

Joseph A. Curnane Oral History Interview—11/29/1966
Administrative Information

Creator: Joseph A. Curnane

Interviewer: John F. Stewart

Date of Interview: November 29, 1966

Location: Boston, Massachusetts

Length: 110 pages (NOTE: page 88 is missing the from the original transcript; page 20 appears twice, but is renumbered page 20a and page 20b; the original transcript appears to have been mis-numbered)

Biographical Note

Curnane, a Massachusetts political figure and publisher of the *Everett Leader-Herald* and the *News-Gazette*, discusses John F. Kennedy's (JFK) 1952 senatorial campaign in Everett, Massachusetts, JFK's 1960 presidential campaign in Maryland, and JFK's presidential debates with Richard M. Nixon, among other issues.

Access

Open.

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed November 19, 1980, 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 The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form.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

Joseph A. Curnane, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, November 29, 1966, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview
of Joseph Curnane

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Joseph Curnane, of Everett, Massachusetts do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of a personal interview, conducted on November 29, 1966 at Boston, Massachusetts and prepared for deposit in the John F. Kennedy Library. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the John F. Kennedy Library.
2. The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript; however, access to the tape recording shall be for background use only, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase, or quote therefrom.
3. I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.
4. Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.
5. Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library.

Joseph A. Curnane
Donor
OCT. 30, 1980
Date

William M. Har
Archivist of the United States
November 19, 1980
Date

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

Addendum to the Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview

of Joseph A. Curnane

Interviewed by: John F. Stewart

I, Margaret Curnane Hahesy
hereby remove the restrictions on the use of the tape that state "This tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript; however, access to the tape recording shall be for background use only, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase or quote therefrom" of the personal interview conducted with **Joseph A. Curnane** on **November 29, 1966** currently at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

Margaret Curnane Hahesy 11/29/13
Donor Dated

Sueda 12/19/13
Susan K. Donius Dated
Director for Presidential Libraries

Joseph A. Curnane

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	First meeting with John F. Kennedy (JFK)
3	First contact with the Kennedy family
4	JFK's Everett, Massachusetts involvement and appearances
9	JFK's 1952 senatorial campaign in Everett
22	Curnane's newspaper endorsements
24	JFK's 1952 Boston campaign headquarters
28	Henry Cabot Lodge's 1952 Everett campaign
30	Edward M. Kennedy's 1962 senatorial campaign
34	1956 dispute over the Massachusetts Democratic committee chairman
43	JFK's 1958 senatorial campaign
50	Involvement in JFK's 1960 presidential campaign
55, 82	1960 presidential campaign in Maryland
71	Problems with JFK's 1960 New Jersey campaign chairman selection
81	Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.'s influence on the 1960 election
84	Tip about one of the questions to appear in the 1960 presidential debates
93	Election night 1960
95	Curnane's post-election contact with JFK
100	JFK's 1960 Pikesville, Maryland campaign dinner

Oral History Interview

with

Joseph A. Curnane

November 29, 1966
Boston, Massachusetts

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Let me start by asking you when did you first meet any members of the Kennedy family?

CURNANE: Well, I believe the first member of the Kennedy family that I met was the President [John F. Kennedy] himself. It's rather a interesting fact that how I first came in contact with him was one day he came out to my newspaper in Everett and introduced himself, saying that it had been suggested to him to see me. I sat down with him, and I remember quite vividly that he had a very strong coat of tan and at the same

[-1-]

it seemed he must have been suffering from a malaria, et cetera, because he was a little jaundiced at the same time.

STEWART: This would have been in what, 1949 or '50?

CURNANE: I would say about the that time. I believe he was a congressman at that time. He told me then that he was thinking very much of running for state office.

We sat and discussed in the office politics in general, and I was very much impressed by his affability and his general attractiveness because he had a very fine personality. We hit it off very well from the outset. I think our talk at that time possibly was about an hour or the like, and he just sat there in the newspaper office and told me about he was, at one time, in the newspaper business. I think he mentioned he worked for Hearst [Hearst Corporation] at the United Nations covering. He told me that he'd be in touch with me. That,

[-2-]

actually, was my first meeting with John F. Kennedy.

STEWART: Had you heard of him before that, were you aware of his race in '46 and his election to Congress?

CURNANE: Yes, but I first heard of the Kennedys—of course, you could not be a Massachusetts person without knowing of the father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] and then everything about the family—but I was aboard ship during World War II on the U.S.S. Colbert, APA 245. And on that ship was a John Fitzgerald who was Jack Kennedy's cousin. John Fitzgerald's father made the Alpo cigar here in Boston. I had been in politics, and was in politics then, presently serving on the school committee. So we used to sit aboard ship and discuss Boston politics, which I was very much interested in. John Fitzgerald said to me, as I recall—of course, time has a tendency to blur your actual

[-3-]

time element—but I remember the conversation to this extent, he said, "When we go back, Joe," he said, "I have a cousin that wants to go into politics, and I think that you and he would hit it off well." And I said, "What is his name?" He said "Joe Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.]" And I said, "Fine." Now, in the meantime, afterwards Joe Kennedy got killed. I did make a judgment at that time, "Well, I guess John's cousin that was going into politics will not be in politics now." Joe Kennedy. But I never heard exactly whether Jack, when he came out to see me at the newspaper, was there at the suggestion of his cousin John or not. But that was how I first heard about the Kennedys, from his cousin out in the Pacific. Then afterwards the judgment was made that he was going to be a candidate, and then the speculation in the newspapers was

[-4-]

that he was to be a candidate. But he was waiting the decision of Paul Dever [Paul A. Dever] to decide whether or not it would be for governor or for the United States Senate. But to try and give Jack some exposure I contacted him and brought him out to the Kiwanis club in Everett to give him a dry run in exposure with the Everett people. That was as a congressman. Then, in addition to that, they were having a Democratic rally one Sunday out in Everett when he was a congressman, so I suggested that he come out to that. He was the

key speaker at that particular thing. In other words, we were laying the ground work for futures.

STEWART: Was the reaction totally favorable? Do you remember any unfavorable reaction?

CURNANE: No, but the general feeling at that time was that, "That's Joe Kennedy's kid." You see? He did not impress as much as he did later because

[-5-]

he was a skinny little fellow, and he almost looked at the point of being ill, he was so thin. But when you talked to him you had a feeling of warmth. I always said to my friends it was a little bit like an indefinable something that you find in a Babe Ruth [George Herman "Babe" Ruth], or a Bobby Jones, or a Jack Dempsey [William Harrison Dempsey]. He seemed to have it in abundance. Of course, it later developed greater when he took on a more healthy appearance, you know. But you could see the embryo at that particular time. I'm just trying to.... Oh, yes, then, before we ran, before we.... Let me see. It's hard for me to just definitely set up a time that's specific. He was still a congressman, and I called him to give him further exposure and asked him would he—no, I'm wrong on that. He was the United States Senator. And I called him and told him that I would like him to come

[-6-]

out to Everett to talk to an Irish society. Now, the reason I was setting up an Irish society, the ethnic complexion of the city of Everett, where I lived, was changing to the extent that we were losing our particular prominence by virtue of the newer races, the Italians moving in in tremendous quantity. So I decided, so as not to be inundated, that I would set up an Irish group to meet once a year on St. Patrick's Day. So I called Jack and asked him if he would be the speaker, and he said, "Well, what's the date?" And I said, "March the 17th." "Oh," he said, "I'm sorry, Joe, but I can't be there that night because I'm speaking in New York to the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick." "Well," I said, "how about the night before?" And he said, "Fine." He said, "What's the name of the organization?" I hesitated and said, "The

[-7-]

Friendly Sons of St. Patrick." He laughed and said, "All right, I'll be there." So he came to the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick at our first meeting, and since that time we have had probably the most prominent national figures in that past, oh, I'd say fifteen years. Such people as Cardinal Cushing [Richard James Cushing], Senator Joseph McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] of Wisconsin, Senator McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy], Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] when he was a Senator, Senator Muskie [Edmund S. Muskie], Senator Dodd [Thomas J. Dodd], Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy], Edward Boland [Edward P. Boland], the Ambassador to the United Nations from Ireland, and others too numerous to mention. But it all started with Jack Kennedy as the...

STEWART: First speaker.

CURNANE: ...first speaker. And, frankly, as a result of it, I don't know of a place where he

[-8-]

made more personal appearances, other than in Boston, then he did in Everett because he would always come either to introduce the speaker or to be a guest himself. Then at Fourth of July parades he would always be there. Then, as a senator—as I mentioned earlier, I was on the School Committee—I would bring Jack Kennedy to address the pupils at the Everett Senior High School, which he did on two occasions, and once brought Jacqueline [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] with him, his wife at the time, to address the pupils of the Everett Senior High School. So those were in the initial days. Then, getting back to the...

STEWART: '52 campaign.

CURNANE: ...the '52 campaign, I got a call from Tony Galluccio [Anthony Galluccio], and he said he was sent out to see me, Jack told me that he wanted him to

[-9-]

see me, and he wanted me to be the secretary for Everett. I said I'd be happy to. And then, I think this is of significance, I came in here to Bowdoin Street, and it seemed to be the concern of the campaign committee of what they were going to do in the summertime because this was a time when people were not in concentrated areas where you could get them into halls. Jack told me on more than one occasion that he always credited me with the suggestion which was very helpful, and that was, I suggested that Everett had the greatest concentration of industrial plants. At that time we had the Eastern Gas and Fuel, which had the big and only blast furnace in New England, the Esso Standard Oil, Monsanto Chemical, Metropolitan Lithograph, Warren Pipe, and many, many others. I suggested, "Why not go right to these plants and meet the people?" And

[-10-]

Jack, at the time, made the observation, well, frankly, quote, "How the hell can we get in there? No plant manager's going to let his people take their time away from their work to just shake hands at a political rally." So I said, well, I had contacts in these plants, with these plant managers, having the newspaper, and I would arrange it. And he said, "Well, all right, but make certain that you have cleared it so we don't get rebuffed at the gate." Well, I set up a tour of the city of Everett, and it was the first time that they had ever campaigned in plants, industrial plants. Jack arrived in his car driven by Bob Morey [Robert F. Morey] and a fellow by the name of Al McDonald from Malden, whom Jack way back hired to accompany him

with a sound truck when he went through the Commonwealth. Jack met me at the Everett line, and I had set up a schedule in which he

[-11-]

would visit these particular plants. I remember Jack's hesitancy each time, when he would say, "You're sure you've cleared it here?" Well, frankly, I didn't tell him, but we were acting a little bit on braggadocio because some of the plants we hadn't set it up, but we did set up for probably six of the big ones. But then it was going so well that we decided to expand it as we went along, unbeknown to Jack Kennedy. We did this for two and half days, and I could see Jack taking to this like a duck takes to water. At first he would take his comb out of his pocket and push his hair back to make certain he looked all right and then would say "Now, you make sure now we've already been cleared in here." And I would go in, and I would announce that Congressman John Kennedy of the Labor Subcommittee was running a study for the

[-12-]

Congress and would like very much to visit his plant. I received no rebuffs, they said, "Oh fine, fine." And he would go in and shake hands with the management and then proceed to walk throughout the whole plant. As a matter of fact, at the Eastern Gas and Fuel, they put a locomotive and a flat car available to us, and Jack and I stood up on the flat car and were driven throughout the entire yard. At that time they had in excess of three thousand men working there at the blast furnace. I have some very fine photographs of he and I campaigning and shaking hands with the men in the blast furnace and the gas works and everything at that particular time. Then we went into the Metropolitan Lithograph, that's a greeting card place, and I introduced him to all the ladies, as I knew,

[-13-]

having lived in Everett, that most of the old widows or people that needed an extra dollar would work in there at this menial task. Jack would shake hands with them all, and it was very apparent that he went over terrific with the women.

