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Bernhard, Berl oral history interview

Don Nicoll

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Interview with Berl Bernhard by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Bernhard, Berl

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

January 28, 2003

Place

Washington, D.C.

ID Number

MOH 395

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Biographical Note

Berl Bernhard was born in New York, New York on September 7, 1929 to Morris and Celia (Nadele) Bernhard. Berl lived in New Jersey, then attended Dartmouth College, graduating in 1951 and Yale Law School, graduating in 1954. His law career began in Washington as a law clerk to Luther Youngdahl. In the late 1950s he took a position on the Civil Rights Commission, and was appointed staff director by John Kennedy in 1961. In 1963 he returned to private practice, and became counsel to the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee in 1965. He became involved with Senator Muskie's 1968 vice presidential campaign as a result of his DSCC work, and then went on to work for Senator Muskie's 1972 presidential campaign as national campaign manager accompanying the Senator on his trips to Israel and the Soviet Union. From 1980 to 1981 he served as senior advisor to Ed Muskie when he became Secretary of State.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Manchester, New Hampshire incident; William Loeb; 1972 presidential campaign; 1972 convention and attitudes towards Muskie; and the meeting asking for Muskie's support of Humphrey in California.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Tuesday, the 28th of January, 2003. We are in Washington, D.C. in the law offices of Berl Bernhard; Don Nicoll is interviewing Mr. Bernhard. Berl, the last time we talked, you were describing the 1970 to 1972 campaign and some of the difficulties with that. I'd like to start this time with going back to the famous incident of the confrontation in front of the *Manchester Union Leader* in New Hampshire. As I recall, the senator flew in one night from Florida and was greeted by the attacks on Mrs. Muskie in the *Union Leader*, along with the other attacks. What was it like for you, and what was the scene?

Berl Bernhard: Well, here's where I was. You're right that Ed had been down at a drug rehabilitation center, I think two of them, in Florida, and it was hot. I was let off here in Washington, and George had the opportunity to be with Ed up there. So I really, I'm -

DN: Your's is remote.

BB: But it was a lot of conversation. And subsequent conversation with David Broder. George and I spoke, I forget who the advance person was on that, but -

DN: I think it was Tony Podesta, wasn't it?

BB: Yeah, it was Tony. And what really bothers me about that whole thing was in a sense I felt somewhat responsible, because Ed's energy level was not as high as we would have liked for a national campaign. And he'd get tired, and when he got tired he, surprisingly enough, got a little more crotchety, and I use the word "more" carefully. And what happened, I think, he went from the hot Florida scene at the drug centers up to New Hampshire where it was snowing. The thought was that if he confronted the *Manchester Union Leader* and Loeb, and the rather virulent attack that had been going on consistently, mostly directed at Jane, and he called her some dreadful things. And it wasn't, this is my recollection of it, I did not think that Ed was going up there for the reason of simply defending Jane's honor. That may have been in someone's mind, but that wasn't why, the initial reason in any event why he was going there. My understanding, at the time, was that we were going to confront the Loeb positions that he was taking, antagonistic to those of Senator Muskie. And what happened, happened.

It was snowing up there, we thought that we could have a great television opportunity in front of the *Manchester Union Leader*, and we got this flatbed truck, and I remember approving all this stuff and saying it sounded great to me. But I came, I got off here because we were going from there, if you recall, on another trip right after that. I guess it was going down to Florida where we knew we had big trouble because of George Wallace and a lot of reasons. So I got off here, and then they went up there. So therefore, what I report is not having been there.

Looking back on it, and having talked to David Broder, who for the, it took him about five years to say he may have overstated the situation. In fact, he wrote that he may have been the cause of the decline of the campaign, though I don't think it was that singular an issue. But my understanding was that, at least David admits finally, maybe I'm taking it from his understanding, that maybe it was not tears but snow that was in his eyes, and I don't know that and I'm not sure. But I do believe that it was vastly overstated in the press, and since we had adopted the phrase and the slogan, "Trust Muskie", and that he was the person that you could rely on to be the strong, disciplined, careful, balanced public figure, that this suddenly seemed to undermine it, that he was fragile and he was over-emotional, and he was an angry man; the things that we did not want to be part of the campaign. I mean, a little anger was fine, but this kind of thing looked like it was out of control, that's how it was printed. And there is no question that it had a disproportional impact on the campaign, you know, far beyond the reality of it.

