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Barton, Frederick "Rick" oral history interview

Don Nicoll

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Interview with Frederick “Rick” Barton by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Barton, Frederick “Rick”

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

November 12, 2003

Place

Washington, D.C.

ID Number

MOH 419

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Biographical Note

Frederick Durrie “Rick” Barton was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina on September 5, 1949 to Robert Barton and Nancy Hemenway (Whitten) Barton. After four years the family moved to Spain and later to New York City. Rick went to public elementary schools, then attended Deerfield Academy and Harvard University. Ten years after college, while working in Boston, he received a MBA from Boston University. He recently received an honorary degree from Wheaton College. He worked on Bill Hathaway’s 1972 campaign then worked in his office until 1975. In 1976 he ran for congress and won the primary election but lost the general election against the incumbent David Emery. He then worked for Secretary Joseph Califano in the New England region as director of public affairs. In 1982 he was the finance chairman for Joe Brennan’s general election. He later was director of the Office of Transition Initiatives in the U.S. State Department. Starting in 1999, he worked at the United Nations as Deputy High Commissioner for refugees for two years. For a year he had a special professorship at Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School. He later became director of the post-conflict reconstruction project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: early life and education; early interests; campaigning for Bill

Hathaway in 1972; working in the office of Bill Hathaway; running for congress in 1976; various jobs from 1976 to present; working on the 1972 campaign; campaigning with Muskie; Muskie's personality; other Maine politicians; and the anecdote about golfing with Muskie.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Wednesday the 12th day of November, 2003. We are in Washington, D.C. at the offices of CSIS; Don Nicoll is interviewing Rick Barton. Rick, would you state your full name, give us your date and place of birth, and the names of your parents?

Rick Barton: Sure, it's Frederick Durrie Barton, I was born in Buenos Aries, Argentina on September 5th, 1949. My dad is Robert Barton, and my mother is Nancy [Hemenway] (Whitten) Barton.

DN: And would you spell both the Frederick and your middle name, please?

RB: Sure, Frederick is F-R-E-D-E-R-I-C-K, and Durrie is D-U-R-R-I-E, and most people call me Rick.

DN: And you were born in Buenos Aires. What was your family doing there?

RB: My dad had gotten out of the Marines after the war and had entered the Foreign Service and was working as a, essentially a public information officer for the U.S. State Department. This was his second posting in Rosario, Argentina, and my mother just found a little hospital in Buenos Aires that seemed to be the place to give birth.

DN: And how long did your family live in Buenos Aires?

RB: We lived there about four years. We then went to Spain, and went from Spain to, then my dad got out [of the Foreign Service] for a few years and went to, worked at Columbia University at the Institute for International Education in New York. So wherever we were in the world, my dad had gone to Bowdoin and my mother was born in Boothbay Harbor, so even though we were all over the place, Maine sort of was our anchor.

DN: And did your family go there on vacations?

RB: Yeah, it was really, you get a home leave every other year, and then you would get I think the entire summer, but as you know the memories of that stage of your life are fairly brief. So we would summer there mostly and, but I think we always thought of it as kind of a, a little bit of a spiritual home because we were in so many different places.

DN: Did you have brothers or sisters?

RB: Yeah, I'm the youngest of three boys. We're about four years apart in total, so two years of each of us, and a pretty close family. We're still all in good health, although my mother has Alzheimer's now.

DN: And during your growing up, where did you get your schooling?

RB: We went to local schools wherever we lived, so I started by studying in Spanish in Spain, and then lived in Bronxville, New York and went to public schools there. And then when my father went back into the government service in the Dominican Republic I went to a, in tenth grade to a school called Deerfield Academy in western Massachusetts. I went to Harvard College from there, and then went back to graduate school ten years later, really at night school when I was working in Boston, I got an MBA at Boston University. And then actually two years ago I got an honorary degree at Wheaton College due to a great extent because my mother had gone there.

DN: A family tie.

RB: Yeah, and I think, I had worked at the U.N. and they wanted to have some international element to their graduation, but I think my mother's, the fact that it was it her sixtieth class reunion that year was probably instrumental as well.

