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Biographical Note

Colbert, political editor of the *Boston Post* and treasurer and member of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (1957-1980), discusses John F. Kennedy's (JFK) 1946 congressional campaign, the effects of JFK's 1958 Senate victory on the Massachusetts Democratic Party, and the 1956 Massachusetts Democratic State Committee chairmanship battle, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

with

James G. Colbert

April 16, 1964
Boston, Massachusetts

By Edwin Martin

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MARTIN: The following is an interview with James Colbert, unpaid member and treasurer of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and also the former political editor of the *Boston Post*, which went out of existence in 1956. Jim, you had a long career in political life in the writing and in participation also in Boston. Can you tell me when you first met the President [John F. Kennedy]?

COLBERT: The first time I met John F. Kennedy was while I was covering a birthday luncheon at the Parker House, in honor of the late John F. Fitzgerald [John Francis "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald], after whom President Kennedy was named. I believe, Ed, that was in 1945. It was the first time that John Kennedy had come back to Boston after he had been reported missing and lost in the Pacific. He flew here to attend the luncheon for his grandfather. His plane was late on arriving and he reached the Parker House midway through the luncheon. He received a terrific ovation from the persons at the luncheon and his appearance was the highlight of the day for his grandfather. I met him at that luncheon. He was thin; he was wasted; he was worn from his experience in the Pacific. I didn't know then that he would ever run for public office but that was the first time I met him.

MARTIN: Well then, later you became active in any of his campaigns?

COLBERT: Yes, I was active in his campaign of 1946 when he was running for Congress and was making his first political campaign. I covered his campaign and I worked with him.

MARTIN: What were you doing on the *Post* at the time?

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COLBERT: I was the City Hall reporter for the *Post*, at that time.

MARTIN: Who was mayor?

COLBERT: In 1946 James M. Curley [James Michael Curley] was mayor. He was also congressman and John Kennedy was running for the congressional seat which Curley was giving up because he was the Mayor.

MARTIN: Jim, what kind of a district was that that Jack Kennedy decided to run for Congress in?

COLBERT: It was largely what you would call a poor and moderate income district, Ed. It took in Charlestown, East Boston, Cambridge, the North End, the West End, part of the South End. I believe it also took in the Ward 22 section of Brighton. It was a district that contained a large number of Italo-American voters in East Boston and in the North End, a substantial number of Irish-American voters out in Brighton and Cambridge, and quite a cross section and other sections of the districts such as the West End and the South End.

MARTIN: Was it kind of up for grabs at the time?

COLBERT: Yes, it was. There was a rather large field running. Mayor Neville [Michael J. Neville] of Cambridge was running; a former City Counselor, Joseph Russo was running; John Cotter [John F. Cotter], who is now dead and who had been the secretary to Curley in Congress and who had been a sort of acting congressman was running. It was up for grabs. Curley didn't live in the district. He moved in and ran for the seat in 1942 when Tom Eliot [Thomas Hopkinson Eliot] of Cambridge gave it up; either gave it up or I guess stepped aside when he discovered that Curley was going to run. With Curley giving up the seat, it was up for grabs.

MARTIN: Wasn't this something new in Boston political life to take a young World War II hero, rich, Harvard trained, to put him in an area like that?

COLBERT: It was new and almost unprecedented in a district such as that. Up to that time the theory was to run for Congress you had to serve an apprenticeship in the state legislature, perhaps starting in the House of Representatives working

your way up to the Senate and then eventually running for Congress. It was almost unheard of at that time that a young man who had never held any previous public office would run for Congress, and as I recall that was the issue that was used against John Kennedy in 1946.

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MARTIN: Well then, apparently there was some resentment from the so-called pros in the district?

COLBERT: Yes, the old line politicians—there was a good deal of criticism of Jack Kennedy by persons like the then-city counselor, James S. Coffey of East Boston and by supporters of Neville, by supporters of Cotter, by supporters of Russo.

MARTIN: In this new departure of Boston politics, Jim, it would require a candidate like John Kennedy to bring around him some sort of a new blood, a new type of worker or volunteer.

