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Hildreth, Richard and Marie oral history interview

Don Nicoll

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Interview with Richard and Marie Hildreth by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Hildreth, Richard

Hildreth, Marie

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

April 10, 2001

Place

Bethesda, Maryland

ID Number

MOH 265

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Biographical Note

Richard Hildreth was born on March 10, 1928 in Washington, D.C. His father was a Democratic National Committee member from the District of Columbia and chairman of the Truman inauguration in 1949. Richard was active in the Young Democrats. He attended George Washington University Law School and practiced law in Washington D.C.

Marie Hildreth was born on July 17, 1930 in Providence, Rhode Island. She attended George Washington University where she met and married Richard Hildreth. She met Jane Muskie at the hairdresser's and they developed a lifelong friendship.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family background; Marie's coming to Washington; meeting Jane Muskie; meeting Ed Muskie; golfing; debating McGovern; New Hampshire incident; Campobello; Ed Muskie's mother; Secret Service; Muskie as an auctioneer; Jane during campaigns; China Lake; and general recollections of Jane and Ed Muskie.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Tuesday afternoon, the 10th day of April, the year 2001. We are in Bethesda, Maryland at the home of Dick and Marie Hildreth, interestingly enough for an interview about Edmund S. Muskie. They live at 7540 Sebago Road, in Bethesda, Maryland. Dick, would you begin for us by giving us your full name, spelling it, and your date and place of birth?

Richard Hildreth: My name is Richard Hildreth, H-I-L-D-R-E-T-H. I was born on March 10 in 1928 in the city of Washington, D.C.

DN: Marie?

Marie Hildreth: My name is Marie Hildreth, H-I-L-D-R-E-T-H. I was born in Providence, Rhode Island on July 17th, 1930.

DN: And were either of you from families with political interests in your youth?

RH: I was. My father was Democratic National Committee member from the District of Columbia, very active in local Democratic politics. He was chairman of the Truman inauguration. I forget what year that was, that would be 1948 or thereabouts I presume.

DN: Nineteen forty-nine.

RH: Forty-nine, I was close. So I learned a lot about, I don't know about learned, but I had some brushings with local politics. I was in the Young Democrats, active in that, and I was an officer in that. So my political background came from my father. His political background came from his father really, in Fargo, North Dakota where he was born, where my grandfather was a country attorney out there and then became U.S. attorney during the Wilson administration. They were one of the few Democrats in North Dakota. And my father campaigned heavily for Woodrow Wilson because peace was here to stay. But he was very active in peace activities in the United, not the United Nations-

DN: The League of Nations.

RH: The League of Nations, thank you. And he extended his tour of duty in World War One in France to help participate in the peace efforts after WWI, and eventually came back to the States and came to Washington to live and work with the Democratic Committee at that time, and then set up in a private practice on his own. Now, mainly the practice was lobbying, things like that, he was not a trial lawyer. He was interested in politics and, as a consequence, he got us in politics; also in the circus, by the way.

DN: Oh, that was the second side.

RH: But he thoroughly enjoyed politics. He never missed a convention. He was a wonderful speaker, fantastic speaker. He was only 5' 5 2", not a big guy, but a very powerful guy and a well loved and respected guy. So that brushed off on me. And when Marie met Jane and we got to know the Muskies through Jane, I was quite comfortable in talking with Ed. I didn't know a whole lot about who was, what Democrat was who or whom, but I was not uncomfortable talking and meeting with Ed whatsoever.

DN: What was your career choice?

RH: Law, I'm a lawyer, retired lawyer at this point. And I would liked to have gone into politics but we kept having wonderful children and that was my priority, taking care of the children, looking after the home and hearth. So I did do some politics as I mentioned in the Young Democrats, but as children kept coming along I had to back out of that and concentrate more on the legal practice.

DN: How many did you have?

MH: Six, five sons and a daughter, and our daughter is the lawyer in the family so she makes the -

RH: Only lawyer.

MH: Fourth-generation lawyer. She is now in Zurich over at the Marriott Corporation. We have six blessings.

DN: How many of them live in this area?

MH: We have one with a family of three children, and we have a son, our youngest, who sells corporate jets if you're interested, and -

RH: That's all now.

MH: That's it now, and then we have one in San Diego and two in Connecticut who work in the city, in New York City. So they're a little spread out but it gives us a good reason to travel. Linda was just asked to go to Zurich about five or six months ago, the law firm representing Marriott, and then just about several weeks ago she was asked to go with Marriott as a counsel.

DN: But based in Zurich.

MH: Based in Zurich. And she's excited because that's where the action is right now. And she loves history, that seems to be something all of our family shares. So there's been a lot of overlap there, even with Ed, and talking with him at times about history. Linda particularly is, that's why I think she likes corporate real estate, she gets to read about history.

RH: Ancient deeds.

DN: Ah yes, many of them very old, I assume. Marie, how did you wander from Providence and Great Barrington I understand, or Barrington?