And it also, this was the hard part I think from my personal standpoint, it made Ed very defensive about accepting recommendations for the right kind of television exposure, and he was very negative during the Florida effort, I think in large measure because of that incident. He was very flat, that's the best way to say it; he was very overly cautious and flat. So it was a bad scene. Senator Mitchell and I had a few discussions about it.

You know, my first reaction to it, and this is what I said to them in New Hampshire when they told me this had happened, I said, "That's great, it shows he really cares. It shows he's got an emotion that connects with people on a individual basis; he's not an abstract politician worried about these very important but vague things about clean air and clean water and budget controls.

He's a real person.” Well, that was my initial reaction, which was totally erroneous, and it wasn't the way it came out. But I thought it could, and I was kind of shocked at the reaction.

And I remember getting a call from Averell Harriman that night, who was just arriving in Anchorage, Alaska from some trip to Asia. And he said, “This campaign is over. How could you have allowed that to happen?” and went on and on and on. And the next call I got was from Clark Clifford, who was livid about it and went on and on and on, “This is a disgrace,” and “you ought to step aside to have allowed this to happen.” I said, “I'll step aside. You just give me the opportunity, I'm gone.” And Clark and I met the next day after that happened, and the reaction was just unexpected, stunningly negative, and it had just a dreadful impact on the rest of the campaign. It was just hovering all the time, about this emotional outburst. So it was something I guess is part of any campaign, you never, it's the unexpected, the unplanned for, that unhorses you, and I think this had a big impact. You know, you can overstate it, but I don't, I think it was a measurable negative.

DN: And you indicated that at the time, Senator Muskie's own campaign style changed.

BB: Oh yeah. But let me just say one other thing that happened. The day after that, the senator had a press conference and everybody, I flew up for that because I thought, ‘oh my God’, so I flew up that night, no, it was the next morning, and we arranged this press conference. And that wonderful Dick Stewart was there trying to make light of the whole thing, and he was doing a wonderful job of it. But we had this conference, and Dave Broder, a fellow who's now up in Baltimore, Jack Germond, and some of the other people who were covering, really honed in on this issue, in terms of lack of control and anger. Fair game, except that the sensitivities on the part of Ed were so great, he lost his temper, you may have heard about this, and ragged on Dave Broder, I mean, and then Jack Germond, I mean just tore into them about the overstatement, unfair commentary, factually incorrect, I mean it was a real blow. Well, I was standing I remember in the back saying, “Bob, this is really not going to be helpful.” But the result of that was, there was a second story, if you go back and look at it. I remember the next day there was more commentary about Ed's emotional state. So it was there, I mean.

DN: It raises an interesting question as to whether the initial story or his reaction to the reporters was the most significant event, in terms of subsequent attitude.

BB: It's a good question. Hard to know. It was in a sense maybe the combination of both that just, it was stark contrast to what I think the country had seen of Senator Muskie. And I think it put everybody on edge. Who's the fellow from the Los Angeles *Times*?

DN: Bob Shogun (*sounds like*)?

BB: No, Bob Shogun wasn't at the, I don't think he was up there. It was, Jules was there, it was, Jules was there, and he was on it, too. And they were the ones who really were at that morning, or afternoon, I can't remember what time it was, the press conference where Ed lost it again. Even that, I thought, was less harmful, and it turned out to be more harmful. I thought it was less harmful in terms of, again, showing that he cared, some things were very important. And I think that, if that happened today, for example, I don't think there'd be that reaction to it.