COLBERT: Yes, John Kennedy of course was a new breed of political candidate in Massachusetts. I don't think the voters had ever seen anybody quite like John Kennedy before 1946. He did have a great many enthusiastic young men and women who hadn't previously taken part in politics and who got out and worked with him and helped him. He also had a few experienced old pros with him, too, Ed.

MARTIN: Who were some of those?

COLBERT: Well, Joe Kane [Joseph Kane] was one. I don't imagine there was any more professional pro or experienced politician than Joe Kane. I suppose, in a sense, I was another.

MARTIN: Jim, you knew the President's, grandfather, his maternal grandfather, "Honey Fitz."

COLBERT: Yes, I did.

MARTIN: Did he get active in that first fight?

COLBERT: I don't think he did very much in that first fight. It was a mistaken impression that some people think that John F. Fitzgerald ran the fight; some people think Joseph P. Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] ran the fight. I want to tell you the one who ran it was John F. Kennedy. He made the decisions. He listened to the ideas of his father and I think, probably to a lesser extent, to his grandfather and the advice that I know about his getting he disregarded. He made his own decisions which, as I say, were frequently contrary to what older people thought he should do.

MARTIN: There was some idea that "Honey Fitz" sort of held court in the Bellevue at that time and that John Kennedy would go up to see him for advice from time to time.

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COLBERT: Well, if he did, I didn't know about it at the time. It's possible that he did. But I do know, Ed, that he made his own decisions and he ran his own campaign and nobody else made his decisions or told him what to do.

MARTIN: What was the feeling of the press then? I believe the *Post* then was the dominant paper.

COLBERT: It would be. This was of course the Democratic primary, Ed, and the *Post* was the Democratic newspaper in Boston. I think that the attitude of the newspapers was that they were glad to see somebody like John F. Kennedy come along and run for Congress and get into politics. He was a very clean young man with an outstanding war record, a Harvard graduate, and I think that the newspapers felt that the Democratic party in Massachusetts needed this type of young man, that the state itself needed him.

MARTIN: The type of campaign he ran apparently was quite a new departure, it seems to me. I'm from an area different from yours, Jim, but looking back into the early accounts of some of those Curley fights there was the professional rumormonger and there was the hard-boiled ward boss that doled out the patronage. The whole structure of Kennedy's campaign represented a new shift.

COLBERT: Yes, that's right. Jack Kennedy ran a strictly positive campaign. Up to that time, I think the common practice was that the candidate, to be successful, had to attack his opponent, had to disparage him, had to discredit him. My recollection is that Jack Kennedy made no criticism, made no attacks upon any of his opponents, that he concentrated entirely upon his own candidacy and it proved to be a very successful strategy.

MARTIN: What would you say for a young man starting off in politics like John Kennedy, what would you say was one of his drawbacks or failings?

COLBERT: Do you mean what do I think one of John Kennedy's drawbacks and failings were?

MARTIN: Yes. Was he a good speaker?

COLBERT: No, he developed into a good speaker. He was just a fair speaker in 1946. He grew up in politics. I wouldn't say he was a good speaker. He was almost a little shy and reticent in 1946. I think that he developed a great deal in the two

years of his first term in Congress. He developed very, very rapidly. I would say that probably his

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greatest drawback in 1946 was his own shyness and reticence. It was my impression at the time that he would not have entered politics except for the fact that his brother, Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.], who had planned a public career, had been killed. If Joe had lived, if he had not been killed in the war, then Jack Kennedy probably would have gone into either newspaper work or some form of academic life. That was my impression at that time. He was not a natural politician in my judgment. He developed into one of the outstanding politicians of all time, but he wasn't one in 1946.

MARTIN: Would you say that he might have been somewhat politically naive?

COLBERT: He was indeed politically naive.

MARTIN: Because of this, wasn't he running a risk that he might be taking advice from the wrong people and bad advice?

