Creator: Wendell H. Pigman  
Interviewer: Roberta Greene  
Date of Interview: June 9, 1969  
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.  
Length: 14 pages

Biographical Note  
Wendell H. Pigman was Legislative assistant for Senator Robert F. Kennedy, 1964 - 1968. This interview covers Robert F. Kennedy’s [RFK] decision to run for President in 1968, the 1968 campaign in Iowa, and contact with the National Masonic Organization, among other topics.

Access  
Open

Usage Restrictions  
According to the deed of gift signed December 18, 1970, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

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 The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form.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.

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
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Wendell H. Pigman

to the
Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program,
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, Wendell H. Pigman, 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 Wendell H. Pigman

Date October 12, 1970

Accepted James B. Rhoads

Archivist of the United States

Date 12-18-70
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The 1968 campaign and Robert F. Kennedy’s [RFK] decision to run for President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Recommendations for leadership posts in Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Recommendations for organizing the 1968 campaign in Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>State of the McCarthy campaign in Iowa and their feelings towards Kennedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Contact with people at the National Masonic Organization and agricultural support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Humphrey takes Johnson’s place: effects on the Kennedy campaign in Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Contact and support from the Kennedy organization in Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>End of time with the 1968 campaign and health problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oral History Interview

with

WENDELL PIGMAN

June 9, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By Roberta Greene

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program of the Kennedy Library

GREENE: Mr. Pigman, would you explain, please, when you first learned that Robert Kennedy was considering running for the presidency in 1968?

PIGMAN: Let me do that in a slightly different format. I was legislative assistant to the Senator. In July, the first of July of 1967, I became seriously ill and was out of the office for about a month and a half with that illness. I returned briefly to the office at the end of August and in early September and then went on a leave of absence, which involved a study grant at Princeton University to study pollution control and related matters. I had known all the time that the '68 campaign was coming up and most of my thoughts, and some of the thoughts that I had exchanged with people such as Adam Walinsky, on the campaign revolved about the question of how in the world Robert Kennedy--well, one--how Robert Kennedy could support President [Lyndon Baines] Johnson in campaigning; whether he would in fact campaign for the President; and two, that if he did campaign for the President how Adam Walinsky and Peter [Edelman] and others would write speeches for the campaign. It would seem a rather improbable, a very difficult thing for them to do in these circumstances because congenitally none of us, of course, believed in the Johnson policy and were diametrically opposed to many of the points that the Johnson administration was making. So that this was the context, and it was not so much--at least at that stage, this was August, September--one of thinking of Robert Kennedy getting in. He had given no indication that he was considering it, and it just did not seem in the cards. I'm probably more of an establishment politician than Adam Walinsky would be in that I tend to accept--I tended to accept at that time, at least--the idea that it would be impossible to defeat an incumbent President in a party primary. So that that didn't seem like a realistic possibility, and whatever else Robert Kennedy was, he was a realist and so I shared that feeling. In any event, I went to Princeton in the fall and was asked a number of times what Robert Kennedy planned to do--by students, graduate students, up there. I would
usually say that I didn't see how it would be possible to take on the administration; as far as I knew he wasn't going to run.

Now, at this time, in January, in late January and early February, I took a trip to California that lasted about two weeks in which I spent a great deal of time in the Los Angeles area. And I talked to a couple of major southern California Democratic leaders at the time, both—one was Eugene Wyman and the other name I can't remember right now, but I can get my notes and get that name—both of them were very much in a quandry over the [Eugene J.] McCarthy situation, that is the Senator McCarthy situation, who was now actively campaigning for the nomination. And they wondered what their position would be and they wanted to know what Robert Kennedy's position would be. Now Robert Kennedy had been out there and had already talked to Wyman, but Wyman was interested in finding out what was going on, how the thinking was coming. And both of them made the point that Jesse Unruh was not the single sole source of power in the California Democratic Party, that it was considerably more fragmented. At least they seemed to think Kennedy thought Unruh was undisputed. And my advice to them—I told them I was not in the position to tell them what Robert Kennedy would do, I could only guess as well as others. I was not there on an official visit but rather was out doing some business and was glad to talk to them but could only guess. And I had advised them at the time that since it looked like Robert Kennedy was not going to come in, at least for the time being, to go ahead and tie up with McCarthy and wait and see. If Kennedy came in they could switch their allegiance. I told them I thought that McCarthy didn't stand much of a chance. But, on the other hand, in view of the very strong feeling that they had, and the feeling that they indicated against Johnson, and that their constituencies were against Johnson, that it seemed to make sense to back the only candidate who was out in the field at the time.