But it was still the uptight time, and the, I think the picture people shared and had of Senator Muskie as this brilliant, controlled, seasoned public figure, less so a politician than a really great figure. So it was pretty bad.

And the other thing is, it did haunt us all the way through Florida, because Ed was, I can remember the difficulty of trying to convince him to do certain events, because he, as you know, he could be the most indefatigable cross examiner when he got started, and he wanted to know the implication of everything that you suggested. You went through it a lot more than I did. And so each event became a monumental debating moment, and you can't really run things that way. And I guess I don't blame him, I never blamed him on it, but it was, it became timid. And there was Hubert [Humphrey] running all over the state with great happiness and glee, and George Wallace kicking the hell out of everyone, and George McGovern, and you know, but we were timid all the way through it. And I don't know if it showed. I mean, it was a bad situation. We ran into those problems of the dirty tricks, the [Donald] Segretti stuff and the Tampa scene, you probably know about that one, and then the synagogue down in Florida. I mean, it was a bad situation where he was not as emotionally or intellectually prepared to respond to attack. And you could feel it, it was palpable. So the results of that were really -

DN: That had an adverse effect on the Florida campaign, and after he came out of the Florida campaign, did he regain his energy?

BB: Well, yes, I think so. I mean, when we went to Illinois, that was the next stop on this awful road. And, you know, Ross (*name sounds like: Dutkowsky*) had kind of kicked out all of our people, I don't know if you recall all that. But when I went to see him, he removed everybody that we had put in the state, and said, "If I run it, I run it. You get out of here and I'll tell you what to do." But Ed was comfortable with Ross (*name sounds like: Dutkowsky*), and he felt energized even though, I forget, we came in fourth or fifth or something in Florida, it was awful, but Ed felt good about being in Illinois. And he seemed to regain his footing, he was more affirmative, he seemed more relaxed. I think the events were more effective, Ross (*name sounds like: Dutkowsky*) lived up to his commitments. Mayor [Richard] Daley was his usual, he had supported everybody wholeheartedly, one hundred percent, you could rely on him, but he never caused us problems. We had meetings with him, he committed to Muskie, but he never hurt us. And we did well, and Ed was good, and for the first time I had the feeling that we were regaining some momentum, and we were getting in some money. Because it was hat in hand, I felt like, you know, the Depression, with a tin cup most of the time, we never had the money.

And I know Arnold [Picker] and the other people that were trying to raise money, we almost dried up in Florida, I mean it was awful. You know, we made huge efforts in southern Florida, southeast Florida, along the Gold Coast with the Jewish community, and were not well supported. And you may recall, there was an Yitzhak Rabin problem, which Arnold helped to straighten out. But the whole thing was kind of, "don't support Muskie," in that community. We didn't have an Hispanic issue, that wasn't an issue. It was more the hard core, what I'd refer to these days and probably get killed for, was the redneck issue in mid-Florida and in the western part of the state. And then when we didn't get the help we thought we should have had on the Gold Coast, we were in trouble. And it was a really nasty campaign, anyway.

DN: We talked in the last interview some about the problem in the Jewish community and Yitzhak Rabin. What's your conclusion about why Rabin behaved as he did during this period?

BB: Well, I've never been sure about that. I didn't know the man really, I knew who he was and I think I'd met him once or something. My belief was that someone had convinced him that supporting a Polish Catholic was not going to be helpful to the Jewish community and to the state of Israel. I don't know why he came to that conclusion. My belief always was that people in the other camps were planning this, because it was an easy shot. Whether it was Lindsay and the people who were supporting him in New York started it, I don't know where it started. I remember Arnold tried to find out why this occurred, and he did help to put an end to it. But why it occurred, I didn't know whether, I did not believe it was the Humphrey supporters because, they could have since he was such an outspoken overt supporter of the independent state of Israel.

I've accused Frank Mankiewicz at one point, on the McGovern side, and he vehemently denied it, which was to be anticipated. And I have no reason to assume that he did it, but I did accuse him of it. He lived in back of me at home, so it was easy to yell at him over the fence. I don't know why he'd do it.

