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Forbes, (1915 - 1990) Executive director, John F. Kennedy for President, New Hampshire (1960); campaign organizer, West Virginia (1960); editor Kennedy Convention Bulletin (1960), discusses the New Hampshire primary, opponents in the campaign, and the Kennedy family's visits to New Hampshire, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Fred A. Forbes

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Fred A. Forbes – JFK #1

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First Oral History Interview

with

FRED FORBES

February 16, 1966
Washington, D.C.

By Ronald J. Grele

For the John F. Kennedy Library

GRELE: Mr. Forbes, do you recall when you first came into contact with John Kennedy or members of the Kennedy organization?

FORBES: Yes, I remember this very well. I had been doing some work with the Democratic State Committee in New Hampshire. Bernard Boutin [Bernard Louis Boutin], who was a national committeeman, and Bill Dunfey [William L. Dunfey], who had long been active in Democratic politics in New Hampshire, needed some help presswise, and they needed some help on pictures. And of course, being a newsman and having a camera and being a Democrat, I was able to help them. Now at this time, I had just finished doing a three-year public relations job for the Crotchet Mountain Foundation in Greenfield, New Hampshire, which is a big rehabilitation center for adults and for children.

GRELE: What year was this?

FORBES: This was 1959. This was about, oh, I think, September. And of course, these people were talking about Bernie Boutin running again for governor. He had come so close in 1958. I had supported, of course, the Democrats in '58, but I had not been an active party worker at that time. I was too much involved with the program at Crotchet Mountain. But since that time I had left Crotchet Mountain, I was in Boston doing a relocation program for the Boston Evening

Clinic, but spending most of my time and my weekends in New Hampshire. This is where I first came into contact with Bernie Boutin and Bill Dunfey.

Politically, I had known Bill Dunfey before when he had helped me, of course, on the Easter Seal programs. He and his family

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were good at that. They were the young, the up-and-coming, the guiding light of the Democratic party in New Hampshire at the time.

GRELE: And how did you meet Senator Kennedy?

FORBES: Well, of course, I had known Senator Kennedy, not intimately, but I had known him as a person. I am an old Boston boy myself. As a matter of fact, it is very interesting that I was brought into the world by the same doctor, Doctor Frederick L. Good, that brought all of the Kennedy children into the world. This is a rather interesting sidelight. He was a wonderful person.

The way I actually came into contact with Jack Kennedy at this early stage is that I needed a speaker for a fundraising dinner to raise twenty thousand dollars to move the Boston Evening Clinic from its old home on Commonwealth Avenue which was at the corner of Commonwealth and Hereford Street, the old Burrage [Albert C. Burrage] estate. One of my board of directors thought it was a good idea that I go down and get the then young senator from Massachusetts to come up and make that speech because he had a good following with labor, and even at that time, they were talking about him as a possible presidential candidate. Of course, all of us will remember the very close race he had for the vice presidency four years before.

So I got on a plane, and I came down to Washington. I went immediately to his office. This was the first time, actually, that I had met Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln]. I walked in and talked to her and told her who I was and what I wanted. She told me that the senator was out, but that he would be glad to see me in the afternoon. I can remember buying Profiles in Courage from her right there.

I went out and made some other calls. I came back in the afternoon, and I had a very brief ten minutes with Senator Kennedy, and he said that he would be very much interested in trying to help us. He said that Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith], at this time, was handling his speaking schedule down at the Esso Building and would I go down to talk to him.

[Interruption]

GRELE: You are saying that you went down to see Steve Smith at the Esso Building?

FORBES: Yes, Senator Kennedy then asked me to go down and talk to him. And then quite aside from this, he said to me, "Fred, you are in New Hampshire, aren't you? You live in New Hampshire. I'm very much interested and I am thinking very seriously of going into that presidential primary

in New Hampshire.” And then he asked me who the best people were in the Democratic Party in New Hampshire. Now I am sure that he knew that Bernard Boutin, the national committeeman, and Bill Dunfey were the guiding lights of the New Hampshire Democratic party, and Bill Dunfey had been responsible, ever since he had been president of the Young Democrats, in building the party. So I said to the senator, “Unless you go with the Bernie Boutin, Bill Dunfey, Murray Devine [J. Murray Devine] major element of the Democratic party in New Hampshire, you won’t get the full strength.” And he said, “That is what I thought.” And then he looks right at me and says, “I may want to talk to you about this later.”

And then before I left I said, “Would you autograph this book, Profiles in Courage, for me? By this time we were walking down the corridor of the old Senate Office Building, and he took the book very nicely and held it up against the wall and autographed it for me.

And I left immediately and went down to the Esso Building and talked to Steve Smith. I told him what I wanted and Steve gave me three possible dates that were possibilities for the senator making the major address for this fundraising for the Boston Evening Clinic, a labor clinic, founded around at that time by a very wonderful person, Dr. Morris Cohen [Morris A. Cohen].

Then Steve Smith asked me the same questions about my being a New Hampshire man, what I knew about the party, was I connected with it. I made the same reply to him, that unless they went with the Dunfey-Devine-Bernie Boutin part of the Democratic party, they wouldn’t have a chance because they wouldn’t have any organization. I said to Steve Smith at that time, “I am very much interested if you do come into the primary in working along with you.” He thanked me and asked me to keep in touch with him.

And then he said, “By the way, I have two people that I want you to meet in this outer office. I went out and he introduced me for the first time to Larry O’Brien [Lawrence F. O’Brien] and to Ken O’Donnell [Kenneth P. O’Donnell] who later became, of course, the guiding geniuses of the whole primary and the whole 1960 campaign. This was the first time that I had met these people.

