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Charles, Arthur H. oral history interview

Stuart O'Brien

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Interview with Arthur H. Charles by Stuart O'Brien

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Charles, Arthur H.

Interviewers

O'Brien, Stuart

Date

September 18, 1998

Place

Portland, Maine

ID Number

MOH 048

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Biographical Note

Arthur H. Charles was born in Portland, Maine on July 1, 1911 to Florence and John Charles. He was educated in the Portland public schools, graduating from Portland High School. He took a post-graduate year at Hebron Academy before enrolling at Boston University. He left Boston University after his second year because of health problems and completed his college education through classes at Portland College, now University of Southern Maine. His father was a grocer, and President of the Maine Grocers Association. He worked for his father as executive secretary of the association, eventually making it his career. In the 1930s he began lobbying in Augusta for the Grocers Association. He worked with Ed Muskie in the Office of Price Stabilization during World War II, because he had a relationship with the grocers of Maine. He served in the Maine House in the mid-1950s, and served one term in the Maine Senate in the late 1950s. He retired from the grocery industry after more than fifty years. His wife, Helen Charles, worked with him in the grocery business.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Portland during the Depression; Maine Grocers Association; Portland City Basketball League; Office of Price Stabilization (OPS); Maine state politics in the

mid-1950s; his election to the Maine Senate; John Reed; lobbying for grocers; roles in the OPS; retail coupon redemption; Muskie's relationship with small business; and Muskie's contributions to Maine.

Indexed Names

Charles, Arthur H.

Charles, John

Charles, Florence

Charles, Helen

Clauson, Clinton Amos, 1895-1959

Cloutier, Adrian

Hillman, Earl M.

Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996

Reed, John

Transcript

Tuck O'Brien: Could I start by having you state and spell your name?

Arthur Charles: Yeah, my name is Arthur H. Charles, that's C-H-A-R-L-E-S.

TO: Okay, where and when were you born?

AC: I was born here in Portland on July 1st, 1911.

TO: Did you grow up in Portland?

AC: I grew up here.

TO: Did you live your whole life in Portland?

AC: Except for the time that I spent my college years in Boston.

TO: What were your parents' names and occupations?

AC: My parents' name was Florence and John Charles; their occupation was grocer, they were grocers.

TO: What was Portland like when you were growing up? Was it a small city, very Republican area?

AC: I was more or less an independent at the time. You mean my political affiliations?

TO: No, the area. What was Portland like as a city at the time you were growing up. Portland, the city itself?

AC: Oh, yeah.

TO: What was it like?

AC: Oh, very conservative at that time. That was about 19-, oh, of course I was born in 1911, and I didn't know what was going on until a few years later. I would say it was a very conservative and a very tight period. I know that my parents were having difficulty financially at the time, even though they I'd have to go back to my parents arriving here in about the very late eighteen hundreds from Turkey. And they escaped from the Turks, the massacres that were going on, and they came here because of the goodness of the Christian Civic League, not the Christian Civic League, but the Women's Temperance Union.

And at that time they had difficulty getting oriented, and I'm trying to answer your question by those beginning years. He was working at the Winslow Pottery where Shop 'n' Save is located now in Portland. And later on he decided that he was go into, that's my father, into the grocery business, and he did not have any knowledge of the English language even though he entered the business. He would ask the customers how much they paid for the merchandise elsewhere, to give him the same amount of money. He was very trustworthy of the consumers. In other words, whatever they said, he believed in them and apparently the consumers were very good to him, and apparently later on he did become successful in the grocery business.

But we're in a Depression period and I know as I'm growing up and in my early years, I can remember very clearly, the very difficulty that they had making both ends meet. But along came the WWI and my father was able to pull through that by being very economical. And since being in the grocery business he was able to buy his merchandise at wholesale and we lived by that and he did have some help. He hired some outside help like a meat cutter and so forth, to come into the store and prepare the meats for him, and he became successful.

Then as I'm growing up, I'm in my eleventh and twelfth years, and I still had, there was a period of difficulty there with my parents financially. But the Arc of Triumph is up and down, like the stock market, and that's the way it was in my early days. In my high school days, that would be in the 1929s or 30s

TO: Where did you go to high school?

AC: Portland High School, and it was a very difficult year. However, we were able to survive the cause of our type of business that we were in, my father was in. After finishing high school, I decided that I wanted to go to college but I didn't have enough points to do so. So my parents sent me to Hebron Academy where I was able to make up my differences and I was admitted to Boston University. And at that time my father was president of the Maine Grocer's Association.

