

10-2-2001

## Delahanty, John oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie\\_oh](http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh)

---

### Recommended Citation

L'Hommedieu, Andrea, "Delahanty, John oral history interview" (2001). *Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection*. 115.  
[http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie\\_oh/115](http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh/115)

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library at SCARAB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of SCARAB. For more information, please contact [batesscarab@bates.edu](mailto:batesscarab@bates.edu).

## **Interview with John Delahanty by Andrea L'Hommedieu**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Delahanty, John

### **Interviewer**

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

### **Date**

October 2, 2001

### **Place**

Portland, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 318

### **Use Restrictions**

© Bates College. This transcript is provided for individual **Research Purposes Only**; for all other uses, including publication, reproduction and quotation beyond fair use, permission must be obtained in writing from: The Edmund S. Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library, Bates College, 70 Campus Avenue, Lewiston, Maine 04240-6018.

### **Biographical Note**

John Delahanty was born to Jeanne (Clifford) and Thomas E. Delahanty on March 26, 1948 in Lewiston, Maine. His father was a political activist, Congressional candidate, Muskie supporter, and Maine superior court judge. John was educated in the Lewiston public schools, and graduated from Bowdoin College in 1970. That same year he worked on Muskie's Senate campaign. After college, he served in Vietnam as a Captain in the Army. He returned to Lewiston to substitute teach, and work for Senator Muskie as a Maine Affairs staff person. He then attended Boston College School of Law, and went to work for Pierce Atwood in Portland. He is a partner in the firm, specializing in environmental law.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: Lewiston, Maine 1950 to 1970; Maine Democratic Party 1950s to 1970s; Bowdoin College; Vietnam War; driving Senator Muskie in the 1970 Senate campaign; observations of Muskie's 1972 presidential campaign; Muskie's character; Muskie's late career; and Gayle Cory.

### **Indexed Names**

Allen, Tom  
Asbell, Bernard  
Baldacci, Joe  
Benoit, Larry  
Billings, Leon  
Blais, Denis  
Brann, Louis  
Brennan, Joseph E.  
Clifford, John, II  
Coffin, Frank Morey  
Coffin, Ruth Ulrich  
Collins, Susan, 1952-  
Cooney, Leighton  
Cory, Gayle  
Cox, Peter  
Cutler, Eliot  
Delahanty, Jeanne (Clifford)  
Delahanty, John  
Delahanty, Tom  
Donovan, John C.  
Dorsky, Benjamin J. (Benjamin James), 1905-  
Fullam, Paul  
Goodwin, Dick  
Haskell, Robert  
Hathaway, Bill  
Hazelton, Paul  
Humphrey, Hubert H. (Hubert Horatio), 1911-1978  
Jalbert, Louis  
Jensen, Anita  
Karahalios, Tony  
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963  
King, Angus  
Kirk, Geneva  
Kyros, Peter N., Jr.  
Kyros, Peter N., Sr.  
Lander, Charlie  
Lessard, Al  
Loeb, William  
Longley, James, Sr.  
MacDonald, Clyde, Jr.  
Malenfant, Ernest  
Martin, John  
McMahon, Dick  
Micoleau, Charlie  
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-

Murray, Margaret "Peggy"  
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996  
Muskie, Jane Gray  
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994  
Pomeroy, Arlene  
Pomeroy, Charlie  
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962  
Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945  
Rose, Bob  
Sheive, Doreen  
Smith, Margaret Chase, 1897-1995  
Snowe, Olympia J. (Olympia Jean), 1947-  
Tara, Kaileigh  
Toll, Maynard  
Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972

## **Transcript**

**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview with John Delahanty on October the 2nd, the year 2001, at the law office of Pierce & Atwood [in Portland, Maine] in the Fred Scribner room on the tenth floor, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. If you could start just by giving me your full name and spelling it?

**John Delahanty:** Andrea, my full name is John David Delahanty, D-E-L-A-H-A-N-T-Y.

**AL:** And where and when were you born?

**JD:** I was born in Lewiston, Maine at then Central Maine General Hospital on March 26th, 1948.

**AL:** And you also grew up in Lewiston?

**JD:** I grew up in Lewiston, and I basically lived there except for my college years until I headed off to the service in 1970.

**AL:** And what was Lewiston like growing up in the fifties and sixties?

**JD:** I remember first we lived on College Street, at 158 College Street, which was a two-family home. Now I remember it as being relatively close to Luigi's Pizza, which is still there, but I didn't frequent Luigi's at that time. But it was, as I said, a two family apartment, we lived on the top floor. The family below us was the name of Lebls, and when I went into their apartment I had to speak French because that was the language of their house. And it was probably symbolic of Lewiston that you had a very strong Franco-American influence mixed with the Irish contingent that was very strong in Lewiston at one particular time. But it was much smaller than the Franco American influence over the years.

And, you know, I don't remember that much about living on College Street since we moved when I was just about four. We moved and went up to Montello Heights where my father had purchased some land and built his house. But that area was quite a bit different from College Street, it was much more open, it had some fields and woods which College Street certainly didn't. And we basically lived on the outskirts of town at that time, and we grew up in a very strong neighborhood. There were a number of kids around and they were Greek, they were French, they were Irish, they were of English ancestry. It was a fun neighborhood to grow up in. We didn't have a lot of contact with the inner city children or Franco kids. I went to Pettengill School, which still exists, on College Street. And I went there from what was then sub-primary, the kindergarten, through the third grade.

And in the fourth grade we were transferred to Frye School because they were doing an addition on to Pettengill. And Frye School is I suppose what you'd call an "inner city school" and it was located near St. Peter's Church. It was a school that was much more heavily Franco than Pettengill. It was an old school that I think now is housing for the elderly I believe, I think they've rehabbed it for that. And we used to have to walk from Frye to then Jordan Junior High School for our lunch. And it was, I'm trying to think, it may have been half a mile for a walk, but that's where we went for lunch. And I remember that it was the first place where I really saw a schoolyard fight. There were a couple of young toughs that I eventually grew to know more about, and they had already established their reputations as some very tough kids. But I only stayed at Frye School for one year and then we transferred back for fifth and sixth grade at Pettengill and, you know, was back in the more if you call the suburbs of Lewiston, you know. It was a very different school than Frye. We, I spent my junior high years, my seventh and eighth grade, back at Jordan and, there was only one junior high in Lewiston at that time, and I clearly remember some of my teachers.

