

John Foster Furcolo Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 06/09/1964
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Biographical Note

(1917 - 1995) Massachusetts political figure; U.S. Representative (1949-1952), state treasurer (1953-1954), governor (1957-1961); delegate, Democratic National Convention (1960), discusses working with John F. Kennedy [JFK] in the U.S. House of Representatives, and the gubernatorial relationship with JFK during the 1960 campaign and his presidency, among other issues.

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John Foster Furcolo – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

With

John Foster Furcolo

June 9, 1964
Boston, Massachusetts

By David Hern

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HERN: Governor, when did you first meet President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

FURCOLO: I think it was in 1946. He was then a member of Congress and I was running for the Democratic nomination for Congress from the western district.

HERN: Did he precede you in Congress?

FURCOLO: Yes, he was elected in 1946, I think, and I was not elected until 1948.

HERN: Well, you did serve with him one term in the House, or two terms?

FURCOLO: Two terms.

HERN: What kind of association did you have with him as congressmen from Massachusetts?

FURCOLO: Actually, not to indicate that we were close because we were not that close, but he was the closest one to my age in the congressional delegation and I was the closest to his age, and so I would say that we saw more of

each other than he normally did of the other members of the Massachusetts delegation, but we were not that close actually.

HERN: Did you participate with him on legislation or socially?

FURCOLO: Some legislation I discussed with him. He was on the Labor and Education Committee [House Committee on Education and Labor]. And there were other legislative matters on Congressional matters that we discussed from time to time. And I have gone with him to the White House on at

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least one or two occasions in connection with matters which were of mutual interest. Socially, except for having lunch with him in his office a couple of times or seeing him after some dinner or at some dinner, would be about the extent of it.

HERN: Well, at that time you were living with your family.

FURCOLO: Yes, my family was in Washington. We had youngsters and actually I really didn't do anything socially anyhow to any extent down there.

HERN: Did you share many platforms with Congressman Kennedy at various functions in Massachusetts?

FURCOLO: Not too many because I was from the western part of the state and he was from the eastern part. And while many people in the western part knew of him and he had occasion to be through the state because I guess he was anticipating running statewide, I was merely known in the western part and I didn't have much occasion to be in the eastern part where I wasn't known and had no real reason – you know, to attend affairs.

HERN: Did he meet through you Mr. Lawrence O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] who later became one of his top assistants?

FURCOLO: I don't know whether you'd say he met him through me or not. I suppose you would. I know that the late president told me that he had first asked Mr. O'Brien to help him out in his campaign under the assumption that O'Brien would be friendly with people who had been supporting me for Congress. That was the reason he gave me for having contacted Mr. O'Brien at that time.

HERN: Was Mr. O'Brien a member of your staff at any point?

FURCOLO: He was on my staff in the years 1949 and 1950.

HERN: When he called on Mr. O'Brien, was that in the 1952 Senate fight?

FURCOLO: I think the first time he contacted O'Brien, at least to the best of my knowledge, would be in the Spring of 1952, which would be in connection with the Senate contest. That's my impression.

HERN: Now, in the house, what sort of a congressman did you think President Kennedy was?

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FURCOLO: Well, he did not take as active a part in things in the House as I later saw that he took in the Senate. I think one of the interesting things about him and I think this is what anybody who served with him would say, is that he seemed to grow and develop in later years. I mean, now there are some members of Congress who I served with that I haven't noticed any change in from the time that I first knew them. They had either attained a certain position or a certain way of doing things or a certain ability and there wasn't any change in them. I think that Senator Kennedy had developed much more than had Congressman Kennedy and I think that President Kennedy had developed much more than Senator Kennedy had. In other words, I would think that anybody who had known him and had seen his progress over the years would say that he had a much greater grasp of government as he went along than he had back in Congress. I don't mean by that to indicate that he didn't have a grasp then, merely to indicate that he had a much greater grasp which I think was a growth as he went along.