MH: Barrington, hm-hmm. Well, when I was graduated from high school there was a friend of mine from school who was coming down to Washington, D.C. to college, because her cousin, a Roosevelt as a matter of fact, was here at school. And through that she just became interested, and I asked mother and dad if I couldn't go. They really would have preferred my going to one of the sister schools up in New England, but my dad loved Washington and I think it was that that made, and knowing that I would be roommates with Frannie who he, because I was the oldest grandchild, and to let me out of the Providence area was a little bit of a stretch.

So I came down here in 1949, '48, '48, excuse me, and was able to witness this Truman inauguration of which Richard's dad was chairman. And then I guess we met in, I was at GW, at George Washington University, and then we met in, at the university in the student union, the student union. He asked me to go to this little benefit that was being held, and that was the start of it. And so in October, 1949 we had our first date. And I studied up in the law school all the time

RH: I was in law school there.

MH: He was in law school, he was just starting, he was under the combined degree. So we used to go up there to study, climb all those steps. And matter of fact, I now get mail, I don't know why or how but it's to, what is it, Marie Hildreth, "Esquire". I keep telling them I was not graduated from law school. But that's what brought me here, and then eventually we just were married and had children.

DN: I'll have to blame your mailings on the reference librarian, probably.

MH: But it was a tremendous experience going to school as all who live here should appreciate. I was able to write my senior thesis at the Library of Congress. I mean, you can't get that now.

DN: Had you grown up in a family that had an interest in public affairs?

MH: No, not really. Politics was not really discussed. I have three brothers and, what were you smiling about Dick?

RH: I was just laughing at, I remember as a young child and Roosevelt was speaking, and my father didn't curse much usually, but I recall being somewhat shocked when my father said, "Goddamn that's a good speech."

MH: Did he really? Oh, I love it. I never heard that.

RH: I'll never forget it.

MH: Oh, that's grand.

DN: So you came to Washington, fell in love, married and were here raising your family when you met -

MH: Jane at the hairdressers. We went to the same salon and started with smiles and eventually conversations, and then there's a children's shop still, where we all go, and started more conversation there and eventually just started seeing each other as friends, which eventually led to Ed, big Ed.

DN: Do you remember first meeting him?

MH: Do you know I can't. I think it was, did they have a get together, it was a tie, I remember there was a party and I don't remember the victim, but Ed cut his tie, and I can't remember the conversation and what went around it but it was hysterical. For some reason, one of my earliest memories go back to a

RH: Tie cutting.

MH: Tie cutting. But there he was, you know, in that hall at the foot of steps. I can remember that, isn't it interesting how you remember certain, and he took over the conversation and the action and I wish I could remember more of the story, but I do have that picture of him.

DN: What was your impression of him when you first met him?

MH: Big, impressive, cool, he was just sort of, no, and my impression over all these years is a man of, who knew who he was, very confident. Although I do remember once when we were,

the Baxters and we all and the Muskies spent that few weeks up in Maine together. And I wish I could remember which campaign it was, but he was sitting rocking on the porch and he said, "I think I'll go back to college and find out what I should do for a life."

RH: For a living?

MH: For a living. And I can't connect it with anything in particular, but I thought it was funny at the time.

RH: That must have been the old house, it was on the -

MH: No, actually I think it was the house somebody else was renting. You know how we'd go from one house to another to have dinner? And it wasn't their house on the golf course. But it was, I just remember he could come up with gems sometimes and out of the blue he said, "I think I should go back to school and find out what I should do for a living."

DN: Do you remember when you first met him, Dick?

RH: No, I don't. I mean, I have a vague recollection that it was really up in Maine, although I may have met him just to say hello here. But my recollections come out of our visits up in Maine. The first time when, really around, not Ned's wedding, the older boy's wedding.

DN: Steve's?

RH: Steve's wedding, yeah.

MH: Well that was probably not long after we were friends with both of them. Yeah, because I remember we walked in and we had driven up, and I remember Nordy Hoffmann said, "They made it! They made it!" I don't think we'd known them that long.

RH: And Ed went to play golf, and I was not a, still am not a good golfer, and I declined to do so, so he and Nordy went off and played golf and Ed, did he break eighty? He came back just exhilarated, that was the best round he had had. They played the Webb Hannah course up there, which is a nice little course, it's a lot of fun. But he was just thrilled with his golfing, because Ed was not that good a golfer. He was a fervent golfer, he enjoyed golf very, very much. But he was not consistent with his game and the one thing that drives golfers crazy is the inconsistency that occurs. And I've played lots of golf with Ed and sometimes it was very good, and other times you just had to ignore him because he would really be steaming at himself.

MH: The only time he wouldn't cuss I think was the time you told me that, I don't remember whether, maybe when he was running for president, but he was a congress--, you all worked congressionally and he asked you to meet him. And the Secret Service were of course around, but then there was a lady Secret Service.

RH: Oh, Ed would let out an oath with some regularity, really, with his golf game. And Marie was quite correct, there was a lady Secret Service agent that was part of the assignment, so he

really held it back in, he didn't say one cuss word. I was, I didn't think about that until we were through. But playing golf with Ed was a lot of fun, it was. Because I was not a good player, we could pretty much commiserate. We didn't hit it very far, and often not very straight, but we had a good time doing it. I can't think of any time we went out that was terribly miserable.