And in the, either the seventh or eighth grade, it was then the fall of 1960, the elections of 1960 when Frank Coffin was running for governor and he was just a superlative candidate, a wonderful person, friend of the family, and he had a son who was a week younger than myself and so I have known that family basically all my life, and we had played and I was very interested and involved at the school in a campaign. I didn't get involved in the campaign, there weren't many young people running around in campaigns, but that's my first recollection of a very strong interest in a political campaign. Unfortunately Frank lost that year, even though he pulled, if I recall correctly, more votes losing than any other candidate for governor had ever pulled winning. But that was also the year Jack Kennedy beat Richard Nixon. And Maine had, again if I recall correctly, a significant turnout of voters. And I recall comments being mentioned around the house with some of the folks that my father had in, that the anti-Catholic vote was very strong in Maine, you could see in various counties that that came out. And even though Coffin was not a Catholic, Maine still had the big box at the top and Nixon prevailed and therefore the other Republican candidates prevailed. And so John Reed, the Republican candidate, beat Frank Coffin. So that was, you know, some interesting ways to take a look at because of the implications for it from the national level.

But Lewiston, you know, growing up, was a mill town. My father was fortunate in having been able to work his way into college. His father had passed away when he was only four years old, so he had basically worked a lot growing up. His mother was a very strong woman who had five

children, but kept them together when she lost her husband in 1919. And my father went to college on a football scholarship down at George Washington but only lasted one year because they would only give him certain subjects: arithmetic, spelling. He said he wanted more, his mother prevailed upon him to stay the full year, he left the next year, and at that point you could go to law school and he went to law school without a college education and attended then the Catholic University Law School. Went into the FBI, and eventually came back to Lewiston to practice law.

**AL:** Wow.

**JD:** And at a point in there, you know, he married my mother who also grew up in Lewiston whose family you could say probably came from the other side of the tracks. Her father was a lawyer, her grandfather was a contractor who actually built part of what now is Lewiston City Hall. And, you know, the Cliffords, my mother's a Clifford, and the Cliffords had an interest in politics, my grandfather did. He was appointed U.S. Attorney by Roosevelt and Federal District Judge by Truman.

**AL:** And what was his name?

**JD:** John Clifford. And he, you know, I don't think he lit the political spark in my father, I think my father had it after graduating from law school, watching what was going on, how could he make an impact. And coming back to Lewiston, how could he assist his legal practice. So he became involved in local Lewiston politics as corporation counsel, being involved locally, and running for the legislature in 1948. And I recall him mentioning to me, I forget whether it was when he was in there in 1948 or 1950, in the House of Representatives there were only fourteen Democrats out of a hundred-and-fifty -one representatives, and one of those representatives was Ed Muskie. And the senator at that point was the minority leader, and my father was the assistant minority leader. But there's not many people to lead when you're only fourteen.

And, you know, so Lewiston was very politically active from what I remember, strongly Democratic. There was a large union vote out of the textile mills. I remember the name of Denny Blais as a key organizer in the unions, and you know, there were some very colorful local politicians, I just remember some of the -

**AL:** Louis Jalbert?

**JD:** Louis Jalbert was one of them, I mean there was Ernest Malenfant, Romeo Couture, I mean the list I'm sure could go on, I haven't thought of those names for a long time.

But, you know, Lewiston was a very ethnic city, my father would explain to me. It had its Irish neighborhood, the Polish, the small Greek contingent, but a large Franco contingent and eventually the Franco contingent really became a dominant population, ethnic group in Lewiston. And, you know, going through school, you know, naturally I had a number of friends; they were French, few Irish because there weren't that many at the time. But it was all, all my friends came from close-knit families, which I think at that time symbolized the city of close families and close neighborhoods that I don't think you find today.

The, I remember being involved in some service clubs in high school and, you know, we'd be delivering Christmas packages to some of the less fortunate people in Lewiston in some of the, you know, five and six story apartment homes that were around and. They took great pride in their apartments, they were always clean, the yards were clean, and it was I think a city that had a lot of pride in itself. There were a lot of hard workers, and not a great deal of opportunity for people around, given the economy. And even today there are I think lasting wounds to some of the decisions that were made on a political level with regard to the placement of the transportation system. You know, Lewiston always kind of gets forgotten, and, you know, it's unfortunate.

But Lewiston was a strong town and I, when growing up in the sixties there used to be a lot of community activity in going to some of the sports events that, you know, I just don't sense is there now. I mean, we had very good football teams in my three years in high school, because the junior high was seventh to the ninth grade. We were state champs for three years in a row and we used to get thousands of people every game at home, and huge rivalries with Edward Little in Auburn. I remember my senior year there were probably five or six thousand people at the game, but I just don't sense that Lewiston has that cohesiveness that it used to have.

And, you know, we had, I had a real great experience growing up in Lewiston. A lot of good friends that still live in Lewiston or live around Lewiston that I maintain some contact with. But, you know, I know, you know, it was a city that worked hard. But I, you know, as I've mentioned, the Francos, there were some, some students looking back on the experience that I think we're afraid to show their heritage, too. And they may have been somewhat discriminated against in the schools for speaking French, I really don't know, but I do know that some of them spoke French at home but then would have English at school. And, you know, it was a rugged town, but a good place to grow up and as I said, in retrospect always politically active.

I left Lewiston to go twenty-six miles away to college down at Bowdoin so I didn't go very far. And would still be able to get back home fairly easily. But it was, you know, it was vastly different just down in Brunswick at small little Bowdoin College than growing up in Lewiston. And, but the political flavor of the city, you know, it was always something, you know, I recall as almost a sport for some people. And, Andrea, you mentioned about Louis Jalbert, I mean he's a, I'm not sure when he first ran for political office but he was always in political office that I can remember. And, you know, I mentioned Frank Coffin, I think Lewiston, and indeed the state, benefited from Frank Coffin's abilities, his leadership. And he never forgot that he grew up in Lewiston either, and the city produced some excellent people. And I know that Frank was very involved in the resurgence of the Democratic Party.