DN: Now, was your interest in international affairs stimulated by your childhood, or by family interests?

RB: Yeah, I think it sort of in a way was kind of my street corner. You know, you always have some greater comfort in those places that you've known all your life, and so it feels very comfortable to me and a bit like, a bit of, it's sort of second nature.

DN: Now, for a while you settled in Maine. What brought you there, other than the family ties?

RB: Well, you know, I was very interested in politics but had never really done anything with it in college, it was a, when I was in college it was a turbulent time, much going on. The Vietnam War was causing a lot of, many protest marches, we, seizing of buildings at various universities, including Harvard. But I still was interested in politics and had always followed it, probably to some extent because my dad wouldn't give me the sports section until I had finished the front page.

And then I ran into a friend of mine who had been my little league coach named [Oliver] Ollie Quayle who was a pollster, a fairly well known national pollster, had been a partner of Lou Harris. And he said, "Oh, I'll get you a job with one of the campaigns, helping out." So he, I sat in his office and got one of those great life lessons where he picked up the phone and he called a couple congressmen. And he said, "I've got a young man here that I stake my personal reputation on the job he'll do for you, and I want you to give him a job." It's actually something I've tried to follow up on a little bit because I was so impressed by it, by that intervention.

And one of the people he called was Bill Hathaway. He said, "I'm going to call places that you know, and you know Maine. And this is a guy I really like a lot and he's in a really interesting race with Margaret Chase Smith." Then I got up there and within a couple of weeks they had asked me to pretty much run the northern part of the state, and it kept growing. As you know, campaigns are always, there's always much more to do than anybody could get done.

DN: So this was the 1972 campaign.

RB: Nineteen seventy-two campaign. So pretty much out of college, and I, so I got up there and, just before the primary, and, which was in early June, and worked right through the general election. And then Bill Hathaway asked me to open his new offices in southern Maine, so I was a field rep in the state which I think turned out to be a real blessing, as opposed to sort of going the Washington route because I just, I loved the real politics of these exercises. And I had office hours all over the state and got to work alongside of both John Delahanty and Larry Benoit who were sort of my young counterparts in Peter Kyros' office and Ed Muskie's office.

DN: What did you do in the field office?

RB: Well, basically it was a lot of casework, and the senator's schedule when he came back. We also opened new offices in Biddeford and, but I, what I tried to do very aggressively was hold office hours all over the, sort of the southern western part of the state. So I was constantly

on the, going out maybe two or three days a week and sitting in offices. And most of the cases that came in were Social Security and veterans cases.

But every so often you'd get something really quite different, like an entire town had its oil prices doubled in 1974, and so they all showed up in Livermore Falls one day. I was surprised, I thought I had a hundred and fifty people who had cases, and normally there'd be one to five a day, and when I walked in there were a hundred and fifty. And so I said, "Well, I'm happy to meet with you, shall we just start one at a time?" And the crowd chanted, thinking that I was trying to split them up and break their solidarity, and it was just a, I didn't realize that their oil dealer had sent them to see the senator's representative to set things right. Which I'm afraid I wasn't able to do, or I don't think the senator was either.

DN: Was that the entire crowd?

RB: That was, there was about a hundred and fifty people. And I remember one woman, one very distinguished woman standing up at a critical moment in the discussion, and it was all a very new experience to me, and she said, "What we need right now is Margaret Chase Smith." And she was expecting there would be kind of an applause line but the crowd didn't seem to react.

DN: And how long did you stay with Senator Hathaway?

RB: Just until the beginning of 1975, and I sort of got the delusion in my own mind that I should, that I could be a congressman myself. And, so I ended up, the great advantage of the year was that I started early, I got to start ahead of all my opponents. And even though I was a thoroughly improbable candidate, I was able to find out, I had enough time to find the people who were not committed to any of the other six candidates, and for a while there was a seventh candidate, a seventh opponent. But it was really probably that early start that Bill Hathaway suggested was a good idea since he didn't really want me running from his staff. But it did make for a financially difficult time really; basically being almost a full-time candidate for two years is not a very lucrative way to stay in business.

