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## Jensen, Anita oral history interview

Don Nicoll

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## **Interview with Anita Jensen by Don Nicoll**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Jensen, Anita

### **Interviewer**

Nicoll, Don

### **Date**

May 2, 2002

### **Place**

Washington, D.C.

### **ID Number**

MOH 352

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### **Biographical Note**

Anita Holst-Jensen was born in Chemnitz (KarlMarxstadt), East Germany on March 16, 1945 to Rasma Rasmanis and Arvids Lusi. Her mother emigrated from Latvia in September of 1944. Jensen was born in a displaced persons camp in Germany, where she lived for her first four years. The family eventually immigrated to Australia in 1949, settling in Victoria. Jensen did all of her schooling in Australia, and went to University in Melbourne. She married Henning Holst-Jensen, and in 1966 they moved to Perth, Denmark. When immigration into the United States became available in 1968, they moved to the Washington area. Jensen took a job with Investors Overseas Services, later Equity Funding. In 1970, she went to work in Senator Ed Muskie's office. She worked in his office until he became Secretary of State. She stayed on in the office of George Mitchell for his fourteen years of Senate service and became more involved with speech writing and research.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: finding a place to live out of displaced persons camps after World War II; Kennedy's Immigration Reform bill; recruiting European help for American corporations; Investors Overseas Services scandal; going to work for Ed Muskie; the Senate offices in 1970; answering mail and constituent correspondence; Dan Lewis and Tyrone Brown;

Maynard Toll; 1976 State of the Union response; relationship with Leon Billings; backlog of mail in the Senate offices; US-China trade relations; clothespins and China; campaign staff vs. Senate staff; personal relationship with Muskie; foreign perspective of the American system of government; apprehension about moving to America while living in Denmark; differences between the American and Australian systems; Gayle Cory; gender relations in the Senate during the 1970s; Gus Garcelon; relationship with Jane Fenderson; Maynard Toll as Administrative Assistant; reproductive rights; debates with Ed Muskie; Madeleine Albright's relationship with Muskie and other staff; working for Senator Mitchell; issues of Senator Mitchell's first two years; impressions of Senator Muskie; change in Washington, D.C. from the 1970s to the 1980s and 1990s.

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## **Transcript**

**Don Nicoll:** It is Thursday afternoon, the 2nd day of May, 2002. We are in the offices of the Muskie Foundation in Washington, D.C.; Don Nicoll is interviewing Anita Jensen. Anita, would you give us your full name, date and place of birth, and the names of your parents?

**Anita Jensen:** My full name is Anita Holst-Jensen. My date of birth was March 16th, 1945. I was born in a place called Chemnitz, in what became East Germany. My mother's name is Rasma Rasmanis, she is a Latvian woman, and my father's name is Arvids Lusis. I did not know my father because my family refugeeed out of Latvia in the end of September of 1944, and I was born in March of '45, some months later. So I have no idea whether my father is dead or alive, or was at the time. We lived for four years in the DP camps in Germany, and then we emigrated to Australia where I grew up and went to school.

**DN:** How old were you when you emigrated to Australia?

**AJ:** Four.

**DN:** Four years old. Do you remember your early years in Germany?

**AJ:** Oh yes, a little bit. We lived, we were in DP camps, which means, stood for “displaced person”, at the time, and the international agencies hadn't yet figured out UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Work Agency], so there were a bunch of different organizations. And there were, my family of course is not Jewish, but there were organizations dealing with the Jewish survivors of the war, as well as those of us displaced from the war from, mainly from the Russians coming in of course, in the east. So there was a sort of a mess.

And so we lived in, you know, several families to a room, curtains down the middle when you had the fabric to make curtains, and we, in one particular place we lived in a little town called Hagenow in northern Germany which, part of the city was basically cordoned off as a DP camp. And in 1948 the British Commonwealth countries, Canada, Australia, what was then Rhodesia

back in those days, South Africa, started to tentatively accept immigrants. And we didn't have family in America so we couldn't apply to go to America, because you needed contacts, at least that was the scuttle butt in the camp. And so we ended up going to Australia in 1949. We were not the very first ship load, but we were pretty early. People kept coming until about '51, '52.

**DN:** And you went by ship.

**AJ:** Yes, it was a converted Italian troop carrier called the (*sounds like: Castelle Bianco*), it sailed then out of Naples, down through the Suez Canal, and over the Indian Ocean, past Perth, around the Great Australian Bight, and then docked in Sydney, where we got off. And we went to a migrant camp in Bathurst, two hundred miles inland from Sydney in the Australian Blue Mountains. And there was a migrant camp that had the military encampment, and we lived there until 1951 when my mother had saved enough money to go together with a Latvian man she met, and they shared in putting down a deposit in a small house in Ballarat, Victoria, where I grew up. [I] went to school, went to high school, went to Melbourne to university, got married, moved to Denmark, husband's Danish, came to America, end of story.

**DN:** When did you move to Denmark?

**AJ:** We moved to Denmark in 1966. We took a ship from Perth, Henning's family lived in Perth, so we took the train over to Perth and embarked there, took a ship, Greek ship, to (*unintelligible word*), to Piraeus, port of Athens, and we hitchhiked through Europe for a number of months, and arrived in Denmark about four months later, it was terrific.

**DN:** And how long were you in Denmark?

**AJ:** We lived there two years. In 1968, see, in 1966 Senator Kennedy successfully got the Immigration Reform Bill through, which got rid of the country quotas, substituted family relationships. The law did not take effect until 1968, and it was in that year that Europe filled up with Americans looking to buy and import European workers. They purchased the patent for a little industrial thing called an overriding dog, which is used on assembly lines. Boeing uses it to make jet planes, but lots of people use it. They bought the patent, they bought the engineer who invented it, and they bought a couple of assistants and a draftsman, a technical draftsman, who was my husband. And they got us because in the last throes, we were all able to come in on country quotas. See, I was, by virtue of being born in what was at the time East Germany, I qualified for the East German quota, which as you can imagine was never filled. Big surprise. My husband qualified I think on the Australian quota because they had a lot of Danes backed up that they wanted to use it for.