**AL:** As was your father, I understand.

**JD:** I understand. I was a little young to, I certainly wasn't involved. But I do recall my father telling me that in 1954 the Democrats wanted to field a plan that Frank Coffin had put together. It was to field candidates for all the major offices: Governor, U.S. Senate, and then Maine had three congressional seats. And they wanted to field candidates for all five races. And basically it was, "Who's going to run for which position?" And I can't recall exactly whether it was drawing

straws out of a hat or, you know, “Who wants to run for governor?” And you know, they kind of looked around and the eyes gazed on Ed Muskie, “Okay, you're going to run.” “Well, I guess so.” And my father ran for the then second district congressional seat. And I forget the candidates for the first and third districts, but Paul Fullam was the Democratic candidate against Margaret Chase Smith.

**AL:** Yes.

**JD:** And, you know, it was a situation where, you know, let's put it out there, let's see what we can do. I remember my father mentioning to me that the Democrats believed they could take the gubernatorial seat because the Republicans were in some, or whatever, a little disarray, they felt they had lost touch. And so most of the effort, especially financially, was focused on the gubernatorial race. And again, if I recall my father, Tom, mentioning to me, that I think they had a total budget for five races of between eighteen and twenty thousand dollars. And most of the money, at least half, if not two-thirds of it, was dedicated to the gubernatorial race. And my father for his congressional race had got fifteen hundred of the money that the party had. And at that time I guess it was much more party funded than individual fund raising. And so he had fifteen hundred, the other congressional candidates had fifteen-hundred. Paul Fullam running a statewide campaign had more, and the Muskie campaign had, you know, a larger chunk because that's where they thought they could prevail. And prevail they did. You know, it's unfortunate that a person like Dick McMahan is not alive. Andrea, I don't know if you've ever heard of Dick McMahan?

**AL:** Oh, absolutely, many, many times. But tell me what you remember.

**JD:** Dick, I'm not sure what his job was. I have no idea, I can't remember his employment, but I remember the name Dick McMahan, I met him a number of times. I think his wife's name may have been Peggy. He was from the Waterville and Winslow area, very close friends with the Muskie family. But my father had mentioned he just had this intuitive feeling for politics.

**AL:** For politics, okay.

**JD:** Yeah, and what was going to happen. And my father, when I became more interested in politics I remember my father telling me that Dick, on the basis of a few returns from certain precincts in Maine, well before the advent of any computers, had a very good sense of who was going to win. But he had this innate ability to kind of push the right buttons and do the right things. I'm not sure if he was the person or not that prevailed in the thinking that they should run the first television ads in 1954, and you know, it's been such a time ago I can't remember clearly. I'm fifty-three, I have trouble remembering anything now.

**AL:** Yeah, I'm not sure.

**JD:** I think, I remember they ran the ads. And I can't remember whether the senator mentioned this to me when I was working for him, that they wanted to show the people of the state of Maine, (I do remember this being said but I can't remember if it was Dick McMahan or the senator), that the Democrats didn't wear horns. And, you know, they had to get out and they

knew this would catch the Republicans by surprise, and it did. And so they put that out. And with Dick McMahon driving around, telling his story of when he and the senator were driving, they were up in Machias and they were staying in a motel that was next to a drive-in and they didn't have, they really didn't have the money to go into the drive-in so they watched it from the motel. It was a very low budget campaign. But it was a time when some very good people were involved in Maine's Democratic Party to give it its birth.

The senator was the only one who won out of the five races in '54. I recall, since I was six years old at the time but really being told afterwards some of my actions, but my mother being called by my teacher saying, or asking her if she knew that I was handing out my father's opponent's literature because I didn't want to go to Washington if he won. And my mother telling me that, when the returns began to come in, she was concerned that my father was going to win because they had just built a home and had this mortgage, didn't know what they'd have to do if he won, and in fact he went ahead when Lewiston came in but when the outlying districts came in he ended up losing by a very small margin, fifteen-hundred, two-thousand votes. It was pretty small. But it was the start of the resurgence of the Democratic Party in Maine. And, you know, the rise of Ed Muskie's political career which was, I think, a wonderful tribute to a person and a wonderful tribute to the state of Maine.

He appointed my father to the chair of the Public Utilities Commission after being elected, and at that time we certainly didn't have the energy crunch of today. But, again, I recall my father mentioning to me that a certain power company had a rate hearing coming up and was interested in what was going to be done at the hearing. And so the utility's attorney and president came in to see my father and said, "Well we have this hearing coming up and we'd like to know what questions you're going to ask us." And my father was a little offended by it and he said, "What do you mean?" And their response was, "Well this is how it's always been done in the past." My father's response was to the effect that, "This is an adversarial hearing, I don't care how they've done it in the past; it's not going to be done that way now. Get out of here." And so that was the last time that attorney and that president of the utility ever came into his office. At that point and for probably several years later, the railroads and the utilities and the paper companies in Maine were major players in everything, and so it was probably a substantial shock to their system to have a change of that nature.

But I remember going up the State House to visit my father in his office. And it was in the State House proper, up on the fourth floor. And they had a bell from an old steam engine there and I remember getting to ring the bell. We visited governor, then Governor Muskie's office, we had our picture taken with him and, you know, it was a pretty exciting time for a young kid. But, my father maintained his interest in politics in both local Lewiston politics and the state politics. He was still practicing law at the time because the PUC was only a part time position. And as commissioner of the PUC and chairman of the PUC he hired a young attorney who then went on to become a congressman by the name of Peter Kyros. And that was my first introduction to Peter Kyros. And they, I don't know, maybe around 1955, '56, and it may have been a little later than that, there were various politicians. You know, they'd have meetings at the house, talk about strategy, about Lewiston, you know. But I can't recall a lot about those. I do remember Eleanor Roosevelt coming to visit Lewiston and on very short notice they needed someplace to have a small gathering for her. We were shunted off to a neighbor's house, they had it at our house, and

we were brought over from the neighbor's house. It was probably '55 or so and, you know, we were able to get our pictures taken with Eleanor Roosevelt. We're there with our dungarees and, you know, kind of worn out knees in the dungarees. And, you know, she just seemed to be such a warm, friendly woman. One of the advantages of having parents involved in the political process, you get to meet some of these historical figures.