DN: And how did that race turn out?

RB: Well, it turned out good. First of all it was a spectacular growth experience and learning experience, and really quite a lot of fun. We managed to win the primary, the seven way primary, by a modest amount. I don't think I, I think it was less than thirty percent, so a pretty well split field. But then we really ran out of gas against the incumbent, Dave Emery, and had a, I think the electorate made a pretty straightforward choice. David had just, just was completing his first term. And I think they felt, well, let's give him a chance to do the job, because his first term had been clouded a bit by the recount that Peter Kyros had asked for that had gone on for several months, so there was a feeling he had just gotten there.

And then I think they looked at me and they said, well, he's a promising young guy. Translation: another day. But it was pretty, it was competitive. I got I think around forty-three percent of the vote which, in those days the incumbents were doing pretty well, but just essentially ran out of

gas, didn't have enough money, probably didn't have enough energy. And we did an awful lot of entrepreneurial things but they were, they all took a toll on the candidate, on his family, and that core of supporters who were really working all the time.

DN: And so that was '76, and after that what did you decide to do?

RB: Well, obviously a period of under employment. I didn't have alternate plans, but I ended up having a radio show for a while. Then I worked, went, with good, just great good fortune I got a chance to work for Secretary Joseph Califano in the New England region as a director for public affairs, which started out as Health, Education and Welfare and then became Health and Human Services. And I stayed on with Secretary Patricia Roberts Harris, and that was a great chance to sort of just catch my breath.

DN: In the same role?

RB: In the same role, yeah. And I got a little bit of, a bit of national exposure with them just because he occasionally needed somebody to travel with him in other parts of the country, so. And he'd gotten to know me because he had a house on the Cape and so I'd see him every so often. And that was great, I got my, managed to get my MBA during that time and so it really was a good period to just kind of get a little more grounded. And after that I went back to Maine and, I commuted that whole time from Maine which is really sort of insane, but nevertheless, it worked out okay. And then I got back to Maine full time really in 1982 probably, and then went to work in Joe Brennan's, I was Joe Brennan's finance chairman or director really. I raised the money for his general election, reelection.

DN: That was what year?

RB: In '82, and then started the, then started my own little business which has done quite well. It still has my name; I'm not part of it any longer, but Barton and Gingold in Portland, and we did a lot of public policy, strategic planning, marketing, organizational development work. Really got to know the state in a very different way over the next twelve years when I ran that business, and it was fun. It was a valuable experience for a lot of this international work, because unless you work for the paper industry in Maine, you tend to have to work for a lot of different people at the same time, so hospitals, schools, family businesses, banks, the supreme court, the Turnpike Authority and statewide referenda. Just a very wide set of opportunities, so quite stimulating.

DN: And you came back to Washington?

RB: So then we came to Washington. I'd never really lived in Washington, and in 1994 I was very lucky to, and it was partially through a connection, in a way an Ed Muskie connection. Brian Atwood, who had been his, a secretary of Muskie's, basically assistant secretary for legislative affairs when he was secretary of state, was now the senior person in the State Department. And then he became the administrator of USAID which Frank Coffin had been deputy administrator of way, way, way back. And he, we were talking one day and he said, "You know, I've had this idea, the bureaucracy's just chewing it up, and I need to get somebody

who's sort of an unconventional force to maybe take charge of this office of transition initiatives,” and has a great Washington story. He said, “It's going to be a thirty million dollar office with ten people, and what would you think about it?” I said, “It seems to me like just the kind of thing that I like to do. I love starting things and sort of shaping the idea.” He said, “Well, go talk to my deputy.”

And I went down the hall and the first question his deputy, Carol Lancaster, asked was, “So, why are you the right person to run a twenty million dollar office with four people?” And so I said to her, “Well, you know, I don't know much about Washington but I've just, I've taken forty-five steps down the hall and I've lost ten million dollars and six people. I don't think I'm the right guy.” And she said, “Did he say thirty million? I told him it was going to be twenty and four.” And so that became, that was the center of the interview. But it turned out to be a grand experience, because we were able to work in all these countries that were transitioning out of conflicts.