I think it was just planted by one of the camps with some effort as substantiation, because I remember Arnold told me, "Well, they had this and they had that." I said, "Arnold, I don't know what you're talking about." And he said, "Well that's what they're saying." And it was rumor. But it was difficult, and the word clearly was on the gold coast of Florida that Rabin was not, and people in Israel were not in favor of Muskie. And then you back it up a bit, you know, the kind of stuff that came out down there, the big banner, you know, very difficult.

DN: So Illinois was a rebound.

BB: Yup, no question about it.

DN: And then the next big campaign was Pennsylvania?

BB: And Michigan.

DN: And Michigan.

BB: Keeping in mind, by that time we did not have very much money left, even with the help we got during the Illinois campaign. In fact, the real issue was: could we go into Pennsylvania and into Michigan? And we really didn't have the money; I mean it was just that simple. The money was not coming in. It goes back to the fact that Ed was always uncomfortable about asking for money, he just, he didn't like it. And there are people who like it, and there are those who don't, and he didn't like it. He thought, you know, he felt like an old whore or something asking for money for something that he shouldn't have had to ask for. And, you know, we had the [Milton Jerrold] Shapp problem, which is just awful. I mean, you probably have heard about this from others, though.

DN: No, we haven't talked about Shapp, so tell us about that.

BB: Milton Shapp. Well, Ed said, "You go see Governor Shapp. He is going to support us and he has committed to have a large, huge fund raiser in Pittsburgh. And he says he will get as many as a thousand people there, contributing at least five hundred dollars apiece. You go talk to him about it, and work it out." So, I didn't know Governor Shapp, but I went to see him in Harrisburg. And I said, "I'm really excited to see you, and that this could make a big difference," and blah-blah-blah. He said, "We're going to do this, we're going to have this big fund raiser," and it was scheduled for two or three weeks beyond that. I said, "Short notice, but you think . . . ?" He said, "We can do it. I've got people all over the state; it'll be a big success." So we had it, and it was a big success.

There was only one little problem, which I was too dumb to think about at the time. Shapp said he was entitled to fifty percent of the proceeds. So when I heard that, and we got this check which was so much less than I had anticipated. I don't remember what it was, but it was a shock. And I got it, I said, "There's a mistake." So I called up Shapp's assistant, I said, "I think there's a mistake on this fund raiser," you know. "We stopped the campaign to do this and raise the money, and Ed spoke and all." He said, "No, that's right, that was, didn't the governor tell you that he was entitled to half of the proceeds?" And I said, "Half of the proceeds, but, let's assume that, but I never heard that before. I thought this was a fund raiser for Senator Muskie?" And he said, "Well that's not the governor's understanding." And I said, "But even if it were half, it has to be more than this." "I'll get back to you." Well, he got back to me in very short order. I was at a hotel in Harrisburg, and he said, "Well, of course that was after the expenses." So they took all the expenses out, then took half and gave us half. Well, it did not leave a very good sense of worth toward Governor Shapp. But I figured, money was money, and thank you very much, and so we moved ahead.

Well, I don't know if you know all that business about what happened the night before the primary? Well, I kind of figured Michigan was hopeless, I mean, we did what we could but we didn't have money. We couldn't do much advertising, we couldn't, and I thought, 'but we've got Governor Shapp in Pennsylvania'. Two days before, a day before, it was not two days, a day before the primary I got a call from someone saying, "Are you aware that Governor Shapp has sent the state of Pennsylvania plane to pick up George McGovern from Massachusetts, and to bring him in for the primary for the next day?" I said, "I don't think that could be true." "Believe me, take my word, it's true." So I called Governor Shapp's office and said, "I need to talk to the governor." And he said, "If you have anything to say, you have to come see me. I'm in Philadelphia." I said, "Ed, you're going to have to call him, because I don't think he's going to see me." So Ed called him and said, "I really appreciate it if you see Berl." Governor said, "Okay." So I went to see him in Philadelphia at the hotel. And I said, "Governor, the rumors are that you sent the," well, I said two things. I said, "I understood that you had endorsed Senator Muskie, and now I hear you're sending, or have sent the state plane to pick up George McGovern in Boston, and I'm just stunned. Is that true?" "Yes, it is true." "Well, how could that be?" And he said, "I want to be sure that the people in Pennsylvania have an opportunity to know both candidates." And I said, "Well then what kind of endorsement do we have?" Well, it got, it was kind of bad. I was, you know, you get tired, you're very uptight, and I, Milton Shapp and I had words.