The only times that I felt badly was the last couple of games we played because his knees were gone on him and he really couldn't play. He would shoot a couple holes and then I'd play through the ninth hole and then we'd wrap it up. And I really felt for Ed on that because he enjoyed the game so much. And to be out there and not be able to participate was, I think, pretty much of a downer for him. And he realized that his time of golf was probably escaping him. And that's, I think, one of the reasons that led to the knee surgery, trying to remedy that deficiency.

But he was fun, I enjoyed Ed so much. We never debated. We did get into a difference of opinion one time, and I wouldn't agree with him, I just was as stubborn as he was stubborn, and I think he was a little bit irritated at me.

MH: I don't know, but it was loud. Jane and I, this was in Maine, and we were in the kitchen.

DN: What was the issue?

RH: I have no idea.

MH: Is that not typical?

RH: Terribly unimportant, I'm sure. But whatever it was, we were about a hundred and eighty degrees apart.

MH: Neither one would (*unintelligible phrase*).

RH: He said something I thought was so funny, he said, "I can't argue or talk with a person who argues like that." And I said, "I've got the same problem." And afterwards, Ed, we were, five minutes later we were having dinner together, just having a good time. But that's one thing I can recall so clearly on the, Ed's

We used to take a lot of walks up there, walk down to the beach, walk along there. And when we first went up there we used to go swimming, God help us, in that iceberg they call water up there in Maine. And Ed showed me how to do it. I was a southern type bather and I would tippy-toe into the water and freeze in the interim. So Ed showed me how to do it, just run in there and dive. And he would do that, he was a, he would have a delightful time. And later on there was less of that as he grew older.

In the campaigns that he had, I never saw him upset except on one occasion, and that was at the house, I'm just trying to recall that. George Mitchell was there.

MH: Oh, the time, with George Mitchell, I remember it was a dinner party. It was an

interesting dinner. It was Jane's birthday, which is February 12th. And we, there was, there were about two or three tables, I don't remember now, three I think. And it was interesting because George was to my right and John Daley was to my left. And George, there was this debating going on about the campaign and where they should go and what, some suggestions. Were you there?

DN: No.

MH: And George Mitchell said, "Marie, just think, you're witnessing history." And I've never forgotten that, because for us there that's what it was.

RH: It was a question whether Ed should debate, who was he opposing, McGovern?

DN: It would be McGovern probably.

RH: McGovern. And Ed was strongly opposed to doing so and shared his opinion forcefully.

MH: And Jane got into it.

RH: Yeah, Jane got into it. But he was -

DN: Did Jane agree with him?

RH: No.

MH: No, no, I don't think so. I think there was, not confrontation, discussion, strong discussion, and I can't remember what her ideas were but they weren't quite the same, and I don't want to misrepresent them.

RH: But Ed quite forcefully said that he could not see the value of debating McGovern, period. He expressed it with greater forcefulness than that.

MH: And that's about the time when the campaign started to falter, I think.

DN: Yes, that would have been February of '72.

MH: Because Jane had come off the trail, the campaign trail and was in bed with back spasms and I was sitting with her and then we were discussing that.

DN: About then, that's very close to the time I think possibly after the incident in New Hampshire where the -

RH: Ah, yes, the newspaper mess.

DN: bus trip, and then the newspaper business.

MH: And, you know, I was reflecting on Ed and there's one characteristic of that, that everybody would agree on, and that's his integrity. And I respected him highly for that. But the other thing was his commitment to family. We could see that on the inside, and that was an incident where -

RH: Well, he attacked Jane; the Jerk.

MH: Exactly, and Jane and those children were, you know, you hit him in a soft spot there.

RH: And Ed was properly furious. And I was surprised that it was taken adversely to Ed. I thought it was the proper thing to do.

MH: Today it would be.

RH: That editor's name, Manchester -

DN: Loeb.

RH: Loeb, yeah.

DN: William Loeb.

RH: And I thought Ed was quite right. I, frankly I was proud of him, I thought that was a great thing that he did. I know if he could have gotten Loeb by the throat he would have done him in, or at least given him a good shake, shaking. But I thought it was the right thing to do. Beyond that, I can't think of occasions other than golf where Ed lost his temper. He was extremely together, both then as a senator and as a candidate, and later as secretary of state.

MH: He was very relaxed when he'd come here. And wouldn't really talk about politics. Or when he came as secretary of state I remember, and of course the Secret Service were around, it was just before they were going up to Maine for the summer, and he said, "Marie, I don't want any of that heavy stuff, just hamburgers on the grill." Because he was wine and dined with his appointment. So he headed right out to the patio to the chaise lounge and as Jane said, "Well, he leads the party," and we were all out there. And he always loved chocolate so I'd made lots of brownies and hot fudge sundaes. And as a matter of fact, relative to that, I've lost my best dessert partner. He loved dessert.

