake of Franklin D. Roosevelt (Sr.)--and you must be aware of the great popularity Franklin D. Roosevelt enjoyed in the state of West Virginia during his presidency--and we were very successful everywhere we went. I might say this, that we were so successful that we never had enough room in any of the buildings that we ever had our meetings. And this was my part.

I did introduce him. We had all types of people there. we'd have the Negro, the coal miner, the grocery clerk. I think that Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. played a tremendous part

in the victory of John F. Kennedy in West Virginia. Say what you please, Mr. Young, talk about the workers, talk about the brothers, talk about the sisters, talk about anybody, but what sold John F. Kennedy in West Virginia was the tremendous personality of John Fitzgerald Kennedy himself.

YOUNG: Do you feel then that the Harvard accent and the eastern mannerisms were an asset rather than a liability?

MANCHIN: Certainly not a liability. Anything that he would say, people had the feeling that here was a man that was genuinely concerned with them, that he talked to you and not at you; he talked with you. And he was a man with great human warmth. The accent, well, people. . . . You know how they would get amused anytime they hear a little different accent, but nevertheless that was no barrier. His warmth came through all.

YOUNG: Mr. Manchin, the national press made much, of course, of the religious issue. Did you notice a change in religion as an issue from the beginning of the campaign through to the end? Did it go through any kind of an evolutionary development?

MANCHIN: Well, I don't think it had played as big a part in the West Virginia primary as one would think-- let's say as compared to, from what I understand, (Alfred E.) Al Smith's campaign in 1928. There it reached the point of maybe even bodily harm, and people became really vicious. But I think in the primary in 1960 in West Virginia, it played some, because you have some of that deep-rooted prejudice against people and against certain religions.

I think that was an underlying factor, but let me say this, Mr. Young, it wasn't open. There was no open animosity and people wouldn't come out and say it--except in one case. I ran into it in Greenbrier County. A man says, "Manchin, how come all you Catholic boys are running around with John F. Kennedy? Are you Catholics trying to take over not only the state of West Virginia but the United States, and are you going to try to bring the Pope here?" Now, that was the only open incident in my three or four months that I campaigned with John F. Kennedy, that I noticed the religion issue. It was present, but I'd say it was present as an undercurrent. I can never remember when it was really out in the open, save this Greenbrier incident.

YOUNG: Do you remember what you told your friend?

MANCHIN: I told this friend--and I'm going to say it here--

this is what I told him: "I am not a Catholic. I'm a Jew. And Jesus Christ was a Jew. And you're the kind of man who crucified the Lord." Now, that's exactly what I told him.

YOUNG: That solved the problem, did it?

MANCHIN: That settled it; he moved away.

YOUNG: Well, you weren't aware, then, of any particular sermons directed against the president because of his religion?

MANCHIN: Oh, yes, I was. I was aware of that. Where I used to teach school, in Vienna, the Church of Christ made a definite move in that direction. The ministers were openly preaching sermons against John F. Kennedy. And they were distributing literature that was derogatory against the Catholic Church. They even brought in this situation in Puerto Rico where the priests were trying to tell the people of Puerto Rico what to do, how to vote, and how to run their government. And they were afraid that the same thing would happen in the United States.

So I was very well aware of that. And my answer to that was, "Well, that's exactly what these preachers are doing. They're telling their congregation how to vote, and they're using as an example what the priests are doing down in Puerto Rico." But I would say that this was the only group that I was aware of, that was passing out derogatory material and that were making sermons that were definitely not only anti-Kennedy but anti-Catholic in their entire intent.

YOUNG: Well, did you notice that any particular denominations looked with any more favor on President Kennedy--excluding the Catholic Church--in other words, some evaluation of Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarians, Episcopalians?

MANCHIN: Well, I'm unaware of that; I just never noticed it. Maybe it was because, Mr. Young, I was so busy getting things organized and introducing that I didn't get a lot of that undercurrent. I'm unaware of that.

YOUNG: Well, as you organized public meetings and political rallies around the state, did you have any difficulty finding clergymen who would participate?