HERN: I take it that your committee assignments, your committee work, did not bring you in contact with the President's committee assignments of committee work.

FURCOLO: No, and in addition, as I understand it, the then Congressman Kennedy had occasion to be away from Washington at different times either because of his health or commitments at home and other things. So it was not a situation where he would actually have too much association or contact with me or other congressmen. I would say that we had the normal association or contact that you'd have but we were on different committees.

HERN: Was there a periodic meeting of Massachusetts congressmen with Congressman McCormack [John William McCormack]?

FURCOLO: I tried at one time to begin a series of meeting of the New England Democratic members of Congress. I had been impressed by the fact that the southern members of Congress used to meet fairly regularly and that was not true of the northern members, at least not in Massachusetts or New England. And I did start a series of meetings that we had which included all the Democratic members of Congress and we would try to bring down department heads and others to talk. It was informal.

HERN: Now, in 1952, you resigned at the conclusion of the congressional year to become the state treasurer. Did you consult with Mr. Kennedy at any point in regard to that?

FURCOLO: No, I did not.

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HERN: You were going to be on the same state ticket that he was that year as you recognized.

FURCOLO: Well, now, I suppose that's true. Yes, it would be true because in '52 he was running for the Senate and it was known that he would be the nominee. That's so. But I didn't consult with him. As a matter of fact, that never occurred to me at all and it perhaps didn't occur to him.

HERN: Well, 1952 was the first statewide year for both of you, of course.

FURCOLO: That's right, it was for me and it was for him in the sense that would be his first campaign. Actually, he had been around the state for much longer than that. But it would be the first time officially, that's right.

HERN: Now, were there any incidents regarding that 1952 campaign that you can recall? You must have appeared together occasionally.

FURCOLO: Yes, we appeared at different places. I know I was at several house parties where members of his family were. His sisters were campaigning for him. And then we had a big rally at the Hotel Sheraton Plaza in which my supporters were brought in from all over the state and the only outside speaker who came to that was Senator Kennedy. He was not then the senator, but was running for the Senate. And we asked all my workers to do everything they could for him. He was introduced there and so on. I remember that. Then, of course, at the other rallies and places where you would appear at the same time and place.

HERN: Well, that year, was it correct that various candidates endorsed each other at different rallies especially if one didn't happen to be present?

FURCOLO: Well, I assume that. I know that I always made it a practice of asking people to vote not only for me but for the entire Democratic ticket. This affair at the Sheraton Plaza that I mentioned was not a Democratic affair. This was a gathering of people from all over the state; some were Republican and some were Democrats and it was not the kind of affair where there would be an appeal made for the entire Democratic ticket. This was what was unusual about the meeting and this was why I

happen to remember this particular one. This is the one that Senator Kennedy was invited to and did attend.

HERN: Well, both of you won in 1952, you as state Treasurer and Mr. Kennedy as United States senator. In 1954 you became the Democratic nominee for the United States Senate against Senator Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall].

FURCOLO: That's right.

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HERN: Now, during that campaign there was a well-known incident regarding a television appearance that became a campaign issue.

FURCOLO: Yes.

HERN: In the television appearance apparently there was a different of opinion with regard to what type of endorsement or what type of script would be used by the then Senator Kennedy, at that particular television studio. Could you tell us, Governor, what happened in your viewpoint?