So we came here, we came here thinking we would live in America for a couple of years, and I had this theory that it would be really cool to go to Brazil. I wanted to see the Amazon. That didn't happen for a variety of reasons which I now forget, but we didn't really plan to live here forever, we planned to go home but, back to Denmark, but it didn't happen. And the next time I turned around and looked I thought, "Oh, my God, I already own a house. I can't leave." You know, so stuff just kept right on happening.

**DN:** Now when you came to the States, did you settle in the Washington, D.C. area?

**AJ:** Yes, we came straight to D.C. because the company that hired Henning had offices here, it was a defense contractor. I mean, it was a little company so it had a little contract, but they did some work with the Defense Department. And so yeah, we came here, and stayed. Doesn't everybody?

**DN:** Let me drop back to your university time. What was your major in university?

**AJ:** If I had finished, which I didn't, I would have been, it's under, it's a British system, I would have got a B.A. Honors in history and English basically. But it really doesn't work the way American colleges work. I went to the University of Melbourne, which in those days was about the only university in Victoria. And I left because I got married, and also in those days you could not stay at the university if you were a girl and got married. This was 1963, you know. What can I tell you, times have changed.

**DN:** And you landed in the Washington, D.C. area in -

**AJ:** October, '68.

**DN:** Sixty-eight. And did you go to work immediately, or -?

**AJ:** Yes, I found a job working as a, what was then called a 'girl Friday' for an investment banking outfit, which later got into deep trouble with the law. It was called IOS [Investors Overseas Services]. And then Bernie Cornfeld, who I think skipped the country, was the man who had built it up, the company, and in the subsequent year changed into another company called Equity Funding, which was headquartered in California, and which was subsequently also closed down by the SEC for fraud. I had absolutely nothing to do with any of those things, but I thought it was an interesting introduction to American corporate life.

**DN:** And after you, and when did you leave IOS?

**AJ:** Well, IOS sort of closed down, and turned into Equity Funding sometime in 1969. And I left then in, I guess it was May or June of '70, because Henning and I wanted to go to the Grand Canyon and they wouldn't give me time off. So I said, "The hell with it, I'll find another job. Life's too short." So I found another job which happened to be in the same building as Berl Bernhard's old law firm, on the corner of L and 17th, that building. And I knew one of the women who worked in Berl's office, Sandy Lydding, because Sandy Lydding had been my husband's secretary way back in 1968 when we first came here. And Sandy, we introduced Sandy to a friend of ours, who she was dating, and he knew John Whitehead.

**DN:** John Whitelaw.

**AJ:** Whitelaw, that's it, that's it, I'm sorry, boy, age is really catching up with me. Anyway, George knew John Whitelaw, and he knew that there was an opening in the Muskie office. So I was sort of bored with where I was, because I had got another one of these nothing receptionist

jobs, right, and I was really bored out of my mind because there wasn't enough to do, so I applied for it. And they asked if I could type and I said, "Yes." They asked if I could take shorthand and I said, "Well, pretty much," because I could pretty much. And Eliot Cutler said, "Okay, you're on," and that was it.

**DN:** And what was your responsibility when you started?

**AJ:** I was supposed to be Eliot's secretary. And then as things turned out he didn't really need a secretary. He left the Russell, well, it wasn't the Russell building, he left the Senate and moved downtown shortly after, sometime in October, November-ish, as I remember. And Tyrone Brown took over his job, so I worked for Tyrone Brown until January or very early February of 1971, at which point Ty Brown left and Dan Lewis came in with John McEvoy.

And then I proceeded to work for Dan Lewis. Lewis probably needed more secretarial support than the other two guys did, but most of the time I just, I answered a lot of mail because it was stacked up, backed up. These enormous piles of environmental mail, you know, they were sitting in shoe boxes. I mean, you remember what those offices were like, you sat so close to somebody both of you could not stand up simultaneously. So I did answer mail. I also, you know, Dan would dictate speeches for the Senator and I would take those down in shorthand and type them up, and then Dan would correct the draft and then I would type those up. In the days before automatic typewriters, this was all manual and it was a royal pain in the whatsis. I did not, you know, there are more fun ways to make a living, it seems to me as I look back on it, but at the time I thought it was pretty cool.

**DN:** And were you simply given the stacks of mail and asked to answer it?

**AJ:** Pretty much. There was not what you would call training. I mean, I looked at it, somebody, I don't think it was Susie Nicholas, but it was somebody at the far end said, "Here, here's some old stuff, this is how we answer it." And I sort of looked at it and said, "Well, that doesn't make a lot of sense to me either." But I looked at the stuff, and I looked at some of the Muskie speeches on the environment and I thought, well, this is supposed to be him so why don't I just write what he's saying, and so I did that. And Eliot, one day Eliot said, "Oh, this was actually a good response." You know, in this tone of total surprise, like, God, you can read and write. And I said, "Well I thank you Eliot, good night." Jane Fenderson was there then; Lee Enfield, Lee Lockwood now. And Lee and Jane helped, and also then Eliot for, well you know . . .

**DN:** Training.

**AJ:** Yeah, I mean they at least answered questions. Eliot was often not there, and when he was he wasn't always the most approachable guy, god bless his little heart. But -

**DN:** How was it working for Tyrone?

**AJ:** Fine, easier. Tyrone wasn't as temperamental. And he was, he had sort of the basic civilized "thank you, please" adjuncts to the language, you know. At the time I appreciated it. I

still appreciate it. You know, he was not, I think I was intimidated by Eliot at the time, and Tyrone was a lot less intimidating, so I think that probably colors my memory of it. And of course Dan Lewis, well, you know, what's to be intimidated by, you know.