GRELE: Back to New Hampshire, what were the alternatives if he didn’t go with the Bernie Boutin-Murray Devine Democrats? What were the alternatives?

FORBES: Well, the alternatives were to just go in there on an independent basis with what I would call a minority group, a group who never could seem to agree with the majority of the party. This was one of the reasons why we didn’t build as fast as we should have in New Hampshire. But actually, I think he was just questioning me to know how much I knew about the Democrats and which group I was with. It was a very smart question. And of course, I knew that he and Bernard were friends and I knew they had been talking even as he was speaking to me.

GRELE: Did he come to Boston and to the dinner?

FORBES: No, I never did get President Kennedy because we had to hold the fundraising dinner earlier than any of the three dates that he had. But we did have it, and it was a successful dinner. My contract with the Boston Evening Clinic was over at the end of this week of the dinner which was a successful fund raising dinner.

My last day in the office, I received a telephone call from Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch], the Massachusetts State Democratic Chairman, at my office. When I picked up the phone it was Larry O'Brien. This was Friday afternoon. He said to me, "Fred, are you going to Manchester, New Hampshire tonight by any chance? If you are, Kenny O'Donnell and I would like to ride up with you. And by the way, we would like to have you attend this meeting with Bernie Boutin, and Murray Devine, and Bill Dunfey." I was going to New Hampshire and I picked them up. We drove up, and we talked about the primary.

I did attend this meeting which was a rather long evening meeting, and they said at this time – and this was about a week to ten days before President Kennedy made his announcement that he was going to run – that he was definitely coming in, and that they wanted to form a committee and that they were looking for a director for the campaign.

Then, I guess, as luck would have it or by the grace of God, they asked me to step out of the room for awhile. I went down to the first floor and had a cup of coffee in the restaurant. Finally, in about a half hour, Bernie Boutin came down and asked me if I would accept the job as executive director of the first in the nation's primary for Senator Kennedy. The pay was not the highest but, certainly, the challenge was there. He asked me how much I had to have. I said, "Well, with a wife and three youngsters, even living up here in the country, I have to have at least \$150 a week." Bernie Boutin said to me, "Well,

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we can't quite make that. Will you do it for \$100?" Now, this is a great decision to have had to make right at that time because I had other things that I could have gone to.

But this whole business of Senator Kennedy considering running for this, the fact that he was the second Catholic to try, and I think the first Catholic in years to have a chance, was a great challenge to me. So I said yes, without batting an eye. I said, "Sure, I would do it, and I would be thrilled to be a part of it." We had an understanding that they would pay me \$100 a week, and of course, all my expenses. Right from that night we started to organize.

GRELE: Did you ever speculate on why they asked you to leave the room?

FORBES: Well, I had assumed that they were very much interested in getting me into the Democratic party work in New Hampshire simply because I was a known newsman. I had covered the entire state. I had many friends. I was also a fair photographer. We needed this kind of help to move the Democratic party. I had an inkling that this was going to be it. I didn't know that I would be lucky enough to, but... I didn't say, "Ah, yes, or no." I made the judgment right off the top of my head, and it was a good judgment, a wonderful judgment. It was just tremendous. I didn't

even ask my wife or anybody else their opinion. I just said, "Yes, I'll go."

GRELE: What else occurred at the meeting?

FORBES: Well, they greeted me, of course, and were very happy that I was going to do this. They told me something of the plans for the announcement and told me something of the plans for going into Wisconsin and West Virginia. As all Kennedy programs that I ever had anything to do with, politically or anything else, we were off and running. The minute I said yes, I was part of the gang and away we went. We talked about various and sundry things in relations to the campaign.

I went right to work for the most part with Bernie Boutin. Bernie Boutin was the top organizer simply because he was the top ranking official in the state at that time; being our national committeeman. It was agreed that I would work closely with him, that he would be the boss of the organization, and that Bill Dunfey and Murray Devine would be our advisers. And of course, the talk at this time was who to get for chairman and a vice-chairman, where to set up the headquarters, and when to start.

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GRELE: Who was the vice-chairman?

FORBES: Well, let's go back to the chairman. Bernie was the working chairman, but we wanted somebody who was politically potent at the time. The choice fell to Roger Brassard [Roger E. Brassard], who was a jeweler, a good Frenchman there in Manchester, but who was the only Democrat on the governor's council. I think Roger was in his third term, and he was actually the highest ranking Democratic politician. So we got a hold of him, and he accepted this.

Then we wanted to tie this in with the older group of Democrats, and I am sure that's why Bernard, and Murray Devine, and Bill Dunfey worked so hard to get Jack Sheehan [John Joseph Sheehan]. Jack Sheehan had been the last Democratic U.S. attorney in the state and was well thought of and much beloved. He accepted the vice-chairmanship. Then after we had gotten those done – a very interesting setup – I had the chore of setting up the campaign office which was to be in the basement of the Carpenter Motor Hotel which is the largest hotel anywhere east of Boston and is owned by the Dunfey interests.

I was given the name of Bill Hartigan [William J. Hartigan] who was then a Boston boy close to the Kennedys, who was working for American Airlines and had been very active in the last senatorial campaign – to call him up and see if he had any posters from the senator's last campaign that we could use. I called Bill, and he said, "Yes, I've got them. How should I get them to you?" I said, "I'll come down tonight." That very night I drove from Manchester to Revere [Massachusetts], and I met Bill and his lovely wife and some of his kids and he gave me 14 posters.

I brought these 14 posters back, took them over to a sign company and had them read so that they were usable in our campaign. We used the same young face of the senator and doctored up the poster to read, instead of, "He served all New England with distinction. U.S.

Senator John Kennedy for President.” It really came out real well, of course.