FURCOLO: Well, I never have given my viewpoint or any indication of what happened there at the television station for the public. As a matter of fact, there are only two people who know what happened. One was me and the other was Senator Kennedy. Since that time there have been two or three newspaper people who have inquired in confidence as to what happened because the facts of what happened have never been given in any public version up to the present time. There have been many different public versions and the most that has ever been done by me in connection with any of them is merely to tell whoever had written the version that that didn't happen to be correct. But I have never gone into the factual version. And I don't frankly see much point in going into it in 1964 if I haven't gone into it in '56, '58, and '60. I think I should say that at the time Senator Kennedy came to the television station and was very gracious about coming. He had been sick and I think probably had a temperature at the time, too. He was not well. It was not too long after that, he was operated upon. There was no great disagreement of any kind with reference to the script. They had a script there that probably would run, I suppose, eight or ten pages. And I had merely asked for the addition of I think it was four words to this script. The four words had nothing whatever to do with me, the four words had nothing about any endorsement of me because he was already endorsing me in the printed thing that they had there. And the four words had nothing to do with any kind of attack upon Senator Saltonstall or anything of that sort. I mention this only because of the fact that newspaper articles referring to this so-called television incident; some have gone off on the point that I had asked him to attack Senator Saltonstall, which I had not, because I myself hadn't even attacked Senator Saltonstall and didn't want anybody to attack him. I mean I don't believe in campaigning that way. Others had gone off on the point that I had asked him for an

endorsement of me. Well, it wasn't necessary to ask for an endorsement of me. There already was an endorsement of me in the script and he was on the television program with me.

HERN: Well, I take it, perhaps I could put it this way. The wire service accounts at the time were somewhat sketchy or inaccurate in your opinion, Governor?

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FURCOLO: I don't think there were any wire service accounts at the time. What happened was the next day there was nothing in the paper and I think the second day there was nothing in the paper. I believe the third day there was a statement in the paper, not by Senator Kennedy, but by a supporter of his who had not been present at the television incident outlining something with reference to it and it then went on from there. I don't know whether these were picked up by the wire services or not.

HERN: I see, well, in 1956 you came back and you were elected governor by a substantial margin. And you had various contacts with the senator as governor, I believe.

FURCOLO: That's right.

HERN: Could you tell us about some of those?

FURCOLO: We had a very cordial relationship. I think both of us worked very hard to try to keep it a friendly and cordial relationship because as he once said to me and with which I agreed. He said, "You and I are all right and know and understand that we get along all right. But we both have people who would like to make trouble between us." And I agreed with that. And I think the knowledge of that was helpful to both of us and we both tried to keep a friendly cordial relationship and that continued all through the governorship as perhaps best witnessed by many of the appointments I made at his request to people who were very close to him. We also collaborated on various programs that were both state and federal in their scope. As you know, many governmental programs are. And we had cooperation from him and he had from us. Then, of course, we were together many times in a political sense, at banquets and affairs of that kind. We didn't have too much to do politically as far as the political machinery of the state was concerned. I took the position that that was more or less up to him, that he would be the leader in the state and politically we were all glad to go along with him. And I think there were public statements to this effect. In addition, as I guess is reasonably well known, I never was too close to the political machinery of Massachusetts, anyway. At that time the late Governor Dever [Paul A. Dever] had been very important politically and then later on it became the late Governor Dever and the then Senator Kennedy. Then Senator Kennedy's influence became more important and as Governor Dever influence diminished, Senator Kennedy took the political leadership more or less, and that was not only completely satisfactory to me but, as a matter of fact, it was the kind of thing I would vastly have preferred.

HERN: There might be interest, Governor (I think there would be) in how it was you came to make some of the appointments you made. For instance, you appointed Frank Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey] to the Boston municipal court bench.

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FURCOLO: That's right that was at the recommendation of President Kennedy. I think he was then senator.

HERN: Yes well, Mr. Morrissey at that time was the party you were referring to earlier, I believe, in that 1954 television situation?

FURCOLO: I didn't refer to any party by name and I don't see any particular point in referring to any by name. And I don't mean to give you a short answer.

HERN: No. Could you tell us in a way how it comes about, how the senator would have contacted your office? Did he deal directly with you on that?