So it's, you know, it was an active household politically with my, I remember my father being on the phone a lot, you know. A couple of names, there was a name of a woman he said was probably one of the only Democrats in Hancock County who lived in Blue Hill. Her name was Peggy Murray, she was a very big supporter of Muskie and, you know, she'd call my father in all hours of the day to talk politics. And, you know, even after he was appointed to the bench by then Governor Muskie.

In 1958, just before the governor resigned as, Senator-Elect Muskie went to resign as governor, which, he resigned as governor to go down and be sworn into the Senate and to get a few days, as I was told, to get a few days extra seniority on the other senators. And one of his last appointments was to appoint my father to the Superior Court bench. And again, this is based on hearsay, but there had to be some deals being made because my father was a Democrat, the governor at that time had an executive council that had to approve many appointments including judicial appointments. And I believe part of the deal was that Governor Muskie would resign early to give then senate president, whom I believe was Bob Haskell, the former president of Bangor Hydro, the opportunity to become governor for three weeks or something. And so it was a wonderful gesture for the governor to appoint my father to the bench. And just to go back a couple of years to 1956, after my father lost in '54, I like to think he softened the folks up. Frank Coffin then ran in 1956 for the congressional seat and won. And so, you know, the Democrats were slowly chipping away at the Republican power base- Lewiston remaining a very strong influence in the victories of any Democrats. And, you know, I could almost say even up to today, very important in the political survivability of Democrats because Angus King did well in Lewiston when he beat Joe Brennan and Susan Collins. And Angus won, and Jim Longley back in 1974, coming from Lewiston and Auburn, I believe he beat George Mitchell in the Lewiston, Androscoggin county area, and George ended up losing to Jim Longley who served one term as governor. But it kind of gives a little study of how important the Lewiston-Auburn, Androscoggin County area has been and really continues to be in the election of Democrats to state office in Maine.

**AL:** Even if you look at this year's, well, what's shaping up for next year's race, Kaileigh Tara is listed as a big possibility and she'd been the mayor of Lewiston, although she's not well known in a lot of other parts of the state. Just that fact makes her one of the stronger candidates.

**JD:** That's right, and it's interesting that Lewiston occupies this position that I still see it because part of my legal practice is I advocate for various clients up at the legislature. And I see today, that Lewiston is kind of a step-child in many ways in terms of committee assignments. You know, the people that serve up there and what gets taken care of. And, but it's an important cog in the elections. And, you know, I think Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin and Dick McMahan and others who were involved certainly recognized that. It was obviously telling to have John Kennedy come at the end of his campaign in 1960 to Kennedy Park. You know, one of his last

campaign stops if not the last campaign stop. Where then Senator Muskie was obviously trying to keep the crowd there by any way he could.

And did. So it was a time of the Democrats beginning to grow and with some significant leadership by being able to strategically combine alliances in key areas of the state. And I think it was amazing that such people as Frank Coffin and Ed Muskie came together at the same time, you know, two people I greatly admire. I think, you know, I know my father was involved and maybe I'm too close to him to see how he did. I think it was great that he was able to help participate in the process with folks such as those two. But, you know, just to get back to Dick McMahan once again, again, he was very jovial and kept everybody from getting too much of an ego in how they would react. And making sure everybody understood that, you know, just because they were elected they still had to be responsive to the people. And it was, but the best thing about Dick I think was his strategic political sense and that somehow was just an innate quality of his personality.

**AL:** Now, going back to the early- to mid-fifties when Senator Muskie and Dick McMahan and your dad and Frank Coffin were getting together, and a lot of times wouldn't they stay at your house, sometimes, during -?

**JD:** They'd stay at the, we had an extra bedroom in the basement, and I'm not -

**AL:** Did it have a particular name, this room?

**JD:** Oh, God.

**AL:** The purple -

**JD:** Geez, what was it?

**AL:** Purple passion pit?

**JD:** Purple passion pit I think. I'm a little young on that one, I guess. But no, it was in the basement. It, you know, we had our kind of a family room, our playroom in the basement and it was a, I still remember a long set of stairs and sometimes you never knew who was going to be coming out from the basement. I mean, we had, you know, we had politicians, we had, you know, drivers and staff people sometimes in the bed and sometimes others on the couches down there so, you know, it was, I guess, my mother's name was Jeanne, kind of "Jeanne's Way Station" or something. They knew they could come in, it was an easy place to meet and be, you know, private, it was easy to park, it was, you know. And if they wanted to meet and not have lots of people around they could be there. And so it was kind of a hub of an activity. Although when that stuff was taking place I was usually outside playing around.

**AL:** And I should clarify, I think the name they got that from was the color of the walls or something, nothing else intended. But do you recall, maybe when you were older, your father telling you stories about some of the meetings that took place, maybe tense meetings or really important things that went on?

**JD:** In one in particular meeting, you may have already heard about this one. When my father was appointed as a judge he always felt that, you know, there are three branches of government and one was the judiciary. And while he remained, he retained an intense interest in politics he really did not stay active in politics although he maintained his contacts very closely with a lot of different people. But he just didn't think he should be, you know, publicly out campaigning for anyone or involved in that nature, it was just the way my father worked, how he thought. You know, judges in Maine were appointed but, you know, they should not be politicized. And this was in, I believe it was 1960, and this was . . . . There was a meeting that was to take place, they needed a place to meet, so they called my mother to see if they could come and they came and, you know, the senator was there and Frank Coffin and Ben Dorsky who was the president of the Maine AFL-CIO at that time, and Dick McMahan. My father was there. A neighbor of ours by the name of Tony Karahalios was there. You're smiling, you've probably heard this story.