Gradually I'm getting into the area that's going to connect me with Ed Muskie. And since he was president of the Maine Grocer's Association, I was able to help him write his letters for him, since he was not able to do so because of his language difficulty. I would write his letters for him, and I gave him some advice on some of the things that could be done or should be done. Then I did attend Boston University for the first two years. In my second year I had a physical difficulty with my lungs and I had to leave school, leave college, come back to Portland. And at that time I became more interested in the Grocer's Association and I was more of a help to my father. And around 1930 . . . '34, '35, I became executive secretary for the Maine Grocer's Association.

TO: What was the Maine Grocer's Association?

AC: That was an organization of retail grocers and wholesalers throughout the whole state of Maine. We had seven hundred members, and I was able to handle that. I published a magazine for them, which was on a monthly basis, of anything from ten to twelve to fourteen pages, and I was the editor and publisher of that magazine.

At the same time, because of my affiliation with the Maine Grocer's Association, I became interested in doing some lobbying for the association at the State House in Augusta. And I remember very well at that time, that Ed Muskie was a member of the House of Representatives, but I didn't know him personally. And yet, that is what my first connection is with Ed, in the legislature and politics. I knew he was a Democrat but I was an independent for awhile and then I was induced to become a Republican. So I'm still a Republican by political affiliation.

TO: Did your parents vote?

AC: My parents did vote, yes, they were citizens.

TO: They were Republicans?

AC: Yes, they were Republican.

TO: And do you have any siblings, any brothers and sisters? Did you have any brothers and sisters?

AC: I had a sister, yes.

TO: You had a sister.

AC: Yes.

TO: So you, it's 1935, you're lobbying for the Maine Grocer's Association in Augusta.

AC: That's right.

TO: Do you remember meeting Ed Muskie for the first time?

AC: I can't really say that I do, but I knew he was there. And I knew the difficulties that he was in, because of his minority situation. I guess he was the only one that could speak up for the Democrats at the time, and he did a very good job by doing it and I admired him very much for that. Even though I had no direct contact with him. There was no object on my part to lobby Ed Muskie because of his minority condition. I had to do my work with the Republicans who had control of the votes, and that's why I had very little relations with Ed at the time.

But I want to go on further to say about my education that, even while I was still executive secretary, I decided that I wanted to complete my course at Boston University. So I took night courses and summer courses, and I took one course at Portland University, which is now the University of Maine, Portland [University of Southern Maine]. That used to be called Portland University, yes. And I took one course there and I was able to make up enough points so that I could receive my bachelor of business administration degree.

TO: Now when you were in high school and at Boston University, were you involved in a lot of extracurricular activities?

AC: At high school I was not, since I took the college course it was very difficult for me, and I was not eligible to participate in athletics at the time. But I did join the City League at the time, which is basketball, and I made my mark at that time with the City League, which is not, I wouldn't call it a semi-professional organization but they were a group of teams throughout the city and South Portland and Westbrook, and I was a member of the associates basketball team of Chester Street Church. We did very well; we won the championship. Other than that I was very interested in the YMCA. And even in my youth while I was in my 14s and 15s or 16s, I was very proficient in calisthenics and athletics and I became an instructor of calisthenics at the Portland YMCA for younger employed people.

And then beyond that, after I gained my degree, I decided to, I would uh, well, I decided that I would concentrate more on the Grocer's Association. I'm trying to get to the point now about Ed Muskie. I had very good connections with the food industry in the whole state. In fact, that folder over there contains all the information that I have relative to the Office of Price Stabilization that Ed Muskie was chief of at the time, back in 1951.

When the war situation developed, it caused the establishment of the Office of Price Stabilization at the time. It was my job to see to it that the grocers of Maine were very well informed about the rules and regulations of OPS so that they wouldn't get in trouble. And I used to do price surveys for them, and I did lectures and I also did convention material in order to bring them, give them more light as to what is necessary. And apparently, without me realizing it, I was doing a lot of work that the OPS wanted to do themselves.

And one day I was approached by Adrian Cloutier, who was the employment advisor for the Office of Price Stabilization, to see if I would be interested in applying for a position with OPS. And I said, "Yes, I would be." I still knew that Ed Muskie was the chief administrator of the

entire program, but I had no direct contact with him at the time. But apparently some of his people under him knew about me and had relayed the messages to him so that he was, probably gave his okay so, to get me into his organization.