**DN:** What was it like working for Dan?

**AJ:** Oh, fine pretty much. I really only stayed working directly with him for about, I guess about eight months, because I kept taking on more and more mail. And the office as a perennial problem was having problems getting people to answer their mail, big surprise, right. Mail was backing up, people were getting shirty, people in Maine were calling down like, you know, "Why the hell hasn't this letter been answered, it's four months old," yadda-yadda-yadda. So one thing I'm lucky about is I write very easily, I write very fluently. I don't really need a lot of time to answer a letter, it just doesn't take me long. So once the office discovered that, it was like this gold mine had opened up. Give it to Anita, she'll answer it. And so I actually ended up doing an awful lot of mail.

**DN:** Now, were you covering a lot of subjects in that time?

**AJ:** Mostly the stuff Lewis was doing, you know, which is to say no environmental stuff, because of course that came out of Leon's shop. No IGR stuff, thank heavens, because that came out of (*sounds like: Mike Withers*) shop, but, the gamut of the other stuff. Dan didn't do foreign policy much, but Maynard Toll came on staff, and Maynard and I go, well, I mean, you know, you have to remember physically we're practically sitting on top of each other, it was very odd not to get along, you know. And Maynard, when Maynard was shy a secretary, which he was from time to time, he'd get me to do stuff, you know, just type up the occasional memo or whatever, you know, nothing major. I mean, he did this hunt and peck typing himself because he liked to think he was independent, but, actually he couldn't type his way out of a paper bag. And as I said, I ended up doing more and more mail. And Dan hired Chris [Christine] Sanborn to be his full time secretary, because he felt the need for one. I didn't think he actually needed one, but he felt the need, so who am I to argue. And I essentially ended up doing the mail, which I proceeded to do for many long, long years.

**DN:** Now, did you continue essentially answering mail through the entire period you were with the senator?

**AJ:** Not really. Let's see, we got our first magic machine I guess in seventy-, was that '75, '76? It was sort of a, remember the old Robo machines that you fed paper through? It was sort of an updated version of that where you had a magnetic roll on one side and one on the other, and this contained the names and addresses, and this contained different paragraphs that you could then punch in and type, you know. So we used, I did, I sort of organized that for a bit, because I had the girl who ran it, whose name now completely eludes me. And after that we had the memory typewriter which I learned how to use, which was terrible because you had to remember fifty stations, you had to remember what was in each one and if you didn't remember, too bad, because you couldn't tell from looking.

But in the course of it, I mean like in 1976, was it, when Muskie gave his response to the State of

the Union from Gerald Ford. I don't know if you recall, but everybody and their brother wanted to be the author of the next great Muskie speech. So we had McEvoy sitting there churning out his stuff. We had all the troops from IGR, which by then was From and Dave Johnson, I mean, cast of thousands over there. And, of course, their own home grown egos such as they were, Micoleau. And I was, I had the magic machine, so I could plug in paragraphs because we were coming up to the time when Muskie was going to have to take this damn thing. And it still wasn't done because Richard what's his name, the one who wrote the 1970 speech -

**DN:** Richard Goodwin.

**AJ:** Richard Goodwin. Richard Goodwin had been asked to help out, he had blown into town, he had gone and stayed at Georgetown, you know, some damn thing, and had succumbed to a fit of the sulks or a fit of the vapors or some damn thing, and refused to deliver anything. And then he finally descended on the office late in the afternoon with this opus, right, which apparently Muskie read and said, "This is crap. I'm not going to say it," or words to that effect. And that went out the window. So we left huddling together as best we could, and I mean that was, that was sort of one of these, I'd say, you know, terrific things.

I tried to write, on the draft, this was being rushed into Muskie by Gayle Cory and Carole Parmelee in various moments, I tried to draw little pencil lines, very faint ones, with the number of the station on it so that I could get, Muskie very carefully and deliberately erased them all as he read. And then, of course, the guys wouldn't let you just sit there and type, no, they had to talk at you. Like, it's not enough that they're driving me nuts and there are ten of them, but they have to talk at you, and you know, it's sort of like, in a minute I'm, I'm going to pick this up and I'm going to throw it at the lot of you, I'm sick to death of you. But it was pretty neat.

So I did, I mean, Madeleine [Albright] came and I worked with Madeleine for a while, did a lot of, how do you put it, oh, you know, occasionally we had memos, like a lengthy memo on what was going on in Latin American, sort of, you know. It was a sort of around the continent trip. And I thought, 'What on earth am I doing this for?' I mean, why does Ed Muskie care what's going on? And I thought, mine not to reason why, I've been asked to produce this, I will produce this, this is fine. You know, so I did sort of backgrounders and stuff like that.

And when Leon became AA in 1978, I think his initial impulse at first was to fire me, at least he told me that that was his initial impulse. I don't know why he felt the need to share that with me, but he did. And then he reorganized the office so there were like five L.A.s, we were all stuck into one room. And we all shared the mail, like everybody had their own mail to do, which meant that every couple of months Leon would crack down and demand to see everybody's old mail. And because most people never really kept up with their mail, big surprise, we would be in for an all night session where nobody leaves here until you answer your mail, which meant in practice that I got to answer most of the mail anyway because some of these folk were just damn slow. So, you know, I had a relationship with the mail over the years.

But, you know, by the time Muskie left, what was I doing, I was doing stuff like the FTC bills, you know, some of the consumer stuff, assorted, writing a bit of stuff and drafting a lot of the stupid Robos, because they were, you know. Some of the people working for Leon had

difficulty interacting with him sometimes, because he could be noisy, as you probably know.

There was one unfortunate girl, I hired her, and I thought she was going to work out fine to, you know, basically to write mail. And she drafted, she, it was about the Endangered Species Act, she very beautifully drafted this letter reflecting exactly what was happening in, legislatively, which is to say the Congress was considering having a commission to judge whether, basically, a species should go extinct. In Leon's mind, this was anathema, you know, just that Congress would even do such a thing. And when this poor child produced this perfectly tidy little letter explaining this, Leon made some very sarcastic changes on it, you know, like . . . . And she, thinking that they were edits, dutifully copied it out and was ready to ship it over to be . . . . And I'm sort of like, "Leon, you really can't do this. You know, not everybody understands irony, get used to it." It was pretty funny in a way, but it was pretty hairy in another way. Oh my God, you know, "Don't let Leon near the mail, for God's sake!" It was a happy office and a very, very, you know.