STEWART: Do you remember him asking—did he talk to many people on these tours?

CURNANE: Oh, yes. He would immediately talk to a man and become engrossed with the man's task, "Well, how do you do this? How do you make this steel?" And the man that was doing this task at the steel place would immediately tell him the entire thing. We that had set up the tour would move back and allow Jack to be the one in the center of attraction for the whole thing after we introduced him to John Jones. Then at that particular time I brought a press photographer with me, and we took at that time,

[-14-]

probably in a day, sixty to seventy-five photographs. I kept a pad with me, and I would mark each photo with a number and who it was in the picture. Probably there are more pictures in Everett of Jack Kennedy with somebody on the mantelpiece because these people cherish these photos now. As I said, at the outset, Jack became so enthusiastic about this and told me on two occasions how he felt that the key election that he beat Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge] was he out-worked him in the summertime and got into all these plants, when Lodge had timed his campaign, which was the mode in those days, of approximately forty days before the election. But he didn't realize that Jack Kennedy had already supersaturated the working public by these tours of the plants. So that is one of the things we did. An interesting offshoot was at the Metropolitan Lithograph

[-15-]

I mentioned to him that they printed postcards from all over the world there, and Jack said, "Is that so?" Yes, I told him that that's what they did. Well, about three years later, when he was the United States Senator, I got a call from him. Could I get him—I forget the number—five hundred or a thousand postcards of I think it was Rome or Belgium or someplace, which I did, down at the Metropolitan Lithograph. Jack had them all signed here by his staff, and the first thing he did when he hit Europe were to put them in the letter box, and they all came back with these cards from Jack Kennedy all over Massachusetts, and they were printed down at Everett, Massachusetts.

STEWART: Very interesting. You were the secretary then for the Everett...

CURNANE: Kennedy group.

[-16-]

STEWART: Right. It just covered Everett, or the area.

CURNANE: That just covered Everett, that's right.

STEWART: When you started to get the whole thing organized, do you remember what you felt were the big problems you had to overcome? As far as organizing the campaign was concerned.

CURNANE: Yes. Well, we did have—I would say the assets were greater than the liabilities. First, Mr. Kennedy, the Ambassador, in spite of what some people might have liked to say he had his liabilities and the Kennedy boys in their campaigns at the origin, Mr. Kennedy preferred, because of his national image, to stay in the background. I found that Mr. Kennedy had tremendous assets because there were many people who came from East Boston and migrated to Everett. When

[-17-]

they were being pushed out by an ethnic persuasion over there, a lot of the Irish moved to Everett. And the result of it was they knew Joe Kennedy, and frankly, he was well liked. So he was, in Everett, Joe Kennedy's son. Now, the liability of trying to get the campaign going was Henry Cabot Lodge was the United States senator and had a fine reputation because he got a tremendous vote on the North Shore. As a result of it, Henry Cabot Lodge had spoken in Everett many times and was always very available, whether it be for an Elks meeting or a school program, so that there were many people, and among the Catholic people, that liked Henry Cabot Lodge because he had spoken at Communion breakfasts and Catholic club meetings. So that that was our biggest problem, because, "Oh, Henry Cabot Lodge is a good fellow.

[-18-]

I know him personally. I get a Christmas card from him." You see? But Jack Kennedy then, by virtue of his meetings that he had come to Everett and the exposure that he had been given, counteracted the assets that Lodge had. Then the super saturation of the shaking hands and meeting these people personally was too much for Henry Cabot Lodge when he tried to put his show on the road.

STEWART: Did you have any problems getting people to work for you there?

CURNANE: Well, not too much. Frankly, we did not have.... Well, as you probably know, the Kennedy organization did not function through the Democratic organization. And there was a certain degree of antipathy by the old hard-line Democrat who felt that the Kennedy people were a lot of upstarts. If there was any particular dragging of feet, I'd have to say it was dragging of feet

[-19-]

by the entrenched Democratic Ward and City Committee people who felt that, "Who the hell is this young upstart? He's starting in at the top. Why don't he start in at the bottom like every else?" You see? But when Kennedy got the nomination it was, the nomination was as a result of Paul Dever making his decision first, so that there was no place for the Democratic Ward and City Committee to go but to us. But they were constantly wanting to be the big shots and run the thing, whereas the Kennedy attitude was they didn't want them running it because they never ran anything but into the ground. So we were trying to keep them happy, work with them, but let not them be in decision making.

STEWART: Did you have any problems combining, or to the extent that you had to combine, your efforts with Dever's campaign in Everett?

[-20a-]

CURNANE: Well, as a matter of fact, the truth of the matter is we didn't play too much with Paul Dever. The Kennedy organization set up its own, and we, naturally,

were so intent on John Kennedy for the Senate. I wouldn't say we ignored Paul Dever, but we were so intent in the pursuit of our own aims that we had little time left other than to say, "Vote Democratic." See? But I wouldn't say that the Dever and Kennedy campaigns were amalgamated. They were not. We ran our headquarters, we had our own John F. Kennedy headquarters, which did create a problem with the old line Democrats.

STEWART: Who were actively involved in Dever's campaign.

CURNANE: Right. They were actively involved for many, many years, and they didn't like the young people—at that time I was one of the young ones—taking over. But to try to give

[-20b-]

a spirit of cooperation, whenever I would move in with them, I'd always push the old-timers out front, if it was only for window dressing. I would take the chairman of the Ward and City Committee and let him be the chairman of the particular function or put his picture in the paper. And owning the newspaper, I was able to placate their feelings so that they didn't show them obviously to somebody. I would take and put all their pictures in the paper. When Jack Kennedy would come to town, I would make certain that all the old line guys would be up front with him, and then I'd put their pictures in the paper. If they wanted to squawk or wanted to criticize, there was no evidence to show that they could do it and have people hear them.

STEWART: You said a little bit about this newspaper you

[-21-]

were running. Are you still running it?

CURNANE: Yes, I still own it.

STEWART: Is it a weekly or a...

CURNANE: Weekly paper.

STEWART: Right. And I assume you heavily endorsed Kennedy in your paper.

CURNANE: Yes. As a matter of fact, I've always felt that endorsements per se are of little value. But if you take the product, you can subconsciously indoctrinate the public to the candidate by the exposure you give him. And I was giving Kennedy, and have done all the Kennedys, super saturation exposure. Their picture in the paper all the time by virtue of some local person. Now, if I want to give—a Republican candidate comes to town and I want to give him what we call the shiv treatment, I will send him down to the bank with the bank president, and I will put his

[-22-]

picture in the paper, and I will also send them over then to have his picture taken with a cop. Because in both instances I've always felt that even if you got a mortgage from the bank, you hate like hell to give them the money every month. And, in addition to it, most people have an unpleasant experience with a policeman because he's usually giving them a tag or he's chastising them. But now, on the other hand, if I wanted to give real good exposure, I'd bring the candidate that I wanted to the fire station, and then I'd bring him down to the city yard at seven o'clock in the morning and get a fifteen gallon can of coffee and have his picture taken with the ash men when they were going out in the morning. Then I would take them up, and I would have them taken into a classroom and show them being interviewed

[-23-]

by a teacher of a kindergarten class. But I would avoid the places where there was abrasiveness, see? Now these kind of pictures appearing all the time would create the image, "You know, that John Kennedy or that Ted Kennedy, they must be nice people. They're so democratic. You know, they might have a million dollars, but they're damn nice people." Now, that's the different techniques we would use if we wanted to give a man exposure.

STEWART: That's very interesting. Do you recall who in the headquarters here in Boston you dealt with primarily, or what types of contacts did you have with the headquarters?

CURNANE: Well, I was in contact with them probably, oh, two or three times a week. I was in contact with Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] and Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and

[-24-]

Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell]. Then, of course, my association with Ken O'Donnell goes back a good many years because Ken O'Donnell's father [Cleo O'Donnell] was the famous football coach at Everett High School in its greatest football era in the era before World War I. So that we had a general bridge of communication of a common interest. Then Larry O'Brien I personally took to in a professional, political way because I always said that of all of the Kennedy group Larry O'Brien, in my humble judgment, was the one who knew what he was talking about. Occasionally, he would become abrasive, but I could understand in the frustrations of trying to get some of the things implemented he would get abrasive. But I'd have the same.... My personal experience with Larry was he was a good, practical sensible politician.

[-25-]

STEWART: Do you remember any particular problems he had with the headquarters

during the '52 campaign?

CURNANE: Oh, yes.

STEWART: Were there any differences of opinion within the headquarters that you encountered?

CURNANE: Well, no, the thing that you were always trying to do was I was interested, frankly, in seeing that my unit would do well, so we were all trying to make demands on the candidate to give him exposure and come to our functions. Of course, the boys in town would have to budget his time. But where I had given him the super saturation of the industries, as I told you at the outset, I could not really make demands beyond that because the other parts of the state had to get him. Oh, let me see. Bob Kennedy and his sister Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] and Jean

[-26-]

Smith [Jean Kennedy Smith]—they were all single at that particular time—all came out to a meeting that I had in Everett where Jack was some other place. But Bobby and his three sisters came out that particular evening to the meeting. Bob, in those days, was a take-charge fellow, and if there was any antipathy, it was to Bob's age and take-charge with some of the old people. I had to, later, go to some of my older people and say, "Well, now look. Be realistic here." But Jack never was abrasive. He was so tolerant. But Bobby is not as abrasive since that time because I have seen him change, you know.