DN: And what was your title there?

RB: I was the director of the Office of Transition Initiatives, and it was just a great new political development tool that the U.S. government developed in the last ten years. And it's actually been kind of a showpiece in Iraq and other places now, because there's so little flexible funding that isn't tied to a region or isn't tied to a specific program. And this was really more strategic, that we could go in and really look at the open wounds in the society and say what is the priority of priorities, as opposed to ‘I have a health program’, ‘I've got AIDS money’, or whatever it happens to be.

So I've really carried that over into this job as well, and actually to the work at the U.N. that, you know, let's not get too hung up on mandates, let's see what the people really need. And in a way it goes back to sort of those early office hours that you'd have as kind of a traveling representative of a member of Congress, with just a habit of listening to people and assuming that they've got probably a better idea than what you have in your briefcase.

DN: When did you go to the U.N.?

RB: I went there in 1999 as a deputy high commissioner for refugees for two years. And while it was too brief and not completely fulfilling, it was still a pretty outsize experience.

DN: Who was the commissioner at that time?

RB: I started, the high commissioner who brought me in was Sadako Ogata who was the, was nearing the end of her ten year term and had been really quite a visionary force. And then I was a bridge deputy to the new high commissioner, Ruud Lubbers had been prime minister of Holland, for The Netherlands for twelve years, up until about 1994, I think. Two very strong, independent, highly competitive high commissioners.

DN: And after that you came to Washington.

RB: Yeah, I had a year where I was, I had a special professorship at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School, a Frederick Schultz Professorship, which was a great pleasure. And I continue to teach there, but now I'm just a visiting lecturer, really, one course a year. And then I started here at CSIS as the director of the post conflict reconstruction project.

DN: What is the full title for CSIS?

RB: It's the Center for Strategic and International Studies. It's a centrist, independent think tank that has a real mix of personalities so it doesn't really have a, it doesn't have an ideological definition. I started here in September of 2002.

DN: I'd like to take you back to 1972, now that we've surveyed your career since then. You came in to Bill Hathaway's office and the campaign in early summer, late spring, early summer of '72. That was a presidential year, Ed Muskie by then had pretty much withdrawn from the presidential race. Had you met him before that campaign?

RB: I don't remember having met him before. I mean, I received, the early impressions were of the speech from Kennebunk. Well, I thought the 1968 campaign, my mother really liked, was a big fan of his, and my mother was not particularly party oriented, I mean, she always liked Nelson Rockefeller and then she liked Ed Muskie. So she kind of liked the centrist, I think rather progressive people at that stage of her life. And so I think that that was probably the early impressions.

The '68 campaign, obviously calling people up on the podium to, when there were hecklers, the way he dealt with that made an impression. I was in college at that point. And just sort of the steadiness of it, and then the speech in 1970 in the mid-term elections. And I even was, I even thought some of the things he said around the Florida primary, which was near the end of his run, were, I kind of liked, I liked the directness of them, but they didn't seem to work for him.

It's interesting that I ran into the man who gave my professorship at Princeton, Fred Schultz, who had been speaker of the house in Florida and so, I didn't realize that. But I called him and had lunch with him down in Jacksonville, Florida a couple years ago, because my brother lives there. And he had been, he told a story about Ed Muskie coming to see him early, early, early on, and his telling Muskie that you just can't, in these big states you just cannot run the same kind of campaign that you would run in a small state. You really have to go much less person to person and much more on a broader scale, or you'll wear yourself out. I'm not sure how he got to that story, but it seemed, it seemed actually by the time that Senator Muskie got to Florida he did look like he was a bit worn down, as opposed to kind of, you got to keep the product fresh in these campaigns; it's hard to do.

DN: So you had not met him. Did he campaign for Bill Hathaway in '72?