Senator Kennedy was thought of in New Hampshire. He was very popular in New Hampshire, and he was actually thought of as either the third or fourth senator of New Hampshire because both he and Senator Kefauver [Estes Kefauver], who campaigned twice in the primary, were just wonderful people and had many, many friends in New Hampshire. This young senator who had won by such a tremendous margin the last time, I mean Senator Kennedy, just captured the hearts of all New Englanders. He was a real operator, a brilliant person, a man who made a wonderful speech and got around and did things, and came from a fabulous family

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and a lovely and beautiful and talented wife. This all just generated great enthusiasm in New Hampshire. It couldn't have been more natural.

When we brought the posters back and set them up, then of course I had to wait for the official announcement. Kennedy's official announcement came on Saturday, December 31. It was a Saturday afternoon that he made this announcement, and he made this announcement and flew immediately from Washington to Boston in a private plane with Pierre Salinger. My next assignment was to go to Logan Airport and to meet them there and to pick up the announcement that he taped for use of the radio stations in New Hampshire and the one or two TV outlets that we had. This was the first time I had met Pierre Salinger. I met Pierre at the airport. I introduced myself. He said, "Here's your stuff, Forbes. Go ahead."

Of course, that night was the famous night when John Kennedy appeared with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt at Brandeis University on her program. I shall never forget getting back to New Hampshire in time to see that. Her first words to then Senator Kennedy, "It's very nice to have you here on the show, and for a young man it is a very important occasion because of the announcement that you just made." Now this is very significant because later on, of course, I had the privilege of working with Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.] and at this time of course, everybody knew that Mrs. Roosevelt, the wonderful person and stateswoman that she was, world citizen, heavily favored Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] again. It was significant, I think, that Senator Kennedy had the courage to go into a program like this, knowing this and knowing that he was going to be asked a lot of the \$64,000 questions. But it was a brilliant performance, and she was very gracious and wonderful even with her, I know, thoughts that he was not at that time her choice for the Democratic nomination.

GRELE: What was the strategy behind the timing of the announcement? Do you recall?

FORBES: Well, of course, Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] had made his announcement three days earlier, but with his announcement had said nothing about entering anything but the Wisconsin primary, if I remember it. The strategy of the Kennedy group was to hold this until the weekend knowing that this major TV program, I'm sure, was a good way to say that he was going to come into the state

of New Hampshire for the first-in-the-nation primary. The timing was excellent. It took us just about three days, the weekend, to set up the office and to put

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these posters up and to open up what was officially the first-in-the-nation Kennedy-for-President headquarters.

We did this, and we took pictures of it. I was able to give these pictures to the AP [Associated Press] wire service, and it went all over the country. Bernard Boutin and Murray Devine along with Roger Brassard, the new and first-in-the-nation chairman for Kennedy, and Jack Sheehan were present at that opening ceremony.

GRELE: That was in Manchester?

FORBES: That was in Manchester in the Carpenter Motor Hotel. The other people who were present were the three leading Democrats in the city: Mayor Josaphat T. Benoit, and Madeline Gladu, who headed the Democratic women, and Joe Myers, who was the Manchester Democratic city chairman. Those were the ones who participated in that ribbon cutting. I took the picture, and one of the thrills of my life, you know, was to have this as a first and to have this go all over the country. I think that Larry O'Brien and the rest of the group were really amazed that we had been able to set this up so fast and get it out so fast.

GRELE: At this early stage, what were your impressions of the Kennedy staff: Larry O'Brien, Kenny O'Donnell, Pierre Salinger?

FORBES: Well, of course, I was taken with O'Brien and Kenny when I first met them and when I had that long session in Manchester where we set up this committee, and they chose me. I was taken immediately with their seriousness of purpose, and their all-out efforts, and their outlook on the whole thing. This sort of a spirit in the Kennedy thing caught fire to you. I think you will find this in all the people who worked for Jack Kennedy, that this was an automatic, catching fire.

I liked, of course, Pierre the minute I saw him in the Boston airport, and I didn't talk to him more than three minutes. Later of course, during the campaign in New Hampshire, I got to know him very well and found out what a real sharp mind he had and how tremendously he worked under pressure. Pierre is one of the greatest.

Larry O'Brien I have never seen rattled in my life. I have seen him handle some real tough ones and always with the same tremendous charm and real ability he had. I was immediately taken with the attitude and the ability of that staff. And remember, it was not a big staff either. This was no nine-to-five job. This was an all-day, all-night, every waking hour you can give to it, because that is the way it had to move.

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GRELE: Did John Kennedy ever say anything to you about the rapidity with which you set up headquarters in New Hampshire and had everything going?

FORBES: Yes, when he came into Nashua in January for his first tour with his lovely wife. We did that area and then went into Manchester. Of course, he saw the headquarters, and he was amazed that we had set it up, and that we had things going so nicely, lists being prepared. I think he was rather impressed with the schedule.

Now, Bernard Boutin and I were responsible for the Kennedy schedule. Bernard and I would labor at night to set up the schedule and get it off airmail to Washington for approval by O'Brien, being sure that we had covered all the bases, and being sure that this was not too involved for him. But he was always impressed with how we covered every area, and again, with the dispatch with which we did it.

Now, we couldn't have done this unless we had the same kind of a staff in the Manchester office that we had. I am trying to think of the name of my secretary there. Doris... I will think of her last name in a minute. But she was a fabulous gal who came out of more or less retirement to help us, and she was just terrific. Lucille Kelly was one of our volunteers who was a very stable person at that time, and of course, the local organization helped us tremendously.