Now I talked to a number of other personal friends and was, one, interested in the strong support for Kennedy; two, interested in the fact that they seemed very disappointed in Kennedy. They wanted to know what was wrong, why wasn't he getting out and getting into the fight. And at the time, I would have to go through the routine of telling them that it just looked sort of impossible to beat Johnson. And I would cite the fact that even McCarthy himself had stated at the beginning that he wasn't going in because he seriously thought that he was going to be able to overturn Johnson, but rather that he thought the issue ought to be discussed. But as a result of my trip out there, this company's conversations reinforced my view that there was this strong anti-Johnson sentiment, that the people who believed in Robert Kennedy expected more of him than to sit by at this time since he could be a serious opponent to Johnson, whereas McCarthy was still not regarded as a serious opponent. I just happen to recall another time when the primary came up, and this was at a meeting of one of the reform Democratic clubs down below 23rd Street on Madison Avenue—it must have been May or so, May or so of '67—at which [Alan] Scotty Campbell from Syracuse University and [Allard K.] Lowenstein and I appeared as speakers
to this reform Democratic club. I was there for the Senator. I spoke on... It was sort of a, it was supposed to be a comment about state problems or current problems. And Lowenstein spoke on the war and the issue of the war, a very fiery speech. He struck me at the time as being somewhat of a firebrand, and advocated at that time a third party effort. And I spoke after Lowenstein and I said I thought that the third... I made the point to the group that a third party candidacy was a foolish thing to do; it was bound to end in loss, that it never really succeeded in U.S. history, and that it would be better to try to get a good Republican who might take a different course, such as [Nelson R.] Rockefeller; but that to throw their efforts behind a third party candidate would be to waste them. And Scotty Campbell got up and made this point again. Both of us made the point. And I don't know whether this led to a change in Lowenstein's thinking, but Lowenstein eventually, of course, got involved. He is the only member of sort of the new politics who is also in the Establishment in that he believes you've got to work within the two party system. And he has been damned for it. But this is just a sidelight on some of these aspects leading down to the campaign.

Anyway, after I came back from the California trip, I was very worked up about what was taking place. It became increasingly clear that not only was--at least to me it became clear--that Kennedy had to get into the primary, and in summary my conclusion was that he would gain even if he lost in the primary battle. That is to say that it wouldn't hurt to lose the primary; it would hurt more not to enter the fight because the people that were his supporters were at a loss at this time, and in the long run his position would, in a historical sense, would be looked at as being totally incorrect for not entering the lists. And so I went to see him and I got about twenty minutes, maybe not even that long since most conversations with Robert Kennedy tend to be very quick. But I gave him what I considered to be my... One, I gave him my view of what the situation was, told him that the supporters were waiting for him to do something. And that, two, the Johnson administration was not going to be able to deal with the social crises which he felt so strongly about, nor was it going to do anything about the war. And McCarthy was obviously not going to be able to beat Johnson; so that if anyone possibly had a chance that it was Kennedy and that even if he lost, that he still should get into it, that he owed it to his supporters. And I said that this was a fight, the sort of fight where you might lose the battle and win the war in the long run this way. And I got up and I then went back and typed up the essence of my remarks and gave a copy to [Joseph] Joe Dolan and, I believe, a copy to Frank Mankiewics and the other one to the Senator. And I basically typed it myself because I didn't think it was the sort of thing which ought to circulate around the office. Now apparently by that time--oh incidentally, at the end of the discussion he said, "Well, I agree with you but my advisors tell me otherwise, advise me to do otherwise," which was the conclusion. Now this is prior to the time of the McCarthy... It was about two weeks before the McCarthy run in the New Hampshire primary and I don't know, I'm sure there were many factors leading to his entry into it, but I don't know other... I felt
that I had to do it, to indicate that my support was for him. I probably, as I say, was more conservative than either Peter Edelman or Adam Walinsky of the younger staff members on this issue. I think both of them had spoken to him before on this. My remarks may have had influence because I think the Senator realized that I was somewhat, I guess just about the only WASP male staff member. I think he realized that I was slightly more conservative, so for me to make this sort of, to advise him that way may have had an effect, I don't know.