MANCHIN: Never. We had on one occasion a Negro minister, on another occasion we had a Baptist minister, on another occasion we had a Methodist minister. And on those occasions where we couldn't get a Methodist or a

Baptist or any type of minister, I would give the invocation and the benediction, so we never had any trouble. And I never noticed that any of them were really prejudiced against coming and attending the meeting.

Oh, I take that back. I do recall an incident--I don't want to use names--a politician in Marion County who does a little ministry work, refused to give the benediction because he was afraid that he would become associated with the Kennedy campaign.

YOUNG: Not with Kennedy's politics but with Kennedy's religion?

MANCHIN: With Kennedy's religion, because he was a Democrat--or I think he is a Democrat.

YOUNG: Well, did you do much work with the volunteers, the housewives and amateurs in politics that came forward to help in the Kennedy campaign?

MANCHIN: No, I didn't do anything like that. Except I was successful in getting one volunteer. One of my assignments was to get Sam Huff, who at the time was with the New York Giants and is now with the Washington Redskins. He was all-pro defensive line backer, and well known throughout the United States. He happened to be a good friend of mine who lived in Farmington and grew up in my same home town. So, they asked me if I could get Sam Huff to endorse John F. Kennedy and get him to introduce Mr. Kennedy when he came to West Virginia. I said, "I don't know, because there might be a lot of personal things, and maybe the New York Giants concerned don't want their boys to get in politics."

So, it so happened that we were having a meeting at Monongah, West Virginia, which was the opening of the campaign. And we had Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. as our principal speaker. And who comes to the door but Sam Huff, and says, "I'm in town. Jimmy, have you got a ticket for me?" And I said, "I not only have a ticket for you, but I have a place front stage center. You come on up here and sit down right by us." So here he was. He showed up. I told them that we had Sam Huff with us and he would be the first to say what kind of a man John F. Kennedy is and what kind of a president he would make, and I think if he stands up here tonight, he'll endorse John F. Kennedy. So, he jumped and said, "We're going to support Kennedy and we're going to go all the way with him." So that was the only incident I can remember where I obtained a volunteer, but ordinarily that was not within my category of work.

YOUNG: Mr. Manchin, in summarizing the primary campaign in West Virginia, would you make some comment, then, on the difference between the Senator Humphrey and Senator Kennedy campaign in terms of technique, organization, personal appeal, policy issues, and that sort of thing?

MANCHIN: Well, I would say the biggest factor in the whole campaign was John F. Kennedy's technique. John F. Kennedy had the kind of personality, he had the kind of voice, he had the kind of emotion that appealed to the people. He got with them. Senator Humphrey--and I might add that I have a great admiration for Senator Humphrey--but his rapid fire delivery was not as well accepted in West Virginia, in my way of thinking, as the smooth way that Senator John F. Kennedy spoke. So to me it was basically a matter of personality, and John F. Kennedy was able to sell his personality just a little bit better than Hubert Humphrey. And I think that was one of the main differences.

Now as far as policy is concerned, I think that John F. Kennedy showed more real depth and understanding of the problems that faced the people of West Virginia than did Senator Humphrey. He brought home more about the mechanization of the coal mines and what must be done to assist these coal miners who were being displaced. He talked about these farm problems, what we could do to help the little farmer and maintain his way of life on the farm. He talked about bringing more industry into West Virginia. He made more issues, I think, than did Senator Humphrey. Now as far as the campaign itself was concerned, I don't think there's any doubt that Senator Kennedy's campaign was better organized. Because you had some excellent people running the campaign, and I think that all who were involved in this campaign realized that some of the good, strong people--now, not professional politicians--but good business people, schoolteachers, people who were really interested in good government, were really supporting John F. Kennedy.

You didn't have this type of people, on the whole, supporting Hubert Humphrey, and I think that was one of the reasons why the campaign, as far as John F. Kennedy went, was just a little bit smoother. Oh, they talk about a lot of money. Well, there's no doubt it takes a certain amount of money to get organized. But if you don't have a product to sell, it doesn't make any difference how much money you use trying to sell it, you're not going to sell it. So it's just this, that John F. Kennedy was able to sell himself, and in the final analysis this is what won the primary in West Virginia.