But in those particular days Torbie Macdonald [Torbert H. Macdonald] and I had a knowledge and acquaintance with, who was Jack's best friend. Now, of course, Torbie's folks originally lived in Everett, moved to Malden, and I knew Torbie's father. I know that Torbie and I were friends about at the same

[-27-]

time and, therefore, I had a common contact there with Jack. I for example, something was coming up and I couldn't get through to Jack via the channels of Bob or Larry or Kenny, I could always go to Torbie. Torbie had immediate contact with Jack so that.... As a matter of fact, that had to be done on occasions you see?

STEWART: Did Lodge campaign very much in Everett, do you recall?

CURNANE: Oh yes, very much so. But the big problem that Lodge had, when he started to put his show on the road, he found the demands on his time, that he be in so many places, just was physically impossible. He made a miscalculation of his assets to the extent that he felt where he was the incumbent and was campaigning for Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] that that was going to be no problem. And he underestimated this young, thin John Kennedy.

[-28-]

“He’s just a congressman. What the heck.” So when he made a judgment of put the show on the road, time ran against him because Jack had so supersaturated the particular political arena that there was nothing left for him, only to try and catch up. Jack maintained this handicap that he established in the summertime throughout the whole campaign, and we won by seventy-eight thousand, I think it was.

STEWART: That was the...

CURNANE: Plurality. Let me see if I recall that. I think it was seventy-eight thousand when Eisenhower was winning...

STEWART: Yes, yes, I think statewide it was something like that. Were the results in Everett as you had anticipated?

CURNANE: Yes. Kennedy carried Everett. And, incidentally, I think that Lodge had beat David I. Walsh in

[-29-]

Everett when he had run. So we completely turned the tables around. And as such it’s been a tremendous Kennedy town ever since because they, frankly, do their homework. Teddy has picked up since that time. When Teddy decided to run to fill the seat that Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith, II] had been holding, Teddy came out to see me and suggested that he’d come to see me because Jack said so. Well, most of the old Kennedy gang—I’m going ahead of myself—but most of the old Kennedy gang had virtually gone to Washington. I had decided that I didn’t want to go down there because of my interests back in Boston, and I stayed here in Boston and took an appointment as the Comptroller of Customs, which it was a presidential appointment. So Teddy came to me and said that Jack said to get in touch with me. So we had at that time seventeen delegates to the state convention.

[-30-]

Now I had always been, before, Eddie McCormack’s [Edward J. McCormack, Jr.] friend, and I consider myself today Eddie McCormack’s friend. But I had to tell Eddie McCormack, “I’m sorry Eddie, I was always a delegate for you at various conventions, but in this instance I have to see that the delegates from Everett are pledged to Teddy.” Eddie McCormack accepted it quite graciously, and he said, “Joe,” he said, “I can understand that, and if you didn’t do that, I would think less of you.” And the result of it was I had to operate, because of the Hatch Act, through my brother. So that I suggested to Teddy that we set up the same set of conditions as we did for Jack, only my brother arranged the tours for Everett. Now my brother is the principal of one of the biggest junior high schools in town. So he became Ted’s secretary in Everett, where I was Jack’s, and the result

[-31-]

of it was that I could not involve myself technically because of the Hatch Act. So, at the same time, we had seventeen delegates, and sixteen of the seventeen went to the convention pledged to Ted Kennedy.

Now, Eddie McCormack's father leaked the story—of course, you know Eddie McCormack's father was "Knocko" McCormack [Edward J. McCormack, Sr.]—leaked the story early in the campaign before going to the convention at that time that, why, Ted Kennedy was thinking of withdrawing from the campaign. You see? And Larry Laughlin, who was a campaign man very close to Ted Kennedy, called me and said, "Gee," he says, "That story that appeared in the evening paper, Ted's all shook up about it." "Well," I said, "look it. Don't panic. Have Ted go on the television at night and say in a very offhanded, easy manner, 'Why that is ridiculous! As a matter of fact, I just

[-32-]

got a report today that I have sixteen out of seventeen delegates from Everett.'" And I heard no more. But that night the news report I watched at eleven o'clock Ted Kennedy was on in which he made the statement, "Why this is ridiculous. I just heard today I've got sixteen out of seventeen pledges coming from Everett." He did not go into depth, but he did not, at that particular moment, have any other tangible pledges which he could hand his hat on. But then, again, the big key to Teddy's campaign was the momentum he gathered after the debate with Eddie McCormack and that was just wildfire.

STEWART: Well, to get back to the '52 campaign, is there anything else of significance that you recall before we move on to the years between...

CURNANE: Well, I'll tell you, John, as I say, since you first

[-33-]

called me to come here, I've been trying to go back in my mind to recall certain things, and certain things flash by my mind, and well after I leave here I'm going to have other thoughts about certain particular detail things. But at this particular moment, I would think this is basically what was handled there. The only problem we seemed to have was the older crowd, the Ward and City Committee old Democrats being a little provoked at the upstart of these young people coming in with their young candidates.

STEWART: Were you involved at all in the 1956 fight over the chairman of the state Democratic Committee?

CURNANE: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, in that taking over of the thing I remember Kenny O'Donnell calling me, and I had some conversations with the Senator at that time, that's

[-34-]

Senator John Kennedy, that they were going to make a push to push out Bill Burke [William H. Burke, Jr.]. So I was called to see if I could do anything with my Democratic Committeewoman in Everett who happened to be Mrs. Mary Cahill. And Mary Cahill was the wife of the former Democratic State Chairman, John Cahill [John F. Cahill], from Everett. Now, I went to see Mary, and Mary personally liked Jack Kennedy and would like to do what he wanted her to do, but she was under obligation and pressure from her husband, who was under obligation to Bill Burke. As such, I tried to push and shove Mary Cahill into being with Jack Kennedy, but when the vote was finally tallied, she was listed for Burke because of old personal things that Mr. Burke had done for John Cahill, and she voted the way her husband wanted her to vote.

Now, that day, I remember it quite well,

[-35-]

it was at the Bradford Hotel in Boston, and I was up in the room with Jack Kennedy, Larry O'Brien, Kenny O'Donnell, and myself, I believe. And Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch] came in—no, Pay Lynch was down on the floor doing all he could do to keep the meeting orderly. A report came upstairs that Burke's crowd had started to panic and was going to break up the meeting before a vote was taken. Jack got mad, went to the phone, Larry O'Brien called the then police commissioner, Sullivan [Thomas F. Sullivan] I think it was, and he was an elderly man, and started saying to send up some police to stop the meeting from breaking into a riot. Commissioner Sullivan said to him, evidently—and this is a judgment—"Well, it's a private affair, and I can't involve myself with it." And Larry cupped the phone and said, "He said, really, it's

[-36-]

a private affair, and I can't intrude." Jack grabbed the phone away from Larry O'Brien and proceeded to lace down Commissioner Sullivan. I think the name was Sullivan, you'd have to check that. He was an elderly gentleman, and he said, "What the hell do you mean?" He said, "They're trying to break up a meeting here, and it's police business. And you ought to be here!" And he slammed the phone down. About a minute and a half passed and the phone rang again, and Larry answered it and he says, "It's for you, Senator." He picked up the phone, Jack did, and it was the Commissioner again. Jack said, "Oh, fine. Thank you, Commissioner, it was awful kind of you. Thanks very much. Yes, fine." So Jack said, "The old s.o.b. is going to send up some men right away." So they kept the meeting downstairs

[-37-]

down as a result of the phone call, and we won the particular vote. But I know Jack was very apprehensive about it because he put in the day upstairs in the thing. But I have to say to you

in all honesty, that which I was asked to do to put Mary Cahill, my Democratic woman, in Jack's corner I was unable to do because they had built up close friendships.

STEWART: What kind of arguments were you using with her to try to...

CURNANE: "Well, here's Jack Kennedy, he's the United States Senator, he's the leader of the party, for goodness sakes, if you want me to do something for you, how can I deliver to you if I have to say to him that, hell, you wouldn't do the proper thing." And she, at the time, was wanting me to do something and how could I even make a contact, you know?

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

So she said, well, she'd

[-38-]

think about it, but she was planning that she'd.... She liked Jack very much, but I felt she took me down to the depths and she took me to the heights in the span of a week's time, and I thought I had her six out of ten times. But when the final vote was taken, she wasn't with us, so I was unable to deliver the vote.

STEWART: This has been debated back and forth a number of times, but do you feel that this whole thing was a Kennedy-McCormack [John William McCormack] struggle? Some people have said that this has been exaggerated considerably and that it wasn't that much of a split between the two as has been suggested.

CURNANE: Well, I would have to say to you that there was an awful lot of straw thrown on the fire by the then *Boston Post*. The *Boston Post* was then owned by John Forrest, and James Colbert [James G. Colbert], who

[-39-]

incidentally, writes for my weekly paper now in a syndicated column, was the political editor. He was trying to pump a particular candidacy of John McCormack to be governor. Whereas the truth of the matter is John McCormack is lucky to be a congressman because he never does anything for anybody other than if you live in South Boston. It is the history of people who have gone to John McCormack, where they have read about him and know him to be a Democrat and come from a district where they are represented by a Republican, and will go to see John McCormack, and the first thing he says to you is, quote, "Where do you live?" And he'd say, "Well, I live in Nahant." Or in those days, "I live in Everett," where we had Angier Goodwin [Angier L. Goodwin] as our congressman. And he would tell you, "Well, why don't you

[-40-]

go to your congressman?" Well, here you are a Democrat, living in a district that's represented by a Republican, and you need something to go to work in the Christmas rush, a college fellow or something wanted to get Christmas work, and you go to see John McCormack, and he'd tell you to go to your congressman. So now here's to say again, thinking in terms of being a candidate for any state office, he would go over like a lead balloon because he never did anything for anybody outside of South Boston. Now Jim and the editor, who was very close to John McCormack, were pushing for John McCormack to be a candidate for governor. If anything precipitated the particular out of proportion antipathy one with the other of Kennedy's and the McCormack's, I would have to say it was the *Boston Post* putting that

[-41-]

particular big thing up. Now, part of the particular situation was that they didn't have it said that it was a McCormack situation but it was a struggle between Burke, who was McCormack's man, and a struggle by Jack Kennedy who wanted Pat Lynch. But I think it was blown way out of proportion by virtue of the old *Boston Post*, who was owned by John Parks and Jim Cauldwin. That I don't know, but I would say if anything, if you could say there was a particular antipathy—which I never was in that particular place to say with knowledge—but I think it was the stuffiness of John McCormack. Here is John Kennedy who went to Washington, and he was considered an upstart if you don't wait for forty years before they tell you where the men's room is. And as a result of that, he's a man who is being demanded to

[-42-]

speaking at this place and John McCormack has got men that have been senior to him by twenty years, thirty years in that particular thing, and they're being ignored, John McCormack treated him like a Boy Scout. Jack didn't like it, he had other plans, and if there's anything, that's where the antipathy really had its embryo.