Well, it was unfortunately exacerbated by the trip I made from Michigan to Philadelphia. We had, we were on one of those little planes, and my seatmate was one Johnny Apple, and he was the one who had told me about the plane. So we're sitting next to each other, he was giving me a load all the way there about, you know, 'What kind of campaign is this?' and how the people that you rely on are duplicitous. He went on and on and on. And so I listened to it, and listened to it, and I finally said, I just sat back in my seat and I said, "What do you expect from that little shmuck from Harrisburg." Okay? Not knowing, and not remembering to say, this is all off the record. That's on the front page of the *New York Times*. So that made the whole thing really unpleasant, and of course got all over my ass about that, but it was really a hopeless situation at that point.

And then we had the meeting subsequent thereto, with Ed Williams and Clark Clifford, and Arnold Picker and Ed, to talk about whether we could continue going. And, you know, there's the question, do you drop out altogether? Or do you say, 'I'm not going to campaign anymore'. Ed Williams had the clear, unequivocal position, you fight until you die, and I don't want to hear all this, you're going to recede and do this. Clark, of course, said, "I believe that this is not going to work." You know, it was the same kind of conversation we had after that Saturday night massacre. And Arnold said, "Well, we're having an impossible problem raising money," and I believed Arnold. He was about as decent a human being as I ever met, and I ever will meet. And he really sincerely believed that we didn't have the fund raising capacity, that the emotional commitment of the country, of the Democrat participants in the primary in the country, were McGovern, anti-Vietnam people who were really motivated, and a lot of the big money from the party was going to anti-Vietnam.

And, you know, it's so crazy because Vietnam was, it was basically over, I mean as far as I could see at the time. But it wasn't, I guess, in anyone's mind. McGovern kept the heat going, which is, was partly smart politically. But it was clear, we just couldn't raise money, any more than we could raise volunteers for the states. I mean, young people were not supporting us. Why the endorsement philosophy? That was the only thing we had going, that was where we thought we could build momentum, which we couldn't get out of the young people in college and right out of college. They were all for George McGovern, anti-Vietnam, they were protesting and running it over in every way possible. The fact that there were negotiations going on didn't make a damn bit of difference. So, it was a difficult time.

DN: And it was after that meeting, or at that meeting, that the decision was made.

BB: Well, Ed didn't say it finally, but everybody except Ed Williams agreed that it could be embarrassing to attempt to continue. Remember, we had California coming up, we just had, Jerry Brown had taken a powder on us, and Pat Brown stuck with Ed all the way through but he wasn't significant because he just wasn't significant at the time. And the idea was, don't get out, but say you're suspending campaigning. And that's what we did, and clearly you don't get the nomination by suspending a campaign when momentum is with someone else, so.

And then, I guess you know, the only thing, if you remember it came down to Humphrey-McGovern right at the end, and the big issue was, and I remember the meeting at Ed's house with

Hubert about Hubert asking him to support him in California. And I didn't know what he was going to say or do, and he said he would think about it. But he was still burned about Hubert having gotten in in January with his sails full and all that. And I didn't know what he was going to do. And the only thing that Ed has ever said to me, and I think it was absolutely from the bottom of his heart, he said, "There were a lot of mistakes we all made in the campaign; my biggest mistake was not supporting Hubert in California."

DN: Did he elaborate on that?