**AL:** I, no, I've just interviewed Tony.

**JD:** Oh, Tony. And, you know, I forget the others there. Well, obviously the meeting had the particular topic of, must have been a fairly hot topic and discussion because Ben Dorsky keeled over and fainted. But people thought, "God, the guy is dead," that he had died, and they were worried that it would get out in the press that, you know, these Democrats were meeting with the president of the AFL-CIO in a judge's house. And Tony said, "Look, let's pick him up. We'll bring him over to my house and we'll, you know, we'll put him out on the lawn," and I, you know. That is, that's one of the meetings I remember. Fortunately he didn't die, he, you know, maybe he had indigestion or something and fainted, was revived. But, you know, it really was a meeting to remember. I don't recall a lot of the people who were there, I just, you know, people coming in and my mind was elsewhere. You know, as a, you know, in the late fifties I was about twelve years old and things going on, but different folks coming, you know. But I very clearly remember about that meeting as one of the most infamous ones.

I remember one long time guest was by the name of Peter Cox. Peter was Frank Coffin's campaign manager/speech writer for the 1960 campaign. He spent many a night in our basement, and he also taught me how to center a football for a punt. We used to practice it in the basement. But that was my first introduction to Peter Cox. But, you know, I know that the cast of characters that came around generally were those that we talked about when they would have some meetings. I do recall my mother saying, you know, she wishes she had had a tape recorder at some of those meetings because she couldn't tell what they were saying but she could tell that they were fairly animated and, you know, the discussions were, it wasn't a lot of arguing but certainly points being made in the discussions.

**AL:** Let me stop real quick and flip the tape.

*End of Side A*  
*Side B*

**AL:** We are now on Side B of the interview with Mr. John Delahanty. And so, your mother was probably upstairs and hearing what she heard from the basement. My question is, was she

just really busy feeding everybody, you know, and keeping the house going, or was she not really interested in going into the political area?

**JD:** Oh no, she was very interested, she was very supportive of my father's interest. You know, her father was involved in politics, her grandfather on her mother's side was a U.S. congressman from Michigan, and she, you know, she had a natural interest in it. But there weren't many women involved in politics at that time. She I'm sure made sure there were plenty of, you know, food and coffee and things for them to, for the male folks to have to eat and drink. I don't, as much as she may have wanted to, I don't think she probably participated in any of them. But, you know, she was always willing to put people up, to be supportive. You know, the event with Eleanor Roosevelt I understand happened, I want to say, almost with something like a twenty-four hour notice. She would just put it together and she loved it. She enjoyed it, she was, you know, Jane Muskie was younger, she enjoyed Jane. Ruth Coffin, Mrs. Coffin, you know, a wonderful person, you know, they knew each other and friendly, and their husbands, so, you know. Oh no, she definitely had an interest. And in today's world she'd probably be right in on the meetings.

**AL:** So you went to Bowdoin.

**JD:** I went to Bowdoin and interestingly one of my professors down there was John Donovan who, I guess we keep coming back to folks who were involved in Maine Democratic politics and, you know, he was one of them. I forget the positions he occupied, but besides remembering his wonderful bald head, he was just a wonderful professor who had a great deal of insight into the political process. And I think he was able to expand my, you know, certainly expanded my knowledge of government, you know, and I really thought he, you know, his classes as a professor were very good. He had a lot of good insights into Maine politics, too, which kind of validated some of the things I had been told growing up. About Lewiston, the different political areas in Maine, some of the folks who, about, you know, we've talked. And I, and down at Bowdoin at the time it was beginning to become a time with the Vietnam War and the anti-war demonstrations. I was at Bowdoin from 1966, graduating in 1970, and as fate would have it I joined ROTC figuring that if I ever was drafted, you know, I'd rather go in as an officer rather than an enlisted man. And while I benefited from a student deferment, once I graduated in 1970 the student deferments were gone and that year my draft number came up and if I hadn't been in ROTC I would have been drafted.

So I, you know, politically, even though the senator was involved in 1968 and I had a chance to take off and do some work on the presidential campaign, my father thought it best that I stay at Bowdoin and get an education and, you know, I can't fault him for that. It certainly was a thrill to watch that campaign unfold, you know, a person you had known about for so many years and, you know, as a young kid had met and certainly admired. But the bid of Humphrey-Muskie didn't quite prevail, and so he was up for reelection to the U.S. Senate in 1970 and it just so happened I graduated in 1970 and, I can't remember exactly how I hooked up with it, maybe I, you know, I was looking for something to do before I went in the service in November and I can't remember who I contacted. It may have been my father very well could have called someone in the campaign.

In any event, John Martin, who was a young Democratic state legislator, who had not yet become speaker, was involved I believe in helping to manage the campaign and hired me on, you know, kind of just as a go-for, no policy thing, let's work on the campaign. But I did a lot of driving for the senator, and I think John wanted me for that because of the long relationship my father had with the senator. I think he felt comfortable having someone, you know, he at least knew the family of, someone he had met a few times and probably would not go out and divulge secrets of the campaign to others. So it was, it was a fun, interesting way to become involved in the campaign, to meet some of the staff from Washington when they came up. I got to see areas of the state I had never seen before, you know.

Got to know a very close dear friend of the senator's, Charlie Lander that you, Andrea, you've probably heard his name frequently. And it's, you know, Charlie was New England Telephone kind of person assigned to the campaign. But I think the telephone company paid him. But he was a great friend of the senator's, he was a person, you know, and I think I kind of learned how to react to the senator some with Charlie because, you know, the senator could become a little testy at times. And Charlie would take it, say something back, not get riled, let's just go on, go do what we need to be done. But, you know, I was, put a few miles on Charlie's car in driving back and forth around the state and, you know, basically would try to keep the Governor, the Senator, on schedule for various campaign stops. And pretty typical campaign going around.