RB: He certainly did. He was not a centerpiece really, of the campaign. I think Bill Hathaway had decided that endorsements from other people and kind of really, that part of campaigning didn't really have much value and that he really needed to make the case, keep things rather straightforward with Mrs. Smith. And so while there were clearly party events where Senator

Muskie was featured, it was not, it was really Bill Hathaway's campaign, the way he wanted to run it, and highly individualistic, very much person to person, and extremely positive regarding Mrs. Smith. I mean, he didn't, he basically, we were all directed to never say anything about her and if we did it was always Senator Smith or Mrs. Smith, and that it was essentially a campaign of an attractive alternative, and it worked. So it was a very positive first experience. I didn't see a lot of Senator Muskie on it, though.

DN: What was your impression of Maine politics at that time? The nature of that campaign, for example, beyond Hathaway's?

RB: It was a wonderful experience because you really did expect to meet the people, and the people were engaged and they were interested and generally very positive. The political leaders were seen as a positive force. I'd say in just about every sense, it had, certainly the modern campaign era had not arrived in Maine in 1972, other than we had television commercials and some of those, some computerization, but it was not, the tenor of the campaign was extremely positive and upbeat.

And as we went, I did an awful lot of door-to-door work around the, essentially the second district, the northern part of the state, and people really liked having somebody come to their door and talk to them about politics. Oftentimes they'd invite you in or offer you a cider or something like that, so it was a very positive environment. And we didn't have a clue whether we were going to win or not; it was just a very enjoyable experience.

DN: Did you have encounters at all with Senator Smith or her campaign organization?

RB: I went to see her once with my grandmother. We drove from Boothbay Harbor over to I think the Pownalborough courthouse where there was some kind of historic celebration. My grandmother was quite the Republican and was, but she was also my grandmother, so she was a little bit surprised with Mrs., Senator Smith's vanity and other things. I think that's where she was, that's where she managed to make the leap to having a Hathaway sticker on her car.

DN: Well, after the '72 campaign you worked for Senator Hathaway as his field office director, and you were working as you said before with both the Kyros congressional office and the Muskie senatorial office. What was the nature of the working relationship between the three offices?

RB: It was really very good, because again it came down to the personalities that were there. And John Delahanty, I think his office, I think Senator Muskie's office opened right after ours, maybe a few months after ours did and, in Portland, in the post office there. And he's just a very gregarious and good person, and so he was very easy. There was no sense of competition. Occasionally we'd get some noises from Washington that there was, that that wasn't always the feeling in Washington, but I never had any sense of that in Maine, it was always very relaxed. And then John had a very serious car accident where he almost got killed, with a drunken driver running into him one day when he was out at one of these late town meetings, and so that was obviously a huge concern. And Larry Benoit was just also a good colleague, and Jerry Plante was also in Peter Kyros' office. But Peter Kyros ended up being defeated pretty soon thereafter

so we didn't see, so that changed, and then Larry went to work for Ed Muskie.

DN: In '76 when you ran for Congress, Ed Muskie was up for reelection, so you must have done some campaigning with him?

RB: We did a lot of campaigning together, and that's probably where the strongest memories are. I think probably an adjustment that I never made, and he was such an icon and I was young, that I never quite, even when I won the primary I never quite made the adjustment that people expected me to be certainly not Ed Muskie, but a little bit more of a fully developed candidate. And I, as I recall in our joint appearances I generally tried to get up and down as fast as possible so that Ed Muskie could, would have the, would have the floor. And as you know, he was, I think he was really probably one of the last politicians that I can think of who had real oratorical skills, and generally crafted a speech as opposed to remarks. And I think that combination probably, both sort of the iconic nature and his oratorical skills probably got me back into my seat faster than, as I look back on it, than he would have advised. Not that he ever suggested, I don't remember his giving me any advice.

DN: He never gave you advice during the campaign?

RB: I don't remember, and it may have been that I may not have looked like I was solicitous of it. You never know. But no, I just, I never recall his telling me anything. And generally I would be, I would ask people what they would think of things and I must have at some point, but I can't tell you that he ever gave me any advice. He was always very supportive and friendly, and Jane was great to Kit, which was helpful because that was, we had just been married the year before and that's quite a way to spend your first year of marriage. And Jane was really, they'd go out and have a cigarette together when the bean suppers or whatever dragged on a bit too long, or the speeches got over the top flattering, too much hyperbole. So they, and those are clearly wonderful memories.