I was appointed chief of the food branch with a G-11 rating, which is a federal rating for position, and that's a very good rating. That paid about seven thousand a year, at the time, probably double that right now. So then I was definitely hired and I worked for Ed for two years. And in that two-year period I had very little discussion with Ed, because Ed was a very quiet person. I found that he was very quiet, I mean, as far as being too outwardly with his employees. He wanted to make sure that they were doing a good job. And apparently he liked what I was doing and we would exchange greetings off and on, and I began to like him very much. At the end of the two year period, of course, the appropriations at Congress dropped off and I was released from my position at the time, so was everybody else

TO: What year was this?

AC: That was about 1953. And so I went back to the Grocer's Association, and I continued my work with them, and that was in 1953. In the meantime, I think something happened to Ed at his home, he became injured or

TO: He broke his back.

AC: He broke his back. And I was very sad about that, and that kept him out of circulation for quite a while. But he became interested in politics again and he ran for governor and he made the governorship. Now, I ran for the House of Representatives in, around 1956 or '55, or '56, and there was a Republican governor at the time. And I don't know what year it was that he was governor, but I was still on the legislature. Do you know the year that he was governor?

TO: Ed Muskie?

AC: Yeah.

TO: He was governor from '54 to '58.

AC: Fifty-four to '58. I was there at the time, yeah. So I served under him as a, in the House of Representatives. And I also ran for the senate, and I had two years in the Maine senate.

TO: So, what was, what were Maine politics like at that time, right after you got elected for state legislature?

AC: Politics at that time was a lot of talk about the sales tax, which I opposed greatly. And every time the sales tax question came up I opposed it. I really can't tell you what, exactly what the situation was at that time, it's gone beyond my memory.

TO: Sure. What was your first campaign like for the legislature? What did you do? Why do

you think you won?

AC: In my first campaign? Well, first of all I was getting quite a lot of publicity relative to some of the positions that I was taking. And it was probably favorable to the consumer, there's no question about it. And I would speak to the women's organizations and I was very interested in the local GOP organization in Portland, and I participated as much as I could.

And on one occasion I remember making a statement relative to some women that were invited to go to South America and to check up on the price of coffee at that time. Coffee prices were rising and I spoke up against that. I said the reason why they're going down there is for the coffee people down there to make them think that there is an emergency. And they're going to come back and say it's okay to raise the prices of coffee, and I was very much opposed to that. And I probably got a little publicity by doing so. Other than that, my campaign was mostly for the Republicans.

And I can tell you one occasion while I was a member of the senate, that, in my second year, my second term in the Maine senate, the vote was coming up for president of the senate. And I was approached by Mr. Hillman, who was then campaigning for John Reed. John Reed wanted to become president of the senate, but Hillman came to me and he said, "Arthur, John Reed wants to become president of the senate, but he said he'll support you if you want to run for the president of the senate." I says, "Go ahead," I said, "I'll support John Reed." And he was elected president of the senate. In that year, Clinton Clauson was governor. Clinton Clauson died in office; the president of the senate then became governor. I missed the governorship by deciding not to run for the president of the senate. Is there anything else you want me to discuss about myself? I'd like to say more about Ed if I could.

TO: Yeah, we'll get to that in a minute. Why did you decide to run for the senate?

AC: What's that?

TO: Why did you decide to run for the senate?

AC: Well, because I thought that it had a higher position. In order to run for the senate I had to run for twenty-six cities and towns of Cumberland County, it isn't like it is today. I had to campaign in every city and town in Cumberland County. I didn't mind doing so, and I wanted to, I wanted to go for the top. In other words, I wasn't satisfied for what I had already done, I wanted to go further. And that's why I decided on the senate as the place to go, and I was elected. I think one year I led the ticket of four senators that were elected from Cumberland County. I had the highest vote. And the second year I was number two.

TO: I want to ask you a couple questions about your days as a lobbyist for the Maine Grocer's Association. What was your role in the government as a lobbyist?

AC: Okay, see, the primary issues at that time were number one, competition was a change towards, a change towards cutting hard into the independents. I represented the independents.

There was a regulation or a piece of legislation that would curtail the expansion of the chain stores in Maine. Number two was a trade, fair trade laws. In other words, price-cutting was a very dangerous thing at the time. And the independents could not stand taking a loss, because of the price of the merchandise that the chain stores were selling, or with anybody that was selling, any grocer that would be selling below cost. My job was to protect that particular provision by asking for legislation to curtail the selling of merchandise below cost. It passed; we won that one. So today in order for anybody to sell below cost, they have to show intent not to injure competition.