And then he got shortly thereafterwards... Well, I was as shocked as everyone else when--and surprised I really should say rather than shocked--when President Johnson withdrew. I don't think I was surprised at the McCarthy victory in New Hampshire, partially because I knew a good deal about New Hampshire. My wife had been in Massachusetts politics and had talked, had known a good many New Hampshire people; so I don't know that his victory surprised me that much. The Senator then announced that he would enter the primaries. I had no knowledge that he was going to change his mind. I was not privy to the conferences. I do recall that Joe Dolan said, I think after--it was right after I spoke to him--Joe thought that about that time the Senator was going to come in. In any event, the announcement came that he was going to enter and I went to the conference, the press conference at the Caucus Room in the Senate Office Building and, of course, offered to drop my work at Princeton and to work in the campaign. And in the campaign my role was a limited one. Again for health reasons, I could not be an advance man in the strictest sense of the word. What I did do was I had had a number of contacts in Iowa and went out to Iowa to help organize the Kennedy forces out there and was out there for about three weeks talking to party leaders and finding out who the best people were to put on the team, and keeping in contact with headquarters, and advising them on how things were shaping up out there. And at the end of that, that basically concluded the--I shouldn't say basically, I'm just trying to think if I did anything else--that was the end of the work that I did in the campaign. I made no more trips. And that was it. So the next... Oh, I also offered some assistance with names of people in Los Angeles which may or may not have been used since... I fed them into the right sources and whether they were drawn on I don't know. But I think that about concludes my role in the campaign. And, of course, I was not involved in the speech writing or anything like that.

GREENE: Who were your recommendations for leadership posts in Iowa?

PIGMAN: I can't remember the names now because there were... One of the people was [Lawrence] Larry Scalise, who was the former Attorney General. But the way it wound up was that one of the questions was whether [Harold E.] Hughes would be, Governor Hughes, would be, would come out early enough for Kennedy. And I thought that perhaps if they picked somebody who would push Hughes a little bit more than others that he would be better. I think the person that they wound up choosing was a person who was more favorable to Hughes. Scalise had had some problems
with the Governor and so he was not appointed in the end. And the reason was fairly legitimate, in reflection, and that was that they chose to ride with Governor Hughes all the way and count on his support at the right time. I thought it would be useful to have Hughes come out--be one of the early people for Kennedy. But in the state-wide primaries and district primaries--there are a number of steps in the election of delegates out there--McCarthy showed a lot of strength and Hughes didn't choose to announce one way or the other, perhaps not to divide his Democratic following. Hughes has problems in Iowa because he has to draw on Republicans as well as Democrats to get elected, and he was riding it out without indicating a preference, I think, as long as he could. And, of course, by the time the choice came up at the Convention, the Senator was dead and he had an easier choice at that point. But he had not, although he was sympathetic to the Senator, he had not come out with a public announcement. And what we were hoping to get--at least I was hoping to get--was a statement similar to those of the Governors of Vermont and Maine in favor of Kennedy. That's why I'd recommended Scalise. It was not only a question of recommending a leader for the "Kennedy for President" groups in Iowa; I was also picking regional chairmen. And there was a slate of names, and I'd have to go back and pull my notes from that to see who they were. I tend to discard stuff that I don't have to remember.

GREENE: William Sueppel was the--I don't know if I'm saying that correctly, William S-u-e-p-p-e-l--was the man that finally did become chairman of the Kennedy organization. What do you remember about him?

PIGMAN: That does not sound like the name of the guy who was initially designated as the chairman of the Kennedy forces there. But what may have happened was that they may have gone through several choices. I'm sure that--I mean in a typical campaigning situation like this--I was not the only source of information. John Culver is a Congressman from Iowa and a close friend of Ted's, [Edward M.] Ted Kennedy's, and I know that John was in contact with Ted regularly, advising him. And there was also another fellow whose name I can't remember who went out at roughly the same time I did and had been a power in Iowa politics, and I think he talked to the Governor and he made some recommendations too. So there were a number of people who were reporting on what was going on. Because unlike the John Kennedy campaign, this was all done at the last minute and sort of posthaste. But Sueppel does not sound like the name that it started out with. But it could be. They go through several channels. I'll just have to look and see my records on that.