DN: What, did you have opportunities to talk with Senator Muskie during that campaign?

RB: It was more a, occasionally we would drive around together, we would go to events. Oftentimes we would end up, most often we'd end up at events together, and so we'd see each other several times a week; not necessarily every day, because his campaign was very well crafted, how many days should he spend in each county. Mine was more frenetic, I was trying to be everywhere all the time. And so he really did have a, it was really a well managed effort, and mine was really more entrepreneurial, just trying to make a mark. But we would end up at the same events many times. Clearly his bean suppers, that was a very, I thought a really smart idea that they had in the 1976 campaign, kind of bridging the gap between his being a famous man and being somebody from Maine. And it was a good theme and it worked well, and there were crowds there so we'd always go where there were crowds. But those were his events primarily.

Then, you know, we'd end up at candidates nights as well. I remember one in particular in Harpswell where the local committee had attracted a pretty good crowd in the general election, maybe a hundred people in one of these community meeting spaces. And we were all told, candidates from sheriff on up basically, and we were all told that we could speak for five

minutes. What was interesting was that the clock had stopped on the wall, that the speakers were, we were on a stage, we were looking at a clock and it said seven minutes of nine. It happened that Ed Muskie was the last and the featured speaker of the evening, and it was about seven minutes of nine when he started his speech. He had a standard speech during that campaign that described freedoms, "There are no freedoms in Chile," and then he'd clap his hands. And, "There are no freedoms in Czechoslovakia," clap his hands. And it's actually a theme that I've become much more fond of in these ten years that I've worked in all of these countries, an idea of sort of basic freedom concept of my own.

But he went on for quite a while, as I'm sure others have reported. And when he finished he looked at the clock and he said, "Well, I can see that I still have some time." And of course he had probably spoken for forty-five minutes but nobody had had the temerity to interrupt him, whereas the rest of us were, we were gonged much earlier in the program. But they were well crafted messages, and he loved that opportunity to communicate. And I think he saw it as a central piece of leadership, that you had to be a skillful communicator and it was your responsibility to deliver the message.

We had a special fund raiser after the 1976 campaign. I had a little debt, Leighton Cooney who had run in the second district had a little debt, and basically I put together an event which was an Ed Muskie salute, because at that point neither Leighton or myself had any real fund raising power. And we got Adlai Stevenson III there as the honored guest. But when it got to be Senator Muskie's chance to speak he, the crowd as usual at these Democrat events, the first four or five rows are listening to you, and then there are people having drinks at the back who are talking it up and catching up. And so once again the senator clapped his hands, very much like a school master, and he said to the people in the back of the room, "Are you here to listen to me?" And he quieted the whole room down, and then he went on with his speech. So, there was that sort of a lot of elements around. And of course these old timers, the Joe Angelones and others who had been around, would always be teasing him about the length of his speeches and 'how long was this one going to go on?', but I think with a pretty high degree of affection as well.

DN: After that campaign, did you get to see him much in the '76 to '82 period?

RB: You know, even in the campaign there are other moments. There's a wonderful picture that was in the *Boston Globe*, on a feature story, there was a Sunday magazine story about him. And he's standing, we're at the Kenneth Roberts' estate in Kennebunk, and he's sort of standing, almost looks like the prophet with his arms kind of spread out, and all of us are in the pasture around him. And so, I would see him a lot because as party chairman, even though he was, at that point he'd gone through, he'd gone into the secretary of state's office, he continued to really be generous in his availability to the party, and I was party chairman for a few years.

DN: What was the period of your chairmanship?

RB: I think about '86 to '89. I took over sort of half way through '86, or maybe early '86, and then left in early '89. But he came back many times. And I remember his, at some of the events, generally he would have brief remarks at these, but he was quite stunned that we had managed to take the party out of the red and we were running a financially sound operation. He teasingly

would chide me in his public remarks, suggesting that perhaps this was not in the finest Democratic Party traditions. So he did have a, he had sort of a dry, a very dry way about him. I mean there, at times he could be downright grumpy, but at the other end of it he could be kind of understanding.