Also, at this time, we were beginning to involve some Dartmouth seniors who were majoring in political science. There was one fellow by the name of Irving Fasher – we called him Red Fasher – who was in the Tuck School of public administration [Amos Tuck School of Business Administration]. He was assigned to this primary as a part of a student project from Dartmouth, and he was most helpful. As a matter of fact, he not only was with us in New Hampshire, but he came out and helped us in Los Angeles, and then came back and during the major campaign, was the campaign aide to Professor Hill [Herbert W. Hill] who was running for the Senate in '60. This is all tied in with your college program.

GRELE: In the opening stages of the primary campaign, what were some of the major problems that you isolated as you recall?

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FORBES: I think in the first instance of this campaign, there was one candidate who came in and who stayed. And that was Paul Fisher, [Paul C. Fisher] who was a fountain pen manufacturer from the Chicago area, who was a man of wealth, a controversial man who had campaigned previously against withholding taxes, and who, as I understand, ran his company from jail in order to prove his point until some sort of settlement was made. Paul Fisher came in and stayed in this campaign right through the end. Now, Paul Fisher was supposedly a Democrat, and in the end he mustered almost seven thousand votes. His appeal to the New Hampshire people was that he was running on a ticket to abolish the income tax. This was his single purpose. He was not running against John Kennedy per se, but he was running on the program of no income tax. He spent a fabulous amount of money. He had his problems. As I go on with

the campaign story, we met him face to face only once, and that was before a student assembly at the University of New Hampshire at the closing of the campaign. But remarkably enough, he did get a substantial vote.

Now there were two other, what I like to term, screw-ball situations that we had to handle. And these situations evolved around two candidates. One was a man by the name of Elton [Elton Britt], from the Maryland area. He was a hillbilly singer, and he came into the state and wanted to campaign. Elton Britt. He was a 41-year-old, guitar-playing, TV country music singer. And he came in, I think, for the publicity.

He got a number of signatures to go on to the petition that would be needed for him to be put onto the ballot legally. We have to do this in New Hampshire.

You have to have a certain number of valid voter signatures in each district in order to run. He did this, and he named as his vice presidential candidate the then Governor Clements [Earle C. Clements] of Kentucky.

The second man who came in was the perennial Mr. America of Mr. America First, Lar Daly [Lawrence Joseph Sarsfield Daly] of Chicago, who was in the furniture business. This is an interesting story from my standpoint because I was in the lobby of the Carpenter Motor Hotel the night that Lar Daly came in and registered. I knew him, but he didn't know me. The clerk tipped me off to who he was. I had a group of people check him out as to his activities in getting his signatures on the petition for being included on the ballot. Then, fortunately, I was there less than forty-eight hours later when he checked out of the hotel.

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It just seemed to me that there was not enough time in that he had spent there, even with helpers, to have gotten genuine signatures that would stand up. So I got a hold of my associate at this time, Alan Foster from Plymouth, New Hampshire, who was then the executive director of the Democratic State Committee. He and I went up to Concord, the state capital, and got from the secretary of state's office these petitions and copied them. And then we got some help from the mayor's office in Concord to check one group, and the mayor's office in Manchester to check the other group, and we ourselves checked out two groups. We found that better than forty percent in one instance of the signatures would not stand up. They were not registered voters. In some instances it was a great doubt as to whether they were genuine signatures.

We had to make a decision then as to what we were going to do about it. It was a good effort to knock these two people off of the ballot. And our only reason for knocking them off was not in any way to limit the choice that people have, but we wanted this as genuine a battle as we could and as genuine a sampling of Senator Kennedy's popularity. We had a conference with Bernie Boutin and with Murray Devine, who is a lawyer and who is our state chairman, and Bill Dunfey. The decision of the state officials at that time was that we should make an issue of this, and that we should appeal to get these guys off the ballot.

So, we called Washington. Bernie Boutin talked directly to Senator Kennedy and explained what we were up against. There was a little bit of hesitancy at this time as far as Senator Kennedy was concerned. He didn't want to seem to be strong-arming, as I remember the terms he used, anybody who wanted to participate in that primary.

I think Boutin did a masterful job on selling him on the same thing that we thought, that these people – I don't like to use the word phonies – were taking advantage of a situation and just looking for undue publicity. Anybody who knows anything about politics, knows that Lar Daly is a perennial hanger on, and an American firster, and that type of thing.

So, Senator Kennedy said, "Go ahead. I'll go by your judgment." So at this time, Murray Devine and myself went to the secretary of state and put in a petition to move these names dropped from the ballot. It took us three days, and finally we won.

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It was quite significant, and it was another thing that helped us in promoting this campaigning. People knew that we were tremendously sincere. We wanted to make a real effort on this thing. We wanted a real show of popularity. I think it was a great thing that we got them off. I think that it helped as a vehicle in moving the campaign. And again, a very, I would almost say lucky, item that two of us bumped onto and thought enough of to work out, and it was one of the things that worked to our advantage.

Oh and then I might say too, that Britt's manager threatened me in the newspapers saying that we had won this dishonestly and that they were going to make a real issue. They had four days, both Lar Daly and Elton Britt had four days to appeal on this, and neither of their camps or they themselves appealed in any way because they knew that we had the goods, and they knew that they did not get genuine signatures or enough of them. So this was very interesting, very good.

GRELE: How significant a threat or what kind of a threat did the Kennedy organization feel that Paul Fisher was?

FORBES: Well, I don't think that the Kennedy group ever thought that Paul Fisher was any kind of a threat. He was campaigning on this income tax issue which was a popular issue simply to the number of retired people in New Hampshire. New Hampshire has a tremendous number of older, elder, wonderful retired people. This was a sort of a Townsend Plan thing for them. I think maybe Paul Fisher dragged along a few of the dissident Democrats that you find in any state. Despite the glamour that he tried to throw into his campaign and some of the threatening that he did, the only time that Paul Fisher ever became a really important item in the campaign was when he insisted that if the student convocation at the University of New Hampshire was going to hear one side of the political campaign, that he had a right to be heard too.