GREENE: Do you know who the Governor favored?

PIGMAN: Well, the Governor--I'm assuming that the guy who was appointed, the first appointment, who could have been Sueppel, but I believe it was somebody else, was someone who was acceptable to the Governor. And I gathered, although it was never said specifically, that Scalise
was not favorable, acceptable to the Governor. Whether it was put on that cold a basis, or whether it was just that he'd prefer the other guy, I don't know. But because the Governor had had a reputation, at least among local Iowa Democrats, of not being particularly careful about local Democrats—that is to say being more concerned about Hughes than being concerned about the party in Iowa, the Democratic Party—I thought perhaps that somebody who could push Hughes a little bit, might be better on this but •••

GREENE: Do you know anything about [Edward A.] Ed McDermott? Was that one of the people that the Governor •

PIGMAN: Yes, Ed is the guy who went out from here. Ed came back from Europe, and Ed went and talked to the Governor. He wasn't the guy who was selected but he was the one who was the other guy who was out there roughly at the same time I was, on a five day trip to talk to people and then came back. He knew the Governor well and had been, I don't know whether it was a National Committeeman or what, but he had an official ••• He was big in the '60 campaign and he made contacts out there to find out, had made some recommendations as to who should be in charge.

GREENE: Did you see the Governor personally at all?

PIGMAN: No, I did not see Governor Hughes. I know that Ed did, but I did not.

GREENE: What were some of your recommendations as far as organizing the campaign in Iowa? What were some of the groups they should be courting and people that they should be working on?

PIGMAN: Well, at this stage the main problem was to select the leaders or the leader and the people that he would work with. There was no question as to who would be involved. We went through in various discussions, you know, the obvious sort of groups that should be set up, and I can't recall at the time. But that wasn't regarded as the focus of the effort. The focus of the effort at this time was to get somebody designated. See McCarthy had already designated a chairman for his drive, and it was felt rather clearly by the ••• There was the first of the elections—I guess it was the election of delegates to the state convention from the precinct, for the precinct, delegates to the county conventions, I guess it was, at the precinct level—was about to take place. And the question was should there be a Kennedy spokesman and leader prior to that? Should we rush in and get somebody appointed before that vote was taken, or should we wait because there was a chance that McCarthy was going to do very well—his people had been active—should we wait until after the vote before appointing? And we had some conversations between Ted and I. I talked to Ted some, and it was somewhat of a quandary. I pointed out the two sides to the issue and I don't recall that I came out with a strong recommendation because he wasn't at all clear that ••• It was clear that nothing much could be done other than if he came out almost
immediately with a guy who would head up the Kennedy forces, at least at that stage, and made a statement that they were heading for the primary in hope that you could pick up some people. But the conclusion in the end on that was that it would be too late. We checked it out with a number of leaders around Iowa and they just thought it was too late to do much good. So that we let that pass by and then got into appointment of a leader. You don't tell local party people who are smart what sort of organization they ought to set up and whether they need a citizens organization or if they need to count rank and file. And these people were smart and were involving a wide range of support. It wasn't just, it wasn't party hacks only. The Iowa Democratic Party is strongly based in the college communities of which there are a good many; as a matter of fact, a number of the county chairmen are college professors. And the one group that you have to make an appeal to is labor, get them involved, but I didn't think it was my position to tell anybody there how to organize, other than to just to talk about getting the thing started and then you could turn to the decisions as to what had to be done. Most of us knew what were the initial steps that you do to set up headquarters in the major cities and get the names of people who are interested and handle it on that basis. But we weren't, in that stage that you're describing of going into organization, beyond the stage of getting the structure. And the structure—it was felt that once the structure was there that the questions that you are raising would tend to resolve themselves. And unless it's clear, at least it seemed to me in reflection, unless it's clear that they weren't setting up an organization that would be effective, they had largely the say in these things. You know, American politics is confederation politics and you don't send out an army and organize states except under very unusual conditions. What you do is to select a few people who are there and who largely know how to run things and let them run it, and back them, and work with them. Exceptions are when you have a very weak area in which there is nothing, or in which you have an organization that is so totally misdirected or directed in the wrong direction, that you just don't want to work with it at all. That was not the case in Iowa. Iowa is surprisingly liberal, I don't know whether I should say surprisingly, but for an Easterner who a while ago didn't know that much about it. It's got a long, even a radical tradition from the sort of the Populist days in agriculture, and I was very, very much surprised at the role of the colleges in Iowa politics. Many of the Iowa towns are based on colleges and universities, and these people in the colleges are very much involved in the Party and they tend to be county chairmen, as I said before. So anyway, I think that's about it on the campaign.