STEWART: Were you involved at all on the national level in '56 as far as the vice presidential...

CURNANE: No, I did not go to the convention.

STEWART: It didn't concern...

CURNANE: Therefore had no participation in it other than I heard Torbie Macdonald tell me what transpired like. But I have to say as far as the Chicago situation, I had nothing to do with that Chicago episode at all.

STEWART: Were you involved in the '58 senatorial campaign?

[-43-]

CURNANE: Oh yes. The same situation as what went on before. We reactivated the Kennedy secretaries and we went on from there. As I recall—wasn't that the '58 where we had the difficulty with Furcolo [Foster Furcolo], was it? I'm not...

STEWART: No, that was...

CURNANE: Was that the time when he ran against that little Italian fellow from East Boston?

STEWART: Celeste [Vincent J. Celeste].

CURNANE: Celeste?

STEWART: Right.

CURNANE: Yes, well that was just a, that was just what you'd call like a fire drill because Celeste wasn't going any place, and we just did the rudimentary things we felt it was...

STEWART: It was in '54 that Furcolo ran against Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall] for the Senate.

CURNANE: Right. Well, that was the one in which we

[-44-]

never had anything directly ever told to us by Jack Kennedy, any of the Kennedys or Larry O'Brien, or any person in authority not to work for Foster Furcolo. But we always heard the antipathy that Jack had for Foster. We, therefore, inherited that particular feeling. But, I'd have to say in all fairness nobody of the Kennedys ever discussed with us or me as far as Foster Furcolo. But he was not, frankly, my cup of tea as far as a pal was concerned. He was too pushy and, frankly, I couldn't warm up to Foster. I have no facts to say, other than hearsay, that was, you might say, nourishing my antipathy to Foster. But I was hearing so much about him, he double crossed Jack or this or that. But I have no reason to know that. And then I knew that Larry O'Brien used to be a secretary to Foster, and he broke away from him. Then

[-45-]

I never heard from Larry whatever happened. But the fact that Larry wasn't with him and wouldn't say anything, I personally took it that to hell with Foster. You see?

STEWART: As far as that '58 campaign do you recall running into any problems in trying to generate some enthusiasm? Everyone, of course, realized that Kennedy was going to win very big, and there was some discussion that a lot of people felt they really didn't have to go out and work as hard as they might have because...

CURNANE: Well, that is true, but we used the incentive plan that we hoped for Jack to get a tremendous vote and then by so doing to project him on the national media, news media as a good image, where he beat so-and-so. But the people in Massachusetts who knew the circumstances virtually felt that he was running against

[-46-]

nothing. So when you're running against nothing, how are you going to generate enthusiasm to watch the contest, let alone participate it? But we were fighting a general feeling of apathy as far as people who liked Jack, "What the hell, what am I going to vote for? He can't lose." But we said, "Well, get out and vote. We want to project him on a national image." That's the only thing we could sell. At that time Foster was running for governor, was he not?

STEWART: In '58, right.

CURNANE: He was running for governor.

STEWART: For a second term.

CURNANE: For a second term. He got elected for a second term. I remember hearing at the time Foster wanting to embrace Jack, and I think it was Foster who printed the pictures that showed he and Jack together. And he put them all over

[-47-]

the billboards. But I never heard this from Jack, but I don't think he particularly was enthusiastic about it, you know. Because he never said to me, but I never thought that he embraced Foster rather than just a political guy that was another pal.

STEWART: Did you have any of the same problems that you had in '52 of there being a separate regular Democratic organization?

CURNANE: No, they had reconciled themselves to the fact now that Jack Kennedy was the leading Democrat in the state, especially since the old Ward and City people had reconciled themselves, things had changed. Then I moved into the Ward and City Committee in my town and started to take over that. Therefore, as I told you earlier in reference to Teddy, then I could move the structure of sixteen out of seventeen delegates to Ted because we had

[-48-]

taken over the Ward and City Committee. So I ran for the Ward and City Committee offices and then I put all Kennedy people in the structure. Therefore, we dominated the Ward and City...

STEWART: This was before '58, then.

CURNANE: Right, because we were in a four year term.

STEWART: Right.

CURNANE: So we had none of those problems which we had at the outset. Massachusetts, old line Democrats took Jack Kennedy like you take a dose of salt, but you knew it was necessary, you know. They, "Oh, what the hell." If they had their criticism, it was not made outwardly.

STEWART: Right. Well, moving on from '58 then, when did you first become involved in the presidential campaign?

CURNANE: Well, this is an interesting situation. Now,

[-49-]

as I told you earlier, I was friendly with all the boys, so as not to repeat their names specifically, all the ones that were involved in Jack's push for the presidency were all basically the Boston Mafia. You know, we called them the Irish Mafia. Now, I mentioned just a little bit that Torbie Macdonald was Jack Kennedy's closest personal friend. So much so that he would converse and traffic in intimate questions and opinions with Torbie Macdonald when he would hesitate to traffic with his father or his brother Robert, who was that much younger. And Teddy, in those days, just out of a baby carriage. You see? Well, the campaign is getting under way, and we're having throughout the country many of these primaries. Now, the primary situation was that the various ones would go out and set up a thing and campaign in Wisconsin. I think the first primary was

[-50-]

New Hampshire.

STEWART: Right, the early one.

CURNANE: Jack went up there and some of the boys went up with him, and they could concentrate on it. Torbie Macdonald—I was a little distracted there—Torbie Macdonald, being Jack's closest friend, naturally was expected to be in on the ground floor of all Jack's activity and had always been that way. They would be socializing together, there would probably never be a day that they didn't talk on the telephone, as a

congressman and a senator, and socialize in the evening. Torbie would be at Jack's house, and they were great personal friends. Well, the campaign for these primaries was moving along, and I'm getting back little droppings that many of these fellows that are down there in the organization are starting to drop little hints of where's Torbie? And the truth of the matter is

[-51-]

Torbie was with Jack all the time but wasn't out in the hustling, so to speak.

Well, I made a judgment that this was basically a little jealousy on the part of these people who were, you know, working and were inclined to be a little jealous of Torbie, who would be—when Jack would come in and Torbie, they'd go off together, the two of them. Here's a guy who's working and working and working, and he's getting a little, "Gee, that goddamn Torbie is around, but when does he ever do any work for us?" So I called Torbie and said, "Torbie, have you been in touch with Jack lately about this campaign?" And he says, "Gee, Joe," he says, "Jack and I are so friendly. I was with him two or three nights," he said, "and he knows that if he wants me, I'll do anything he wants." I said, "Torbie, take my advice. Even the closeness of friendship has to be nourished

[-52-]

once in awhile by an overt act on the part of the other to specifically say, 'Look, I want you to know if there's anything I can do, please call me.'" So Torbie, with the greatest reluctance, said to me, "I don't think it's necessary, but if you think so, Joe, okay. I'm going to have dinner with Jack Wednesday night." Jack and Jacqueline were then living, I think, in Georgetown. So he had the meeting, and Torbie called me back afterwards, he says, "You got me into something." I says, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, Jack, when I said to him, 'Look, I want you to know Jack if you want me for anything I'll be only too glad,' Jack said, 'Well, Torbie, as a matter of fact, I'm running short of guys to run these campaigns.' He says, 'I wonder if you would go in and handle Maryland for me.'" And Torbie said

[-53-]

to Jack, "Well, I would be glad to."

Oh, I have to go back on that. I said to Torbie, "And if there's anything that Jack wants me to do, I'll be glad to. So Jack and Torbie were talking and Jack said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, Torbie, I'd like you to help me in Maryland." He says, "We're out in Wisconsin, and after that we go to West Virginia, and Maryland is right in that orbit. And I haven't got the luxury of enough men." So Torbie said, "Well, whatever you want me to do. Of course," he said, "I've got some committee hearings that I'm in the middle of. But," he said, "I was talking with Joe Curnane, and Joe said that if he could be helpful to you, he said he would do what he could for you." So Jack said to him, "Well, gee," he said, "will Joe be able to leave his business and come down?" And Torb says, "Well, he indicated he will." He

[-54-]

says, "Well, I'll get in touch with him." So Jack says, "All right." Torb called and said, "you really got me in the soup." He said, "He asked me to go in there. Will you go down?" And I said, "Yes, I'll go down. I'll arrange my affairs." And he says, "All right. When will you go?" I said, "I'll leave tomorrow." So he said, "All right, I'll tell Jack."

Then I got a phone call from Jack Kennedy saying Torbie told him that I'd be willing to help. He says, "Gee, I appreciate it." He says, "I thought possibly you were tied down with your business, Joe, and you couldn't leave." I said, "Look it, I'll go down." He says, "Okay. Go down to the Emerson Hotel. I understand from Steve Smith [Stephen A. Smith]," he says, "that they've hired three rooms, and all the bumper stickers and all the stuff is there. Get some phones put in." Then he said, "Get in touch with

[-55-]

Joe Tydings [Joseph D. Tydings]." He said, "Joe Tydings originally was going to call me back, but he's never called me back." He said, "I wanted Herbert O'Connor [Herbert R. O'Connor, Jr.]" Now just for a little background on Herbert O'Connor. Senator Herbert O'Connor [Herbert Romulus O'Connor] was the junior senator from the state of Maryland. I am talking about Herbert O'Connor, Jr., the son of him. Jack Kennedy was friendly with Herbert O'Connor, Jr., evidently through his father, who had deceased. He had gone to Herbert O'Connor asking him to handle his campaign in Maryland. Herbert O'Connor said, "Gee, I'd like too Jack, but I'm running for the Congress myself." Jack says, "Well, who would you suggest?" And Herbert said, "Well, why don't you ask Joe Tydings, Millard Tydings' [Millard E. Tydings] son?"—incidentally stepson—who was a delegate in the Maryland House of Delegates.