**DN:** Let me take you back to when Leon came. It sounds as if -

**AJ:** Well, he was always there.

**DN:** Well, I mean when he came as administrative assistant. It sounds as if by that time your mail answering was focused on certain legislative areas?

**AJ:** Yeah, I suppose it must have been, but you know, it was, the mail situation between the Muskie personal office and the subcommittees, which is to say IGR and Air and Water Pollution subcommittee, was always on a point of imminent disaster. In 1976, Congress, which was the year Muskie was up for election, big surprise, Congress enacted a fairly large tax bill. All the mail on that tax bill had been sent over to Jim Davidson at IGR, who was the primary tax floor guy on that. And he had, I hesitate to, he had saved it all of course. So we're getting into like October and a lot of these guys who are presidents and CEOs of companies, many of them in Maine, are wondering how come their friend Ed Muskie never bothered to answer their letter, which gets to people up, you know, like Larry up in Maine, gets to Gayle.

Gayle immediately demands to know what this is, and I say I've never seen, I don't have any tax mail, tax mail is somewhere else. So we unearth it from Davidson, right, at which point I have to pull, I pulled an all-nighter putting together a sort of a quick and dirty 'this is what's in the tax bill' sort of thing for everybody. And, you know, it was a sort of a little mini disaster, you know, because as Gayle and Charlie Micoletau, who was the AA at that time, pointed out, Muskie was going back to some of these people looking for contributions and he couldn't bother to answer the damn letter. And most of them, as I said, they were sort of hotshot people (*unintelligible phrase*). The mail situation was always mildly on the edge of being out of control.

**DN:** Did you do work other than -

**AJ:** Mail?

**DN:** Mail?

**AJ:** Sometimes it didn't feel like it. Yeah, sure, as I said I did a fair amount of consumer affairs stuff. Leon hired this girl, Estrellita Jones, who was supposed to do foreign affairs and trade. After Estrellita arrived, she informed Leon she would not be doing trade because she actually didn't know much about trade, and didn't like trade. And Muskie unfortunately was headed out the following week to one of these European parliamentary hooaha trips. So Leon said, "Anita, what do you know about trade?" And I said, "What do you want me to know about trade?" So I became the trade person, right. So yeah, I mean, I did a lot of trade stuff, the shoes I remember.

And the Communist clothes pins, People's Republic of China, we had just opened up to the People's Republic. And one of the very few items that they actually produced there that everybody in America wanted to buy was wooden clothes pins. Maine has two, had, two companies then that made wooden clothes pins, so I did the wooden clothes, the Communist clothes pins. I mean, there was a huge, there was this huge interagency group with people from the State Department, you know, Commerce Department, various consumer types, the White House of course, you know. Congress, Republicans and Democrats both, right, and it was Jimmy Carter you know, big deal, you know. And we would meet somewhere in the (*sounds like: ERB*) and we would all sit around chewing the fat about the damn Communist clothes pins. It was a most astonishing thing. And that went on for months. I sort of thought, well, you know, I suppose I'm learning things. So, anyway. So I did a fair bit of briefing at that time for Muskie, foreign affairs-ish type stuff, partly because Leon and I got along fairly well after he decided not to fire me, and I think he trusted my instincts, and partly because I churn out stuff easy, (*unintelligible phrase*).

**DN:** I'd like to take you back to the 1970-'72 period when you worked in the office, and you were working for the congressional staff.

**AJ:** No I wasn't, I was on the campaign payroll until April of 1972. I was hired, when I was hired in September of 1970 I didn't realize that I wasn't on a Senate payroll, it just never crossed my mind. Why would it? Because I was given a desk in 221, you know, in the old Senate office building, and told to report there and sit down and shut up and type, basically, and it's just what I proceeded to do. But they, in March, March-April of '72, the campaign ran out of money and all the campaign staff were told they'd have to go a month without being paid. And Lewis said, "Well," you know, "they can't do that to me, you're my secretary." Some private paternity or something, I don't know. And Leslie said, "Well, Anita can't be hired because she's a foreigner, she's not a citizen," which I wasn't. And Lewis said, "Oh bullshit, there's got to be something you can do."

And it turned out, of course, that being a member, being a citizen of a country with which the United States has a defensive alliance, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, remember, and Australians fighting in Vietnam at the time, meant that I was actually entitled to be employed by the U.S. Senate. So I got switched to the Senate payroll then. So, you know, technically I didn't start working for the Senate until April of 1972.

**DN:** But in that time, in spite of the fact you were employed by the campaign, you were

working in the Senate.

**AJ:** Physically yes, physically in the Senate, yes. We wor-, I worked in the narrow office that was right beside Muskie's office. His office took up one whole room, we had like a five-room suite. And our room was, had the L.A.[Legislative Assistant] sitting in the alcove of the front area where the windows were, and the rest of it was taken up with bookshelves housing all congressional records and CQs [Congressional Quarterly] and what have you. And the old-fashioned senate desks that didn't have drawers in them, they only had like the desk top, a center drawer, and an L turnout for your typewriter. And there were two of those jammed together with, in a very chummy way, we were really close people. And there was another, there was always another girl working there, but her identity changed. And there was a line of desks along the wall, too, where there were different people who came and went, like Dick Fay came, Kermit Lipez, you know. I mean all those guys sort of cycled through that room.

And we had to eat up a huge chunk of that room for a corridor so that when Muskie wanted to leave his office, he wouldn't have to walk through, the other way through the front reception room, and thus be seen by whoever was visiting. He could instead scoot out the back way past us. And, of course, there was this huge chunk of space that you simply couldn't use for office purposes because Muskie needed it. So that was, oh, sort of cool. So you would see, I would see him coming and going, you know, but he never, he was not the kind of guy who would stop and pass the time of day.