I remember at his eightieth birthday party a lot of people teased him about his grumpiness, and he looked a little bit surprised by it all, that somehow it hadn't registered. And I remember going to his mother's funeral up in Rumford, because it happened to be Senator Hathaway's daughter's wedding the same day, so the senator couldn't make it. And so I had to represent Bill Hathaway there. And one of the speakers said that, something like, 'Ed's mom was very proud of him, but she didn't find him the most likeable of the children,' or something of that sort. I mean, you could see that at times, for sure.

DN: Were you ever the target of his grumpiness?

RB: Yeah, you could sit next to him, for example, at a party dinner, and small talk was not something at that point that he was really, that he entertained much. And so I'd say, "Senator, what do you think about what's happening in El Salvador now?" And he might turn and say, "Well, what do you think?" I'd say, "Well," and then he'd say, then he'd come back with something like, "Well, in my experience these things just don't get better with age." Or usually some, almost a closing, a conversation closer and there you'd be. Generally you'd be sitting at a head table looking out at a crowd with only one person to talk to, and so those little. But he did, that impatience at times, you had to like him as well because it was very, because there's so much artifice in politics so it had, it works both ways. I kind of wanted to, I'm always sort of, was hoping to learn, to hear what his insights in a certain situation were.

I remember a woman coming up to him, John Glenn had flown in to the airport in Portland and there was, I think he was a presidential candidate at that point, and Senator Muskie was there to greet him. And this is probably, I forget which year it was that Glenn was a short lived candidate for president.

DN: About '84?

RB: Probably '84 I think, yeah, and he, somehow we were all there at the airport, and this woman came up to Senator Muskie and said, "Senator, you remember me don't you?" And he looked at her, and I thought had really the perfect response, he said, "Help me out." And she said, "Oh, come on, Senator, you know who I am." At which point he, that was the end of his patience with that exercise.

And even in 1976 I had been surprised the couple of times that I'd seen him be abrupt to people, and I thought, "Gee, this can't be a vote getting quality." But as somebody pointed out to me, they said, you know, he has quite a bit of inventory, there's a lot of, there's a reserve of good will, and that approach might not work for somebody in your position but it's not going to be quite as risky for him.

DN: Did you ever get to talk to him about foreign policy other than El Salvador?

RB: You know, yeah, I probably did, and I'm just trying to see if there, the one idea that really has stuck is that one of "the longer you delay making tough choices, the fewer good choices you have." I mean, that's essentially what he said in that earlier exchange. And that idea has really influenced my thinking a great deal, even in this work on this Iraq situation that I've been working on for over a year. Right from the beginning we, even in my work we just put forward lots of choices that need to be made now as opposed to tomorrow, and if you wait until tomorrow you often don't have that choice.

So I think it was really that feeling, and I also liked tremendously that we had a secretary of state who understood the American electorate. And I think that that, I find foreign policy to be of great fascination to the American public, even though surveys say they don't like to read that page of the paper and this and that. But we have a habit of only coming back to the American public when it's crisis time: By the way, the smartest people on earth have screwed up and now we need to go to war someplace, so where are you when we need you? is kind of the invitation. And I had the feeling that he really bridged that gap.

But as Carole Parmelee said to me a couple years afterwards, after he'd been secretary of state, she said, "We really weren't there long enough to create a Muskie feeling in the institution." And I think that's unfortunate because I do think that it isn't, this is a subject that requires great grounding in American, in the American political reality if you're going to have any impact globally. And I think that he, I think he had that touch clearly, and he had that understanding. And having faced the voters and, both successfully and unsuccessfully, was clearly an important dimension that some of these other folks who are awfully smart but don't have it, are missing.

DN: Did you gain similar insights in terms of his attitude toward politics in general, or the responsibilities of a leader?

RB: Yeah, I think he was, I think that's one of the great gifts that he created certainly in the Maine body politic. I would say that most people who run for office in Maine have this really very serious and sober respect for the relationship with the people and the sense of responsibility, and clearly he had that. That was something that I think was in a way a burden, it's part of what made him, maybe made him a little bit, even more overly serious at times, but it's something that's been inherited by virtually everybody that I've admired in Maine, whether it's George Mitchell or Bill Hathaway. And of course Frank Coffin had a lot to do with that as well.