COLBERT: I don't think that was any real risk. Jack Kennedy, as I said, made his own decisions and whatever advice was given to him he weighed it very, very carefully. An example of his being naive—in 1946, when he was running a strictly conservative and positive campaign and was talking about himself and not attacking any of his opponents, he found it very difficult to understand why he should be the subject of attack. And he was not philosophical about that as he was to be later in his life, when he learned more about politics. The idea that you couldn't run for public office without being attacked was something that the just couldn't understand in 1946.

MARTIN: In '46 the return of World War II veterans, they certainly appeared to take good advantage of that. I can remember I was living in East Boston, getting reprints from the *Readers' Digest* on articles of his war service, his heroism in the Pacific.

COLBERT: The *Readers' Digest* had written, had published an excellent article on his heroism after the PT boat which he skippered was sunk and copies of that article were distributed, I think, to every voter in the congressional district in that campaign.

MARTIN: Jim, you're a Harvard graduate.

COLBERT: I am.

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MARTIN: Did you have any associations at all with the Kennedys? Let's see, that would be perhaps in Joe's era.

COLBERT: No. It was a long time after Joe and quite a bit before Jack.

MARTIN: I don't mean the father.

COLBERT: I graduated in 1932. No, I had no association of any kind with the Kennedy family until my very informal and very brief meeting with Jack Kennedy at his grandfather's birthday luncheon, which as I say, I believe was in 1945. The first real association I had with him was in 1946 and in the spring of 1946, the Primary of 1946. Because a great many soldiers were still overseas, Ed, they needed time to get the ballots to them. My recollection was that the Primary in 1946 was held on June 18. It was not held in September as it is now. So this was a spring campaign. In a way it was a difficult campaign because people were accustomed to voting in September, not in June. One of the things Jack Kennedy had to do was to persuade the people to come out and vote.

MARTIN: Which he apparently did.

COLBERT: He did indeed.

MARTIN: Do you remember the size of the vote? Of course it was a big field and it was a pretty...

COLBERT: I don't remember the size of the vote, Ed. The thing I do remember was that Jack Kennedy received almost as many votes as all his opponents put together.

MARTIN: Going on from the '46 campaign. Of course he went down to Washington. Did you ever have occasion to go down there to see him, Jim?

COLBERT: Yes, I saw him two or three times. Several times I saw him in Washington and I saw him here in Boston. We met occasionally at the Ritz. I met with him when he told me in 1952 he had decided to run for the United States Senate against Henry Cabot Lodge. He had no serious contests. I don't think he had any contests at all for reelection to Congress in either 1948 or 1950. If he did, it was only token opposition. My recollection is he was unopposed both times, which would indicate the impression that he made

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in two years. That's rather unusual for a freshman congressman to get a free ride the next time around—the first time you stand for reelection.

MARTIN: Jim, over the Kennedy years in Boston, in state politics, there is no question

that you were the outstanding political columnist on the most important paper in the state. When he told you about his decision to buck Lodge for the Senate seat, what was your reaction to that?

COLBERT: I was rather afraid at the time that he couldn't win, to be honest about it. I wasn't sure whether he was making his move too early. He had been in Congress six years. Lodge had been a terrific vote-getter. My recollection is that Lodge had never been defeated. In 1946 when John Kennedy was elected congressman, Lodge, who had resigned his seat in the United States Senate, and then had come back to run again, defeated David I. Walsh, who had been one of the great figures in Massachusetts political history, by something over 300,000 votes. Of course that was a Republican trend in the 1946 election, but Lodge had also defeated Curley, Lodge had established himself. I felt at the time that Jack was tackling a pretty tough customer.

MARTIN: It also meant that he had a ballot on a statewide basis and built some sort of a...

COLBERT: Yes, his political activity up to that time had been confined to a congressional district and a rather small compact, geographically compact, congressional district.

MARTIN: Well, even today for somebody to launch a statewide campaign from a congressional seat is pretty unusual.

COLBERT: Well, it's not unusual. That has been done. Other people have done it, not with as much success as he did it.

MARTIN: I know Curtis [Laurence Curtis] tried.