YOUNG: Mr. Manchin, before we move on to the Kennedy years

in the White House, do you have any anecdotes, stories, personal incidents, with respect to the late president and his visits to West Virginia, that you might want to include in the interview?

MANCHIN: Well, we took him to the Wood County Airport. . . .

YOUNG: That would be at Parkersburg.

MANCHIN: At Parkersburg. And before he went he said, "Jimmy, give me some inspiration that will make me go flying in air." And I looked at him and I said, "Mr. President, if I could climb to the highest mountain in West Virginia, I'd cut down the highest pine tree and hew it into a penstock, and dip it not into a river but into an ocean of ink, and write across the sky 'God Bless John F. Kennedy and elect him president of the United States.'" And he laughed and hollered and yelled and finally went off into the far blue yonder--is that how you say it? That was one of the things that I remember. It was always these little things. But I don't think that you could ever escape, Mr. Young, his warm humor and how he was able to laugh. And he was so easy to be with. I think that's the thing will live for me, will be with me forever.

YOUNG: Did you have any contacts with Senator Kennedy, then, after the inauguration?

MANCHIN: Oh, yes, I remember seeing him in Wheeling after he was president--when he came to Wheeling.

YOUNG: That was to campaign for Congressman (Cleveland M.) Bailey?

MANCHIN: Congressman Bailey. I was sitting in the front row--not on the platform--I was sitting down where the people are. And he walked down off the platform and came over to me, shook hands and picked up my son. And one thing he told me, he said, "Jimmy, Teddy did real good in Massachusetts, didn't he?" He knew that Teddy and I were real fond of one another. (Incidentally, I call my brothers "brother," and he began to call me "brother.") He says, "Teddy did real good." And that was the thing that he brought to my attention. And I said, "Yes, he did, Mr. President. Would it be all right if I go up to Massachusetts and campaign for him?"

YOUNG: Did you have any other contacts?

MANCHIN: I can't recall any more. I think that was the last

time that I had a chance to speak with him.

YOUNG: Mr. Manchin, let's go on, then, to the Kennedy years in the White House, with respect to policies which may or may not have helped West Virginia. You mentioned that Senator Kennedy as a candidate campaigned on the platform of attempting to preserve the small family farm. What New Frontier policies, what Kennedy policies had this in mind, or what Kennedy policies with this in mind were West Virginians aware of?

MANCHIN: Well, do you mean, Mr. Young, what he accomplished during his administration to maintain. . . ?

YOUNG: Or proposed to accomplish. Yes.

MANCHIN: Just take, for instance, our own agency. Not only are we talking, then, about family farms, but developing real communities.

YOUNG: What do you mean your own agency?

MANCHIN: I am state director of the Farmers Home Administration.

YOUNG: Farmers Home Administration.

MANCHIN: This is what I'm referring to. But prior to John F. Kennedy's time this was a little-known program that accomplished very little. It put in one water system in eight years.

YOUNG: In one farm you mean?

MANCHIN: In one community.

YOUNG: Oh, in one community.

MANCHIN: Since the advent of the New Frontier, we have put in seventeen in less than four years, as opposed to one in eight years. So that gives you one indication of his real interest. And, of course, President (Lyndon B.) Johnson is continuing. That gives you one instance where he wanted to keep the rural communities together. Our own programs have been enlarged to where we are now able to build houses for farm families, we are now able to take care of people who live in communities of twenty-five hundred or less, we have more money with which to work with these people. And as a result we're able to keep them on the farm. Because, while they had the initiative, they had the drive, they had

the determination, they were unable to get adequate funds to maintain this way of life. Now, it was not a gift. All that President Kennedy's program did was to permit them to open the door, and these people were able to walk through it.

YOUNG: You mentioned the way in which small farm rural communities are helped. Could you mention a way in which the individual isolated farmer living in the separate isolated farm house has been helped?

MANCHIN: Well, we had more money to help them buy livestock, to buy more land, to buy machines, to have fertilizers to use on the land--this is how we work with the individual farm families, and our allotments have been a lot bigger than previous to the Kennedy administration.