DN: Did you have many opportunities or any opportunities to interact with Frank Coffin?

RB: I've had a few. I mean, I've tried to come, I try to visit Frank Coffin on an irregular basis, because I just enjoy it so much and I just find his kind of self deprecating, and yet very bright way to be a model for, it's quite closer to the way I would like to be when I grow up kind of thing. But he just always has a good piece of thinking on whatever subject that you happen to be talking to him about.

DN: As you, you had the experience of being a campaigner, and as a staff member and then as

a candidate, and then as state chairman. As you worked in those areas, what sense did you have about what Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin had done starting in '54 to and for the party?

RB: Well, I think there's a great awareness that they had created the opportunity and that they had opened the door, and again, built a very solid platform of public, of a sense of public service. And so the Maine Democratic party really was in its heyday when I was getting started, and Ken Curtis continued that in a most positive way - - solution oriented, not caught up in petty wrangles. We didn't have enough strength at that point to be internally competitive in an unpleasant way. And so that was really, and it was an idea driven party as well. So those were, we had, the key to our success was recruit good candidates, give him a progressive platform to run with, and support him, and that was pretty much the way it was, engage people. So we had those advantages at that point, and I think it was, that it was a direct result of obviously your work, their work, as well.

DN: As you think back about the encounters you've had with Ed Muskie over the years, are there other anecdotes or insights that we've missed in reviewing that history?

RB: Yeah, you know, I think the, probably one sort of fun little story that doesn't have any import but it does kind of speak to. . . . I don't think I was a party chairman, but I went, we had a field day every year, a Democratic field day, and there was a golfing day at Poland Spring. And I happened to get up there early one day, and the next person to arrive, that Saturday, the next person to arrive was Ed Muskie and his son Ned. And he drove up and he said, "Where is everybody, and what's going on here, and who's in charge, and how come it hasn't started?" I didn't really have the answers to any of those questions, but it seemed like the best thing to do would be to say, well why don't we just tee off, why don't we go off as a foursome and we'll see everybody as the day develops. So I went off with him, and of course in the first tee everybody asks what your handicaps are and I didn't play a lot of golf, but I think I probably said fifteen or twenty. Ned was a very good golfer, he could really hit the ball well. Well, it just so happened the first three holes I parred, so that got the Muskies grumbling, that I was

DN: Both of them?

RB: Yeah, that I was sandbagging them. I quickly came back to earth, so that wasn't a problem. But on the eighteenth hole, we were walking down the eighteenth fairway -

End of Side A
Side B

DN: This is the second side of the November 12 interview with Rick Barton. Rick, you were just telling the golfing story.

RB: So a couple of older women, we'll say from Massachusetts but who knows where they were from, saw Senator Muskie and so they came running out onto the fairway to greet him and to take pictures and whatnot. He was not particularly happy with that interruption because what had just happened is he had hit his second or third shot to the green, and unlike most of his shots of the day it actually had gone right onto the green. But the ball, from where we were standing,

it looked as if his ball which landed on the green had hit another ball, and his ball then had skittered thirty yards off of the green. So instead of having one of his best shots of the day, he was now looking at another shot. So these women came rushing up to him for autographs and the rest, and he brushed them aside and sort of stalked to the green whereupon he found that not only had his ball stayed on the green, but because of the ricochet it was resting very near the pin, so whereupon his outlook changed immediately.

DN: He gave fifteen autographs.

RB: He was ready for the entire hotel. So, but we made it through the day. It was, again, these are all sort of really fond memories. And I think that's, I think overall, the overall impression was of a very serious individual who had a great sense of public responsibility, who really believed in certain critical elements of leadership, held himself to a very high standard, had difficulty accepting when others probably did not reach that same level but primarily because he, it was his own internal measure. And as a result made some huge contributions in areas that others hadn't touched. I think he really developed entire new fields of politics, which is fabulous.

DN: Thank you very much, Rick.

RB: Well, thank you, Don, I hope that was helpful.

End of Interview