BB: Oh yeah, he said it was so clear to me that McGovern was okay for the Democratic Party, and impossible in terms of the chance of winning, and that in '68 we came within a quarter of a percent of winning, and I think there were people who could rally behind Hubert that couldn't ever rally behind George McGovern. But I was still harboring this antipathy, which is what he said, that's almost a quote, toward Hubert for having gotten in, having said, you know, the path is yours, I picked you before, it's your chance, I had mine. I was there when he said it at a breakfast meeting, I'm not going to get, it was in December, at Ed's house. This is your opportunity. And then Ed thought, well, he turned around and he really destroys the campaign. I think there's truth to that. I mean, there's no question that even if we didn't run a brilliant campaign and all that kind of thing, I do believe that we cut the center up and, you know, I just believe that Ed would have been in a very different position, from both a money standpoint, campaign organization standpoint, a capability of articulating a vision that was different, if it hadn't been for Hubert.

DN: What arguments did Hubert advance at that, at Ed's house?

BB: I remember we were sitting at the table; it was a breakfast meeting at the house. He was very good. As you know, he was a high-, I mean, I really loved Hubert, but I got to confess, and he was high spirited and he was very smart. And he said, "Look, I know that you've been," I forget the words, it was like 'unenthusiastic', "about my having gotten into the campaign, but politics are politics and, you know, I didn't mean to hurt your campaign, I wanted another opportunity because I think we came so close, and I recognize that this may have had a very bad effect on both of our campaigns, but I've picked mine up now, and it's now down to who carries California; who will get the nomination. And I think the country won't support George McGovern; I think the country will support me again." And he didn't say, 'and if I get the nomination I want you to run with me again'. I was waiting for that, you know, through the whole breakfast. I was sitting there waiting for him to say, "If I get it, Ed, you're my man again," and he never said that. And I thought that was stupid on his part. He could have gotten the nomination if he'd said that.

I really believe, Ed would have said, had a different view, but I think he was personally, he didn't say, you know how he never really said when he was hurting about something. But when we talked about it after Hubert left that morning, he said, "I have to really think about this. I think that Hubert underestimates the impact of his entry on my campaign and my opportunity to be heard and to lead," and all that kind of. And I really had the feeling, and I didn't say it because I thought, I just, you know, things were a little tense at the time. I was going to say, 'well maybe it would have been a good idea if he said he wanted you to run again with him'. But he didn't

say that. And Ed said he would think about it, and then, it wasn't that day, he didn't say anything.

We talked, I guess it was the next day, and he said, "I think I should remain neutral." I said, "I don't know enough about California, but I do know that if you come out and support him, there will be a lot voters who will follow your lead, who I believe otherwise may become McGovern supporters. And I don't know enough about California to tell you with any finality what would happen, but it's going to make a difference." And I had talked to some of the people, polls there for some of the other people out there, to ask what they thought about that. And Paul thought he should do it, Jerry Brown thought he should do it, but Jerry by that time was everywhere but on this planet. But he just, he didn't do it, but he told me later, that was the biggest mistake I made in that whole period of time, because it could have made a huge difference. Maybe we could have taken Nixon.

DN: So he suspended the campaign, he declined to endorse Hubert, and then went to the convention?

BB: Yeah. It was really bad, Don, it was one of the most depressing experiences I think I've ever had. First, Ed said to me, "Well, you're the only one in this group that has had any contact with Governor Wallace, the delegation has got to go, a delegation has got to go, I want you to represent." And I said, "Look, I'm the guy who tried to put him in jail, and I subpoenaed him, went to U.S. District Court in Montgomery." He said, "I want you to go pick him up. He's been shot, he's in a wheelchair, I want to show some" So I went to the airport to pick up George Wallace, and we talked about the old days and blah-blah-blah.