YOUNG: Was this, again, special attention being given to West Virginia, or was this a nation-wide program?

MANCHIN: Well, I would say, of course, this was a nation-wide program, that the whole country benefited. But we must look at it this way, Mr. Young. I don't think anybody--at least I didn't think that the president was going to have special programs to just help West Virginia. We like to feel that what helps West Virginia helps the nation, and what helps the nation helps West Virginia. But you recall he put in this food stamp plan in West Virginia and, I think--what is it? 30 or 40 percent more defense contracts for the state of West Virginia than we ever had before.

Now in those cases, we can see where he had showed a special preference to West Virginia, but I don't think that anyone would think that he should show some special privilege to West Virginia at the expense of the rest of the nation. I don't think any fair-minded citizen would think of that. And I think that John Kennedy certainly had kept his promise to the people of West Virginia, because I think that this state will consider him always as one of their own.

YOUNG: Well, do you think that the West Virginia farmers in general have been aware of the president's interest, or at least the interest of the federal government, in preserving the small family-type farm?

MANCHIN: Well, if I have anything to do with it, they should know about it; I've made them well aware of it.

YOUNG: Your own particular county of Marion, is it divided between mining and agriculture? What kind of a balance do you have there?

MANCHIN: Well, we look at it in this way. We have a lot of coal mines, but we also have a lot of rural villages. And when I speak of a rural village I speak of any community of twenty-five hundred people or less. And that's what our agency, the Farmers Home Administration, can work, in any community of twenty-five hundred or under. But in Marion County you just have Mannington and the city of Fairmont that are over the twenty-five hundred. So you can see that basically about half, then, of Marion County would be considered as rural. Now we have some agriculture, but there's more mining than there is agriculture. We have the small family farm. But in the rural communities we have put in seven new water systems serving some four thousand people in rural areas, who up to that time had never been serviced.

We just put in a project the other day that will take care of better than one thousand people in one area of Marion County that have been without water for the past twenty years. They had to carry their water. They had to carry it, they had cisterns, wells, but they always had an inadequate water supply. So as a result of this program-- and I truly say this--as a result of John F. Kennedy's tenure in the White House, and continuing under President Johnson, that these people are able to enjoy the facilities and blessings of life in rural West Virginia, that prior to that time they were unable to do so.

YOUNG: Mr. Manchin, you've already partly answered the next question, which was going to be, "Do you think that West Virginians were pleased with the New Frontier?" Did they feel that the president kept his promises, or was there at any point any disappointment? You've mentioned, of course, the food stamp plan and your own agency which deals with rural communities. Could you comment on any other Kennedy policies in the domestic area which had any special bearing on West Virginia?

MANCHIN: Well, of course, we talked about these defense contracts that came into West Virginia. And, of course, all the programs that he sponsored--for instance, your medical care for the aged--all these programs that he was advancing, certainly would have been of particular interest to the people of West Virginia. But, Mr. Young, when you ask me a question like that, I am going to admit that I could not be objective on any kind of question like that, because to me I've heard nothing but praise for John F. Kennedy. And, of course, I probably would, because my ears were always open to this. I didn't hear too much criticism against John F. Kennedy. Maybe it's the group of people I associated with; we're all good Kennedy people.

YOUNG: Well, that answers the next question, which was going to be, "Was there any, perhaps, criticism or, if not criticism, any disappointment with the Kennedy presidency?"

MANCHIN: Well, I've answered that. I can say without any hesitation that I heard no criticism. And if I did, I wouldn't even listen to it anyway, because I was 100 percent for John Fitzgerald Kennedy. There's only one little criticism, and it was this cheap oil coming into the country that people talked about.

YOUNG: Residual oil?

MANCHIN: Residual oil was coming into the country. The people were saying it was hurting the coal industry. Now, if I'd say any one thing, this was the big thing. But on the other hand, the president of the United States had to look at the whole country and not a particular section, and I don't think that he ever made that commitment to any state that he was going to help them at the detriment of some other. And I think that every fair-minded citizen of West Virginia would certainly not expect that of any man.