FURCOLO: Yes, what would happen would be that Senator Kennedy would be bothered, I suppose, by various people who might want appointments or consideration of one kind or another either from the governor or the governor's office. We had a code worked out by letter where from the way the letter was worded and by the way it was addressed and by the kind of signature, we knew pretty well what his thoughts and wishes were with reference to the contents of the letter. Some of the requests made were by letter. On the other hand, many of the requests made would be personal requests made in person or by phone. Now, I believe that the appointment of Judge Morrissey, in fact, I recall clearly, this was at a meeting that I had with him in Washington. When I'd go to Washington, I used to stop in and see him. And on one of my visits there when I stopped in to see him, he asked me if I would appoint Frank Morrissey and I was very happy to, because I thought Frank Morrissey was very well qualified and, in addition, I was more than glad to follow Senator Kennedy's recommendations and wishes if it were for a qualified person as I think Judge Morrissey was.

HERN: You mentioned something about a code, Governor. Was that something only you and the senator understood?

FURCOLO: Well, and several members of my staff.

HERN: And his staff as well, perhaps?

FURCOLO: I don't know about his staff but I think at least one or two of his staff. I know that there were about four people of my staff who were familiar with this and my recollection is that there was at least one on his staff that would be familiar with this.

HERN: How was that introduced originally? What brought that up?

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FURCOLO: He had made the request that it be done that way and we were happy to go along with his request.

HERN: Now, in the 1958 election you were both on the ticket together, you for reelection and the senator for reelection. Was there very much to that campaign?

FURCOLO: Well, he didn't have any kind of a campaign. It was known that he was going to win and win big. As a matter of fact, I had an idea of what he would win by and why and it turned out to be not too far from the mark. He and I had conferred together at some length both in Washington and I think down at Hyannis Port with reference as to how we could cooperate in the campaign, the matter of joint headquarters, the matter of joint appearances and things of that sort. And it was very cordial and very friendly.

HERN: Of course, the picture that year changed considerably for you in view of the fact that the potential Republican nominee died just before the primary. Mr. Fingold [George Fingold] was unopposed, Attorney General Fingold was unopposed, I believe, in that primary.

FURCOLO: Yes, that's right. Well, I think it made my contest a little bit more difficult. I had Charlie Gibbons [Charles Gibbons]. I might say parenthetically that except for myself I think every political observer felt that I had a weaker candidate in Gibbons than I would have had in George Fingold, had he lived. I myself always felt that I had a more difficult candidate in Gibbons than I did in Fingold. More difficult because of the two people who were running' namely, Gibbons (an Irish name) and Furcolo. Because Gibbons was quite a name to be reckoned with, particularly for someone with the name Furcolo.

HERN: Also, I suppose, you had gauged your campaign for Mr. Fingold?

FURCOLO: No, actually, we had not done any real campaigning. When George Fingold, who was a friend of mine, was taken sick, I called his wife and also sent word to him at home that I would not campaign until he was up and around and on his feet and I actually did cancel appearances and so forth. So we didn't do anything most of that summer.

HERN: Well, now, there was another appointment that was of considerable political interest that involved the senator, yourself and other, but this particular one, the district attorney in Middlesex County resigned about

that time. Could you tell us what transpired regarding that appointment?

FURCOLO: Well, John Droney [John J. Droney] who was later named by me as district attorney, as I understand it, had been the first campaign manager in that county for Congressman Kennedy when he ran for Congress. At any rate, he was supposed to have been very close to him. Droney was

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also an assistant district attorney and I suppose you'd say would be the next man in line in seniority in the district attorney's office when the time for an appointment came up. I was asked to name Droney by Senator Kennedy and I later did name him. I think it would be fair to say that Droney would have been considered by me very seriously whether or not Senator Kennedy was for or against him. I think it's also fair to say that the fact that Senator Kennedy recommended him weighed very heavily with me and it's usually been considered that I made the appointment more or less out of consideration for Senator Kennedy.

HERN: Did you say you know Mr. Droney personally?

FURCOLO: No, I had never known him well, I perhaps had met him, but I didn't know him.

HERN: I take it he was not necessarily your first choice politically, we'll say.