On the other hand, in 197-, later, oh God, what year was that, I think that would have been '78 or '79, I wanted to have children and I instead had a series of miscarriages for all sorts of (*unintelligible*) reasons. When I came back to work after one of those, and I, you know, I was standing there, Muskie came out of his shop, you know, just the way you run into people in the office. He walks over to me, in front of Carole and Gayle and Leon, all of whom became immediately speechless, tosses his arms around me and hugs me, right. And it's like, from Ed Muskie you don't expect this, and I didn't expect it, you know. And neither did they. It was one of those, oh, okay, moments, you know. But I always, you know, I mean I always liked him, he was always civil to me. I was introduced to him in 1970 I think. There was a big party upstairs around Christmas, after the campaign because he was reelected in '70 it was. Somewhere up in the Russell [building], on the second floor, there was a hearing room that we used for parties from time to time. And I got introduced to him then, and, you know. I mean he, you know, I'm five foot tall, he's like, he was like a big guy, so it was very much like shaking hands with Mt. Rushmore.

**DN:** Did he say anything to you that time he hugged you?

**AJ:** He said, you know, he said, I'm just, "I'm very sorry, I'm really sorry Anita." And, you know, I said, you know, "Stuff happens." See, at that point I thought I was going to have a successful pregnancy, I didn't realize I wouldn't, so, you know. But it was just a very unexpected gesture, it really was. And I really don't think it was out of character for Muskie, because you could, he did do kind things for people when you, which I think people would not normally have assumed he would do. I mean, I think, I have always believed he was a slightly shy guy, despite being an egomaniac as all politicians are. I'm sorry he's dead.

**DN:** During the campaign, as you said, you were working in the Senate office. Did you have much contact with the campaign?

**AJ:** I went down there, down to Goff Street a couple of times, but the campaign folk were pretty self contained. And I didn't, I was sent down to see if you can help out with the mail or something, you know. I got the very strong impression, perhaps I was being overly sensitive, that they really didn't welcome help from the Senate staff. And they, even though I technically wasn't on the Senate staff they thought I was because I looked it, so it wasn't a relationship that got warm and fuzzy over time. I mean, I did know Sandy in Berl's front office, you know, and, she and the other woman hung out there, remember the short shorts.

**DN:** Yes, I don't remember the name.

**AJ:** Yeah, it's, I've lost it for a second, it'll come back to me. But I knew those girls, well obviously we'd known Sandy for some time. But the campaign people I didn't really, I met Mary McAleney and a few people, but not, not, I got, you know, not really a lot of them, not the famous ones at all. Didn't, I don't believe I met Mitchell at that time, even though he was very much a hotshot. And of course we all, I mean, I knew Berl but everybody knew Berl, hard to avoid Berl. But yeah, there was a big -

**DN:** How did the campaign affect you, or what was your impression of it as someone who had come to the United States fairly recently?

**AJ:** Well, it was a little bit like being trapped in a very strange game that I didn't know the rules of. You have to remember, we came in October of '68, Martin Luther King had been killed, Robert Kennedy had been killed, there were riots in Chicago with the Democratic Convention. And looking at that from Europe, when I went to get my visa in Copenhagen, which isn't, certainly was in those days a nice quiet, very civilized little town, there were armed guards around the American embassy. It was bizarre, from, to me, it was like deep, I mean there were guys parading around with these dirty great, you call them Alsatian dogs, German shepherds, and it looked, it looked really, really strange.

And I mean, the year before there was a small scare in Europe because of the '67 Israeli war, and we in Denmark all felt very superior because there were stories that in Switzerland people had gone and stockpiled sugar because they were afraid that another war would break out and you wouldn't be able to get sugar again. Just like in the last one, right? So we always felt like, you know, Danes are sensible, you know, Denmark's a sensible country. But when this stuff started happening here, it was very, it was quite unnerving. And I really, Henning came over in June, and I really had second thoughts about coming because I thought, I don't, I'm not sure I want to live in a place that shoots people like that.

And of course Denmark was full of the usual prejudices that, you know, you can't get into a hospital without paying first, the streets are running wild with, you know, lunatics holding guns and stuff like this. And I'm not sure that I believed all of it, but '68 was not a good year for American PR, I will say that for it, you know. So, by the time I reached the Senate, I'd been here

two years roughly, twenty months, whatever, and I knew that there was more to America than what I left Denmark knowing. So I knew there was more to it but I didn't really understand the, either the party system.

I had made the mistake, I think, at that time of thinking 'Well, Australia's like this, we too have senators and, we don't call them congressmen but we have representatives, you know, two-house structure in the Australian government, and prime ministers,' you know. The only difference is they don't have a governor general in America like we do in Australia because it's not a Commonwealth country, big surprise. So for a long time, well for a while, I sort of unconsciously kept thinking it was like the Australian system, which is what I learned about in civics class as a kid. And, you know, in Australia there are five states, here there are fifty. O.k., you know, you adjust.

So in some ways it was sort of very easy and very interesting to see how it worked, and in some ways, because of my own preconceptions, stuff that, some of the stuff was just blindingly stupid, you know. It sort of made no sense, you know? It was just mildly out of body experience, I would think. But to a large extent, I thought that my role in life was to do as much work as I could do in the hours that I was in the office, so I didn't really, didn't spend a lot of time partying because there was always stuff to do. So I thought that the way to keep the job, you know, was to do it, and so I kept my head down and my butt up, as it were, for a while. And because I didn't really know the people I didn't get involved in too much interoffice stuff, you know. I worked late, Henning would come and pick me up, drive me home. And, so I didn't hang out with people after work that much in the first couple of years, because it just didn't work out that way.