COLBERT: Yes, Curtis tried in 1962 but was unable to get the endorsement of the Republican State Convention, and was defeated by George Lodge [George Cabot Lodge] in the Primary.

MARTIN: This might be a good point to ask you. You followed the President's youngest brother [Edward M. Kennedy] in the beginnings of his early political career.

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COLBERT: Yes, I did.

MARTIN: How would you compare his start with that of the President's?

COLBERT: I would say that as a result of the part which Ted Kennedy had taken in his brother's campaign and particularly in his brother's 1960 presidential

campaign, that Ted Kennedy in 1962, when he began his own political career, was a far more finished politician than John F. Kennedy was in 1946 or even in 1952.

MARTIN: But when in your association with the President did you reach any conclusion that he would go any further than a Senate seat?

COLBERT: Of course in 1954 he was very seriously ill and at that time we were afraid that he was going to die. If you recall, he went into a hospital for a very serious operation, as I recall, in the fall of 1954 during the election campaign here in Massachusetts. At that time we were more concerned whether he was going to survive his operation than whether he was going to run for higher office. I began to think along in 1956; as a matter of fact, I wrote an article, a column, in 1955 urging John Kennedy as the Democratic nominee for vice president. He didn't think too much of the idea at the time but then in 1956 he did run against Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] for the nomination and was lucky enough to be defeated for it.

MARTIN: Why do you say lucky?

COLBERT: Had he been nominated to team up with Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] in 1956, I think Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] would still have been reelected and reelected very handily and I think he was lucky politically. Maybe it would have been a great deal better for him if he had got the nomination. I rather suspect that if John Kennedy had received the vice presidential nomination in 1956 and had teamed up with Adlai Stevenson and they had been defeated badly, as I believe they would have been, that John Kennedy would have lost some of his glamour, and would have had much less appeal in 1960 and might have had to delay his bid for the presidential nomination. An unsuccessful vice president candidate, unless he makes a remarkable showing, is not usually good presidential timber although Lodge is trying to show otherwise.

MARTIN: Jim, during John Kennedy's career in the Congress, there were many occasions when he took a somewhat unpopular view, particularly in regard to some of

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the legislative bills on the New England area, and I have in mind the St. Lawrence Seaway. That seemed to be quite unpopular. What was the *Post's* position on that?

COLBERT: My recollection is that the *Post* was against the St. Lawrence Seaway. I think that John Kennedy took the position on that that he had a choice between voting for what he felt was best for the nation and in the long run it wouldn't hurt Massachusetts to the extent that most people thought it would. I think probably the stand that John Kennedy took in Congress that aroused the greatest feeling in Boston was when he refused to sign a petition for a pardon for James M. Curley who was then in Danbury Penitentiary. A petition was circulated; I believe John McCormack [John William

McCormack] and other Democratic leaders in Massachusetts wanted to get a petition together, wanted to get the entire Massachusetts delegation to sign it and submit it to the then President Truman [Harry S. Truman] seeking a pardon for Curley which he later got, and John Kennedy declined to sign it. That didn't strike a very responsive cord with some of Curley's close friends, but there was no indication that it ever really hurt the then congressman.

MARTIN: At the time, wasn't Mayor Curley using as a means of gaining some sympathy, a line from Shakespeare, "the quality of mercy?"

COLBERT: Curley was using about every means he could to get sympathy but at the time that John Kennedy refused to sign that petition, Curley was in jail.

MARTIN: Jim, when the President was running for a second term in the United States Senate, did you cover the Convention preceding that?

COLBERT: The Republican and Democratic state conventions? I covered both of them, yes.

MARTIN: What was unusual about the Republican convention? I understand that was pretty much of a hot contest, wasn't it?