Because of the fact that John F. Kennedy gave praise to West Virginia even though they say, "Well, what does that do?" I think that gave us a new pride in West Virginia that we never enjoyed before. As I think West Virginia became the center of the world as a result of John F. Kennedy, his praise for our great mountain state. And to me if he had accomplished nothing more, and gave us a new feeling that we really belonged in the sunshine of the states, that was enough for me. I could live on that for a long time, in addition to the other good things that he has accomplished for the state of West Virginia.

YOUNG: Well, do you feel that the people, the volunteers who were active for Kennedy, have retained an interest in politics that they perhaps previously did not have?

MANCHIN: Oh, I would say some of them. But if it was just on a volunteer basis, I'd say a lot of them haven't maintained that interest. Those who have been in politics and interested in politics before, have maintained the interest. Others who came in because of the personal magnetism of John F. Kennedy, and they were dedicated and devoted to a man, I don't think many of them will continue to be active in politics. But I think as a result of him getting them into the political scene to begin with, a lot more have come in and

are interested in politics today, that otherwise would not have been.

YOUNG: Well, did you observe that the volunteers came from any particular section or class or religious grouping?

MANCHIN: No, they were general.

YOUNG: Seemed to be a pretty good cross section.

MANCHIN: A cross section. You had schoolteachers, you had Catholics, you had Baptists, you had Negroes, you had some people who professed the Jewish belief, you had rich, you had poor, you had university professors, you had coal miners--so it was just a cross section of the people of West Virginia that were really interested in John F. Kennedy.

YOUNG: Well, you've mentioned that West Virginia enjoyed some moments of national glory, of course, in the campaign. Do you think that the national press, in general, treated the Humphrey-Kennedy campaign fairly, and treated West Virginia fairly?

MANCHIN: Well, I became disturbed somewhat that they kept referring to West Virginia as "poverty-stricken." Everybody got the impression that we didn't know what a pair of shoes looked like in West Virginia. But when you get into the limelight, Mr. Young, there are certain hardships that you have to go through, and certain distasteful things that you have to accept. You can't have everything. But I think that the spotlight that was put on us made us realize what our own ills were, what we should do to correct them, and I think that when you balance the whole program, more good came out of that primary than harm. So they poked a little fun, but you're not much of a man if you can't accept a little fun.

YOUNG: Well, if we move from the primary to the general election, did you observe that Democrats that had been fighting each other in the primary closed ranks, then, for the general election in the fall of 1960?

MANCHIN: I would say very much so. After the primary was over--you must realize, though, that there was a convention in between; they were still not closed until after the convention--but after the convention, I would say that all of them joined hands in trying to put over this ticket.

Of course, still there were some who placed more emphasis on the governor's race, more emphasis on a particular local race than they did on the presidency of the United States. Because in some counties the local ticket or the governor would run far ahead of that of the president, so that might lead you to believe that maybe they were concentrating more on your local and your state-wide races than they were on the presidency of the United States. But I think in general that we did unite, and the fact that we carried the state, the fact that all the electoral votes went to John F. Kennedy, should speak loud and clear that for all practical purposes we were all together in West Virginia.

YOUNG: Well, did you notice a reluctance on the part of any Democrats to be associated with the national ticket in the fall election because of the feeling, perhaps, that the issue of religion had not really been done away with yet?

MANCHIN: I didn't notice that too much. If we're speaking that maybe someone wanted to divorce himself from the presidential race because they were afraid that the Catholic on the ticket would drag them down--no, I don't think that occurred. Oh, it might have within the committees at times and on lesser politicians, but I would say basically all the major candidates running, the biggest part of them, had endorsed the candidacy of John F. Kennedy.

Now, I did go to several local meetings where a judge or a sheriff campaigning would say, "Well, let's put this young man in," or. . . . They would very seldom refer to the name of Kennedy, but there was no open animosity. If it was, it was, a lot of it, under cover. And they apparently did a pretty good job of keeping it under cover, because you cannot argue, Mr. Young, with success. And the fact that we were successful in West Virginia would indicate that we were fairly well close together.