And this came down to a very fascinating appearance in which Senator Kennedy came to the University of New Hampshire at the invitation of the president of the university and made a very significant and tremendous speech on foreign policy. Fisher and his cohorts showed up and were allowed with Senator Kennedy agreeing and saying, "Yes, please let him talk, too."

He gave a rather insignificant talk on his tax program much to the amusement, and I'm sorry to say in some cases, the booing applause of the student body. This was really the only time that he showed up, and it was just the event that they picked that made it important.

He was as ridiculous there as he was in his whole campaign. I think it was rather amazing to most of us that he did get six thousand two hundred votes. But it was not significant. I wish we could have that to put on top of Senator Kennedy's forty-five thousand. It would have been tremendous, but you can't get political campaigns this way. Later on, Paul Fisher, I am sorry to say, worked against us very heavily in West Virginia, and took what I thought was some very bad advertising in there, and wound up heading the Democrats for Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] in the overall '60 campaign. So you can see that he was really a maverick. Quite a nice person. I met him and talked with him several times during the campaign. I never had a squabble with him. I think maverick is the best term for him.

GRELE: Were there dissident local Democrats who campaigned against John Kennedy or campaigned as delegates against the Kennedy slate?

FORBES: Well yes, there is a man who is a good friend of mine, a Democrat in New Hampshire, Henry Sullivan [Henry P. Sullivan]. He, at one time, had been Democratic nation committeeman, and he thought that the Democratic party in New Hampshire shouldn't have a picked slate of people to back Kennedy. He thought that everybody ought to work on an individual basis. Well, actually you can't build a campaign successfully unless you have a campaign organization. He was against us on this point. We had a very narrow squeak with him. We finally beat him in a run-off. Now, he was the major one who was, I would say, dissident. But then again, Henry Sullivan, Lord bless him, has always been a dissident ever since I was interested.

GRELE: He sounds like a yankee individualist.

FORBES: And very much so. There was a group of people who have not been in what I call the mainstream of the Democrats, and they call themselves the insurgents. They were from the shore. There was a man by the name of Albert Cook Nadeau [Albert J. Cook Nadeau] of Somersworth; there was Gail Bower [Gail E. Bower, Jr.] of Manchester who had twice been elected delegate; and there was a Felix Daniel [J. Felix Daniel] of Manchester who had once spent half a term as a U.S. representative here; and there was a former mayor of Rochester, Sumner Watson [Sumner W. Watson]. They formed an independent slate and, I might say, went nowhere.

GRELE: There was talk at the time of the Kennedy people trying to get a major candidate to come into New Hampshire and face the primary battle, such as Senator Symington [Stuart Symington, II], perhaps, or Senator Humphrey. Did you know about this at all? Were you at all involved in these attempts?

FORBES: Well, I think that Senator Kennedy would have loved to have Hubert Humphrey in this first test. I think that Hubert Humphrey was smart enough to know that this was Jack Kennedy's home territory, and that he best not come in there. There were faint passes, shall I say, made at trying to talk Senator Symington, who was certainly former President Truman's [Harry S. Truman] candidate, to come into this area, but neither was successful. Never at any time was there any serious major candidate that wanted to come into this territory because it was known as Kennedy territory.

And of course, this was a warm-up for us because while the campaigning in New Hampshire was going on, you must remember, the Wisconsin primary had already started. Jack Kennedy had a wonderful crew out there. I was never privileged to be in that, but I knew many of them. Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey], their lieutenant governor, was the key man in there. The very famous Paul Corbin, of course, was in Wisconsin. But there was never any real major candidate.

GRELE: Was religion a problem in the New Hampshire primary in any way?

FORBES: No, I don't think that religion was a major problem in New Hampshire simply because we have so many Catholics in New Hampshire. Most all of your Catholics in New Hampshire, of course, I would say the majority of them, are Democrats. We have the French Canadians in Berlin in the north, and then of course, Manchester and Nashua are heavily French. No, I don't think the religious issue is one that counted in here because everybody knew Jack Kennedy.

Everybody knew him from Massachusetts, and knew what he had done and knew that he had been helpful to us in our state because, after all, we didn't have any Democratic senators in the United States Senate at this time. He was the closest one. Many people went to him for help on New Hampshire problems. No, I wouldn't say that the religious issue was anyway near a problem or anyway near the proportions that we found in West Virginia where it was a real issue.

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GRELE: Were there particular areas of the state where he did better than other areas?

FORBES: Well, of course, he did pretty well all through the state. The traditional Republican towns that count their votes first, of course, went for Mr. Nixon other than the north. I would say a good portion of the second district went Republican as it mostly does, but by and large, I would say he did very well all over. Let me just look at the record here. [Pause]

You have to remember that the registration in New Hampshire is almost 3 to 1 Republican. Certainly Senator Kennedy, in this instance, cut it down by at least 2 to 1. President Kennedy got 42,969 votes, and Richard Nixon got 65,077 votes, and the major two that took away from either of those... As a matter of fact, Fisher got two thousand votes on the Republican ballot, and he got six thousand seven hundred on the Democratic.

Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] cut in by about three thousand to Mr. Nixon. The only one we had, of course, was Fisher in the Democratic thing, and about three hundred people voted for Symington who wasn't even on the ballot. So I would say that Jack Kennedy cut down the vote from 3 to 1 to 2 to 1 which was really tremendous.