Except right near the end when Richard Nixon was going to make an address to the nation and the senator was chosen by his colleagues in the U.S. Senate, or I can't remember, maybe the National Democratic Party, to give the Democrats response. And it was the last weekend of the campaign in 1970 and I remember we were at one of the motels in Waterville, I forget what the name of it is now, and there were national speech writers up. Richard Goodwin was involved, you know, the local campaign schedule had taken a back seat, although he was still doing some events. But he was clearly concentrating on preparing to give this response to President Nixon's campaign speech on behalf of the Republicans. And we had a campaign stop in Portland and I, I can't remember whether it was a Saturday or a Sunday. But we hopped in the car, we were very late, there was a gentleman doing a book on the Senator and I can picture his face, I just -

**AL:** Oh, [Bernard] Asbell. The Senate Nobody Knows? Is that the book?

**JD:** It may have been. The name doesn't ring a bell, but I . . . . In any event I recall that I had to drive from Waterville to Portland to get him to this event where he was speaking, and the author was in the back seat and the senator was riding the passenger seat and I was, I still remember the car, it was a Chrysler New Yorker, and we were way behind schedule. And I made it from Waterville to Portland in much less time than I should have. I think I was probably traveling about ninety miles an hour, just to get there. But I remember, very distinctly, as we drove through Deering Oaks, the Senator hadn't even looked at the speech. And I had tried to, because he had been talking with the book, this gentleman talking about the upcoming speech, and he said, you know, "What event am I going to?" And we were five minutes away, and I mentioned it to him and I recall, it was a meeting at a New England Historical Society. And whether the Senator meant this or not I don't know, and he probably did, he said, you know, "Who the hell scheduled me in to speak to the New England Hysterical Society on the last GD weekend of the campaign?" I don't think he was very pleased. But we arrived at the then

Eastland Hotel that was owned by the Dunfey's at the time, and had a room. I dropped him off at the front door, he had a speech he hadn't looked at. Went in, I parked the car, got the bags up to the room, got down to the room where he was speaking, and I was stunned because he was already through. And it was most unlike the Senator to be done a speech in twenty minutes. And he was in and out, all he wanted to do was to get upstairs to continue to prepare for his speech. But it was, you know, it was a flash of anger going through Deering Oaks as to who the hell had scheduled him to this group on this last weekend of the campaign.

And, you know, I mention the last week of the campaign because in 1974, again when I was working for him after returning from the service, we were scheduled to meet then gubernatorial candidate George Mitchell down in Kittery for a final swing through the, for the final weekend of the campaign. And I recall at breakfast with the senator and myself eating, his explaining to me how he felt that last weekend of a campaign was always extremely important in order to make that final impression, and you needed to have the flexibility to move where you needed to move. And, you know, I thought back to that weekend in 1970 where, you know, he was not real pleased to be speaking to this group of people, of most people who probably couldn't even vote for him, or in any event probably had no relevance to what he was interested in doing at that particular time. So it was, you know, the rest of that weekend until he gave the speech, we set up at someone's house in Cape Elizabeth, and I'm sure someone else has talked about that. I forget whose home it was at.

**AL:** Benoit?

**JD:** It could have been, yeah, at that home. I forget. But the election came and basically my involvement with the senator ended except for contact with some of his staff when I was in the service because my first duty station was at Fort Mead in Maryland, which was right outside Washington, D.C. So as a result of the campaign in 1970 I got to know some of the staff, I'd see them in Washington while I was there, including, you know, I remember Anita Jensen, Bob Rose, Maynard Toll, Charlie Micoleau, Doreen Sheive, Leon Billings, to some extent Eliot Cutler, to some extent -

**AL:** What about Peter Kyros, Jr.? Wasn't he about your age?

**JD:** Peter Kyros, Jr. is my age. No, Peter was, probably Peter was more involved in the intellectual side of politics than I was at the time. I was I guess more going out and organizing and doing some things. But you know, Peter, I don't, both Peter and I went Boy's State, and because of my father's relationship with Peter senior, you know, I knew Peter junior and I knew he was very involved. But I didn't have much contact with him. And in fact I just kind of renewed my contact with Peter who's now living back up here in Maine. So he, and he was, you know, given his father's position he was more involved in the Washington politics than certainly I was. No, I've known Peter for a long time. It's been nice to get to know him after quite a long, get to see him again after quite a long hiatus.

So I, you know, while I was in the service the senator's star was clearly rising in the presidential rings, and when I left to go to Vietnam it was very high in the sky. And all I could do while I was overseas is read about how things were falling apart over here.

Before I go on I should mention that shortly before I shipped out, there was a fundraiser. And it was the, it was a major fundraiser at the Samoset Inn down in Kennebunkport. And I took a few days off from the military because they needed people to come up and help chauffeur people between the airport and just help out organizing the entire event. So it was interesting to help participate in that event, and I can't remember the guest list. It's probably in the archives or someplace, but I recall it was quite an event. The folks that came in, the money being raised, it was certainly the first big time fundraiser in which I had been, ever been involved. And, you know, clearly it was quite a success. But as I mentioned, when I left to go to Vietnam his star was very high in the sky and unfortunately it fell, and it fell very hard. And clearly it was a significant disappointment to a lot of people and certainly not the least to the senator. And did he cry in New Hampshire? You know, frankly I don't care if he did or not. Personally, he says it was snow, you know, the Senator said it was snow on his face. I think he cried, because he loved his wife so much that to have her maligned by William Loeb I'm sure just touched him deeply. And unfortunately in that day and age it was seized upon, it was blasted about, it was, you know, publicized as a true weakness or whatever it might be. You know, and I, the incident that, did that cause his downfall? You know, I have no reason to say yes or no but a lot of people say it did. But it was a true tragedy if indeed that was, because of his significant intellect that he had. So I, you know, I finished up in Vietnam and I came back and I had, you know, you don't really have much of an opportunity to make plans coming back from Vietnam and having separated shortly thereafter and kind of scouted around for jobs. I substitute taught at Lewiston High, they still remembered me there, I was a decent student. Enjoyed, you know, government, and Geneva Kirk is a person you may have run into in Lewiston.

**AL:** Yes.

**JD:** She helped get me a job as a substitute teacher for a government teacher that was a legislator so he had to take a, you know, basically time off, and his name Leighton Cooney, and so I taught all seniors and they were quite an interesting group. Typical Lewiston, very few had aspirations of going on to college. It was a difficult group because as I mentioned they were all seniors and this was their last winter and spring of their senior year and figuring, you know, why do I need this course? But I think we accomplished something, but what I remember of that time, it was the beginning of the Watergate hearings and so we were able to wrap everything in, you know, clearly, as Watergate showed, the senator was a victim of dirty tricks, you know. It would be interesting to go back and teach about that time now knowing the full historical impact of that time.