[-56-]

"But I don't know whether or not he'd take it." Jack contacted Joe Tydings, and Joe Tydings said, "Let me think it over." Now, when Jack calls me, he's still thinking it over and it's been three weeks gone by. So Jack says to me, "Find out what the hell he's going to do." So I said okay. I went down, I hired a couple, I went into the Emerson Hotel, I got a room, I met the Secretary of State at that particular time, who was a Thomas Finan [Thomas B. Finan], I was given two or three names, ex-mayor Thomas D'Alesandro [Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr.], I met a Frank Udoff, an insurance man there, and I had no other contacts. I called Joe Tydings after I'd set up the office there and put the phones in and called in all the newspapers in the town, bought a case of booze and ginger ale and soda water and invited all the news media including the radio, television, and et

[-57-]

cetera, to come to the town, up to the Emerson Hotel, and I had a little party for them. I introduced myself, and I told them I was here with Jack Kennedy, and I told them I was a newspaperman myself, and I said, "Look, fellows. I know you're interested in one thing, news for your paper. The easier I can give it to you, the happier you are. I'll tell you right at

the outset; I won't lie to you. If I say to you, 'Sorry, gentleman, no comment,' you'll know that I'm not playing dove-tails with somebody else." "Now," I said, "do we understand each other?" And they said, "Fine." So they sat around there and they drank for awhile, and I became friendly with the news media. I made it a point whenever there was a story or anything, I call them all at the same time, *News Post*, and then the *Baltimore Sun*, and then I'd call Eddie

[-58-]

Fenton who was a radio fellow down there. We would handle it all so that nobody got beat on each other. Now it appeared in the paper that the Kennedy campaign was starting, John Kennedy was going to be.... I had to play everything by ear, I talked with Tom D'Alesandro, and he told me that Millard Tawes [John Millard Tawes], the Governor, and George Hocker, the chairman of his kitchen cabinet, were very much in Lyndon Johnson's [Lyndon B. Johnson] pocket. As such, they wanted the delegation from Maryland to go to the Convention uncommitted, or the equivalent of what we'd call for Millard Tydings as a favorite son. So by being uncommitted, he could deliver to Lyndon Johnson, and as such I was in an uphill fight. We were getting no cooperation whatsoever from the Maryland political establishment. So I was already entered in this situation by Thomas

[-59-]

D'Alesandro, the ex-mayor, and Thomas Finan, who was the Secretary of State and was a protégé of William Walsh [William Concannon Walsh], the brother of Maryknoll Bishop [James E. Walsh] who was behind the Iron Curtain in China still... He, namely, Bill Walsh, and Tom Finan were very much pro-John Kennedy. They liked John Kennedy. And they had some particular thing in the background, which I never found out, but I know that they were very loyal Kennedyites. They oriented me with the situation. I finally, after my orientation with these people, called Joe Tydings at Annapolis and introduced myself on the phone and asked him when he was coming over to see me. He said that the House of Delegates was still in session, and he wouldn't be able to do anything until they adjourned. Well, I said, "Hell, we've got a campaign to run here. We can't do this. Jack

[-60-]

Kennedy told me you were going to get back to him three weeks ago, and you never did get back to him. Will you please tell me what the hell you're going to do?" Joe Tydings says, "I will be in Baltimore tomorrow. I will come up to see you at the Emerson." I waited around all day long and finally around four o'clock Joe Tydings showed up. He told me that he hadn't decided, he didn't know what to do. I says, "Well, look it, Joe, you're a young fellow, you're a little younger than I am. May I speak frankly with you?" He says, "Yes." I says, "Look. Your old man was defeated for the United States Senate because of a McCarthy issue which they felt your old man was a bigot. Now if you have any political sagacity in your entire frame, you can only enhance your image as an individual if you ever hope to go any place. First,

[-61-]

if you come with Kennedy and you're out front with him and he wins, you're in great shape. If he loses, you have eliminated the blight associated with the name Tydings with a predominantly Catholic population in Baltimore," which choked him in reference to the Joe McCarthy thing. "Now," I said, "if you've got any brains, there's no course for you to take but just pack it in and let's get going." Joe Tydings got as red as a tomato well ripened, and he said to me, "You don't beat around the bush." I says, "I cannot afford the luxury of it." I said, "What are you going to do?" He said, "I will be here Saturday, and we will start organizing." I said, "Fine." I picked up the phone, I called Jack Kennedy. I told him what I did with Tydings, and Jack started to laugh and says, "Well, how did you do that?" "I told him he

[-62-]

had a choice of being a bigot or coming with us." Jack laughed like hell and got quite a charge out of it, and the result was that we started to function. I applied the same set of conditions that I had in Massachusetts, which I had been oriented in. And we made secretaries in every county, in every city worthy of the name of Maryland, and set up the whole structure. Then when it came to the city, I had the worst bucket of political tripe anybody could inherit. I had Jack Pollack [James H. Pollack], the northwest Baltimore boss, I had the Kovens [Irvin Kovens] and the O'Malleys [Patrick F. O'Malley], the Joe Wyatts [Joseph M. Wyatt], the Biff Hodges [William L. Hodges], the D'Alesandro faction and the Goodman [Phillip M. Goodman] factions, I had the Harold Grady [Joseph Harold Grady] faction, all these people running their own little strongholds. I called them all into a room—and I sent out invitations to every one

[-63-]

of them, every faction. The D'Alesandros had been beaten by the Gradys; the Goodmans and the Pollacks were enemies; Joe Wyatt, Kovens, and O'Malleys and all of them, I brought them all into a big room and I addressed the group. I said, "Look, gentlemen, my name is Joe Curnane, and I'm down from Boston. Now, do you think it is possible for you bunch of bastards to put down your guns and your knives at least long enough for us to proceed?" Well, there was silence for a few minutes, and then D'Alesandro starts to laugh, and they all started to laugh. Then he got up and D'Alesandro made a speech about "this carpet bagger from Boston coming down here trying to run our affairs." But then D'Alesandro put his arm around me, and he said, "I like you, Joe." And he said, "We'll work with you." So every place we worked we had to have co-chairmen. I had the co-chairmen of Baltimore was Grady and D'Alesandro,

[-64-]

see. Then Joe Tydings filled us in on the counties, but he was verbatim when it came to the cities. So we got the entire organization structure put together, and Joe Tydings was very helpful, but very impractical as a young boy—strictly a Boy Scout boy, millionaire many times, but impractical, see. Now, to my knowledge, Joe Tydings never met Jack Kennedy until he went on a tour, which we arranged to bring Jack in for a three day blitz, you know.

STEWART: After West Virginia.

CURNANE: After West Virginia, to let the people know who he was, don't you see? He never met him. But since that time, you'd think Joe Tydings had slept every night since he was born with Jack Kennedy and some of the Kennedys. He was acute enough to push that situation. All right, now we get into the campaign. We were running against

[-65-]

Wayne Morse [Wayne L. Morse], who was nothing. I'd have to say to you other than to get my bumper stickers out and getting everything in shape and doing the rudimentary things necessary to be done, I would say our biggest fight was not against Morse, but against the uninstructed delegation was really who we were running against, against Millard Tawes and his group. Well, Millard Tawes and his group, who were virtually Johnson, were hesitant to move in an obvious way, and our presence campaigning kept them from asserting themselves. If we had not been there, I would think that they would have run and been more obvious against Wayne Morse and would have had their delegated uninstructed. But as a result of the primary, they gave us the vote and, therefore, we married them on the first ballot by statute. Therefore, the entire delegation was married to the Convention for Jack Kennedy on the first

[-66-]

ballot. I knew later from the rumblings of Danny Brewster [Daniel Baugh Brewster], who was a great Johnson man and George Hocker, Millard Tawes, all of these guys were going to give us the dump on the second ballot, see. But, in anticipation of that, I had set up in inter-group of Tom Finan, Jack Pollack, George Mahoney [George Perry Mahoney], these people who were going to stay with Jack Kennedy, and there would have been a hell of a fight on the second ballot if they'd tried to divest themselves. You see? So the result of it was we married them in the primary. After the primary we went to the Convention. In the meantime I'm playing with all the news media so that, frankly, the news media had given us all the advantages they could, you know. I became very friendly with them, I was socializing with them nights, you know Charlie [Charles Bartlett] and Phil Potter [Philip Potter], and the poet Ferguson,

[-67-]

the whole group of them. But the thing was we went to the Convention. The Convention is another story that we wrapped up, but now we come back. I come back to Boston after the Convention, and I have telegrams from the Governor, Millard Tawes, and all the delegation there asking me to come back to Baltimore to run their campaign in the final. In all humility, it was not strictly for me, but they wanted to give the shiv to Tydings, whom they were worried about his potential with the name of Tydings. They all implied to me individually that he would step on his own mother's chest to reach the cookie jar, so they put it. Therefore, they didn't want him in a prominent position. They asked me would I come back to run their campaign, which I was doing. In other words, I was a down boy with Tydings. Well, the result of it was that we.... I said to them, Millard Tawes, the

[-68-]

Governor and all them that asked me about coming back, I says, "Well, look it. It's presumptuous of me to pass on your feelings to somebody else. It would look like I was trying to blow my own horn. Why don't you address yourself to Bob Kennedy? Go over to see Bob and tell him the situation, you want Joe Curnane to come down, and I'll do what they tell me." Well, I got a telephone call from Bob Kennedy saying, "What did you do with those people over there in Baltimore? Did you mesmerize them?" I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "I have every political leader in Baltimore call me and want you to go back to run the campaign in Baltimore." And I said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" He said, "Would you do that?" I says, "Yes, I would." I said.... He said, "You use your judgment just like you did before." And I says,

[-69-]

"All right." Now, we took Joe Tydings out of there and pushed Joe Tydings down to Delaware and to Florida.

STEWART: Florida, yes.

CURNANE: But they wanted to keep him out because he was immature politically, and he was inclined to be very ambitious to the point that he only saw one thing which was himself. And they didn't want him being in Maryland and have rode the Kennedy image if that is the way it was, you know. Now, they were forced to have, when we went back, a whole new condition. Jack Kennedy is the nominee of the party, therefore, the whole party structure is put at my disposal and I am the coordinator. Now I bring in all the factions, the Tawes, and the Hockers, and everything, and the first thing I did was run a hundred dollar dinner out in the Pikesville Armory. We collected two hundred and ten thousand

[-70-]

dollars. In the course of the particular thing, I got a telephone call while I'm working on the dinner from Bob Kennedy. And he said to me, "Look, I want you to go to New Jersey. I'm

having a lot of trouble getting Governor Meyner [Robert B. Meyner] and John Kenny [John V. Kenny] of Jersey City to agree on a chairman for the campaign.” So he says, “Go over and see if you can get them to agree.” I said, “On whom?” He says, “On a fellow by the name of Eugene Laura.” I said, “Okay.” He said, “I’ve called Kenny and Meyner and told them individually to expect you but not let the other know that you’re arriving to see the other guy.” I says okay, so he gave me the particulars, and I went out to Lake Monmouth Hotel, I think, in Lake Worth in New Jersey. Is there such a place as that?

STEWART: Lake Hurst?