GREENE: Could I just ask you about the state of the McCarthy campaign when you got out there? Were they fairly well organized?

PIGMAN: Yes, they were. They were quite, quite, well organized. And they had a chairman and they were active and actually had a slate of leaders, and throughout, they had designated their precinct delegates, and it was clear. You could vote for a McCarthy candidate in your local precinct election without any problem, whereas
the Kennedy delegates were known but there was no official recognition at that point and that was a problem. In other words, the McCarthy people had been at work, and actually they had some of the... They had drawn on some of the college kids from the eastern Iowa colleges who had gone up to--was it Wisconsin where there was the big primary? It was the one that Kennedy didn't enter--I believe Wisconsin or Michigan.

GREENE: No, Indiana.

PIGMAN: And they had worked up there. And the feeling again in all our discussions was whatever we did, we didn't want to alienate them. We wanted to leave open avenues for getting together at a certain point in time, figuring that McCarthy wouldn't last that long, and we didn't want to hurt any chances of effecting a reconciliation. McCarthy was organized in the state at the time. When I say organized, he had slates, he had candidates. You didn't see a lot of McCarthy stuff on the street. I went around Des Moines quite a bit and went through Ames and Iowa City and it wasn't a question of seeing campaign stuff there. There were large, I guess, anti-war groups who had coalesced to work with the McCarthy forces at that time, since he was clearly in the field and Kennedy had only just entered.

GREENE: What was the attitude towards Kennedy among the leadership in the McCarthy camp? Did you feel there was much hope for a coalition, or at least cooperation, later on? Or was it fairly bitter because of his late entry?

PIGMAN: The people I talked to who were in the McCarthy camp--and it may be that I talked to people who would not have fallen in the category of being extremists on this or who were very anti-Kennedy because it wouldn't have been useful. But a number of names were suggested, people that I talked with. It seems to me that there was a gal who was a Kennedy supporter, oh, I'm sorry, a McCarthy supporter but also was reasonably open about this; so I don't recall there being a lot of bitterness about it. I'm not sure that the group that I was talking to were the sort of people who would get bitter about it. I think more they would recognize that it hurt his chances, and that things had gone a certain way and they were, in some cases, committed, but that was too bad if that was the way it was.

They were very sympathetic to Kennedy; you must remember that the polls in Iowa, the Iowa poll was one of the first polls to show the strength of the support for Kennedy against Johnson. At the meeting of the Democratic parties of the Midwest up in South Dakota--was it in early, or spring of '67, or something like that--they really banged Johnson. I mean they gave it to him hard and they were very dissatisfied with him. It was a total fiasco for the Party. It just indicated the degree to which he had lost the farm states for farm policy reasons, for one. We talked about the war at some length, and by the time I got out there, they said you were beginning to
hear it in the taverns, you know, which is a good indication of sentiment. Up until recently you could always find dissidence on the college campuses and in intellectual circles, but you were beginning to get it in the taverns where guys were saying... You know, it was a big thing when somebody died in combat in Iowa in the sense that the Governor would personally write. And since the communities tend to be small, a lot of people know the guy who died and it has, I suspect, more impact than it does on a metropolitan area such as New York where with a population of six or seven million—who knows the guy? He's just another face in the crowd. So the war was having an impact by then. But Iowa was early in its dislike for Johnson, and Kennedy retained very high popularity in the '66 election in which Republicans did quite well, generally. Culver hung on, I think, Robert Kennedy went out and campaigned for him. Culver went and got through and Neal Smith got through too, both of whom were supported by Kennedy. He had a strong base of popularity. McCarthy was less well known, obviously, and also... But the reason that they went with him I think was, or the groups that had gone with him went with him because of the war and because of the dissatisfaction with the Johnson administration. I think the Iowans were the... Things like credibility gap struck the Iowans a lot earlier than perhaps they do other parts of the country. Maybe in the East we're used to people lying, and they're not so used to people lying out in Iowa. I don't know, but whatever the factors were they were damn dissatisfied and it showed up early, and they got out and backed McCarthy when he entered the lists. I suspect that Hughes would have gone for Kennedy at the Convention, but that's hindsight. It's based on the feeling that I don't think anyone really believed that Humphrey could win at the Convention. I think there was... Of the political leaders there, they felt that he was not going to win but that there was nobody else there and McCarthy was not seen as a viable alternative. And I think that had Kennedy been alive he would have had a good chance had he gone into the election. When I had spoken to him urging him to get in, I told him that I thought that if he were to run, that the place that he would win would be in the cities and he might lose everything else, but he could win in the cities and take it on that basis. And suburbs didn't like him basically, but that was something that he had to expect. That was not insurmountable by any means.