FURCOLO: Well, you don't really make them politically.

HERN: There was open competition for the office at that time.

FURCOLO: Yes.

HERN: It was a gubernatorial appointment?

FURCOLO: Yes, actually, you don't really make appointments too much politically, because as I think most governors know, political appointments really don't mean that much. I mean they can hurt you often, but they very rarely can help you and so as a result, I think you just make the appointments you think should be made. You may be right or wrong in your decision but you make them because if anybody is aware that they don't mean too much politically, it's the governor. It's the same with judges. Governors don't get elected or defeated because of their appointments, I don't believe.

HERN: At that time one of the other candidates as I recall was the present governor of Massachusetts, Endicott Peabody.

FURCOLO: Yes, as a matter of fact, I probably would have named Endicott Peabody to the district attorney post except for the fact that he had opposition on a personal basis, from one of the state's highest political figures and it would not have been right, in my opinion, to have named him to that particular post for that reason. Other than that, I'm inclined to think I might well have named Endicott Peabody. But the position he sought was more or less under the jurisdiction of the political figure. For any other position, it wouldn't have made any difference who might have been for or against him.

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HERN: That person you refer to is not Senator Kennedy?

FURCOLO: No.

HERN: Coming up to 1960, Governor. In the year 1960 and for some months before that Senator Kennedy was making his move for the Democratic nomination for president. What role did you play in that at any time.

FURCOLO: I would say a very minor role as is true of everybody in Massachusetts to a certain extent. First of all, although I was a delegate, I merely went as a delegate because he was running for the presidency. I didn't care too much for conventions but I thought it would look funny if the governor of his own state didn't go, so I went. He didn't need any help in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts delegates were all for him.

HERN: I am referring to something earlier than that, say during the year. Didn't you speak for Kennedy at a major dinner?

FURCOLO: Yes, I went to New York State for him and I also went up to New Hampshire, I think it was, for him. It was either New Hampshire or Vermont. Both those were at his personal request. Then, I also contacted congressional friends. I had many friends throughout the country, as he did, but there were some people that he would know, that I wouldn't and there would be some I'd know, that he wouldn't. I also did some work for him at the governors' convention [New England Governors' Conference]. There's always quite a little politicking going on at the governors' convention. And this was the place where there would be many governors and you could do something and I did. That, too, was at his request.

HERN: There was some incident about the time of the Wisconsin primary that you were talking about. Could you bring us up to date on that?

FURCOLO: Well, I had a call with reference to a promotion of, I think it was Ed Fitzgerald [Edward F. Fitzgerald] in the corporation taxation department here in Massachusetts.

HERN: Was he a cousin of the president?

FURCOLO: Yes. There were two calls, as a matter of fact. And these were made at the request of the president. Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] made the calls and at the time Bobby said that this was what Jack wanted very much and if there was any questions on it Jack was going to be at such and such a number out there at such and such a time. And I said that there wasn't any need for that and if Bobby said that's what he wanted, that certainly was good enough for me to know that that was what he did want.

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HERN: Now, in the 1960 election when the president was campaigning around the country and I recall you were defeated in the Democratic primary for the Senate seat here.

FURCOLO: I recall that too.

HERN: You do, yes, I suppose. [Laughter]

HERN: Now, later on, there was much to-do, much speculation, the president having been elected, about the temporary successor, to be the successor until the next election, which would have been a little less than two-year term of office. Could you tell us what transpired in that regard?

FURCOLO: Well, the governor has the appointment of the United States Senator and we were told that the president would like to have what was described as a bench-warmer to keep the seat open and the word was all around.

HERN: Could you tell us how you were told that first, Governor?

FURCOLO: Well, we were told that first by everybody in politics and all the newspapermen and it wasn't until maybe a couple of weeks after the stories were around that eventually the president-elect called me and told me the same thing. But it first came from everybody around.

HERN: But you did get it directly from the president-elect?