RH: Say what he said.

MH: Well, he used to say, we used to relax, he loved going to the club, too, and I think when he came here he felt relaxed, too. But at the club, at the Congressional, he would, he said, "Marie, don't you hate these people who don't order dessert and then want some of yours?" And he wouldn't give Jane any. The two of them would not, Jane and Richard would not order dessert but they always wanted a taste. So we kind of reminisce on that, so I miss him. Good dessert partner.

DN: What did he like to talk about when he was relaxing, either walking or golfing or here?

MH: You know what he would do, he'd tell these silly jokes. What do you call them? Corny? Corny jokes? Oh, he did a lot of those. He could turn things into a silly joke, he had a sense -

RH: Things we talked about were not earth shaking.

MH: No, they were just general conversation.

RH: Kind of daily, topical conversations. And on the walks we would say things that anybody else would say about how beautiful it is, how nice it is, and we'd talk about the kids, the fact that our wives were always buying things, you know.

MH: Oh, he would say, "You and Jane have been on the phone all day long now. What in the world can you still be talking about tonight?" So, you know, it was just a very ordinary conversation.

RH: We didn't get anything, I can't think of any time that we got into a conversation -

MH: Just whatever the moment carried.

RH: Or something of extreme depth. Talk about the daily news, those things of that nature. He was very careful when he was secretary of state not to get into a discourse on things that were involving him with the government or his activities as secretary.

MH: No, never discussed those things. Nor did we ask.

RH: No, no, of course not. But he was very circumspect, even if we didn't ask. I got the feeling that he was very careful to avoid any topic that might come back to haunt him. Not that we'd say anything, but I would think that just as a matter of practice he didn't want to -

MH: I think he enjoyed not, as I say he relaxed, seemed to relax when he came here.

RH: He enjoyed being out of the office.

MH: And I think that was it. I think it was a place he could take his shoes off if he wanted to, and so as a result the office probably was somewhere else. One night they came over, was it their anniversary? And the Albrights came, Joe and Madeleine, and we were down in the room. He says, "Oh, by the way Marie," I, we had brought him back a, in Spanish they say *bonina*, a beret from Spain. And he took it, and he, and that was fun, that he shared with us that he took it to the Great Wall and he used it there.

RH: There's a picture of him.

MH: He said he could put it in his pocket and so forth, but -

RH: Just roll it up -

MH: But, you know, and I remember when Jane would come back from, and there was one trip with Mansfield around the world, and sometimes I'd have to run out and get something for her to take on a trip, or she would borrow something. And sometimes I would pick somebody up at Holy Child School. And, so we were really in the background. The politics part we were not a, at all a part of.

RH: He didn't bring that up as I recall, I can't recall, I'm sure there had to have been, but much in the way of discussion involving politics. I think chastisement of the Republicans was fairly routine, but -

MH: Yeah, generally, yeah.

DN: Did he ever talk about his colleagues in the Senate?

MH: We asked him about Bush once.

RH: I don't recall any discussions. Matter of fact I don't recall discussions by Ed that were criticizing other people. He just wouldn't do that.

MH: No, no, he'd give a very general kind of -

RH: Insofar as his fellow senators are concerned, whether Democratic or Republican, I think he just maintained an equal respect. He may have disagreed with them. Who was the, Strom Thurmond, that he had a strong, so it appeared, dislike is not the right word. But I can recall that there was a committee meeting in which Strom Thurmond, Ed was the chairman, and Strom was saying something totally irrelevant and unnecessary. And Ed was pounding the gavel, properly so, in trying to hush Strom up. And successfully so. That's the only time I've seen him lose his cool in the political scene. He was (*unintelligible word*) and Strom was saying short things, but he was pretty cool, he, Ed, and he did not say anything pro or con about his fellow senators or politicians. He did, what was that, there was a, involving Maine, and it was the state elections and he was pushing for the Democratic ticket. That was fun, by the way. We went up to a couple of lobster roasts with Ed and Jane.

MH: Was it Muskie Day?

RH: Yeah, Muskie -

MH: Well that was in the more recent, even.

RH: That was a lot of fun.

MH: And I think he and I tried to outdo him in the lobsters we could eat.

RH: And we went to Campobello.

MH: Yeah, that was a treat once. Drove your state of Maine. Wow, it's a long state.

DN: Especially that run.

MH: Yes, and I remember, I wish, if he were here, he could tell me where we got that fabulous chicken pot pie, it was more towards Canada. Oh, it was the best, we both agreed. And lemon meringue pie.

DN: I can tell you exactly where it was.

MH: It was somebody who supported him who was in the restaurant business, that's all I can remember.

DN: Helen's Restaurant in Machias.

MH: Was, is that where the lemon meringue pie is? Yeah.

RH: Thank you very much. I'm going to write that down.

DN: And strawberry pie and strawberry -

MH: I told you. And I'll nev-, and on one of, on that trip, too, or did we go to Campobello twice?

RH: Twice.