GREENE: Do you know of any active efforts to come to a coalition with McCarthy, if not on the state level then at the county level?

PIGMAN: You mean in Iowa?

GREENE: Yes.

PIGMAN: No. I don't think they had reached that stage at the... What was needed in Iowa at the time, I think we felt was a... Kennedy had to win one or two of the votes that would be taken prior to the state convention to show his strength, and at that time then it might be possible to coalesce, but it had not reached the stage of condition. McCarthy had the strength at the time, and that had been what had been
demonstrated so far. As I recall he won that first precinct election, not by a wide margin but he won it. And then on the next stage up, I think it was the county level, Kennedy won and at that time then would have been the time to begin to try to coalesce. But I was out of Iowa by that time so I can't really speak to that. I do know that I've seen comments to the contrary ever since, but everything I heard during the campaign was... Nothing negative was said about McCarthy. I was continually irritated by McCarthy's comments about Kennedy. There was clear recognition among the people that I talked to during the campaign that we would have to get together with the McCarthy people at some time. We never felt we would get the young people who had initially committed themselves because there's a sort of a taking of a vow of commitment at that age, and once you're committed you just don't change. It's one of the unfortunate, maybe it's unfortunate, maybe it's a good thing; it depends what your cause is. But it's not a good thing in politics in the long run I guess because if your candidate dies, it can be terribly destructive; if they are committed to a shattered image, as I believe McCarthy has become, it also has grave consequences. But we didn't expect to pick up them, but we did expect that a number of the McCarthy people would come around. I mean, my father, for example, who has voted Democratic in just about every election—he's an intellectual, he supported Norman Thomas in '32 and worked for Norman Thomas because he felt that he was the only one that offered a real alternative in that election. He started out backing McCarthy: not that he believed that he would win necessarily. And, of course, when we went up for the funeral in New York, he asked me who we were going to support now. He asked me and my wife, who had worked for Leverett Saltonstall for about ten years, and also Paul Goulding from Claiborne Pell's office. And we said that we tended to think we would probably support Humphrey and he could not understand that. At that point, he said, "Well, why won't you support McCarthy? Humphrey has sold his soul to Johnson and how can you possibly do that?" And we told him that we just didn't think that McCarthy was presidential timber, that we had watched him at work in the Senate and had seen him operate—that for better or worse he was a lazy Senator, that there had been issues on which... He had the Indian Affairs Subcommittee, I believe it was, for two years and didn't do much. I shouldn't say "much"; he didn't do anything with it. And Kennedy came in and became concerned about the Indians and McCarthy was peaked because Kennedy was taking the Indian issue away from him. Well, he wasn't taking it away from him; he hadn't done anything with it. And on top of that there was this sort of personal jealousy which has expressed itself from time to time. And anyway all these factors wound up saying that we wouldn't want him to be president. We didn't like Humphrey but he seemed like the only one that you could trust to any degree at that point in what there was among... My father couldn't understand that and although he wound up voting for Humphrey for other reasons, which I won't discuss here, he congenitally at least was a McCarthy supporter.