But the campaign, the convention was dispirited, except for all the pot. If you recall, the convention hall smelled like a marijuana trip. It was awful, and the press was writing about it. It was all the young people who had supported McGovern, who had gotten themselves named delegates. And what we showed to the American people was horrifying. I mean, who could be the most liberal. The people that were called on to speak, I mean everything was way out on the left, and there was almost no effort, it didn't have a Richard Daley trying to speak as he did in '68, I mean that was almost a highlight. But there was none of that, it was quite awful. And Ed had, you know, he was totally ignored, as you probably heard. I really believe that an effort should have been made to really enlist his support, but it wasn't, I mean it was, everybody connected with him was pushed aside.

DN: Who was calling the shots in that situation?

BB: I don't know. I was never quite sure. I didn't know whether, you know, Gary Hart or Frank. But they had a tight control over that convention, I mean it was not, and it was the young kids, I mean they were there in droves. I don't know who, I don't know, I'm not sure. But it was a very unpleasant few days, and it showed a face of the party which was obviously unacceptable. And when the press all wrote about that they were afraid to go into the auditorium because the smell of marijuana, and there was so much marijuana in there, they thought they were on a high. It was all, if you go back and look at the press stuff at the time, there was all kinds of talk about the unruly young people, pot smoking Democratic Party, and it was just almost designed for the

end.

And it was unrealistic, because as I said, I knew Gary, I knew Frank well, and they were, either they believed, or they tried to convince everybody to believe, that they talked with, that they were going to win, and that these young people were going to be the forward troops of this great undercurrent of anti-Vietnam, anti-war sympathy, and that the country was going to rally behind this. It was a strange, unreal, it was unreal, it was virtual. I mean, there was something bizarre about it. I felt like I was in another party, or another world. And I can remember leaving the day before the convention ended, because I just said, 'this is awful'. And of course we had had that prior discussion with McGovern's people over at Ed's house, and I think the fact that he had turned him down made them more antagonistic at the convention, toward him, which was really dumb. But he became kind of part of the enemy, of the right of the party.

DN: Describe that meeting at his house with Gary Hart and company.

BB: Well, I know Gary and Frank, and who else was there, at least one other person. And I knew what it was going to be about, I mean Frank had called me and said, "We really have to have . . .," and Gary had called me. I said, "Look, I don't think it's real. I don't think he's got the heart to do that, I think too many things have been said that are not acceptable. But, come on over. I mean, I'm not the candidate, so come on over."

So we went over there. It was a, Jane was there, she was, when they came in she went upstairs almost right away. And their discussion started, and they were very articulate about why this would make a difference. If Ed were to run, it would restore confidence that the party did have a center core, and they were, you know, Gary is a smart guy and he did most of the talking, and he was very good. Once or twice, twice as I recall, Jane was at the top of the stairs, you know, the room was right down below the stairs. And she said, "This is not going to happen, Ed," and then went back. And then the last one, when she came down, she said, "If you say yes, just keep in mind, I'm not campaigning." So it was one of those things, you know, where Ed would say, "Oh well," (*unintelligible word*), but right then and there he said, "The chance of my doing this is negligible, if at all, and I'll give you a final answer a little later."

And they kept pressing him, which was a mistake, saying we really need to know now because we really need to get to work on planning and publicity and all that kind of stuff. And that was okay with me, I thought that was fair. But he decided, you know, he had decided basically, but I guess he didn't want to just say, 'go to hell'. And so he did that day, and later in the afternoon he told them, and I talked to them. And it was a, shall we say, a full and frank discussion, because Ed listened to a lot of that and didn't say very much; you know how he could be stone-faced. But he finally got into it toward the end about the positions they'd taken, the political advantage they had taken, that you know, they had absolutely I remember he used language like, deliberately ignored the reality of American life by assuming that everybody agreed that the war had to end on any terms, and the United States had to give in, and then all this argument about the domino theory was ignored. Whether, you know, I just, you know, you have to go back in time I think, Don, you know as well as I, that you just have to go back and it was a different temper than we have. Anyway, then he just said "no", and they sure showed it when we were down in Miami. It was even up time.

DN: Did you get any signals about the vehemence of their response before the convention?

