

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

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Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- * * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- _____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [/] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as */Meeting appears to be breaking up/* or */Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./*

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in 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.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 13A

Conversation #2: President Kennedy and Harold Hughes

March 9, 1963

Gov. Hughes: -----a matter of execution of Victor Figuera here in Iowa, which is to take place next week.

President: Yeah, yeah.

Gov. Hughes: And you have reviewed this matter and denied clemency on it, and I want to talk with you just a bit on the basis of a personal appeal. We have had abolishment of capital punishment bill in the Iowa legislation this session, and I have more or less had to fight against capital punishment. It has gone through the House of Representatives by a huge majority, and coming in to the Senate I hope for a vote. It is in committee at the present time. I can't appeal for this man's life on the basis of thinking he is not guilty, by any sense of means, or that this wasn't a vicious crime at all. I am sure that it was, and I don't think that there is any reasonable doubt as to the man's guilt. The only basis I could appeal for at all would be that I am personally opposed to capital punishment, and I really feel that the majority of people in Iowa are.

President: Right, right.

Gov. Hughes: And I don't know on what basis you were advised on this, but just on the chance that you might possibly review the case again, I felt an obligation to personally talk to you about it.

President: Well, I went through it, Governor. I read the story and then I got a letter from the man, and I've never really, uh . . . I'm not a . . . The crime was so brutal is what finally made me decide not to go for clemency, and was so deliberate.

Gov. Hughes: There's really is some question in my mind, though the man is legally sane, apparently he is a schizophrenic-paranoid, which is a vicious combination according to the reports I have had here. That he is probably not responsible

for a lot of the things he does. Although he does know the difference between right and wrong as far as legal sanity is concerned.

President: That fellow he killed came from Iowa, did he?

Gov. Hughes: Yes, he was a Dubuque doctor. And Dubuque, of course, and the whole community over there is very highly incensed about it and, sure, probably you talked to Ed McDermott about it.

President: Well, as a matter of fact . . . No, I haven't. But . . . I a . . . Of course, they are anxious, I suppose, to have the sentence carried out, are they?

Gov. Hughes: Pardon?

President: They're anxious to a . . .

Gov. Hughes: The people around Dubuque are, yes. They removed the trial from the Dubuque area and it was conducted at Waterloo, about one hundred miles away.

President: When is this sentence supposed to be carried out?

Gov. Hughes: Supposed to be carried out the morning of the 15th, early in the morning.

President: Let's see, that's Friday, isn't it? Well, Governor, why don't I take a look at the matter Monday and then I will call you back.

Gov. Hughes: If you would, I would certainly appreciate it, Mr. President.

President: Oh, fine, now is our a . . . is your call to me, is that known?

Gov. Hughes: No, the call is strictly unknown.