GREENE: Did you have any contact with Oren Staley or other people from the National Masonic Organization?
PIGMAN: Yes, I did. I flew down with Larry Scalise and also [Edward] Ed Mezvinsky to contact Oren Staley because Oren Staley had contacted me in the Kennedy office some time prior to the campaign. They had wanted support from Robert Kennedy perhaps a year and a half before the campaign. At the time Staley was in bad repute on account of the, not the boycott, but withholding crops from market, and he had actually been up. . . . Well, there was the issue— I mean Kennedy represented at that time an urban state, largely city people who were concerned about the price of farm goods and one wondered . . . . Well, it was difficult for him to take a position of wanting to see food prices go up as an urban senator, and Staley's activities were also of questionable legal standing. Subsequently the Justice Department indicted him but—or, I'm sorry, what did they issue? They issued an injunction, I guess it was. But it was resolved. In any event, when I first arrived out in Iowa, I flew down to see Staley's headquarters and talked to Staley. It was strictly on a hush hush basis because, one, he was also in contact with the Humphrey forces. His organization had taken the position of at least of not publicly backing any faction. On the other hand he was quite interested in Kennedy and had a good deal of organization. He had an impressive communications network and had organizers pretty much throughout the Midwest. He was well organized in Iowa certainly, and in Nebraska as well. And he more or less offered to have his people plug Kennedy for the Iowa precinct primary—they agreed to go down the line for him—and certainly for the subsequent primary. And so I notified Ted [Kennedy] of this offer and strictly on a hush hush basis. I talked to [David W.] Dave Burke in detail on this and Burke was very interested. And I don't know exactly what the working relationships were beyond that, but I assume that they worked fairly closely with Staley subsequently; at least that was my impression. But Staley was sympathetic and also at that time I think the Johnson administration and the Justice Department dropped the charges against the NFO [National Farmers Organization]; so it cleared any question of legal standing. Then the only question was, was there a conflict between backing a farm organization that was trying to raise food prices as opposed to the largely urban constituencies that Kennedy would appeal to. But Staley is a wheeler dealer and was interested in Kennedy. There are not many people that have organization. I mean here it was in the southwest corner of Iowa, and he had his address list computerized and telephone reports daily from all his people, and it was just, you know, very impressive. You couldn't help but. . . . Hell, if the DNC [Democratic National Committee] operated on one nineteenth of what he had, you'd really take over the country overnight. He's a fantastic organizer, and you have to give him a lot of credit. There are questions as to whether he's "taking" his contributors or not, the people who are members. I don't know. I only know that the question has arisen as to whether he's as pure with his handling of finances as he should be. But you still have to admire the guy for taking over a tough project and doing something that—it's like organizing the Teamsters; it's a tough job. Each one is an independent. . . . The smaller farmer, at least, has a rough shake and he needs the help.
GREENE: Was there any big shake up after Humphrey came in in place of Johnson? Did that make a big difference as far as Kennedy's support was concerned in Iowa?

PIGMAN: I can't speak to Iowa in particular. I mean you just have to. . . . That happened. . . . Now let's see, Johnson pulled out after Kennedy got in and after I left Iowa, I believe.

GREENE: Oh, I see.

PIGMAN: So that he was still the. . . . The Johnson man in Iowa was a guy who's been on. . . . He showed up at some of the Johnson White House dinners. I can't think of his name. I met him at the--was it a Duke Ellington show, or something like that in Des Moines? And they were all there, this guy was there, head of the sort of the Johnson forces in Iowa. Well, there was clearly a Johnson man there and somebody to be reckoned with.

GREENE: Did you have any contact with either Lex Hawkins or with [Clark R.] Rasmussen?

PIGMAN: That's who it is, Lex Hawkins. Lex Hawkins was the Johnson leader, and I met him. I mean it was just, "Hello, Lex"--what was it? Lex or Les?

GREENE: Lex, I think.

PIGMAN: And I was introduced to him by Scalise at this function and that was about it.

GREENE: He was overtly for Johnson at that point because I understand there was some question, particularly after Johnson dropped out, about . . .

PIGMAN: Well, I don't know whether his allegiance changed after Johnson dropped out, but I do know that at that time that he was recognized as the Johnson man and that also--I think I noted a week later, and mentioned it to the people of Iowa--that he showed up at a White House dinner so that. . . . But he seemed clearly the guy who was heading up forces for Johnson.