FURCOLO: Oh, yes.

HERN: What was your reaction to that?

FURCOLO: It was understandable. I mean, if he had a brother that he wanted to help to get to the Senate, well, that certainly was understandable.

HERN: Now, at what point did the name Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith, II] come into the picture? He was the man that you appointed to that temporary senate seat.

FURCOLO: It seems to me it was some time in the middle of December of 1960, I don't remember exactly, but his name came along some place near the end there.

HERN: Do you recall how it was presented to you? Was it a phone call or letter or....

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FURCOLO: Well, I talked to him in Washington. He had asked me if I would come down and talk with him about the upcoming senate vacancy and I went down and did talk to him in what was then his home or headquarters in Washington D.C., which was where he was living just after the election and before he was sworn in. And then following that, it seems to me that I had several telephone calls with him. Yes, I know I did.

HERN: Did the telephone calls contain a name, a recommendation for a name, or was it just they were considering names at that time?

FURCOLO: Oh, no. Eventually, the name was given to me by the president-elect. I'm trying to think whether it was in the second or third telephone call or when it was. But it was someplace or other along the line.

HERN: Did you have another preference for the job at that particular time?

FURCOLO: Oh, yes.

HERN: Whom would you have named, do you recall?

FURCOLO: Well, I suggested to him, that is to the president, that it seemed to me that somebody should be named who, and I don't say this detrimentally about Ben Smith, but someone should be named who had more stature in the State. Ben Smith was actually not known in the state. This is nothing derogatory about him, but it was simply a fact. I mean any more than I would be known in New York.

HERN: He had never run for state-wide office?

FURCOLO: No, he was known merely in his own particular city just as I would be or you would be or anybody would be. And I suggested that since this was an appointment to the position of United States senator and was going to

some prominent Democrat, at the request of the Democratic United States senator, and the appointment being made by the Democratic governor, that Massachusetts would expect the person to be someone who had had some experience. I suggested to him that I thought it ought to be one of the Democratic congressmen or any one of the Democratic constitutional officers or very well-known Democrat like, well, Sheriff Howard Fitzpatrick [Howard W. Fitzpatrick] I remember was one, who was not a constitutional officer but was about as well known as any of them. It was my feeling it should have been something along that line. I think his general feeling was that it was not good to take a chance with someone like that because if you got someone in there who was well known and had a good solid Irish name and was in the office for two years, he might not get out in two years. And I think that his fears might have been well founded too.

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HERN: Governor, how well did you know Ben Smith when you appointed him United States senator?

FURCOLO: I had met him. I don't think I ever had much talk with him of any kind. I knew him very slightly, I think would be fair to say.

HERN: You said earlier his name was introduced to you directly from the president as the president's choice for the anticipated vacancy?

FURCOLO: Yes, yes. I don't know that that was his first choice at that time. But some place or other that was the ultimate choice.

HERN: Were there any names suggested to you that you were reluctant to name? Any person you were reluctant to appoint?

FURCOLO: Well, Ben Smith.

HERN: But you weren't reluctant to appoint him. You did appoint him.

FURCOLO: Well, I was reluctant to appoint him. But I did. And he served as senator with great honor and distinction, I might add.

HERN: Tell me, Governor, you said you conferred with the president in Washington just prior to his inauguration. I recall that was in the press at the time. What transpired at that meeting other than this senatorial vacancy matter, or were there parts of that that perhaps we could bring out here?

FURCOLO: That was the reason for the meeting. He wanted to discuss the senatorial vacancy. And then there were other matters discussed too but they wouldn't be of any interest to anybody except me—the other matters.

HERN: Well, Governor, how much time did you spend with the president-elect at that meeting in Washington?

FURCOLO: Oh, about an hour.

HERN: Could you tell us some of the other things you might have discussed?