The other one was a sales tax on food. I lobbied strongly against the sales tax on food, which is now exempt except for some things that are still taxed.

The other one was a Sunday closing. The majority of the retailers around the state did not want to open on Sunday. And it became apparent that some of the chains and largest of the markets were opening on Sunday and cutting into the competition with the independents. That failed, I was not able to put that one over. It was apparent that people wanted to shop on Sundays, so there was nothing we could do about it. Those were the major issues that I lobbied.

TO: How amiable was Ed Muskie towards lobbyists, towards special interests? Did you often, did you ever meet with Muskie when he was governor?

AC: Like I said, he was opposed to everything the Republicans wanted to do. I remember that. As to why, I can't tell you.

TO: Okay, so you wanted to, you said you wanted to talk a little bit more about Ed. How did you develop your relationship with Ed Muskie?

AC: Through the Office of Price Stabilization. I thought very much of him at the time, he was very good. He wouldn't criticize anybody. But we were all doing a good job for him anyway, because we wanted to.

TO: In 1955 Muskie gave a speech at the Maine State Grocer's Association convention, do you remember that?

AC: Oh, I know he was invited, yes, but I don't remember what he said.

TO: You don't remember. How long were you a state senator?

AC: Four years.

TO: And then what did you do after that?

AC: There's another part of my life there. After that I, my wife and I formed a partnership. We called ourselves Association Services, and I was, since the amount of money that I was earning for the Grocer's was not sufficient. Merely to keep going, we decided to take on other

organizations. So we were able to receive approval from the Sales and Marketing Association and also the Maine Association of Life Underwriters, and the Southern Maine Association of Life Underwriters. And in all those three organizations, I was able to do all the executive work, take care of the membership, do their publications and magazines or whatever, notifications, and arrange their meetings and so forth. Even though I was not an insurance agent, I was able to do all that work for them. I just retired July 1st from that.

Also in the meantime, the Maine Grocer's had a coupon problem, consumers' coupons. They were not able, financially, to finance a coupon redemption center. So my wife and I borrowed the money privately and we went into the coupon redemption business on our own. And that means that we were handling over a hundred thousand coupons a year from consumers going to the retailers, and the retailers sending their coupons to us.

TO: And then what would you do with them?

AC: We would give them, we would be allowed eight cents a coupon by the manufacturer, and we would give the retailer a proportion relative to the volume of business they gave us. Say, if they gave us like ten thousand coupons a year, we'd give them two cents apiece, or if they had twenty thousand a year we'd give them three or four cents apiece, and we keep the balance. We'd probably end up with about, an average of about two or three cents a coupon on the entire operation.

Eventually, it was time for me to retire from the Grocer's after serving fifty years for them. And I decided at that time, with my wife, that we would continue the coupon redemption business for another five years and then turn it over to the Grocer's Association. Since we had done all the ground work, and we'd done all the financing ourselves, and because of the fifty years of service that I had with the organization, I felt that this belonged to them, that I couldn't take it with me. On the other hand, if I had taken the coupons with me after retirement, the Association no doubt would have gone into it themselves. So it was my prerogative to make my decision once and for all to give them the business. And they continued it after that without any difficulty, and they still do.

TO: What was the impact of the Office of Price Stabilization on small grocers of Maine? What was the impact of OPS on the small grocers of Maine?

AC: They were very much concerned. The small grocer was worried, they didn't know what was going to happen. They were still in competition with the chain stores, price was very sensitive at that time, pricing of merchandise, and they were real frightened. And I tried to alleviate that by giving them all the information I possibly could to keep them at ease and not to worry too much about it, to depend upon the government to do the right thing for them. And the government did the right thing by setting a minimum and maximum prices for merchandise. And the impact was lifted a little bit, but they were worried.

TO: What was Ed Muskie's relationship with small business in Maine, as governor and as a legislator?

AC: He was very much in favor. From what judgment I have on Ed on, as far as that's concerned, he was for the little guy, he was for the independent, yes.

TO: How do you think, in your years involved with Maine politics, especially special interest groups, how do you think politics in Maine has changed over the years, from the late [19] 40s until you retired from working with the Maine Grocer's?