YOUNG: Any reluctance, then, to support the national ticket would be a mild foot dragging rather than overt hostility to Kennedy?

MANCHIN: I would say so. At least, this was my observations. Once again I might say this, I was too busy working to observe much.

YOUNG: Well, what particular sections of the state or what particular counties that you were responsible for, Mr. Manchin, do you feel that you did the best job in? Which ones did you find more interesting to work in?

MANCHIN: Well, I would say every county in West Virginia that I went into, I found it interesting. And of course I did a lot of work in my own county of Marion. I worked some through the Little Kanawha region; that takes in Ritchie County and Wood County, and those were difficult counties because even though some of them are registered Democratic, they vote Republican.

YOUNG: Are those agricultural counties?

MANCHIN: Ritchie County, I would say, and Wirt County are basically rural agricultural counties. And Wood County is, of course, an industrial county-- Parkersburg. But, of course, you would enjoy working more in your own home section. But you see I've been a schoolteacher; I've taught in about eight or nine counties in West Virginia. I know a lot of my former students who even assisted me in the campaign and took a direct interest. I'd say outside of that section that I mentioned there, I found it enjoyable to work all over.

Of course, in Doddridge County you did meet some hostility, basically because of no issue; they weren't voting against John F. Kennedy because he was Catholic or anything else, but they are just conservative Republican people, and you could understand that.

YOUNG: Would this be true of the Little Kanawha area too?

MANCHIN: I would say that would be true.

YOUNG: You mentioned that in some areas the Democratic registration was a little bit deceptive--in the Little Kanawha country.

MANCHIN: Well, that's right--Wood County, Ohio County. Ohio County has more of a registration of Democrats, if you check into it, I don't know how many more Democrats registered than Republicans; yet it predominantly goes Republican--although they did support John F. Kennedy.

YOUNG: Well, did you find any cases of overwhelming Republican support for President Kennedy from Republican Catholics that might normally have voted for Mr. Nixon, the regular Republican candidate?

MANCHIN: I'd say that this would be true in the northern panhandle. I'd say that there were generally in Ohio County a lot of Republicans who were Catholic that did support John F. Kennedy. Well, the fact is that he carried Ohio County, and Ohio County usually goes Republican.

YOUNG: Mr. Manchin, as we bring this interview to a close, do you have any other comments on your broad experience in both the primary and in the general election, or any reaction to the Kennedy presidency with respect to West Virginia, anything that we haven't covered that you would like to comment on?

MANCHIN: I would just like to say this, Mr. Young, how much I appreciate this opportunity. And I would say that if nothing else ever occurred in my lifetime such as this West Virginia primary 1960, it will be enough to last me an entire lifetime. I shall never forget it and I shall never forget the great John F. Kennedy and my association with him. Because, as I want to say once again, he was concerned with every detail, and he was the kind of man that would never push you aside, but he walked side by side with all types of people. And I think that this was the great lesson that we learned from John F. Kennedy.

He left us a legend, a legend to work and love one another. And I think that if we can accept that, we shall truly live in the memory of John Fitzgerald Kennedy for all times. Because he loved people, and I think that is why he was revered all over the world. I shall always hold this close to my heart.

YOUNG: I perhaps should ask just one more question. We've talked largely about domestic policies in West Virginia. Did you notice any particular reaction among your fellow West Virginians with respect to broader Kennedy policies, on things, for instance, such as Cuba, the Bay of Pigs, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. You did mention earlier, of course, Medicare. Just a word about reaction on foreign policy, or did this seem to be of much concern in West Virginia?

MANCHIN: Well, of course, it was of some concern. But on the Bay of Pigs, a lot of people felt that, being the man that John F. Kennedy was, he accepted a lot of responsibility on his shoulders there for things that happened prior to his administration, and that he wasn't totally responsible for. I've heard a lot of that, that they didn't really blame John F. Kennedy for what happened at the Bay of Pigs; that this was something that happened prior to the time the president had stepped into it. And when he did and it went wrong, he accepted the full blame for it. Once again that speaks for the character of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.