MH: One of the trips I remember, we were served in one of the restaurants, garlic mashed potatoes. And he said, "Why do they do this to mashed potatoes, why can't they just leave them alone?" He liked it straight, without the skins or without the garlic.

DN: What uh, when you were at Campobello, did he act as tour guide?

MH: Yes, oh he was so proud of it. The first time particularly, he was so proud of there being, which I think was on his insistence, benches for people to sit, wasn't that a -?

RH: Yeah, but he had a lot to do with the establishment of Campobello.

MH: Oh, I know that but he, some of the things that he particularly was interested in. And, uh, he loved doing that, he loved pointing out things of interest, and very absorbed. That was a wonderful experience.

RH: He knew it very well, he knew the history of it, knew Roosevelt's participation, what Roosevelt did there and when he did it. And also something of, perhaps not, I'm just trying to think, something of Roosevelt's illness when he was struck with polio.

MH: I think we read about that probably.

RH: Perhaps that was it. But he was instrumental in establishing Campobello as a joint Canadian and U.S. Park. He was very proud of that.

MH: And we went out on a boat once to watch the whales and it got kind of whippy with the wind and all.

RH: He was an old sea dog. Well, of course, he was in the Navy.

MH: But that one time he, and his health wasn't in the best then, that last time, and he climbed that wall from the boat.

RH: Because of the tides there, we came in at low tide.

DN: This is at Campobello?

MH: Yes.

RH: And he'd climb up that -

MH: It's just a straight iron kind of -

RH: Like fifteen or twenty feet of, straight up. It was scary for me.

MH: Well, I did it too. You did it because you had to and I guess -

RH: And we were concerned about Ed going up there, because you had to hold on very tight. It was cold, too, cold out.

MH: Oh, it was wicked. What is the, is it Anna Roosevelt who would have been with us, she was on the -

DN: I think so, she was on the commission then.

MH: She lives locally here, in Chevy Chase I think. I remember her saying, she was holding on to the silk scarf that belonged to her, to Eleanor Roosevelt, and she says I think she told me that that was maybe one of the few things she had [of Eleanor's], but it kind of whipped and she was so worried she was going to lose it. I do remember the wind being pretty strong. I don't know that we saw any whales.

RH: Don't think so, it was too cold.

DN: Now you indicated that there was one occasion at least on which you heard some political debate between Ed and Jane. Did you observe over the years many times when they were talking politics?

RH: Going back to the first one, the first question, I don't think it was a debate between Ed and Jane.

MH: No, I think it was people giving their opinions very freely. But it was the most I'd ever seen Jane do that. And she was giving her opinion.

RH: She didn't see, as I recall it, Jane didn't see anything wrong with debating McGovern from a strategy standpoint I guess, and Ed obviously did. Ed didn't want, Ed's position, if I recall it correctly, was that he, it would be a plus to McGovern which he didn't, he Ed, did not want to give.

MH: No, and I subsequently, I don't know, up in Maine in the kitchen we were having dinner or breakfast, and I don't remember, there was a little discussion about whether, how many immigrants we should allow, that whole issue of allowing people, how many people do you allow to come into the country. But, you know, it never, usually something boring or dull would come up and would just be distracted.

RH: I don't recall any debate as such. Nor do I recall any discussion of political matters as such. Perhaps there were but I just don't -

MH: You went out with Ed like to the hardware store, and that was kind of fascinating to watch him because he was always so kind and nice to his constituents. You know, when you'd go to get something at the -

RH: People would stop him, he'd talk to them.

MH: He was very, he was great about that. At least always in our presence.

RH: We were at one place where a constituent, who was just madder than hell, came up to him, he was fussing that he had written to the office and hadn't gotten a response about some problem this constituent was having presumptively with the federal government. And he wanted, expected Ed to know about it and take care of it. And Ed was wonderful. He just said, "I'm terribly sorry. I'll inquire at my office as soon as I get back to Washington." And that satisfied the gentleman. I still don't know what the issue was all about, but the guy was treating Ed as if Ed should be his secretary or his servant. And Ed took it, and just said, "We'll look into it." Didn't get affronted at all.

MH: I admired Ed tremendously that he could keep the office at the office to the degree that he did, that we witnessed, because he was so committed as I say to family and to home. He loved, as you know I'm sure, his home had to be perfection, he liked everything in order and clean and neat, and -

RH: Troublemaker.

MH: For you. And, you know, it was wonderful to see this very important, impressive man be

able to be on the same level with us and the ordinary things of life.

DN: Did he ever demonstrate his sewing skills?

MH: Oh, he said he could still sew. No, he didn't, but he would talk about them all the time, all the time. I don't think so, I'm trying to recall.

RH: No.

MH: And then life got too busy and then once he became, you know, with the law firm, then he would just have things done. He wasn't hanging bathroom tissue holders any more, as I remember his doing once. And we had, we hung a lot of pictures with them, and then we still do, every time we go up there there's always another picture to be hung, or a painting. He loved his tool chest, so proud of that big tool chest. Have you seen that in the living room in Maine? It's an old antique chest, and I think most of the tools came with it. It's over in the corner. But he did, he just loved his home, he loved everything about it.