BB: In terms of what?

DN: Well, you talk about the exclusion of the Muskie group at the convention.

BB: No, the only thing that I was aware of is that any effort that any of us tried to make with them about participating, either in things like the Rules Committee or the Equal Rights Committee or the Credentials Committee, every bit of that was rejected, I mean it was just flat out rejected. And I don't think they were prepared to offer any visibility to Ed of any kind. It was, you know, and then the Eagleton bit came into the whole thing and it was unsettling, and it was nasty, and we were kind of responsible for Eagleton. This wouldn't have happened if, I heard that endlessly, if Ed had accepted, so that was put in the equation of distaste for Muskie, you know, everybody that was connected with him.

DN: Now, the sequence following the convention was the revelation, if you will, of Tom Eagleton's mental health problems and his treatment, and then dumping him from the ticket. At that point, did McGovern come back to Muskie?

BB: Not that I recall, I don't recall that.

DN: There was no coming back at that juncture.

BB: You know, now when you mention it, I have this funny feeling there may have been, but I certainly was not a participant, in any event. I think I heard from them about, you know, and I can't remember, I'd better not speculate, I don't know. But I have this funny feeling that there was some connection about it, whether we would reconsider something, but I don't, I'm not sure on that. I don't know.

DN: After the primary, or after the convention, Ed was really out of the campaign and apparently not wanted by McGovern.

BB: Very clear. I mean, he had turned them down, and probably as myopic a decision as they made was to exclude, and I talked to them about this, that they could have made was to exclude him, because he still had a number of people who were significantly there and almost irresistibly committed to him, and that was ignored. And people were pissed off about it. I mean people who had been, you know, Muskie supporters, were not prepared to help McGovern. And I think it was a mistake, big mistake, but that was the mentality. And clearly with Jane's point of view, and Ed didn't need any grief about that, and his own feelings of exclusion and shoddy treatment, he just didn't choose to want to help.

Now, he did do one or two things, as you know, but it was not like he was rolling it up for George. And it was during that period that, during the period from the convention to the general election, was when Ed made the comments to me about, that was my major mistake of political life, was not support Hubert and help with California. And that was stunning, I mean, when he

said He'd never said anything like that. And he really said it with real conviction and sorrow, I mean I could just feel it, that he knew in his mind he'd made a big mistake.

DN: Do you recall how long that was after the convention?

BB: Don, I don't, but it was some time after the convention. And, two things, what is the name of that restaurant -?

End of Side A
Side B

DN: We are now on Side B of the interview of January 28th, 2003, with Berl Bernhard. You were talking about going to a restaurant.

BB: Right, there were two times that Ed said the same thing. The first time was somewhere close to the general election, when it was clear that McGovern was probably carrying nothing. And we didn't even know what it was, but it was going, you know, everybody was predicting just an overwhelming victory, not for him. And it was some, it was at some proximity, a week or two before the general election, and Ed, the first time he said anything to me, and I was, you know, kind of taken aback.

And then we had lunch subsequent to the election, probably in January or February in Brasserie, that place on Massachusetts Avenue, and he repeated it in more detail, that this had bothered him and was bothering him, that it was a judgment clouded by his initial anger at Hubert for getting into it, but it was a mistake. And it wasn't, I remember this, he said, "It wasn't the kind of disciplined decision I was accustomed to making." And, you know, I knew, that was Ed, I knew that he meant that. And you would know it the best, you know, he always wanted to know what happens if, and what happens after if, and I think he looked at it and said, "I didn't do what I asked others to do." And I had the feeling this was really deep with him; it bothered the hell out of him. And it might have made a huge difference. I don't know if it would have, but, big difference, I mean Hubert still had a significant following and he had that engaging wonder about him. I don't know at the same time

DN: We're about out of time, and I would like to break this interview and then continue later, we pick up after the '72 campaign and talk about the later years. Thank you very much.

BB: Thank you, Don, I appreciate it.

End of Interview