**DN:** You have mentioned several people on the staff. Tell us about your impressions of Gayle Cory.

**AJ:** Oh, Gayle. Well, I didn't meet Gayle until 1971 because Gayle was in New Hampshire in 1970 and she did not rejoin the staff until sometime in '71, in the spring. I mean, I remember Jane Fenderson, who always had a close relationship with Gayle, talking about this Gayle person all the time. But this Gayle person like never materialized, so my attitude was, okay, fine, Gayle. In the meantime, I have Jane to deal with and I'll deal with Jane, you know, that was sort of that kind of thing. Gayle, I mean Gayle and I became, I'm sure if you ask everybody who knew her, you'll get the same answer, "Gayle was my best friend," everybody probably feels that way.

Gayle and I, I mean we rode the train together when I moved to Gaithersburg. I mean, you know, she did, she did become, well, she was one of the main supports of that office, especially for the staff. For the, especially I would say probably for the girl staff because there was this sort of, in the early seventies Capitol Hill was a very boy dominated experience. It really mattered that you wore the pants or you didn't, it really, really mattered, and they treated you that way, you know. I mean, it was, it's not like it is today.

I still remember when we first got the squawk boxes, you know, from the Senate floor where you could just hear the noise, and National Public Radio, or its forerunner, used to broadcast it out.

And Muskie was standing there one day on the Senate floor, in 1976, doing a dry run on the budget before the budget process took effect the following year. And George McGovern had introduced an amendment to move so many billions of dollars from the defense function of the budget to the (*sounds like: nutritional*) uh, the income support function, and explained that this would be like help, you know, providing money for the school lunch program. Then Muskie stood up and said, "Yes, but this is precisely what the budget process is designed to prevent, we need discipline." And he thundered about this, right. McGovern's amendment passed, big surprise, right. And Muskie at that point, bless my heart, stood there and said, "Well," he said, "I guess if you're going to be raped you may as well lay back and enjoy it." And it went out all over the airwaves, all over. The phones lit up. I spent the next week of my life on the telephone talking to various and sundry . . . .

That was one of the things I got to do, I got to do the crap issues: abortion, females rights when things weren't going well, guns. Not that Muskie did much with guns, but I had to placate his dentist who was a real gun, you know, real, it was one of these nightmares of my life. Whenever I went to Maine I'd run into his dentist who was . . . .

**DN:** Is this Alonzo Garcelon?

**AJ:** Yes, dammit, Gus Garcelon. Oh, I mean, he was sort of, he was very friendly, he always patted me. And I really, I really didn't like being patted by men I barely knew. But it didn't seem to, hitting him didn't seem to be an option, so I put up with being patted. But it's sort of, you know, you sort of feel, 'oh well, what can you do,' you know. But yeah, I did end up inheriting a lot of the junk stuff, you know, the nasties that nobody else wanted because I was there.

I wrote a letter once, way back, it must have been '70 because Jane was still there, to a person who wrote Muskie a very impassioned letter asking why his son had to die in Vietnam. And I read this, and I thought, 'oh my God, what am I supposed to say?' So I sort of struggled with it and I wrote a letter essentially saying, "I don't know what the answer is to that, I just don't know because it's tragic, it's horrible, I'm doing my best to stop it," right. And, you know, Jane read it and said, "Oh Anita, this is really good," you know, one of these, big surprise, she knows how to write stuff, you know, and shipped it in to Muskie who signed it, you know, who really didn't see that much of his own mail. But she did that, which I thought was kind of her, you know, nice of her. She didn't have to do it. I mean, in those days I was -

**DN:** You had a good working relationship with Jane Fenderson?

**AJ:** I thought I did, yes. I mean, I saw no reason to believe otherwise. And with Lee. Lee was hot and heavy into Vietnam at that point, you know. But most of those people, I mean who would I say I didn't have a good rel-, I wasn't very close to Richard Fay, but Richard Fay was hard to get close to. He was sort of, some mildly prickly kind of guy, you know. I mean, I don't think he hated me or disliked me, he just didn't have a lot of patience. And I wasn't close to Kermit, but I knew him, you know, we all knew Kermit. Kermit also would not answer his mail. You sort of, you know, one of my little chores that I picked up was to nag the guys into doing their mail. Like, "Oh no, you can't answer this, you don't know what's in it," they'd say. And I'd

say "Fine, just answer it, I don't care who does it." You know, I have no pride of authorship in this, but it's got to go out, you know. But I think the reason for that was because Maynard hated nagging them. And it was easier for Maynard to get me to nag them, because then they'd be pissed off at me and not at Maynard. And I really think that was his sort of, where it came down.

**DN:** Was this during Maynard's time as AA?

**AJ:** AA, yes, yes. Maynard, I mean, he was there as AA for a very short period of time, wasn't very long, but you know, he liked to maintain good relations with everybody and nagging them about mail was one of those things that the guys really hated. And I didn't particularly enjoy it, I mean, I wasn't like, oh good, I get to bitch at people, terrific, you know. But everybody picks up different jobs, I guess.

**DN:** You were there during quite a number of administrative assistants. Did the style of the office change during that period?

**AJ:** Oh yeah, yeah. I mean, McEvoy was very militaristic, you know. I mean, John knew what he wanted, and he wanted it done, and he wanted it done this way and that was going to be it, so.

Maynard was a lot less hyper about whether, if a thing got done this way or that way was much less of an issue for Maynard.

Micoleau was very low key. Not that he didn't run the office, he did, but he was super low key. Of course, it is important to remember that he was out all the time getting his law degree, and this naturally effects any attention you're going to focus on stuff.

And Leon, well, I got along good, well with him and so, you know, it's hard for me to be dispassionate about Leon. And by then, by the time Leon came, I'd already been in the office for eight years so I knew everybody and everybody knew me, so you know, you develop relationships and soon know who you are, people know who you are.

**DN:** During this period, when you were working for the senator on a variety of issues, answering mail, doing some briefing work, did you have many occasions when you had to negotiate with the senator, shall we say?