But during the spring I was in touch with Charlie Micoletau and they needed some more assistance and I got hired as a staff person, partly to work in Washington and partly to achieve a greater local presence for the senator who at the time only had one office in Waterville. And today, congressional officers, senatorial offices, there are multiple ones in the state. Tom Allen, Baldacci, Snowe, Collins, all have multiple offices. Bill Hathaway had a couple, but the Senator only had one in Waterville. So part of my purpose was to do a lot of traveling around the state, to make local contact with folks, work on various Maine issues, and eventually help open up a couple of other regional offices for the Senator. Bangor and Portland, which eventually were staffed by Clyde McDonald in Bangor and Larry Benoit here in Portland. And it was a time

when, you know, I then had access to the Senator. Sometimes on some issues, but most of the close time came simply as we were traveling around the state of Maine.

**AL:** What was it like in the car with him?

**JD:** It was a little different than the campaign time, because not only, you know, we weren't involved in a campaign in '73 or '74. But I recall when I first started working for him, he had lost in the presidential primary race and his fortunes had disappeared. In 1970 he was a bundle of energy. He wanted to go out and he was, you know, clear in his direction, forceful in his deliveries, just wanted to go do it. And when I came back onto the staff, you could notice a change, a significant change. It was much more of a disinterest in the office and what was going on. He, yes, he had pushed through major environmental legislation, but even that didn't get him going. There were certain things that, you know, clearly he would be upbeat at times, but you sensed that, "God, I had a run for it, I lost it, you know; what else is there to do?" And there was a transformation that I saw, others probably saw too, as he worked on various measures, he began to focus on putting together the budget committee that he eventually chosen to chair. And when he was chosen, you know, I sense a significant increase in his interest in his senatorial duties. It really gave him another purpose, kind of renewed vigor into what he was going to do, what he was going to focus on and, you know, it was great to see. He certainly maintained a great interest in local politics, he loved to get together with local people when -

**AL:** In Maine?

**JD:** In Maine.

**AL:** Oh, really?

**JD:** He didn't, well, I mean these are people that, you know, like Dick McMahan. Several times we'd stop and pick up Dick and Dick would travel with us. And, you know, they'd talk about, you know, the old times, you know, when there were few people around, few Democrats. And again, Dick, his old self, would keep the senator on track, you know. He'd joke with him, kind of keep his ego in place, build his ego up if he felt that. And so, you know, as we traveled around it was an opportunity to see it. But, you know, he was one who as you've probably heard pushed staff hard, and he always had various comments to make about his schedule. I remember we, he would breakfast, we would take off in the car, he would look at his schedule, you know, a couple of the comments he'd say, one is, "What the hell do they think I am, a basketball? They can just, you know, dribble me around the state?" Another one was, "What do they think I am, an elastic band they can just stretch, stretch, and stretch until I break?" And, you know, they were, it was said with some meaning and force. I don't know whatever happened, whether he may have talked with Gayle Cory or, you know, others back in the office who might have been putting together the schedule. I was just the recipient of it at the beginning. And I'd have a little comment to, you know, try to gauge the mood as to whether I should say anything or, you know, some type of a smart remark back to him.

But it was, you know, during that period of time when you got to learn about his intellect. I mean I, I may have prepared a memo or someone else had prepared a memo, I'd give it to him,

he'd be doing this work in the car, he may talk about it at the meeting to which we were going or, all of a sudden, six months later he's using that information. His retention I found was phenomenal. His grasp of issues was significant and wide spread, and you know, for a person who grew up in a blue collar household in Rumford, Maine, whose father was a tailor, you know, he came a hell of a long way. He worked hard, but you know, he, I remember up here if there were opportunities to get close to Rumford or Peru to see his sisters, he'd always want to try to get back and have some time with them because family was very important to him. And, you know, it was I'm sure not an easy life in the family either because he was gone so much. But, you know, Jane was just a wonderful asset to him, a great supporter, always by his side. Probably not the easiest guy to live with but, you know, he had a wonderful family and they stood right by him.

But he, you know, it was a time when, you know, I think he began to kind of mellow out a little in terms of his political energy. Not that he lost interest in issues but, you know, I recall in 1970 he wanted to drink Manhattans. And then when I came in 1973 he had moved to Vodka, and I don't know whether that was symbolic or not. But then before I left in '75 to go to law school he had switched more to wine. So I don't know what that, and you know, he was chair of the Senate Budget Committee at the time, I don't know whether that is any indication of some type of a change in personality or not. But, you know, he relished certain I call them extracurricular activities, such as being on the Campobello Island Commission, he loved to talk about Roosevelt, the island, what went on up there, being involved with Bates College, stopping there. It was, it meant a lot to him and I think he, I'm sure in those venues he contributed a lot to those.

**AL:** Was the Muskie in Washington, D.C. different from the Muskie in Maine?

**JD:** Oh yeah. I think the Muskie in D.C. . . . . He definitely had a sharper edge, you know. I think he probably, I don't. You probably heard about the Muskie temper and, you know, I think he mentioned to me he used it all as a negotiating ploy. He said, I wasn't losing my temper, I was just negotiating. Well, you know, people on the staff would certainly think he was losing it at them because what the hell was he negotiating with us? He was telling us what to do. But I, you know, he liked to come back to Maine, he loved to play golf, he truly loved it, you know, he loved to get to see Charlie Lander. You know, he'd stop and see Dick McMahan. He enjoyed being back among Maine people, and I think this is especially so after he had had his run in '68 and, you know, '70 into '72. He knew he was among friends who, you know, weren't after a piece of his flesh. And I think it gave him a certain sense of comfort.