FURCOLO: Well, one thing that was of interest, at least, it was to me at the time. If you will recall, everybody was talking about this seat being held for Bobby Kennedy. There never had been a mention made of this seat being held for Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy]. And I went down to Washington to discuss this with the president

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and after we came out of the meeting, I turned to the man who was with me and I said, "Did you get the significance of that?" And he asked what did I mean. And I said, "Well, you know who he's talking about, don't you?" He said, "Well, certainly, his brother Bobby." I said, "No, he's not. He's talking about his brother Teddy." Up to that time Teddy's name and never even been mentioned. And I knew it was going to be Teddy and I knew it after that meeting for this reason. I noticed after about ten or fifteen minutes of conversation, when we were talking about this, the president kept referring to "my brother" and all of a sudden a thought dawned on me. And I said, "Well, can it be that he's talking about somebody other than Bobby." So I made it a point three or four or five times to say, "Well, then, of course, if Bobby is named..." And so forth. I kept using Bobby's name and each time when he had reference, he always limited it to "my brother." Never once, did he use the word "Bobby" and never once used the word "Teddy." And so when we came out I knew it was Teddy, but I think at that time there wasn't another soul in the country who knew it was Teddy with the possible exception of, myself and, of course, the president knew.

HERN: At that time Ted was too young to be appointed.

FURCOLO: At that time his name had never been mentioned remotely, directly or indirectly in any way. And as a matter of fact, the president himself didn't mention Teddy's name to me but I would have bet 100 to 1 it was Teddy based on the very significant fact, to me, that at no time did he ever mention the name "Bobby." Always said "my brother."

HERN: You had occasion to use the name "Bobby" several times?

FURCOLO: I purposely used the word "Bobby." After about ten or fifteen minutes of conversation, Bobby's name had never been mentioned. It was always "my brother." A suspicion began growing in my mind. Well, can he

possibly be talking about Teddy? And so I made certain to ask several different questions that referred to Bobby and never once did he use the word "Bobby." He used the words "my brother."

HERN: You didn't happen to ask the question directly?

FURCOLO: No, no, I didn't ask the question directly because what we were talking about was not anything except who I was to name. It was never suggested that I name Bobby or name Teddy or anything else. It was merely suggested to name what he referred to as a bench-warmer.

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HERN: Was there ever any suggestion that the appointment might go over to your successor who happened to be a Republican governor? There was a lapse of about two weeks in the time between the new administration in the commonwealth here and the new administration at the White House.

FURCOLO: Well, I wouldn't go into that if there had been any.

HERN: After he became president did you have any contacts with the president?

FURCOLO: The only contact that I had was, I think, shortly after he was president, if my memory serves me correctly, when it had been suggested that I come down to see him if I were interested in something, something of that kind.

HERN: That was through a staff member.

FURCOLO: No, through him.

HERN: Directly?

FURCOLO: Yes.

HERN: Did he call you or...

FURCOLO: I'm trying to remember whether this conversation was before he was sworn in or after he was sworn in. And I can't remember which of the two it was. But it was one or the other times. My impression is that it was before he was sworn in.

HERN: As I recall, there was one public criticism in this period, by you, regarding a high federal appointment.

FURCOLO: Oh, McGeorge Bundy.

HERN: You issued a very strong statement regarding McGeorge Bundy. Did you ever get any reaction on that statement from the president who went ahead with the appointment?

FURCOLO: No, no. I had said when word came out that the president was going to name McGeorge Bundy to a position of some discretion and importance, of high importance, and I was called by newspaper reporters in connection with the appointment. This was before it was made. I said I would be very surprised if he named somebody who was as lacking in qualifications as Bundy. And I didn't comment on it after he actually made the appointment. I was asked about it when, I suppose you would say, it was one of those rumors or reports.

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HERN: You never heard directly from anyone connected with Kennedy with regard to it?

FURCOLO: No, they would have no occasion to get my recommendation about it.

HERN: Was that the only appointment that you publicly criticized, Governor, or potential appointment?