DN: Did he talk much with you about his father and mother?

MH: No, I knew his mother, we knew his mother, we had met her, she was elderly then, I guess in her eighties. And her birthday was, Ed's and his mother and Steve's I think are all very close together, and I do remember the comment when he was asked to run. Was it vice president or president? And she said, "Why do you want to do that?" Or something to that effect, you know, "What's wrong with being a senator?" And that was kind of her wit and charm. But I, he never chatted about his father that I can recall, except that he was a tailor. I don't know, it may have been some time since that he had died, you know, that we met him, I don't know. But his mother we knew. And we met his sisters. They were just wonderful to us.

DN: In your conversations with him, do you recall any times when you talked about his political philosophy? You indicated he didn't get involved in current issues or disputes very much, but did he talk about his views of American democracy for example? And his philosophy in approaching politics?

RH: I can't recall conversations of that nature. It was certainly there.

MH: Yeah, I don't remember anything specific. I feel like there was conversation, but I can't remember, it was just general conversation.

RH: I'm just trying to recall, at one point, I think it was in Maine, at the new house in Maine, he was talking about the importance of every person and the fact that they're important no matter where they were in the hierarchy of society. And he firmly believed that. He was a true democratic, true believer in democracy, full democracy. And that's the only time I can recall where he spoke to an issue of that nature.

DN: Did you ever play cribbage with him?

RH: No, played golf with him.

MH: You have, I gather.

RH: No, as a matter of fact I don't think I've played cribbage but once or twice in my life. Probably saved me, saved the friendship, I don't know.

[laughter]

MH: Maybe our ears.

DN: As you observed them as a family, what sorts of things did Ed and Jane do to sort of reinforce the family and provide support with, were they active in connection with schools, or?

MH: I don't think Ed had the time to do that, really. And Jane did as much as she could, of course there's a lot of demand. Perhaps in her era of being the wife of a senator, I think they were even more involved in . . . Women today seem to be so much more independent and doing their own thing that I'm not sure. But I think at that time certainly Jane was a tremendous supporter of, wherever she had to go or whatever it took to, duty wise. They always had good help that came down with, Claudette I think her name is, remember? In fact we saw her for the first time I guess at some memorial services up in Maine. And she was fabulous, and I know Jane depended on her.

And I thought that when Jane, I think it was the second campaign where Jane, I think, made the suggestion they have the, instead of having the Secret Service in the house, you know, with their guns strapped to them and all, and how with young children that wasn't really such a healthy thing maybe. That, I think that started the trailer. There was an empty, on Albion Road there was an empty lot next door and the Secret Service for the most part, I don't know if there was always one in the house or not. I think they, for the most part, were in that trailer. And, of course, as you came up the steps they took your picture and did all the things.

RH: It's a frightening thing to have guns all on top of you.

MH: But that was, you know, I have to believe that that had some effect on the younger children.

RH: And I think the children, because of that were very concerned about Ed.

MH: You'd have to, almost . . .

RH: Just naturally, just this, having all this fire power around and clearly it was there for a purpose, and they were concerned that their father might be hurt.

MH: But the, I thought that was, I think Jane was responsible for that, and it subsequently was true with other candidates I think, that that method was used, very wisely.

RH: And Ed talked to them at that auction out here, at the girls' school.

MH: Oh, was it at Holychild? It must have been there. Yeah, he did that.

RH: He did a wonderful job as an auctioneer.

MH: Not surprisingly with that wonderful booming voice and humor, corny as it was most of the time.

RH: He was a good auctioneer.

MH: Yeah, but I don't think Ed was able to. I think he certainly was, wanted to know what the children were doing and was concerned, and I think he'd be the first one to want them to toe the mark.

But, I'm just remembering this funny story. I witnessed something. I was going up to the house and the paper boy was coming to collect, and Ed came to the door. I was sort of behind the paper boy. And the boy didn't have, let me think, and the boy didn't have change. And Ed, here's Ed, all six-four, is he or was he, and this little boy, and he says, "Well if you're ever going to be a good businessman you've got to have change," or something to that effect. And that little boy was probably shaking in his shoes. And of course he, you know, he told it how it was, it was, 'this is the way it should be'. Who knows, that young man might be the best entrepreneur to this day. But, you know, he cared but he certainly didn't put a lot of time in, he didn't have it.

And then Jane was the car pooler, and Jane is ready to help every friend. And she got us our first live-in help, and she'd be there to help if I ever needed her, I know.

DN: Over the years, did you observe them in any discussions of how to deal with the children, or any incidents of note in child care and upbringing?

MH: I don't think so. I know one time I went in to, but this doesn't have to do with Ed, where Steve was just maybe sixteen, probably just learning to drive, somewhere in that, it was early in our relationship. And I was in the kitchen there and Steve came in and said he wanted to borrow the car. And she wanted to know where he was going, as a matter of fact it was the Zebra Room which is on McComb and Wisconsin. And this discussion ensued which I thought to myself, "Gee Marie, you're an ordinary person, you don't have to worry about these things." But it was like, where is my car going to be parked, and you know, you have to be careful. And I thought, she's right, we all know that that's the way it is, but what a burden on the children, you know, and especially young teenagers.