**AJ:** You didn't negotiate with the senator. Well, I always got to see him on the crappy issues because that's, those are the issues I got landed with. So he was, needless to say, usually not real thrilled when I got marched into the office to present him with a piece of information because he wasn't, he knew he didn't want to hear it. Whatever it was, it really didn't matter. I remember Madeleine called me in, and there was an amendment coming up on which he would have had to cast a vote one way or the other, about allowing federal funding for abortions to save the health of the mother. Not the life of the mother, but the *health* of the mother. And he said, "What's, what health," you know, what's wrong with, you know, "being pregnant isn't being sick, what health?" And I started saying, I mean he had started the conversation with Madeleine, I wasn't in the room, and she buzzed me because his voice started rising. So she buzzed me. So I go charging in, not really knowing what the hell I'm supposed to be doing this for. And he erupts at

me, you know, “What kind of health conc-,” and I'm, “Well, there are a number of health . . . .  
“ you know, you can have cancer, for instance, you can have preclampsia which is, you know,  
and I said, high blood pressure, and I was going to say during labor, you know . . . .

*End of Side A*  
*Side B*

**DN:** This is Side B of the tape of the interview with Anita Jensen on May 2nd, 2002. Anita, you were just talking about the senator's eruption over the question of abortion on behalf of the pregnant women's health.

**AJ:** Yes, he, Senator Muskie was very ambivalent on the whole subject of reproductive rights. I mean, he was a Catholic, he was a believing, practicing Catholic. And initially, in the late sixties, as I came to learn after the fact, and right up until *Roe v. Wade* was decided in January of '73, it had been a matter that the state governments were dealing with, they were dealing with it in different ways. And all told, even though some women might have had to travel to a different state to procure an abortion, it wasn't really a, the situation wasn't so bad that it needed a federal fix.

But the Supremes, I guess, thought otherwise. And they gave it a federal fix, which immediately catapulted it into a Senate, and a House, too, of course, but into a Congress that wasn't ready for it. And really had no institutional way of dealing with it that I could, that worked. Certainly, Muskie's shop, there was no one who was responsible for the issue. We didn't have a women's issue person because there weren't women's issues, there were just issues. And nobody was really bird-dogging it as a policy matter, or even a political matter.

So it was a subject that, I think, Senator Muskie found it difficult to discuss. He certainly found it distasteful to discuss. And, of course, the growth of the pro-life and pro-choice movements outside Congress created a situation that made it very hard to discuss the issue in any kind of way that didn't lead to screaming. I mean, it was a very ridiculous, you know . . . . I had people, I used to have to meet with constituents on these things. One of the things I had to deal with was, you know, I had people coming in calling me a bloody murderer. Because I, presumably because I wasn't ready to tow or toe a full pro-life line on every single subject. And it got, it got sort of, it became unpleasant, is what it became, it just became unpleasant. You didn't want to deal with these people personally because they were abusive. When they weren't abusive, they were just outright rude. Who needs that? It's sort of like, you know, I didn't sign up, I did not sign up to be abused by total strangers, thanks all the same, you know, wonderful opportunity. But, you know, I think Senator Muskie dealt with it as best he could. And of course for him it was, the easy way to deal with it, and I think he took the easy way, was to scream at the staff. That was my job, that's what I was there for. I thought, ‘Okay, fine, you get to yell, you're the senator, I'm the staff. You yell, I shut up.’

**DN:** How did that conversation end?

**AJ:** He said, mutter, mutter, mutter, or words to that effect, you know how he'd sometimes sink down, deep in his chest? And he said, (*Anita makes a deep mumbling sound*), “I'm going to

go and vote.” And he got up and stomped out of it, and we had to wait the whole, the day after, to figure out how he voted. He voted for the stupid amendment. He knew he was going to, he just wanted to throw a tantrum, you know, because he was Ed Muskie and because he could.

**DN:** How did Madeleine Albright deal with him in those situations?

**AJ:** Often enough she would call in reinforcements. She wasn't intimidated by him, I don't think, but she wasn't, she wasn't that comfortable sparring with him the way that some of the guys would. You know, like Leon would talk back to the senator. From wouldn't so much talk, but you know, he would have, From would always have something to add, you know, so that he could steer the conversation if need be.

Madeleine, I had the impression she wasn't as adept at that kind of thing. But, you know, it was harder, she was a female. And there were certain facts about this. And you have to remember that Madeleine was there, there were all these guys. I mean there was McEvoy doing budget committee, there was Billings with, you know, the pollution stuff. For a time it was From, I mean, we did get rid of that committee. But these guys were ready to undercut her any chance they got. I mean, I don't, it wasn't like a conspiracy or anything, it was just normal, normal behavior. I mean, she knew that. I mean, everybody, well anybody who kept their eyes open would have noticed it. So she was always, she was forced to be, I think, always a little defensive, and probably because she didn't, I mean, she wasn't a lawyer. Not that Leon was, but. Most of the guys had a long history of working in this policy area stuff, she really didn't. And I think she felt pretty acutely aware that she didn't have the time on the job that they did, you know, in that sense. So, I mean she had the knowledge, she just hadn't been using it in a policy type of environment.

**DN:** You continued with the senator until he went to the Senate?

**AJ:** Yes, he, until he went to the State Department.

**DN:** Or went to the State Department, excuse me.

**AJ:** Yes, I feel that he deserted me, frankly, I really do. Very strongly. He deserted me, I didn't leave, so I have nothing to reproach myself with. But, I mean he was up for reelection in '82, and it's not clear to me that he would have run had he not left. It's not clear that he would have run, I don't know, I don't know. I mean, it's hard to judge, but how old was he then? How old would he have been in '82? He would have been well into his late sixties, wouldn't he?

**DN:** He was sixty-six in '80.

**AJ:** Okay, so he'd have been sixty-eight. Do you think he wanted to stay there until he was like seventy-two, seventy-four?