Actually, when you think that he did better than Estes Kefauver, and Estes Kefauver is the great senator from Tennessee who was beloved by New Hampshire people. He was a presidential candidate first in '52 and then again in '56, and he spent more time, I would say tremendously more time in New Hampshire than Jack Kennedy was able to do. Actually in this thing, Jack Kennedy made three visits to New Hampshire for this campaign because, of course, he had his senatorial duties to do and he was getting up all the other campaigns. He had started his work in Wisconsin.

GRELE: In choosing the slate of delegates, how was this done?

FORBES: Well, in choosing your slated of delegates, all the people, of course, were well known in the first district – Roger Brassard, as I said, was the top elected Democrat being on the governor's council; Romeo Champagne [Romeo J. Champaigne] was a former governor's councilor and active in the party and who later, of course, ran for the Congress in '60; William Craig [William H. Craig, Jr.] was an excellent Democrat, a hard worker, from Manchester; Bob Filion [Robert H. Filion] was the mayor of Somersworth; Paul Normandin [Paul L. Normandin], of course, was the leading lawyer in Laconia, Bernie Boutin's home town; Bob Plourde [Robert E. Plourde] is a state legislator; John Sheehan, of course, as I said, is the last U.S. attorney as a Democrat in New Hampshire; Freddie Catalfo [Alfred J. Catalfo, Jr.]

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is a lawyer from Dover who is always interested in Democratic programs in the shore level. I think Maurice Bronstein, who incidentally beat Henry Sullivan, the former chairman, was the real new face but was a delightful person and a very popular merchant and a man who had labored in the Democratic cause.

The alternate people – Irja Bownes [Irja C. Bownes], she was one of our leading woman Democrats; George Gauthier [George A. Gauthier] was a member of the board of selectman in the city of Manchester; Winnie Hartigan [Winifred E. Hartigan] was our national committeewoman later on. Tom O'Malley [Thomas B. O'Malley] and John Cahill [John C. Cahill] is the only Democrat ever elected to the city council of Exeter, and Tom O'Malley was elected time and time again in Manchester. That is the way they picked the first district slate.

GRELE: They were well known?

FORBES: They were well known people and people who wanted to really go all out. In the second district, I think the same thing would apply, that the people who ran over there were tremendously important people and who had always been active.

GRELE: Was there any attempt to balance it religiously?

FORBES: No, I don't think that came into feeling at all. For instance, Mr. Kelley [Emmet J. Kelley] of the second district was the former national committeeman from Berlin, long a very able northern New Hampshire Democrat. So was Mr. Lavigne [Romeo J. Lavigne]. Mr. Kretowicz [Walter P. Kretowicz] is a well known Democrat from the Keene area. Leonard [Richard W. Leonard] was a very well known lawyer in the Nashua area. Stu Nims [Stuart V. Nims], over in Keene, had run for the second district. Tom Pitarys [Thomas J. Pitarys], out of Nashua, was the president of the AFL-CIO and a Democrat. Larry Radway [Lawrence Ingram Radway] from – isn't it funny, I forget the two names of those two towns – from the second district were both well known and both members of the legislature. Royal Dion who later became U.S. marshal and executive director of the party was well known. All the people were people that we had worked with before.

GRELE: I have been told that Bernie Boutin was the key man in New Hampshire. How effective was he in the organization?

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FORBES: There is no question in my mind that Bernie Boutin was the guiding genius behind the whole Kennedy primary. Bernie had gotten his feet wet by losing a very close race by five thousand votes to Wesley Powell in 1958 for the governor's chair. He put together the first-in-the-nation presidential primary. He did all of the leg work with me. He and I were in constant touch.

As had later been shown by his great work down here in Washington as GSA [General Services Administration] administrator, this is a man who could do more detail and assimilate more detail in a shorter time and retain it than anybody that I have ever had the pleasure of working with. He is a tremendous administrator. He had a lot of courage too. We had a lot of problems in New Hampshire. He had to make the first decision that we were going to have a pledge slate. He knew that the only reason that we could mount a good campaign was with a pledge slate, and he stuck to his guns on it. I think that this was the first real great thing that he and Murray Devine and Bernie Boutin himself worked out.

Those there were the keys to the organization although, I would say, with Bernie calling the policy shots. Bernie was the day-to-day contact with Senator Kennedy, the week-to-week contact with Senator Kennedy. The senator, you know, had a high regard for him. Of course, later on Bernie participated in the Maryland primary and was very active in Los Angeles during the convention. Bernie Boutin, I would say without a doubt was the guiding light, the leading spark plug, the organizer of the New Hampshire primary.

GRELE: Were you with John Kennedy on the three trips he made into New Hampshire?

FORBES: Yes, I was with him when he crossed that Massachusetts line on that great day of January 13, with his wife. It was snowing. It was a very significant and wonderful tour in Nashua and the Manchester area. I flew with him in his plane with Bernie Boutin and Murray Devine when we went into the north country. We had been snowed out once in the north country. We were supposed to come in... We all got up there one night, and we got buried in about two and one half feet of snow. His plane couldn't even land so he had to postpone that.

Then, I was with him on the third trip which was a very significant one where he came in after flying half across the country in that little plane of his, the Caroline. He landed in Laconia and changed clothes and took a shower and started with a breakfast meeting. We went from Laconia into Franklin and Tilton with a

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luncheon and even participating in a bar mitzvah at Concord, and then down on the shore for the real windup.

GRELE: What is the story of the bar mitzvah? That sounds interesting.

FORBES: Well, this is a very interesting thing. We had a ladies reception and a tea and a buffet luncheon effect in the middle of the afternoon at the Concord Highway Motel. While we were in there somebody from one of the rooms next door said, "Oh, my gracious, Jack Kennedy, the senator who is campaigning for the presidency, is in there. My boy is having a bar mitzvah. Would he come in and just say how do you do and sign the book?"