CURNANE: No, Lake Worth, or something like that. It’s on

[-71-]

the ocean there, and it’s a beautiful hotel that’s only open for seventy days a year. I went there to see Mr. Kenny, who was the big boss and was the former mayor of Jersey City and had defeated Hague [Frank Hague], had knocked out Hague. So when I went there, his wife [Margaret Smith Kenny] said, “You just missed him. He’s gone to the race track for the day, but he’ll be back at six o’clock for dinner.” I says, “All right, I’ll be back, Mrs. Kenny, and see him.” I went down to Cape May, which is at the tip, and my sister was married to a Coast Guard Lieutenant Commander who was stationed there. I drove down there and visited with her for a couple of hours and drove back and met Mr. Kenny that evening at the Monmouth Hotel. We went over the political situation. I said, “Look, Mr. Kenny, will you take Eugene Laura as the campaign

[-72-]

chairman? He says, “Look, I don’t care.” He said, “It’s all right with me, but you’re not going to get that big bastard,” he says, “over in Princeton to take him.” He says, “He’s a no good s.o.b.” And I said, “I know that.” He said all of their antipathy to each other was because Meyner missed the boat and should have been with Kennedy because the whole delegation was with Kennedy and they wanted to be in on the ground floor with him. But this fellow held out too long and thought he could go on the second ballot and be a king-maker. He didn’t get the opportunity because it was gone. They all came back, mad as hell with Meyner; he was a lame duck governor, couldn’t run again, so everybody is sore with him. So I said—in reference to if I can get Meyner to take Laura—“Let me find out.” He says, “When are you going to call him?” I

[-73-]

says, “Well, I gotta call him now I suppose.” He says, “Well, I’ll get the number for you.” So he dials the number at the State House or the Mansion, I believe, in Princeton, dials it and gives me the phone. The Governor came on the phone. I told him who I was and he says, “Oh yes, Bob Kennedy said you were going to call me.” He says, “Where are you?” Well I nearly fainted. So I said, “Well, I’m at....” And I remembered the sign post on my way back from

Cape May. He said, "What are you doing there?" I says, "I just visited my sister at Cape May whose husband is at the Coast Guard installation there, and I'm on my way back and I've checked into a motel." He says, "Well, why don't you come here to Princeton and stay here the night?" I says, "No, I'm a little tired, but could I make an appointment for the morning?" He says, "All right, how about, what time do you

[-74-]

want it?" I says, "How's ten o'clock?" He says, "Fine. See you then." I hung up, I told Kenny I had—he's standing right with me there—I said I had an appointment with Meyner at ten o'clock. He said, "Well, what are you going to do now?" He says, "Why don't you stay here for the night?" I said, "No, I will go into Trenton." And I stayed at the [unclear] Hotel, and I walked down the street to the Capitol. At ten o'clock I went in. And Mr. Kenny told me he would be at the race track and to get him, to get in touch with Sheriff William Flanagan [William J. Flanagan] who had a phone into the race track to let him know what the story was. And I could get Flanagan, who was the sheriff, he had an office in Trenton. So I go into to see Meyner, Meyner meets me very graciously and I said, "I am here because Bob Kennedy told me,

[-75-]

'Before you see anybody in New Jersey be sure you see Bob Meyner because we know who our friends are.'" And he said, "Well," he says, "I like Bob, whatever I can do." I said to him then, "Well, what about taking Eugene Laura as the chairman?" Incidentally, Kenny wanted Flanagan to be the chairman and Meyner wanted his Secretary of Finance, or like our Treasurer, and they couldn't agree. So this was a compromise. So Meyner said, "Well, I want to have so-and-so, the Treasurer." I said, "Look. You've got to be practical. Both have got to give, we've got to put the show on the road. Will you take Eugene Laura?" He said, "Well," he says, "I know Gene Laura. He was a secretary to a former governor here," he said, "and I know him. He's a nice fellow." And I said, "Fine. Well, will you accept him?" He says,

[-76-]

"Well, I might, but could you get that son of a bitch Kenny to accept him?" I said, "I don't know." He says, "Well, why don't you call him?" I said, "Governor, you wouldn't expect me to call you with him present. So why would you expect me to call him with you present?" He says, "Oh, I guess you're right." I said, "Let me see if I can locate him and I'll get back to you." So I go down to the [unclear] Hotel, I call Flanagan, Flanagan gets in touch through the wire to the race track. Kenny comes on the phone and said, "How did you make out with that big fat-head?" And I said, "Well, he will take him, but he wants to know how that son of a bitch in Jersey City will take him." He starts to laugh, and he said, "Well, what do you want me to do? It's all agreed?" I said, "Well, we want to have a picture taken. Bob says to have a picture taken with you and the Governor

[-77-]

and Laura. So he said, "Okay. Where do we have to take it?" I said, "In Trenton at the Capitol." He says, "All right. What time do you want it?" I said, "How about ten o'clock tomorrow morning?" He says, "Okay." So I arranged the picture for the next morning and when the two people who hate each other meet each other you'd think that it was Livingstone [David Livingstone]....

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1]

It was like Stanley [Henry M. Stanley] meeting Livingstone because they were all over each other like long lost brothers and, "Oh, It was good to see you John." And, "It was good to see you, Governor." "Long time no see." I asked them would they stand in for a picture, in the meantime I had Laura show up. And they wanted me to go on the picture, and I said no. In the meantime I had gone down to the Associated Press office

[-78-]

and got a photographer there, and also had hired a photographer and told them that I wanted the pictures developed immediately so I could take it back to Washington. So they wanted me to go on the picture, and I said no. Then the picture was taken, and they were all friendly and everything, and I waited around for an hour. While I was waiting for the pictures to be developed Bob Kennedy, I called him in Washington and told him what had happened and he said, "Oh, what a...." He says, "You know, I've been working for that last two weeks. I've talked with those two better than twenty times." He said, "this is wonderful." He says, "Where are you now?" I says, "I'm at the [unclear] Hotel." He says, "Why don't you go down to Fort Monmouth"—I had told him about this beautiful hotel—he says, "Stay there for three or four days, take a rest,

[-79-]

enjoy yourself," he said, "and send the bill to me." I said, "No, I've got too much to do. I've got to get back to Baltimore because I've got this hundred dollar dinner going." And he said, "Well, I appreciate it. That's wonderful, Joe." He says, "All right." I said, "You'll get these pictures." He says, "As a matter of fact, the picture just was brought in to me on the Associated Press. It was in the Washington newspaper that Meyner and John Kenny and Eugene Laura's picture is in the Washington paper." So he said, "Get back to me." Now, you will be interested in this. When I met Mr. Kenny—he's a very dapper little Irishman and a very nice man and his wife is a very gracious lady—he told me at the outset of our conversation, which we talked about, and we hit if off very well. He liked me and I liked him. He said, "I don't

[-80-]

know Bob and I've met Jack once or twice, but I'm doing this for Joe Kennedy, the father, who did me a good turn in the..."—I think he said in the twenties or the thirties—"...when I

really needed a favor. So,” he says, “I’m doing this for old Joe, period.” Now that’s not unusual when I found people where I would meet all the way along.... You know, a lot of stuff has been written about they kept old Joe in the background, they were afraid about this particular ethnic vote or something like that, but I found in my personal experience many people whom old Joe Kennedy had done a lot for. There was a for instance in reference to that particular thing. He was wonderful like that.

Now we get back to Baltimore. They were all happy with the fact that Joe Tydings has

[-81-]

left. Now we put the campaign on the road, and we.... Well, among the people that were very effective for us in Maryland were, of course, the ex-Mayor Thomas D’Alesandro and Frank Udoff, who is presently the United States Marshall as a result of my recommendation to Robert Kennedy, and Harold Grady, the then Mayor, Biff Hodges, who is now presently a state senator, Joe Wyatt, who’s a judge, Kovens and O’Malley, all the various ward bosses there. I would be very much amiss if I didn’t mention probably Thomas Finan, who was defeated for governor this time and who has been the Attorney General of the state and has now been named by Governor Tawes to be the judge on what would be the equivalent of our Supreme Court in Massachusetts. He was very effective for us, and of course, as I say, Joe Tydings who is now a senator. Those people were

[-82-]

all effective, and a sentimental comment goes to Jack Pollack, who has always been thought of as the big ward boss of a sinister nature. But I would say that when it came to John F. Kennedy’s candidacy, both in the primary and in the final election, Jack Pollack addressed all of his assets to the election of Jack Kennedy, which when I gave my report to Jack Kennedy when he congratulated me and thanked me for my efforts after the election, he amazed me in his conversation when it came to Maryland. He said, “Well, how is my friend Jack Pollack and how is Tommy D’Alesandro? What did Phil Goodman finally do?”

STEWART: He knew them all.

CURNANE: He knew them all right at his fingertips. You know, it was uncanny. But then the result of it was I spent a week after the election in Maryland, and I sent out over a thousand personal

[-83-]

letters to everybody who in any way helped John Kennedy and personally thanked them in his name. The result of it was that I probably today have in Maryland probably more personal friends than I do politically in Massachusetts. They ran a testimonial for me, and there were over two thousand people at it in 1961 at the Emerson Hotel, and they gave my wife and I a round trip to Ireland and they wanted to buy me a Lincoln Continental, but I told them I’d

rather the money be put into the Democratic State Committee. So they did take all the money over and above the expenses, replenished the supply of money in the Democratic State Committee, and then gave my wife and I a round trip ticket to Ireland on Irish Airlines.

Now, there is one particular thing that I think might be of significance, and that was the fact that be debates between Mr. Nixon [Richard M. Nixon]

[-84-]

and Senator Kennedy were probably universally believed to be the one overriding factor that elected John Kennedy the president. His effectiveness on the debates. A thing that happened to me, I think, is of great significance was one time I received a telephone call when I was in Maryland just about the time of the debates. I think, if my memory serves me right, were there three debates?

STEWART: Right.

CURNANE: Well, I think this was after the first debate. I received a telephone call from Charles Whiteford, the political editor of the *Baltimore Sun*, and he said that he wanted to see me, very important. I went down to [unclear] Crabhouse in Baltimore, Maryland, to meet Charlie Whiteford. I believe it was about 11 or 11:30 at night. When I was there, he told me that he had something

[-85-]

that he wanted to get to Jack Kennedy. I said in answer to him, well, if I couldn't get Jack, I could always get Bob. And he said, "Well, here it is. They're going to ask John Kennedy on his next debate..."—and I'm a little vague now whether or not that was between the first and the second debate, or the second and the third debate, but the question was—"If you are elected President, how will you curtail ex-President Harry Truman [Harry S. Truman] from his utterances that are embarrassing at times?" And that's the question that they're going to ask him." I tried to extract from Charlie Whiteford where he got it from or how much authority he knows it's going to be asked. He says, "Look, I can't tell you anymore, Joe." So I went back to the hotel and I called, the next morning, I called Larry O'Brien, I said, "I've got to get through to Jack Kennedy, very important."