GREENE: What about . . .

PIGMAN: Also the county agents, we got the county--I'm sorry, I should . . . . On the Johnson. . . . We were warned, I know we were warned; we were warned by Oren Lee Staley that the Agriculture Department county agents were all being organized as Johnson forces to go to work. You know this is the old, old story. I don't know if it's effective but it's a numerous force of people who go to work for "ins". And I don't know if they
change according to administration but they tend to plug the administration with farmers; it's big in farm communities anyway.

GREENE: I was going to ask you about this fellow Rasmussen, the state Democratic chairman? Did you contact him at all?

PIGMAN: No, I did not. The name came up and he was not--I'm just trying to recall why, I don't...

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

PIGMAN: I don't know. I can't.

GREENE: As I understand it, he favored Kennedy but he was hesitant about coming out publicly with his support, and that was something that they were working on.

PIGMAN: What's his full name?

GREENE: That's what I can't remember, the first name. Rasmussen is the second.

PIGMAN: For whatever reason--and it may be that he was out of town, I'm not sure--he was not one of the people that I talked to.

GREENE: Who was your main contact in the Kennedy organization in Washington while you were out there?

PIGMAN: Well, the guy I was working... The guy who sent me out was [David] Dave Hackett and the person that I tended to report to was [K.] Dun Gifford or to Dave Burke, and once or twice I talked to Ted [Kennedy] himself on this. But that was the contact.

GREENE: Was there any problem at any point in getting enough attention for Iowa materials, or anything else in the early organizational period?

PIGMAN: No. Again, at the stage that I was there, we were involved with the problem of designating leadership. And questions of supplies and money and all that stuff really hadn't come up. I mean they were there and we... For example, I was asked, you know, what would be the story on money and the like, but I said I just couldn't answer that right now and it wasn't time yet to concern ourselves with that. There was more to concern ourselves with getting a structure set up.

GREENE: And in that respect did you get enough support or willingness...

PIGMAN: Yes. I was asked to give just about a daily report in the evening, and I would do so and tell them what the situation was and what the problems were. And I don't recall any... I mean other than
getting into the headquarters—via the telephone, once you got there, within reason—we had decent communication. No, I don't think there was a... We couldn't, let me put it this way, I do recall that as in anything else, it was difficult to get decisions made, but if you've worked around long enough then that's not unusual. So it didn't strike me as unusual at that time that... I mean they had strategy board meetings each evening and there were many states that had to be considered. At times I felt that it would have been more helpful to get a decision right away than to wait maybe a day or two, but I hadn't known it otherwise in situations like this; so I didn't expect it to be different.

GREENE: Is there anything else on the campaign?

PIGMAN: No. I think that's about it. I, as I say, I was going to work up in New Jersey, the next place. And there was a good friend of mine that was going to be up there and I offered to work for him, but then for a variety of reasons I guess, he was pulled out, and it never materialized. I also was considerably tired after—I was quite tired after my Iowa trip and I did not have the physical energy that first year that I've gradually developed. And so a combination of that and a combination of finding the right slot to... I have a problem of having to go into the hospital in the evening usually twice or three times a week for twelve, ten or twelve hours, and that causes... This had to be scheduled at certain particular hospitals so it caused problems, and it meant that I couldn't be as free swinging as I would have liked to have been. And so I may not have pushed as hard as I might have otherwise to have gotten in and done something then. I did offer to work down here, it seems to me, but nothing developed on it. Again, it was a question... In those days I was working about an eight hour day and I would not put in much more time than that because of my physical limitations, and that's a detriment in a campaign. Let's say that not in any self-pitying way, but it's a fact. And you just have to recognize that it means that in a campaign you really have to be at a desk or to be on your job and be available all the time. And it takes a great deal of energy and I didn't have that much. I managed to do it in Iowa, but I sort of rested up for a while after that and never became involved after that.

GREENE: How are you on time?

PIGMAN: I probably ought to, let's see, we've been at it about an hour and a half or for an hour, at least. I think that completes the campaign stuff unless you have other specific questions on the campaign.

GREENE: No. I have questions on the Senate office, but if you're...

PIGMAN: Yes. Let's do that at another time.

GREENE: Sure, that's fine.