Of course, the late president in his gracious way said, "Certainly I would," and he stepped out two doors next door. It was a great thrill for this youngster. He signed the book, and they gave him a present. I forget whether he blew out a candle, but he did something with the ritual which was very nice. Of course, it made a tremendous impression that this guy would take a few minutes out of a very strenuous day, believe me, and a fifteen-hour day, to do this. But this was just typical of him.

I have seen him in a cavalcade when we got stopped in traffic, and we had a light or something, he would get right out of the car and go up to amazed people standing on the corner. "I am Jack Kennedy. I am running for president, and I am delighted to be in your state today." These people would just stand there with their mouths open. You know he never missed a bet.

GRELE: On these trips, did he ever talk to you about New Hampshire?

FORBES: Oh yes, he loved New Hampshire. He loved New Hampshire. His family loved New Hampshire and Vermont. As you know, they are great skiers. He liked to come up there. Of course, he was a great sail boat fan and a great southern person. He liked things like Palm Beach, but he sure did like New Hampshire. We had him several times before he entered the presidential race at the Jefferson-Jackson [Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson] Day dinner. Of course, he was

thrilled to be up there, and people loved to have him.

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GRELE: On that first trip that he made with Mrs. Kennedy, [Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis] how did she campaign?

FORBES: Well, she is always a very gracious lovely person. Let me put it this way, Jacqueline Kennedy just has to be there, and that's campaigning. She is such a charming and beautiful woman, and they made such a terrific couple that this was just wonderful. Of course, she made a hit with the French people because she could talk French. She did this at snowshoe clubs and things like this. She was with him on his first trip only, I think. The last two trips were such that she wasn't there.

His mother [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy], you know, came to campaign in New Hampshire. She spent 48 hours with us. We started over in Keene, came down through Manchester, and down through the Exeter and Dover area, spent the night. Then we went up through Laconia and up to Plymouth College where she talked to the student body, and then came back to Concord, and then went on to Boston.

She was a very delightful woman and told many of the family stories of Jack Kennedy. She is one person who did talk religion. She did it in a very, I thought, wonderful way. She explained how they discussed religion at the table. They wanted the youngsters to know the color of the vestments and the meaning of the ritual and the ceremony. It was talked out, and it was thought of as just a religion of which they had always been a part. She pointed out that she saw no reason for anybody doing anything but this in a very personal way about their religion, that this shouldn't enter into it at all.

She told some of the stories about Senator Kennedy at school and at college, some of the things that he got into. It was a very homey, wonderful effect. She made no bones about it in saying, "I'm here because I want you to know about my son Jack." She told about family stories, and why the touch football, and why they were such a cohesive and wonderful, and loyal unit, that they lived this way. And she talked about the tragedy of the loss of her son Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.] and what an effect this had had. She was just thoroughly delightful.

GRELE: How did the audience respond to her?

FORBES: Oh, they loved her. They loved her.

GRELE: Did any other members of the family come up to campaign from Massachusetts?

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FORBES: Yes, Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] came in. Teddy is a wonderful guy. I stood with Teddy at five o'clock in the morning around the mill yard in Manchester passing out his brother's campaign cards. He and I

would start at five-thirty in the morning. Of course, the mills open around six. He would stand on one side of the door, and I'd stand at the other. He'd pass cards or I'd pass cards, and I'd introduce him or he would say, if the time was right, "I am Jack Kennedy's brother, Ted, and I am campaigning for him here in New Hampshire. I hope you'll help us." This guy was all over the place, a great campaigner. And boy, I will tell you, it was cold. You spend two and a half hours outside in that below zero weather, and you know you have been out. Then he came into Laconia and participated on a weekend with the dog-team races. He was very effective there. He was with the judging stand, and I remember him meeting Wesley Powell for the first time. Wesley Powell was also a judge at the races. He came up, and Bernard Boutin introduced him to Wesley Powell, and he said, "Great, your brother is a great senator, and we want to keep him right in the United States Senate," which, of course, got a lot of laughs. But Teddy was a great campaigner.

Then Teddy came in a second time and made a major speech in Dover in the closing moments of the campaign which was very effective because areas where we hadn't been able to take the senator or where his mother had not gone, we had to get other members of the family to do it, and Ted was available. Of course, Ted at this time was working in the Midwest setting up these other primary campaigns, particularly Wisconsin. But Teddy was very much liked in New Hampshire.

He was a great ski enthusiast. He knew the snow rules. You remember the famous story of him jumping in the Midwest from a jump that I wouldn't want to go off just cold, absolutely cold, you know. Very courageous guy, very nice, very knowledgeable and really a tremendous campaigner. It's no wonder that he is in the Senate on his own because he showed great potential there. He knew political organization. He could pick out the top people, and we would have him say, "There's a good one," and "he (or she) knows what they are doing." "Look at these people. Look at the schedule." He knew because he was a worker. Those are the only two people who came in. His sisters didn't come till the night before the 1960 election when it was his next to last stop during the main campaign he came in.

GRELE: Did Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] come in during the primary?

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FORBES: Yes, Robert Kennedy came in first on January 13, just shortly after the announcement and just shortly after we had organized the first-in-the-nation Kennedy-for-President headquarters. He came in, by and large, to talk to the basic leadership that had been picked to run as Kennedy delegates. He came in to help explain to them what the senator was trying to do, how they were doing, and to thank them for their efforts.

Now going back to Ted Kennedy. I almost forgot, but the first time I ever saw Ted Kennedy, and the first time any Kennedy came into the state on behalf of the presidential primary, was in September of 1959 for the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner when Ted Kennedy and then Governor Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] of Connecticut came in and were the principal speakers of the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner in the armory in Manchester. I took

that picture too. That is how I happen to remember it. I had a chance to talk to both these people.