[-86-]

He said, "Well," he said, "I don't know if we can get Jack, but how will Bobby be?" And I says, "Fine." So he says, "Well, here's a telephone number for you to call Bob." And the exchange, I believe, was Eldorado and I later found out, I think it was New York City. I put in a phone call to Bob, and I told him of the conversation—I could not tell him where I got the question from because Charlie Whiteford had told me that I was not to tell anybody, and I couldn't give anymore information because all I knew was the question. So Bob said to me, after I told him they were going to ask this question, he says, "Well, do you think it's good?" Well, I said, "I don't know, but I think from where it came it's a good question." So he said,

“Well, all right.” He said, “How would you answer it?” Well, I said, “You’ve got a lot of these egghead whiz kids supposed to be

[-87-]

around answering questions, I think that’s for them to answer. But I personally feel that how the hell can anybody curtail a man’s personal views if his wife’s having difficulty doing it?” So he laughed, he says, “Okay.” And I think his last words were, “I’ll be in touch.” Well, the background of this, as I was told after the election from Charlie Whiteford, was this. All these questions that was propounded to Mr. Nixon and Senator Kennedy were as a result of being hashed over between the news media, the television, the radio, and the newspaper people who were traveling with both candidates. Therefore, they selected one from television, one from radio and magazines, and one from the newspapers. These three people had their questions fed to them by the other people who were not appearing. It seemed that this question was one of those selected, and it was as a result

[-89-]

that is became into my hands from Charlie Whiteford because Phil Potter, who was traveling with both the candidates in their tours—he traveled one time for fifteen days with Nixon, fifteen days with Kennedy. John Kennedy’s personality so overwhelmed the majority of the news media that they personally liked him. Mr. Nixon was cold, introverted, and therefore, they did their daily task with a great deal of restraint because he was inclined to be sharp with them. It seemed that Phil Potter, with a great deal of effort is writing up Nixon as he sees him, writing up Kennedy as he sees him, but it comes out of his typewriter, in the eyes of Mr. Herbert Klein [Herbert G. Klein], who was Nixon’s press secretary, that he was prejudiced in his analysis of Nixon and prejudiced...

STEWART: The other way.

[-90-]

CURNANE: The other way. The result of it was Mr. Klein addressed himself in a letter—the name might be wrong, but I think it was Mr. Schmidt, who was the publisher of the *Baltimore Sun*—saying Phil Potter was prejudiced in this particular instance. The publisher saw fit to send the letter, as relayed to me, to Mr. Potter, telling him he thought he’d be interested in knowing what they thought of him. Potter got mad but restrained himself. In the next sit-down of them getting together for the questions, Potter made the judgment that he felt that question which he related to us was an unfair question since both candidates were studying work conditions of Quemoy, Matsu, and et cetera, Communist policy, and they felt this particular question could shake up a man. And Phil Potter, who was the one, felt that this was an unfair, real unfair question and had a

[-91-]

feeling that it was a planted question. So, to wash it out, he called Charlie Whiteford to get in touch with me, and I relayed the question to Bob Kennedy. Later Bob Kennedy got back to me and said to me, "How did you get the question?" And I continued to tell him I was sorry I could not tell him because I was sworn to confidence. In the meantime time has now eradicated it, and Bob Kennedy, even to this day, has never discussed it further with me so I don't know if he even knows how it was. That basically is the question in reference to one of the questions that came up in the debate. Incidentally, I sat chewing my fingernails till the next debate to find out whether or not it actually would appear, and the question did appear in the exact same form as it had been relayed to me better than a week before it appeared on the television.

STEWART: Right, and the answer was somewhat as you suggested?

CURNANE: And the President, the late President Kennedy, when

[-92-]

the question was propounded to him, with a wry smile he chuckled a little, the news media that were putting the questions chuckled a little, and the President said, "Well, I think that is question for Mrs. Truman [Bess Wallace Truman] to answer." And it was generally passed off in a jocular vein, which if a person came upon it without being briefed, he might have blew it, you know. But that was that particular thing of which I have always felt was of significance.

STEWART: Okay, well, why don't we move on to the post election period? Could you tell us what further contacts you had with President Kennedy or members of his staff?

CURNANE: Well, President Kennedy.... As I told you earlier, after the election in Maryland, on election evening I was instructed and given telephone numbers at Hyannis Port, as I had been given on the primary night incidentally. And incidentally, on

[-93-]

primary night—I'll got back a little bit here—Joseph Kennedy called me at, I think, around seven o'clock and he said to me, "What elections have you got?" I said, "Who's this?" And as I recall it, he said, "This is the Ambassador." And I said, "Oh, Mr. Kennedy," I said, "The polls have just closed." "Oh," he said, "I thought they closed an hour earlier or something." He said, "You have no results?" I said, "No." And I said, "But if I do...." He says, "All right, call me at this number." And he gave me a number. But before I could get back to him with some real figures, he called me again and said, "What have you got?" And I said, "Well, I've just got these, and according to what we hear, if these figures hold up, we will be in good shape." He took umbrage at my presumptuousness in saying that if they

[-94-]

held up and said, “Well I had to have more figures than that, and you shouldn’t say that.” But that was my only conversation with him on that election night. Now, on the final election night I was given these telephone numbers to call Hyannis Port, and I called to talk with Robert Kennedy, and I told him that the final results were in because the entire state of Maryland had mechanized ballots. The result of it was that, being mechanized, we were one of the first states to have our results. I told him that the way the figures were coming in I think we’re going to carry the city by about fifty thousand votes, I think it was, and I think we probably will carry the counties, which was an unheard of situation, by about fifteen. I said, “So I think we’ll probably carry everything by about sixty-five thousand.” As it turned out

[-95-]

later, I think we carried the whole state by seventy-eight thousand. It was quite a feat because in spite of the fact of a national image, it’s a Democratic state, at the time of Kennedy’s election they had two Republican United States senators, Glenn Beall [James Glenn Beall] and John Butler [John Marshall Butler], and they had only one Democratic nationally in Franklin Roosevelt’s [Franklin D. Roosevelt] first, no second, term of running for President. All the other times nationally they were recorded for Eisenhower and for Hoover [Herbert Hoover], you know, Dewey [Thomas E. Dewey] and the like. So that it was quite a thing that they did do this flip for us, you see. Now let me see if there’s anything else I can recall. Oh, then I stayed in Maryland—as I think I’ve mentioned before—for about a week and answered all these various letters and thank you’s and wanted to send out these

[-96-]

thanks you’s to these people who had been helpful. Then I arrived home and I received a telephone call one night, my wife did, to say that Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln] had just called from Palm Beach, and the President-elect wanted to talk with me. When I was not home, she asked what time I would be home in the morning. I made it a point to be in the next morning, and he called me and said to me, Evelyn Lincoln came on the phone and said, “The President-elect would like to talk with you.” I expressed some pleasantries with Evelyn, and he came on and he wanted to tell me how much he appreciated, was very thankful of all I did for him in Maryland. Then he proceeded to tape off the various people in Maryland, whom I have just mentioned a few, he said, “And how is Jack Pollack?” I gave him the run-down on him, and he chuckled and

[-97-]

laughed about it. Then he asked me about Tommy D’Alesandro, and he got a kick out of him. Even the most small little person whom he has met in some significant part of the campaign—when I say small, some insignificant contribution that he had personally met—he inquired about. There was a young woman that was in the headquarters that he asked about,

and we spent about twenty minutes talking on the phone and asking me, but he amazed me with his knowledge of the particular thing. I'm just trying to think—oh, then he said to me, "Well," he said, "are you going to come down with us in Washington?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." I said, "Gee, I can't with what I got going here in Massachusetts, Jack." He says, "Well," he says, "I'd like you to come down," he says. "But we'll be in touch." The next I heard from him was,

[-98-]

I forgot now whether it was Bob or Jack, that called and asked me what I wanted. And I told them, after looking it over, I thought I might like to be Comptroller of Customs. My memory is vague now whether it was Jack or Bobby that called me and said that was mine. That was basically the last time I talked with him.

STEWART: You didn't see him at all after that?

CURNANE: Well, I did not see him at the White House. I did not go to the White House, only after—let me see. No, I was in the White House one day, and the President had left. He'd just flown to Hyannis Port for the weekend, and I was with Evelyn Lincoln and Kenny O'Donnell and Dave Powers [David F. Powers] and those, but I did not see the President in the White House.

STEWART: You saw him, you mentioned, on.... Was it '62 or '63 when he came for, wasn't there a big birthday party at the Armory?

[-99-]

CURNANE: Oh, yes. We had a big dinner in Boston here. I did see him then, and he grabbed me, as he was going, grabbed my hand and he said, "How is the job going?" And I said, "Fine." He said, "Good, glad to hear it. How's your family?" and like that.

STEWART: That was the last time you saw him.

CURNANE: Yes. But I can add one little thing that I just happened to remember down in Baltimore. When he came in to the hundred dollar dinner that we ran to get our campaign off in 1960 at the Pikesville Armory, he had come in from Philadelphia in a motorcade that day and he came up to the Emerson Hotel. I walked out on the sidewalk to greet him, and he was really fatigued. He came in and I said, "There's a group in the lobby of Young Democrats who are waiting to see you." Still smiling he said, "Oh, Joe, can we get right to the elevator?"

[-100-]

“Well,” I said, “I have a chair right by the elevator there. If you could step up on it and just possibly say thank you, I think they might appreciate it.” “Okay, all right.” So we went to the lobby, he was continuously smiling. The chair was set right by the elevator. With difficulty I raised him to the chair, because his back was tiring him, and he stood up and he very graciously thanked all the young people who had waited, and he had been delayed, “And I want to thank you all for your efforts. You’ve been very kind. Thank you very much.” He stepped down, he got into the elevator, and we said to the girl, “Close the door.” Everybody pushing around the lobby there. We went up to the seventh floor, I think, where we had the suite reserved, and all of the news media had about a battery of about twenty-five typewriters all set in the

[-101-]

particular adjoining room. We went into the room, Jack flopped right on the bed. Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings] and myself were the only two in the room, Lem pulled his pants off with him still laying down and took the coat that he had and the trousers, and Jack kicked his own shoes off, and took them down to have them pressed while he laid on the bed. Meantime he says, “No phones.” The phone rang, it was Bobby wanting to know how things went. Bobby says, “Who’s this?” I says, “This is Joe Curnane.” He says, “Is Jack there?” And I says, “Yes, just a minute.” I said, “Jack,” I said, “it’s Bobby.” He says, “All right, give it here.” Still laying face down on the bed, he’s got the phone by his ear and he’s talking to Bobby for about twenty minutes. In the meantime I had to interrupt to say, “Look, Jack, what do you want to eat so that we can have it prepared?”