COLBERT: The Republican leaders at that time had selected a rather prominent, aristocratic old Yankee of great wealth to run against John F. Kennedy and be his opponent in the 1958 campaign. Everything had been set up to nominate this man as the Republican candidate against Kennedy. They started a roll call of the Senatorial districts and after the roll call had been started, they learned that the prospective nominee's wife intended to divorce him. While the balloting was going on they tried to exact an agreement from his wife

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that she wouldn't divorce him. She refused to make any such agreement. They dumped the aristocratic, old Yankee candidate and switched in a hurry to Vincent Celeste [Vincent J. Celeste] of East Boston. I don't think the candidate himself—he didn't want to get in the fight in the first place. They persuaded him; they importuned him and he agreed to get into it and then after he did get into it, they cut his legs off, because his wife was going to divorce him and I don't think he ever really knew whatever happened to him. They then gave the nomination to Vincent Celeste, a Republican from East Boston who couldn't get elected to the state legislature, much less the United States Senate, but he turned out to be the hatchet man for the Republican ticket in that election. He made violent political attacks upon Jack Kennedy but they had no effect whatever.

MARTIN: But in a campaign like that when you have such great popularity as John Kennedy, to have a candidate on the order of Vincent Celeste come up against

you, Jim, isn't that disadvantageous?

COLBERT: It is disadvantageous in a sense. The big problem that Senator Kennedy had in 1958 was to try to convince his supporters and the voters that he had a contest and I think he's the only candidate in my memory who ever asked political writers, including me, to please say he had a fight.

MARTIN: That campaign, of course, total effort was put in to get out the vote and was quite successful.

COLBERT: It was very successful. Actually John F. Kennedy's campaign in 1958 and his success in getting out the vote in Massachusetts resulted in a Democratic landslide. Foster Furcolo, who at the start appeared to have a hard fight for reelection to a second term, won reelection by a quarter of a million votes. His plurality in 1958 was about twice as large as it had been in 1956 and there was no question whatever, that this was due to the vote that Kennedy brought out and it is my recollection that as a result of the campaign that John Kennedy made in 1958, that that produced the first Democratic State Senate in the history of Massachusetts. We had had a 20/20 State Senate prior to that in 1948 but the first time that the Democrats ever gained control of the State Senate and of both branches of the state legislature in Massachusetts was as a result of John F. Kennedy's efforts in the 1958 campaign, which gives you some indication, Ed, of the impact that he had on the political picture in the state.

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MARTIN: When you say total effort, you also have got to add to it the total family effort on the part of the Kennedys.

COLBERT: Yes, the total family effort, but the point that I'm making is that a terrific number of candidates at all political levels for the legislature, up even to the Governor, in 1958 were carried into office on the coattails of John F. Kennedy.

MARTIN: That's amazing.

COLBERT: It's true.

MARTIN: Jim, you've witnessed and participated in many, many political highlights in Massachusetts history. One of them seems to stand out and that was the famous fight for the control of the Democratic State Committee. Can you tell us about that?

COLBERT: Well, that's something I'd prefer to forget, Ed. But as long as you bring it up, I'll tell you something about it. In 1956, just about this time of the year, I

wrote an article in the *Post* urging that John W. McCormack, then the Democratic leader of Congress, be the “favorite son” candidate for president from Massachusetts. I wrote the column more as a tribute to John McCormack than anything else. It snowballed; we got a great response to it. I wrote a second article and a third one and suddenly found myself under attack by the A.D.A. [Americans for Democratic Action] and by certain elements of the Stevenson group, and without realizing it, I had backed into a fight to make McCormack the “favorite son” candidate. Other groups, as a result of my article, began a drive for write-in votes for McCormack and having precipitated it, I and other people on the *Post* felt that we had an obligation, a responsibility to go on and carry the thing through. We had quite a fight in the 1956 presidential primary for write-in votes for John McCormack and he defeated Stevenson on the popularity poll about three to two. During the campaign I saw statements from various Democratic leaders in Massachusetts supporting John McCormack for the “favorite son” nomination. My recollection is that one of those who gave me a statement endorsing the idea as being a “favorite son,” first ballot candidate was John Kennedy. I think he did, although of course he was all out with Adlai Stevenson.