This for Teddy was, I think, one of the earliest soundings that the Kennedy people were making. Of course, Governor Ribicoff, now Senator Ribicoff, was a great person and a great friend of New Hampshire and a close friend of Bernard Boutin. He was an early Kennedy backer. He was in this thing, and he said, "We'll help in any way we can." I remember that this September meeting of these two was probably where the seed of this thing was originally dropped. At this time I was still in Boston, of course, but I was there for that Democratic meeting because I was a Democrat.

GRELE: Moving on now, do you recall that John Kennedy's reaction was to Governor Powell's charge that he was soft on communism? Are there any aspects of that whole situation that you want to relate to us?

FORBES: Well, of course, as despicable a statement as it was, it was made by Wesley Powell during the closing days of the primary campaign. I am not sure that I recall how he got around to this thing, but it was a wonderful statement from the standpoint of a campaign issue. I had never seen Senator John Kennedy aroused, angry or mad, but when he read from the Associated Press wires this statement that Wesley Powell had said that Senator John Fitzgerald Kennedy was soft on communism, he really bristled. He took on that statement and Powell that night in the closing political address of the primary campaign. He pounded the lectern, and he got red in the face. He said that no Irishman could ever be accused of ever being soft on communism. He hit Wesley Powell with everything in the book. He also had some few choice morsels to say for Mr. William Loeb, the very controversial publisher of the Manchester Union Leader, on the same score.

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Now in this instance, we were very fortunate in having Pierre Salinger there at the time so that he picked up the ball on this thing. The minute the statement was made he called Herb Klein [Herbert G. Klein] who was press secretary to the Senator Dick Nixon, and asked him to get from a fellow senator a reaction to this. And Dick Nixon, as he could only in fairness, supported Senator Kennedy that this was completely out of line.

But this one crack did more to help us get a good vote in New Hampshire. As you know, I later went in and spent a full nine weeks in the New Hampshire primary. In the early stages of the West Virginia primary, and on two or three occasions through the West Virginia primary, this crack of Powell's soft on communism, did us good.

But I can well remember the night that Jack Kennedy answered that question, and he was vehement, just as vehement as he could be. But he did it beautifully, you know. It was great. I mean to see a guy rise to the occasion like this is just great. But it was the first time that I ever saw him really take off. You know this is something: to question the patriotism of a man with a record like John Fitzgerald Kennedy had, that you couldn't possibly take lightly. And he let him have it.

GRELE: I want to change the tape.

(END OF TAPE 1; SIDE 1)

(BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2)

FORBES: Well, certainly the victory in New Hampshire was a great victory for Senator Kennedy. He had knocked down a Republican margin of 3 to 1 to almost 2 to 1. He had shown that he could get tremendous independent support. I think he had shown precisely that there was a tremendous amount of interest in a Republican, conservative state. I think this was very heartening to him.

When the results were finally in, I remember Bernie Boutin picking up the telephone and calling the senator – or getting a call from him, I don't remember which – but the senator was tremendously pleased with the showing. After all, the forty-six thousand some odd votes was better than Kefauver had done. As I intimated earlier, Kefauver had done a tremendous job in touring the state. He was known with his coonskin cap and so forth and so on. The fact that Jack Kennedy had been able to do this in the two or three trips that he had made, and the two, or three or four that

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his two brothers and his mother had made, could bring in this thing showed that he was a comer. This was particularly helpful to him because he was just starting to take on Humphrey in Wisconsin. This had been good mileage.

Of course, the press coverage was tremendous on this. We had Time and Life, and we had all the major news services and most of the major papers in at one time or another on this thing. Of course, Jack Kennedy was now facing Humphrey both in Wisconsin and West Virginia, and this was a real boost to him.

GRELE: Did you handle the press when they were in New Hampshire?

FORBES: Yes, I did all of the press work because, of course, when the press came in I handled the press, and Bernie Boutin was with the senator, of course, on all trips. The press was very good to us and very fair. We knocked ourselves to do a real job with them. But I think that the New Hampshire primary, without question, was the most effective primary, and was the thing that really got him started. And I am delighted.

Of course, after the primary I didn't know what my position was going to be. Larry O'Brien had found out that I had been a newspaper editor in West Virginia. He said, "Boy, the next place that you go, we want you in West Virginia."

GRELE: One final question before we end today's session: What was the lasting effect of John Kennedy's entry into New Hampshire on the New Hampshire Democratic party?

FORBES: Well, there is no question that John Fitzgerald Kennedy's primary campaign in New Hampshire strengthened the New Hampshire organization as it had never been strengthened before, gave us knowledgeability, gave us something to work for, brought out the kind of candidates that are now... Governor John King [John W. King] at that time was Minority Leader of the House. Tom McIntyre [Thomas J. McIntyre], who had been active in the Kefauver campaign and did help some in the Kennedy campaign, is now United States senator. Certainly Congressman Huot [Joseph Oliva Huot] was a most active member in the Kennedy primary in the Laconia and in the northern region. This gave us a real reputation. This gave us a welding together.

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We took the same Kennedy organization and we ran our gubernatorial primary in September in which Bernie Boutin lost by a greater degree than he did in '58, but we made a real showing. And we had good candidates. We had good candidates there. This was really a building of it. And then the number of men that President Kennedy brought from New Hampshire to the federal government was tremendously helpful to us in the state because it gave us a rapport. The Democratic party in New Hampshire will always be grateful to the Kennedys for what they were able to help us in building our own organization.

GRELE: Well, thank you very much for letting us have your time today.

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