FURCOLO: To the best of my knowledge. Yes, as a matter of fact, I would not have criticized had the appointment been made. There's a difference between criticizing after an appointment is made or expressing surprise before an appointment is made, which is what this situation was. I think, incidentally, just for the record, I think it was a very bad appointment. But I never said that publicly at all.

HERN: You were invited to go down to Washington to talk to him possibly about joining some phase of his administration. Did you ever talk to him? Did you ever take him up on that invitation?

FURCOLO: No. No. There wasn't any particular spot that would be open that I would be interested in.

HERN: Nothing specific was mentioned, I take it.

FURCOLO: Oh, yes. Yes, I could have had a federal judgeship here. I wasn't interested in a federal judgeship. The only appointment that I would have had any particular interest in was not open, actually. I would have been interested in the secretary of health, education and welfare. But that went to Governor Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] and I was very happy that it did.

HERN: You had no further contacts other than those. Now, the Democratic party in Massachusetts in 1961 and '62, was it handled, was it run pretty much by you or your people here in the commonwealth to any extent?

FURCOLO: In '61 and '62?

HERN: Yes, when you were out of office, what role....

FURCOLO: No, that was all Kennedy.

HERN: Through the Democratic state chairman, Pat Lynch [John M. Lynch], at the time?

FURCOLO: Well, I don't know how they operated. I assume it would be through Kennedy appointees either on the state committee or through the Jefferson-Jackson Committee, things of that kind. But I would say that....

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HERN: You continued on the Jefferson-Jackson Committee at that point, did you?

FURCOLO: No, no. I don't think I was ever on the Jefferson-Jackson Committee. I frankly don't know officially whether I was or wasn't. The Democratic governor would always meet with the Jefferson-Jackson Committee and I met with them frequently.

HERN: That was the committee to raise funds for the party for one thing?

FURCOLO: Yes, but whether I met with that merely as a courtesy because I was governor or whether the governor is automatically on the committee, I don't know. But I was never on the committee, to the best of my knowledge. So once I ceased being governor, why, that was the end of my association with that. I would say that from, well, I would say that the late President Kennedy practically ran the political show here from '54 or '56 on. I think from '52 to '54 or '55, it was a combination of the late Governor Dever and Kennedy and then it got to be more and more just the Kennedy faction. That would be my impression.

HERN: Going back a bit, Governor, at one point in your administration, there was a vacancy in the Boston Licensing Board. I remember you appointed Bob Morey [Robert F. Morey], who had driven the senator in Boston and was quite close to him. What happened to that appointment, do you recall?

FURCOLO: The council turned the appointment down. In Massachusetts, governors' appointments are confirmed or rejected by a nine-man body called the Governor's Council. And the council rejected this appointment by, I think,

a unanimous vote. Following that, the president called me and asked me if I would submit the name again because, if he had a week which is the time that would pass before it would come up again for a vote, he wanted to talk to the members of the Governor's Council about the appointment. So I did submit the name again but it was turned down again a week later.

HERN: Do you know whether the president did contact any of the councilors?

FURCOLO: I don't know that personally except that I was told he did.

HERN: Bob is now the United States marshal here in Boston.

FURCOLO: I think later on the president or whoever appoints United States marshals, appointed him. I'm sure it was on the recommendation of the president, I imagine.

HERN: Well, having been a former congressman and governor

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of the state, could you make a brief observation or appraisal of President Kennedy's two and a half years in office?

FURCOLO: Well, I think that President Kennedy in his two and a half years in office obtained great popularity with the people. And I think he was perhaps held in as great affection by the people as any president we've had. I think in addition he obtained enormous popularity throughout the various nations of the world. And I think he will hold a high place in the hearts of the people.

HERN: Thank you, Governor. The preceding interview with former Governor Foster Furcolo in his Boston law office, June 9, 1964. The interviewer was David Hern of the Boston Traveler.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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