RH: There was a senatorial tag on him.

MH: You know, exactly, so, you know, I am sure that sort of thing always hangs over children of prominent people and it's too bad they have to do that.

DN: Did Jane ever talk to you about the pressures on her in connection with the campaigning?

MH: No, a funny incident that I do recall, and that's just hearing it from her, is the BBC was coming to interview him. They had to get up very early, and he was kind of maybe jittery, not jittery but, you just wake up and you've got the people coming in so whether it was anxiety or being rushed or whatever. And Jane said, it's only the BBC, it's not the, you're not running for the king of England, or something to that effect. I guess he calmed down but, you know he did before he went, went before the cameras.

DN: I'm going to turn the tape over.

End of Side A
Side B

DN: This is the second side of the interview with Richard and Marie Hildreth on the 10th of April, 2001. Now we were talking a minute ago about the Muskie's and family, and then the question of Jane and whether she ever talked about the pressures on her in connection with campaigning. And you recalled one incident.

MH: An incident, where the BBC was coming early in the morning to interview.

DN: And were there other times when she was being called on to go out on the road as she did during the '72 campaign, and how did she cope with that? After all, she had pressures on her from her family.

MH: Well she had good help at home that she could trust and felt comfortable with, and live-in so that that made a difference, there was no interruption in a sense of people there. And then I like to think that some of us friends were in the background, knowing that, you know, they could call us to either car pool or pick up or wherever there was a need. We would discuss, as I say again, we weren't on the political side, it was always on the personal side, but she'd say, "Marie, I've got to go find something to wear for this trip or something." And it was always, it was interesting for me to learn from Jane, who was very sharp, what might work in Washington won't work in another town in the mid west. And she was very careful about trying to accommodate the situation. And I've always found Jane a very bright woman, and a tremendous recall, wonderful memory. She always amazes me even today, even though she thinks it's not.

RH: She's a real trooper.

MH: Yeah, a very, a, really a trooper. She did not complain.

DN: Did she talk politics very much with you?

MH: No, we talked babies, babies and children, and the rascal that Ned could be. And ours. You know, that sort of thing. I can't ever remember talking politics. She was always noncommittal, and I think that was very diplomatic of her.

DN: What were the Muskies' recreational interests there?

MH: Well for Ed I think he loved being home, I think just being home, maybe with friends. Because we do a lot of theater and opera and, not movies but, and I at times thought of trying to interest them. And I think with all the affairs that he'd have to go to and all, that he enjoyed mostly being in his house, and he truly, didn't he love home? Loved being home.

RH: He liked golf.

MH: Well, yes, yeah, and I, you have to look down on me Ed and see I'm playing golf now. I would have liked a chance to have played with him. I just started. And, but I know when he was younger he skied, I remember the last ski trip they all took to, what do you have, Snow-?

DN: Well there's Sugarloaf.

MH: Sugarloaf. I remember the last big trip they took there which was a long time ago. But, and I guess with all his traveling they didn't do much. It was between here and Maine mainly. I wouldn't, and this year I was so pleased that Jane did take a trip and she hasn't done that in a long time, down to Florida. But, he wasn't really interested, I don't think, in going to the theater too much. As intellectual as he was, I just think that after his busy, intense days that he just preferred being home, he loved being home.

RH: To relax.

DN: What about Jane?

WH: Oh, we did the usual.

RH: After all she was home.

WH: Yeah, I mean she enjoyed, she'd say, she'd call and say, want to run away, and you know, we'd do no more than maybe go shopping, have lunch, and that was relaxing to her. I think it still is. And then again, in those days when the children were young and at home, I think we're both of the conservative kind of family that family was the most important and we just didn't think of spending too much time on ourselves, and I mean that very modestly. But we were at-home moms who did that.

DN: Did you hear much from them about Maine and their feelings about Maine, or?

MH: Oh yeah, I mean very genuine, very true.

RH: They loved Maine, they loved Maine. That cottage that they had where Ed fell and hurt his back.

WH: At -

DN: China Lake.

RH: China Lake, yes. They talked about that, talked about the times they were there with the kids and -

MH: They loved that.

RH: And the kids had a wonderful time there, because the conversations that would come up, with the fishing and I guess the boating and whatnot, but they thoroughly enjoyed China Lake, it was a wonderful -

MH: That must have been some of their best family time together from what I remember, even though we didn't know it.

DN: Actually they, Ed broke his back at their house in Waterville, and China was where he recuperated.

RH: Oh, is that what it was? I thought he did that at China Lake.

DN: No, it was some of his early carpentry, he was working up in the second floor, converting it into bedrooms, and fell back down the stairs.

MH: And I often tried to imagine that long lanky body, must have been horrendous.

DN: And did you visit them at their place at China Lake?