AC: There's been a great change. A great change has come because it changed those without. But what came back was, the wholesalers that came back and developed their own retail stores like Hannaford Brothers, and they are now very powerful. Also Shaw's markets, Shaw's developed supermarkets. The small grocer could not compete any further. They ended up selling pizzas and Italian sandwiches, they gave up handling sides of beef and things like that. Today's market is very difficult for a small independent grocer to survive, even though Hannaford and Shaw's defeated the change themselves, and they did what we were trying to do for the independent grocer. But what happened was, they developed their own situations and become stronger on their own because of their origin from being a wholesaler, and they were able to run their own business.

TO: What did you see as being Ed Muskie's biggest contribution to the state of Maine?

AC: Loyalty, loyalty and interest for the underprivileged. He was tops, relative to aiding those that needed help. Even though he was a Democrat I admired him for his, some of his positions that he had to take, even against the Republican positions. Like, I didn't like all the things the Republicans were doing, but Ed wanted to make those changes. And he had difficulty doing it on his own, but eventually he pulled the Party together. And I admire him now for the strength of the Democratic Party in the state of Maine, which is very significant. And the bipartisan situation in the State House even today is almost level, it could go one way or the other.

TO: How did you view the Democratic Party when you were in the legislature?

AC: I never, personally I'm a little different type of Republican, I think, because even when I was in the legislature the Democrats would have some kind of a bill that they'd want to put in, like rehabilitation and reconstruction of homes in Portland. Some of the Republicans were against it; I wasn't. I thought it was a good idea, that they should clean out those slums in Portland and build new homes for young people and for elderly people, so that they could live. And Ed Muskie was that type of person. And that was my feeling, because the Democrats are not always wrong. I had to argue against my own delegation in Portland, and also the county, about my position on some Democratic legislation. But I still got reelected.

TO: After you left the senate, did you maintain a relationship with Ed Muskie?

AC: Okay, there's one interesting incident that I had with Ed Muskie. Ed Muskie was elected U.S. Senator, this was after the OPS and after the governorship. And one day we met each other in Freeport in a restaurant. Apparently he was having a meeting with some of his men and I was

having a meeting with some of my grocers. And he spoke up to me and he says, "Arthur," he says, "why is it that you don't contact me when you want some kind of legislation lobbying or something? Why aren't you asking me to do it for you?" He was kind of upset with me at the time. And I says, "Ed, I have nothing against you, it's just a matter of policy for me to go to a Republican senator, ask him to help on some of the issues that we have in Congress." "Well," he says, "the next time you have anything to do with legislation," he says, "you call me." That was the little upset that I had with Ed at that time, because I had no, I did not intend to bypass him whatsoever. It was just the way it happened to go, that's all. I mean, it might have been something having to do with a tobacco bill at the time, tobacco legislation.

TO: What did you see as Ed Muskie's weaknesses as a politician?

AC: I don't think he had a weakness. I think he was very strong.

TO: Why was he strong?

AC: Because of his will power. He was always up front, he would stand up for his rights, and I admired him for that. He was not easy to give up anything, and he stuck to what he wanted. He went after what he wanted, and by doing that you become a good Democrat and a good politician.

TO: Do you think, looking at how Maine is changed since Ed Muskie came around, I asked you what his contributions to Maine were earlier, but what kind of changes in Maine politics and in, from the point of view of small businessmen, what did Ed Muskie do?

AC: It's hard to tell. You're going back quite a few years. Whatever changes he made, I think rubbed off on the voting public. That whatever he did, they approved of it, and his success right through is the work, what he did himself.

TO: Give me a second, Mr. Charles, I just want to flip the tape.

End of Side One
Side Two

TO: Okay, how long after you left the legislature did you maintain contact with Ed Muskie, besides that one incident?

Helen Charles: Hi, I'm Helen.

AC: This is my wife, Helen. Your name again?

TO: Stuart O'Brien.

HC: Stuart, nice to meet you.

AC: Is there something?

(Tape briefly stopped.)

TO: So anyways, I was just wondering about how you maintained contact with Ed Muskie after you left the senate, the state senate.

AC: I really didn't have a contact with him after that.

TO: You didn't. So you really got to know him working through OPS and then later as a, or a little later as a lobbyist for the Grocer's Association. Could you tell us then a little bit more about the structure of OPS, what it was designed to do and what exactly your role was in OPS?

AC: My role or Ed's role?

TO: Your role.