And, you know, I never went on many national speaking trips with him. I don't know whether he went on and on like he did sometimes in Maine with some local folks and, you know. It was frequent when, you know, it was myself or some other staff person was trying to pull him off the podium and say, you know, it's time to go, you know, go to some other place. But frequently he enjoyed spending time with Maine people. It's where he was from, where he was raised, and you know, he was, he really was a person who I believe enjoyed coming back. I think he sincerely enjoyed the national spotlight, enjoyed the editorial cartoons, the relationships he built with people in the national scene. Because clearly he was an equal with these people, an intellectual equal. But I think Maine was a place to come and relax. His place down in Kennebunk, Kennebunk beach, he loved going there. I said, "Why Kennebunk?" You know, he bussed

tables, he worked at *Narrangansett By the Sea* when, I think if I recall when he was a Bates College student. And, you know, he eventually was able to afford the place on the golf course, and then, I think it was the mid-seventies when he purchased the farm. And it was, I somewhat chuckle to myself. I think it had maybe twenty acres of land along with it and, telling me that, you know, this is a wonderful place, I'll be able to divide it up and leave something to my children. Well I think at that time he was thinking maybe leaving land, but then I kind of chuckled to myself as he actually subdivided the property so he could, you know, make sure he had a lovely place for himself, his family and Jane, and hopefully he left some money to Jane and his children out of that. But he very clearly loved being down there because it gave him a sense of relaxation.

And, you know, it was, you know, it's a great honor for me to have worked with him and, you know, to, and see him rise. Just a person that, you know, I had known of and known and worked for for so many years. When he became Secretary of State this clearly was another rejuvenation of his career because he was, you know. Had been a U.S. Senator since 1958 and, you know, and he was just really looking forward to this challenge and it was a great thing. And then he moved on to his private law practice. And right to the end, I, you know, would see him at some functions and it was always nice to say hello to him and always would say hello and, you know, it was a real unfortunate loss to see him pass away. But others have probably mentioned, you know, Charlie died a week before him, and Gayle Cory died a week after. Was it a week after? I think it was a week after. And it was like Charlie dying to be his advance man going to heaven, straighten things out. And I think Gayle died, did Gayle die and then the Senator?

**AL:** I think she preceded him by a small amount.

**JD:** Preceded him by a week or ten days, yeah, it was, the three of them all passed away in like three weeks. But it was a very short period of time but it was, you know, Charlie dying, being a very close friend, just a personal confidante. Charlie didn't get involved in issues, they'd talk golf or sports, just as personal friends and the Governor, or the Senator knew he could just relax with Charlie. And that was a big thing about, you know, when you're, I mean you're on the road and just trying to make sure he could relax and have some time. But Charlie is kind of the advance man, and Gayle up there to set up the schedule, arrange finances, put things together, and then, oh, the Senator arrives. So it was all set. It was, you know, it's, if they were going to die, they passed away as a package, and they were all very close for so many years it was kind of fitting to see it happen that way.

**AL:** A lot of people have characterized Gayle Cory as rather amazing, the power she seemed to have and the number of people she knew. What was your impression of her, and what was it that made her so amazing?

**JD:** I think that, Gayle I think had a, she must have had a photographic memory for contact's names. And I'm not sure how old she was when she first went down there, but I think she was quite young and, you know. Obviously intelligent to be able to stay with it for so many years and have some type of an iron skin to put up with the Senator and, you know, all his, you know, his personalities. Just being able to work with him to try to organize things. She, you know, she was obviously a unique person in being able to wear as many hats as she did and to balance as many

personal issues that she did. Helping Jane, helping the senator, helping the family, keeping this going, what's going, I mean, the Senator never could pay a bill- Gayle will take of this, Gayle will take care of that. And so she really was a key behind the scenes player on the personal level, as well as, you know, if you wanted to get in to see the governor, I mean. Gayle could make things happen. I wish I had that trait.

**AL:** I know that one person told the story of she arranged for someone to be able to meet the Pope, and that was, so there were no limits to her abilities.

**JD:** You know, as, she was, as I said, I'm not sure when she went down to Washington but she was there for a long time. She was close to the senator, clearly developed a lot of relationships with a number of different people, and she wasn't above using it. She'd call them and say, "Hey, can you get this?" And oh sure . . . . And she was a very joyful person and she would do anything for you, also. She was very loyal, and a very strong confidante, and I think she would expect that of you if, you know, she asked you to do something she wanted to make sure it would get done. But she was fun, she was upbeat, and died much too young.

**AL:** One other person I want to ask you about when you were at Bowdoin College, Paul Hazelton. Was he someone that you took classes from or knew or were associated -?

**JD:** No, I knew Paul, I forgot about, I never took a class from Paul. He was in education, given the fact that I substitute taught for six months I probably should have. But no, definitely, I remember Professor Hazelton, and Professor Donovan of course we talked about. But I never took any course with him and unfortunately, in retrospect, I mean I was a college kid, I was interested in sports, some academics and, you know, drinking some beer. You know, a few more academics and trying to develop a good record there, and never sat down with someone like Professor Hazelton. I didn't have a course with him. But he knew my father, he was involved in politics and, but I never took the opportunity really to sit down and chat with him.

**AL:** I was wondering if you had, if you knew him being at your house when you were a kid.

**JD:** I don't recall Paul being there. I recall what he looks like, or looked like at Bowdoin but I couldn't place him at my house.

**AL:** Is there anything that I haven't covered that you think would be important to add to this interview today? I know! I was going to ask you about Charlie Pomeroy.

**JD:** Oh, Charlie. I don't know if my brother said much. Charlie and my father first met in Washington, D.C. where they became roommates. And my father was in law school, Charlie was in law school. And I'm not sure exactly how they met, but my father had a job working for the WPA to help get through law school and then he came back and joined the, when they both ended up in Lewiston, they joined the law firm of Brann & Isaacson which still exists, which was the law firm of Louis Brann. Which until Muskie was elected was the previous, only previous Democratic governor. And in that firm there was Charlie Pomeroy, and my father, and Alton Lessard, a name you may have heard. And I believe that they only stayed there a couple of years, and my father and Al Lessard went out and started their own practice in Lewiston, and

Charlie came down to Portland. But I don't have any real strong memory, you know. I know they, my father and Charlie stayed close through the years, they both were appointed to the bench. My mother is still friendly with Arlene Pomeroy, you know, the Lessards I knew growing up naturally, and unfortunately both Al and (*unintelligible word*) Lessard have passed away. But, you know, that's, so I did know Charlie the judge, but not really involved in his activities politically. And so that's, but I do know they were all at Brann & Isaacson at one time.

**AL:** Thank you very much for your time.

**JD:** Oh, Andrea, it's a pleasure to finally meet you. We've been wanting to do it. I -

*End of Interview*