During the course of that campaign, I went to William H. Burke [William H. Burke, Jr.] who was then the chairman of the Democratic State Committee. I asked him for a statement endorsing John McCormack as

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a “favorite son” candidate for President. He told me that as Chairman of the Democratic State Committee he felt that he should stay neutral. I told him that that was a lot of nonsense, but of course if he was to stay neutral, he should make a statement paying tribute to John McCormack and urging all Democrats in the state to support him. He did, and I remarked in the conversation that if it caused any feeling against him when he ran for the reelection as the Chairman of the Democratic State Committee that we at the *Post* would support him, never thinking that anything would come of it. As a result of Burke’s endorsement of McCormack he became involved in an argument with some of the A.D.A. leaders, as I recall it, and he made some disparaging remarks about Adlai Stevenson.

Later, after the presidential primary, I would say some time in May, I was in Washington in connection with a special congressional hearing on a row which erupted at that time, as you recall, Ed, between the Shuberts and the *Post* over some of the reviews by Elliot Norton, and the Shuberts tried to dictate and insisted that Norton could only write favorable reviews about their shows. Congressman O’Neil [Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neil, Jr.] introduced an order for an investigation and they appointed a special subcommittee to investigate it.

While I was in Washington one afternoon, I went around to Senator Kennedy’s office to see him. He had just come back, I think, from a session of the Senate. He asked me to wait and said that he would drive me back to my hotel. I was staying at the Statler Hotel and he was going to a speaking engagement at the Mayflower. My recollection is that he was driving a rather small Ford, I think it was a Ford convertible. He drove me back and we talked pleasantly about a great many things. During the conversation, he told me that he was going to oppose Bill Burke for reelection as the Democratic State Committee Chairman. I expressed surprise and told him that I was committed to support Burke for reelection. He said

that he hadn't realized that. I told him that I thought he was interpreting some of the things Burke said wrongly and I explained to him that I had been the one that had been responsible for Burke making the statement. Senator Kennedy and I at the time were very friendly and we agreed that whatever fight developed that he would not say anything detrimental about the *Post* or make any real public fight and we wouldn't make any criticism of him. We parted very warmly and I came back to Boston.

I think about the following Monday he went up to Pittsfield and he was speaking before a Democratic audience at the main hotel in Pittsfield.

MARTIN: That was the Wendell.

COLBERT: The Wendell Sheraton, as I recall, the Wendell. He was talking up there and my understanding is that

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he prefaced his remarks by saying that he was talking off the record. He evidently thought that there were no reporters present, or if there were any, that they would honor his request that his remarks be off the record. In the course of his remarks he said that John Fox, the then-publisher of the *Boston Post*, was trying to get control of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts. That may have been true. I don't think it was. I think that Fox undoubtedly would have liked to have had control of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts, but I think that he had so many other troubles at the time that he didn't have opportunity even to think about that although he may have done something that John Kennedy knew about over the weekend that I didn't know. At any rate that story was published. I think it led every paper in Massachusetts on that afternoon.

As you know, John Fox was not too beloved, Ed, by the other newspaper publishers. That night Fox insisted on answering him and Burke got out an answer. Jack Kennedy called me that night and asked me if I knew of any way of stopping the fight and I told him I didn't, that I didn't see how I could. We got into a fight over the chairmanship of the Democratic State Committee which from my standpoint was rather foolish and a fight which we eventually lost. John Kennedy supported John Lynch [John M. Lynch] who had been mayor of Somerville who is now the collector of the port, and he got the necessary votes to put Lynch over. I think the vote in the state committee was something like 52 to 38; it was a hard, tough fight.

One of the things I regret about the situation, looking back on it now, was that on the morning of the State Committee election, which was on a Saturday, one of John Kennedy's sisters [Jean Kennedy Smith] was getting married, as I recall, in New York and he was supposed to be an usher at the wedding. He was so involved in the fight at the time, and so was I, that he missed the wedding and was only able to fly over for the reception. That was a fight which I very much regretted, one which I was sort of pushed into or backed into. I don't know exactly how you would describe it.