AC: Oh, well I had a great list of things I had to do. First of all, I had to work with the mathematicians that the eastern region provided relative to price surveys. I had to work with the wholesalers and finding out what their costs are, and how much they charge the retailers for the merchandise, in order for me to set a ceiling price for the consumer. I had to do all that. In addition to that, it was my job to contact the retail stores by going into their stores myself and talking to them, telling them what's right and what's wrong. And also to send them notifications on bulletins, on letters and things of that sort, to keep them up to date. In my portfolio on that table there I have all kinds of things that I had to do. I'd be very happy to retrieve it if you want me to I'll, I can tell you more

TO: That's okay. What did Ed Muskie do in the OPS?

AC: Ed Muskie kept an eye on the entire operation and worked very closely with the eastern region in Boston. He wanted to make sure that all of our departments, all of the heads of the departments, were doing their job right. And to me, it was very difficult for me to get into his office to find out what he really does besides that. It was kind of a very tight situation. There was no reason for me to go into his office in first place, because I was doing my work and what I was supposed to be doing.

TO: How long was the OPS around?

AC: About two or three years, that's all.

HC: I think several trips that we made to Washington, whether it was for the Grocer's or wherever we were going, because we went to quite a few conventions and things. And we saw Ed and his wife, and they always spoke to us, so they knew Arthur very well, and we did too. And we thought highly of him, and his wife too.

TO: Now what kind of conventions were these?

HC: We were with the Maine State Grocer's Association.

TO: Right, so these were grocery conventions in Washington?

HC: Yes, and we were with them, Arthur was with them for fifty years. And we've always worked as partners, so I took part in that, too. And also I took part in the fact that he was with the house and the senate. And I would always go down and be with him on certain days when he was having his meetings and things like that.

TO: I asked Arthur earlier, what do you think, what was Ed Muskie's relationship to special interests, small business people like the Maine Grocer's, and the Maine Grocer's Association?

HC: Would you like to answer that, Arthur?

TO: Well, I already asked, I asked him earlier.

HC: I would say that he had to be in contact with the smaller grocers because at that time there were a lot of them. Not as many as the, like for instance Shaw's and, Shaw's was almost like one of the smaller grocers at that point, and they seemed to work with us, too, at the Maine Grocer's Association at that time. It was, well we didn't think too much of the A&P and things like that. And I think that Muskie, Senator Muskie felt that he had to be with the smaller grocers. And I think his background was with smaller people, too.

TO: And so you think he was very fair and very ...

HC: Oh yes, we did feel that he was very fair.

TO: Very helpful?

HC: Yes. Yup. Didn't you feel that way, Arthur?

AC: Yeah.

HC: Yeah, we thought of him highly, yeah. And we were not of his, we were not Democrats. So the thing was that Mr. Charles has been sort of a middle road person, so he thought his own ideas up and things like that and he went along with the people, the same as Senator Muskie did. And that's the way we felt that he was, too.

TO: Excellent, excellent, that's great. Is there anything you want to add? Because that's all my questions.

AC: Oh, no, there's nothing more I can add except to say that he was a good friend of mine. Even though I had very little to do with his operation, for the amount of the time that I spent in

the business, I consider him a great friend.

TO: Did you ever see him socially?

AC: Oh yes, I have.

TO: What kind of situations?

AC: Just like anybody else, you know.

HC: We were always invited to all of the, at that time we had assemblies in the house and in the senate. And like every Wednesday we all met there, and we knew him that way. And we always were very friendly with he and his wife, but not a close friendly. In other words, we thought of him as a person that was well thought of, no matter where he was. And we felt quite good about the fact that we knew him as closely as we did, because he went in and did so many good things when he was in Washington. And we followed him, too. And we just felt that, say for instance, if he was there at this point, you would never see what you saw going on now. He wasn't that kind of a person.

TO: You were telling, when were the, these assemblies, were they just informal get togethers, cocktail parties?

HC: They were very, very nice. Very dressy and very nice.

TO: At the Blaine House?

HC: It was at the Augusta ...

AC: Augusta House.

HC: Augusta House, right ...

TO: Hotel.

HC: ... where it used to be in that circle, and then it was torn down. This was a very wonderful thing and everybody, you know, got dressed up and ...

TO: This is when Muskie was governor? Is that right?

HC: Yes, yeah.

TO: Okay, great. Well, thank you very much.

AC: You're welcome.

Additional Notes: After the interview, Ms. Charles called me to say there was [some]thing Arthur neglected to mention and wanted to be sure was included in his recollections:

For eighteen years, Arthur was a member of the Cumberland County Commission. In 1966 (+/-) he invited Senator Muskie to speak at the annual meeting of the National Association of Counties (NACO). Senator Muskie did speak and the Charles family attended. It was a very special occasion. *DN 09/23/98.*

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