MH: No, they had, I think we met them just as they were buy--, I remember her saying they bought a new place, and it was in Kennebunk Beach, and of course subsequently we went there.

RH: We went there, of course.

MH: And she loved that house.

RH: I liked it, it was a great house.

MH: Because Jane likes activity and she could watch the golfers and she didn't feel isolated. She loves

RH: That's where Steve got married.

MH: Uh-huh. And of course then they, when they bought the house after that they did so much work and it's just beautiful, as you know. I think after they sold all that land to, on which to be built, they were happy. They loved seeing the people coming and going and the activity, as long as they had as much as they do have. It's a wonderful house.

DN: As you look back at Ed and also at Jane whom you still have strong associations with,

what are the things that strike you most about them, individually and as a couple?

MH: As a couple I think, especially more toward the end their sparring sometimes, which you just sat back and watched, you know, because you knew this was going to go on and then all of a sudden it's time for strawberries or it's time for ice cream or whatever. And you know, there'd be a little going back and forth. Well, of course, when I look back at Ed I just recall this man of great integrity and his fondness for his family. I think those are the things that just stick out in my mind, that he was so committed; and how he loved home. And to think of the contrast that is, as secretary of state, or senator, or presidential candidate, that he could be comfortable on our level was quite nice for us. Jane, we've been like sisters, it's just sort of like extended family, and I treasure our friendship, the children I'm very fond of, I love them all, and just miss Ed.

RH: There was a question.

DN: The question was your recollections of both Ed and Jane individually and as a couple.

RH: Well, Ed on a man-to-man basis was a lot of fun to be with, and we had some great times together, usually playing golf. As I said earlier, there were no great discussions of politics or issues. But he was a lot of fun to be with, he was good humored, we'd poke fun at each other. I can't recall times when he would be down, on a really down basis. If he was, it would be very short lived.

MH: It was only I think maybe when he was starting to get sick and that was bothering him.

RH: Yeah, he wasn't, that did bother him a lot. But otherwise he was great. He had a temper. He could be demanding with Jane. Jane, as I said, was a real trooper. It just didn't seem to bother or affect Jane, in his demands, it was just the way Ed could be. And I don't think Ed was being demanding from the standpoint of demanding as such. It's just the way he was used to being in the Senate, and getting things done. And as far as Jane is concerned, she's a sweetheart. She was, I think, a real lady. She contributed so much to Ed, really. Things that Ed was doing and the back ups that he needed I think Jane was a principal prop for much of that. She was great.

MH: I admired her for not discussing politics, pro or con, or people. With us she always maintained a diplomatic attitude. I always thought that was, it could be very easy I would think, for someone who crossed paths with so many personalities and people that she could have offered comments which was not her thing to do; very restrained.

RH: But as a couple, I think the, as I said, I think Ed benefited tremendously from Jane. She was a trooper, she was behind him all the way, although he could get demanding and on occasion raise his voice. And it didn't bother Jane a bit, she just -

MH: Well, I'm not sure internally, but -

RH: Well yeah, but externally it didn't. She just went right ahead and did what needed to be done. I can't think of any real situations in which Ed was raising his voice so much, I guess

minor irritations at some times would arise. Where's the butter type thing, or why's the butter out, I mean, just silly things like that. But going back to Ed, we had good times together and we would play a lot of golf at Congressional (*name*), and at Webb Hannett up in Maine. Never playing well, but having a good time doing what we were doing.

MH: Jane and I would stand on the deck and say, "Do they have smiles on their faces?"

RH: We always had smiles, we had -

MH: Well, we could kind of judge what kind of a golf game you had.

RH: We had some great golf games, we didn't always score very well. The only time I saw Ed upset was, we had a, he had a member guest there at Webb Hannett and we were playing with two local gentlemen whose handicaps were not what they stated. They stated a high handicap and the way they played, they just creamed us. It was supposed to be equal handicaps, and these guys were like a maybe a ten handicap.

MH: He was upset about it.

RH: And Ed and I were up there with in the thirty handicaps, and they cleaned us right out. But that's the only time I've seen Ed irritated on the golf course, I mean to the point where he was angry. Although he has gotten angry at some shots, but then you pass that by and you go into the next bad shot.

MH: He had an impatience, I guess I'm forgetting about that. I think he, he had a level of expectation and intelligence that sometimes people like that expect everybody else to. And you could see that impatience at work. I think that was a little bit like the little paper boy, you know, making his collection. And I think, you know, Ed, I wish we could all be as bright and as aware as you are.

RH: Well, Ed was a doer. I mean, he got things done and he expected to get things done.

MH: And he sure did. Don probably knows that better than anybody.

RH: And with me, one-to-one on Ed, as I said we had just great times; friendly, social and talkative, but not about politics.

MH: I think once he came home he, when it came to family and friends. I don't know, maybe in your experience you're finding it's different, but.

RH: I'm sure we talked about politics, I don't know when or what.

MH: Well that's good, if it wasn't anything too earth shattering. And never solutions.

DN: Well thank you very much.

RH: Well, thank you.

MH: Oh, it was our pleasure.

End of Interview