[-102-]

So he said, “Well, get me a filet mignon, baked potato, a salad, a cup of vichyssoise, and get three or four cokes. Bring the cokes up now.” I said, “Fine.” We sent the order down, Billings went out with his suit, he continued to talk. John Bailey [John Moran Bailey] is out in the other room, and they’re preparing a speech. Jack now had been alerted he’s going to take a shower. So he gets up, goes into take a shower, and he’s taking a shower, and John Bailey calls into me, he says, “Look, Joe, have the Senator look at the speech.” I says, “Well, why don’t you give it to him?” He says, “He’s on short fuse today, he’ll chew my neck out.” He said.... Well, I said, “What the hell are you giving it to me for? He’ll chew mine out, too.” He says, “No, he won’t.” He says, “He’ll only chew those that have been with him all day.” He says, “You

[-103-]

give it to him, will you?” I says, “All right.” So I reached into the—there was no door on the shower room—I said, “Jack, they got a speech here they want you to look at, but they’re afraid that you might chew their ass out, but they said you won’t chew mine.” So he stuck his head out of the shower, he looked at me, he starts to laugh, he says, “Give it here.” So, still taking a shower, he held the speech outside of it, came to one portion and starts to swear, and says, “God.... Have you got a pencil?” So I gave him a pen, he says, “Goddamn those s.o.b.’s

I told them not to put that goddamn thing in. That's the third time I told them no." In the meantime, they've all got their ears cocked to the door. Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] was with them, Dick Goodwin, and he had his ear cocked to the door, and he was the speech writer who Jack had

[-104-]

addressed himself. He was still trying to put this goddamn passage in. When they heard him, they all said, "Okay." So I went back out, and they're all, well, all set. All over again." So now I give it back to Bailey, it's soaking wet because he'd pulled it in to scratch it, they started then typing the thing again. Now they were typing it with a typewriter with the big letters, you know, so you don't have to be using glasses, so they typed it all over again, and now they got to time it because Jack has said he wanted it no more than twelve minutes. So they retyped the whole thing. Now, Jack, in the meantime, dries himself off, gets reattired, Billings comes back with his suit, he finished his chow, somebody yells, "Ten minutes." No, seven o'clock. "Two minutes." And Jack says, "What the hell do you mean two minutes? Didn't you just tell me, Joe, ten minutes?" I says, "Yes."

[-105-]

Well, the guy out there was trying to hustle him. So Jack got perturbed, "Don't tell me two minutes when it's ten minutes." So exactly at two minutes I told him two minutes, he brushed his hair, walked out and walked down, we got into a cavalcade, or an autocade I should say, got in the thing to drive out.... [Tape turned off] We went down to the limousine, got into the autocade and we proceeded out to the Pikesville Armory. We had set up the autocade to go through the most populous parts of Baltimore. So as we're going along we came to this Mercy Hospital with all the nuns. And we almost all got killed in the motorcade because we were proceeding about twenty-five miles an hour and Jack said, "Stop." We stopped, and there were twenty cars in back of ours. Well, everybody got all—I nearly flew into the.... I was seated in the front

[-106-]

seat and Jack was in the back seat. He got out and went over and shook hands with the nuns. Then we got back into the thing, and we proceeded through all the areas. Now, as we were proceeding up through part of the ethnic groups, one we went through a Jewish section, we went through colored sections, which were just.... People were all down right up close to the car. We came to two interesting things. We're driving along, and a big fat fellow, and I would think from the area we were in he was of Jewish extraction, and he proceeded going along jaunting in his shorts, it was warm, and he says in a fog horn voice, "Ve vant Dick, ve vant Dick." So Jack waited, and he's smiling and waving his hand, never a change in his expression at all, and out of the side of his mouth, he turns to the little

[-107-]

guy that's yelling alongside of the car, he says, "You can have him, Fatso." Now we proceeded a little—we all got broke up about it—we proceeded along a little further and we come to this other section and it seemed like it was a big rawboned hillbilly. He's yelling, or has his hands cupped and he's yelling, "Go back to Rome. Go back to Rome." And Kennedy could take it no longer, but still very friendly and smiling he turns to the guy, who was right up close now, and he said, "You son of a bitch." But that gave a human side to show that.... The Governor and the Baltimore County Executive [Christian H. Kahl] and the Mayor of Baltimore [Grady] were all in the car. It broke the three of them up something awful, and I'm laughing like hell at it, you know. But that's basically what the situation was.

STEWART: It shows how quickly he could...

[-108-]

CURNANE: React.

STEWART: ...recover after being so tired and then he perked right up again.

CURNANE: He perked right up again and away we were. And then, an interesting thing, at the particular banquet that night we had twenty-one hundred people in there, and it's a tremendous big place. He was so gracious and everything, and he asked me would I walk with him down through the crowd. We went up to the thing, and his remarks were very gracious. Then on the way out there was a fellow that was a real ear-banger, and the crowd was just like sardines around the car, and he sees him up the other side, he yells, this other fellow yells at Jack, "Jack, Jack, how are you, Jack?" So Jack sees him and sees who it is, and it's George Mahoney, who, incidentally, just got defeated by Agnew [Spiro T. Agnew], and he

[-109-]

saw George, he says, "Oh hello, George. How are you, good to see you." He turns to me, and he says, "Let's get the hell in the car. Holy cow." So he gets in the car to sit down to go back, and I shook hands with him and said, "See you later, Jack." He says, "Okay, Joe." Who the hell gets in the other side but Mahoney, sat down alongside of him, and rode with Jack Kennedy to Washington and then took a cab back.

STEWART: Very good. Well, unless there's anything else...

CURNANE: No, that's all I can think of, cut it off.

STEWART: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-110-]

Joseph A. Curnane Oral History Transcript
Name Index

A

Agnew, Spiro T., 109

B

Bailey, John Moran, 103, 105
Bartlett, Charles, 67
Beall, James Glenn, 96
Billings, Kirk LeMoyne, 102, 103, 105
Boland, Edward P., 8
Brewster, Daniel Baugh, 67
Burke, William H., Jr., 35, 36, 42
Butler, John Marshall, 96

C

Cahill, John F., 35
Cahill, Mary, 35, 38
Cauldwin, Jim, 42
Celeste, Vincent J., 44
Colbert, James G., 39, 41
Cushing, Richard James, 8

D

D'Alesandro, Thomas, Jr., 57, 59, 63, 64, 82, 83,
98
Dempsey, Jack, 6
Dever, Paul A., 5, 20a, 20b,
Dewey, Thomas E., 96
Dodd, Thomas J., 8

E

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 28, 29, 96

F

Fenton, Eddie, 58
Ferguson, 67
Finan, Thomas B., 57, 60, 67, 82
Fitzgerald, John, 3, 4
Flanagan, William J., 75, 76, 77
Forrest, John, 39
Furcolo, Foster, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48

G

Galluccio, Anthony, 9
Goodman, Phillip M., 63, 64, 83
Goodwin, Angier L., 40
Goodwin, Richard N., 104
Grady, Joseph Harold, 63, 64, 82, 108

H

Hague, Frank, 72
Hocker, George, 59, 67, 70
Hodges, William L., 63, 82
Hoover, Herbert, 96
Humphrey, Hubert H., 8

J

Johnson, Lyndon B., 59, 66, 67
Jones, Bobby, 6

K

Kahl, Christian H., 108
Kennedy, Edward M., 8, 24, 30, 31, 32, 33, 48, 50
Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 9, 53
Kennedy, John F., 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13,
14, 15, 16, 19, 20a, 20b, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27,
28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43,
44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56,
57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 70, 73, 81, 83,
84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99,
102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110
Kennedy, Joseph P., Jr., 4
Kennedy, Joseph P., Sr., 3, 5, 17, 18, 50, 81, 94
Kennedy, Robert F., 24, 27, 28, 50, 69, 71, 74, 75,
79, 81, 82, 86, 87, 92, 95, 99, 102
Kenny, John V., 71, 72, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80
Kenny, Margaret Smith, 72, 80
Klein, Herbert G., 90, 91
Kovens, Irvin, 63, 64, 82

L

Laughlin, Larry, 32
Laura, Eugene, 71, 72, 73, 76, 78, 80
Lincoln, Evelyn N., 97, 99
Livingstone, David, 78
Lodge, Henry Cabot, 15, 18, 19, 28, 29

Lynch, John M., 36, 42

M

Macdonald, Torbert H., 27, 28, 43, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55
Mahoney, George Perry, 67, 109, 110
McCarthy, Eugene J., 8
McCarthy, Joseph R., 8, 61, 62
McCormack, Edward J., Jr., 31, 32, 33
McCormack, Edward J., Sr., 32
McCormack, John William, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43
McDonald, Al, 11
Meyner, Robert B., 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80
Morey, Robert F., 11
Morse, Wayne L., 66
Muskie, Edmund S., 8

N

Nixon, Richard M., 84, 89, 90, 107

O

O'Brien, Lawrence F., 24, 25, 28, 36, 37, 45, 46, 86
O'Connor, Herbert R., Jr., 56
O'Connor, Herbert Romulus, 56
O'Donnell, Cleo, 25
O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 25, 28, 34, 36, 99
O'Malley, Patrick F., 63, 64, 82

P

Parks, John, 42
Pollack, James H., 63, 64, 67, 83, 97
Potter, Philip, 67, 90, 91
Powers, David F., 99

R

Roosevelt, Franklin D., 96
Ruth, George Herman "Babe," 6

S

Saltonstall, Leverett, 44
Schmidt, 91
Shriver, Eunice Kennedy, 26
Smith, Benjamin A., II, 30
Smith, Jean Kennedy, 26
Smith, Stephen A., 55
Stanley, Henry M., 78

Sullivan, Thomas F., 36, 37

T

Tawes, John Millard, 59, 66, 67, 68, 70, 82, 108
Truman, Bess Wallace, 93
Truman, Harry S., 86
Tydings, Joseph D., 56, 57, 60, 61, 62, 65, 68, 70, 81, 82
Tydings, Millard E., 56, 59

U

Udoff, Frank, 57, 82

W

Walsh, David I., 29
Walsh, James E., 60
Walsh, William Concannon, 60
Whiteford, Charles, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 92
Wyatt, Joseph M., 63, 64, 82