**DN:** I doubt it.

**AJ:** I don't think so either. So, you know, at the time, having him leave, having Gayle leave,

having Leon leave, and Carole Parmelee as well. I mean, these were all people that I really sort of palled around with, you know, having all of them depart like one hit right off the top was very, not what I want, you know, was not what I wanted to happen. I was not a happy camper about it. But there was not much choice. What can I say? It set me up for fourteen glorious years with George Mitchell. Who could want anything more? Sorry, cheap sarcasm.

**DN:** You stayed on in the Senate office working for Senator Mitchell.

**AJ:** Yes, I did, yes.

**DN:** And what roles did you play in that office? Did you continue the same kind of -?

**AJ:** Mitchell? The first two years . . . . Mitchell was thought, it was believed that when Mitchell became a senator, he was chosen by Joe, the governor, and -

**DN:** That's Governor Brennan.

**AJ:** Yes, that would be Joe Brennan. And the scuttle butt in political circles in Maine was, 'Oh well, there's George Mitchell, he's never won an election in his life. He's, every job he's ever had has been handed to him by Ed Muskie and this is just one more example. He's not going to win.' Ken Curtis, who was a former governor, ran a newspaper advertisement saying, "Hey, fellow Democrats, if you don't think George can hold the seat, how about writing, you know, show support for me and I'll run against him in the primary." I mean, Mitchell came in, he looked like a cooked goose, he really did. And people in Maine were not shy about really ladling it on.

So his first priority, and to some extent mine, was to make sure he got reelected. So the first half year, when George came, I did, I sort of ran the legislative shop for him because it was like catch up, catch up, catch up with everything, you know, sort of bring him up to speed. Not that, I mean he wasn't short intellectually, but he came in the middle of a year. We had debates on Nicaragua on the floor, we had stuff about the draft reform, Selective Service Bill up, we had the whole Cambodian thing imploding on us, you know, the horrors in Cambodia. We had a thousand and one stupid little amendments on appropriations bills having to do with immigration, having to do, you know, really arcane dumb stuff that you know perfectly well if you're a member of the Senate, but you don't know when you come in cold. So he needed a lot of, you know, minute by minute briefing on this stuff on the run, which anybody would coming in that way.

And then the year after that I, I spent two years writing newsletters to Maine. We sent seven newsletters for every man, woman, and child in the state of Maine. And that was in the days before postal patron mailings were permitted so we had names, every single one of them had names. I got, I could do a twelve, twenty-four hour turnaround on newsletters. We were fast. It worked. Some other time when you're not doing a Muskie [Oral] History Project, I'll tell you about my Mitchell newsletter operation, it was quite a deal back then. I mean, before computers, when everything still had to be typeset.

But, and then after that I became, I mean I started, I was always his speech writer. I mean I wrote, I started, he asked me to do that the day he walked in and I started doing it, the day he walked in. So I wrote speeches. And I got, he asked me to do the judiciary crap, which meant all the crappy issues, all your civil rights stuff, your gun stuff, your judges, you know, Borque, (*sounds like Pointsell*), Clarence Thomas, you know, really exciting things. And of course abortion, the perennial, you know. So I covered the judiciary committee for a while, I did communications, but mostly judiciary, and speeches, and pinch hitting whenever. I mean, my role in life was being to pinch hit, whenever.

**DN:** Looking back on your years with Senator Muskie, what was your general impression of him, number one, and number two, what impressed you the most about his legislative work?

**AJ:** The hard thing for me is looking back, because I had fifteen years in the Senate after Muskie, and I look back at the seventies, which I spent in the Muskie office, and it is so much like night and day from what the Senate became in the eighties, and certainly in the nineties, and what it was then. I sort of think, we were so innocent then. We believed there were laws, and that you had to, well we believed there were Senate procedures, and that you had to obey them. We actually lived like that. We really did it the way it was written down, and we were told that this is how you do things.

And the entire atmospherics of that office, which I think came straight from Ed Muskie, was that you would no more go into the AA's office and demand to be allowed to go on a junket, than you would have walked in the stacks screaming naked. It simply wasn't acceptable, right? You didn't casually sort of say, 'Oh well, you know, the China lobby wants to send me to Taiwan,' which is like a very common trip nowadays. Back then it simply wasn't done that way, it really wasn't done. So, you know, I think Muskie's last decade sort of was not, the divergence between a Senate where really the rules did apply, and where the members started bending them, you know? The Jesse Helms approach, you know. Like if you can set up a little organization over here to do a little fake, you know, grass roots crap, that's fine, it's not a problem. The fact that you're a senator and you're doing this is not an issue. Well, you know, I mean nowadays that's sort of like a bad joke. I mean, what would Newt Gingrich be without all these bloody little cloned organizations?

But back then, maybe I'm naive, maybe people were doing it. I just don't think so, you know. There were people, you would not imagine that anybody could behave like that. I mean a guy like Ed Muskie, a guy like Phil Hart, Hubert Humphrey, I mean you could take what they said at face value, sort of. I mean, I always felt you could take what they, you know, all politicians go on and on and on, but in terms of giving their word to each other, they meant it. And they wouldn't give their word if they didn't plan to do it, was the impression I had. I always had the impression with Muskie, if he said something to you seriously, he meant it. It was not really negotiable, you know. And it wasn't something, he didn't, he wasn't a man of light words, so he really didn't half-heartedly offer to endorse something. So when he said something it mattered, and he meant it. That's not something I would say I feel about very many of our senators today at all.

Orrin Hatch, you know, springs to mind, so to speak. But that's sort of, I mean it really, I really

feel that there was a huge difference, in the Senate, in the way the staff looked up to senators, or what they thought they could get away with with senators, back in the seventies than in the succeeding time. And, you know, who knows. I keep hearing where American culture has coarsened and yadda-yadda-yadda, so, it would be so simple if we could put it all down to that. But certainly the institution of the Senate changed quite dramatically in the early eighties, and again in the nineties I think, it really did change. And I would say I don't actually approve of the way it changed, but, and they're not asking for my approval, are they.

**DN:** Thank you very much, Anita.

**AJ:** You're welcome.

*End of Interview*