MARTIN: Well, didn't some feeling run pretty high? Wasn't there a circumstance up the back of one of the meetings in which some physical threats were made?

COLBERT: Not to my knowledge, there weren't any physical threats. If there were any, I didn't know about them, Ed.

MARTIN: It's growing into a legend now that there was feeling existing between Speaker McCormack and John Kennedy over the years. Do you know of any knowledge of that or...

COLBERT: I think, at the time, in 1956 when he got into the fight over the chairmanship of the Democratic State

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Committee that John McCormack got into the fight on our side, as we felt he should, since it all started over him. He issued a very strong statement from Washington about a day or two before the State Committee election, in which he supported Burke for the chairmanship and urged the State Committee members to elect him and more or less chastised John F. Kennedy for not supporting Foster Furcolo more vigorously for the United States Senate in 1954, when Furcolo was running against Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall] and Furcolo demanded and expected a stronger endorsement from Kennedy than Kennedy actually gave him. I think there might have been some feeling in the height of the State Committee fight in 1956, but I'm sure that it was quickly forgotten. I think that one of the national magazines had carried a story indicating that McCormack on the floor of the 1956 Democratic National Convention got Sam Rayburn's eye during the balloting for vice president and had Rayburn recognize a state, which was shifting to Estes Kefauver. On checking that out, my understanding is that that is completely fictitious and erroneous, that McCormack did no such thing. Of course, at the 1960 convention, as you know, McCormack went all out for John Kennedy.

MARTIN: Jim, there were rumors that persisted down the years about the Kennedys being interested in purchasing the *Post*? Do you know anything about those?

COLBERT: Chester Steadman [Chester C. Steadman], who is the attorney for the Grozier family which owned the *Post* up to June or September of 1952 told me that he tried to interest Joseph P. Kennedy in purchasing the *Post*. He told me that he went down to Palm Beach and met with Mr. Kennedy and tried to sell him the *Post*, but he wasn't able to do so. On that basis, I would say that Joe Kennedy had no serious interest in buying the *Post*; certainly it was offered to him and he didn't buy it. It was my impression at that time that he might have felt that with a son in politics in Massachusetts that it actually might be a political handicap to John F. Kennedy rather than an asset if he did own a newspaper.

MARTIN: Jim, that ceased publication in 1956.

COLBERT: Yes, October 6th, 1956.

MARTIN: What have you been doing since?

COLBERT: I've worked occasionally for the *Record American*. For the most part, I'm directing the news operations of a chain of eight weekly newspapers. I also write a political column, which is published in about twenty-five daily and weekly newspapers, throughout Massachusetts.

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MARTIN: In other words, you can't get away from politics?

COLBERT: No, I still like politics, Ed.

MARTIN: One final question, Jim. President Kennedy, his impact on the nation and on the world will be assessed later by the historians, but in his eighteen years of politics representing Massachusetts from Congress to president, what would you say was his greatest influence on our state?

COLBERT: Well, I think first of all, politically speaking, Ed, that President Kennedy has come pretty close to making Massachusetts a one-party state. When he ran first for Congress in 1946 Massachusetts was considered basically a Republican state. Up to 1946 we had never had a Democratic State Senate. The Republicans usually held the governorship; they held most of the statewide offices. The election of a Democratic Governor was almost an exception to prove the rule. I think if you went back in the years prior to 1946 you would find that the Republicans in the previous twenty years had held the governorship far more than the Democrats did. I think the influence of John F. Kennedy and the impact he made on the state caused a great many independents to shift to the Democratic Party. It caused some Catholic Republicans to shift to the Democratic Party. And I think it started a trend which will eventually see Massachusetts, and I think his brother is continuing it, eventually will see Massachusetts be a one-party state in which the Democratic party is always in the majority; the Republican Party is always the minority; that the Republican governor or United States senator will be elected only under unusual circumstances, when unusual conditions are involved; and that for the most part, fights for the governorship, for United States senator or other state offices will be settled for all practical purposes in the Democratic primaries.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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