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## Buxton, Anthony Wayne "Tony" oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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# **Interview with Anthony Wayne “Tony” Buxton by Andrea L’Hommedieu**

## *Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Buxton, Anthony Wayne “Tony”

### **Interviewer**

L’Hommedieu, Andrea

### **Date**

May 12, 2000

### **Place**

Lewiston, Maine

### **ID Number**

MOH 184

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### **Biographical Note**

Anthony “Tony” Wayne Buxton was born in Augusta, Maine on December 19, 1946 and grew up in Readfield, Maine. His father Wayne Wilson Buxton, an artist and writer, and his mother Margaret (Murray) Buxton, an artist and teacher, both came from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Tony attended Bowdoin College, then served in the U.S. Army from 1968-1970. He received his law degree and began working for the firm of Preti, Flaherty, Beliveau & Pachios in 1980. He co-founded the Energy Law Institute. Tony has served for both the Democratic State Committee and the Democratic Party as Treasurer and Chair.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: Readfield, Maine community; Bowdoin College professors; Vietnam War; Maine Democratic Party; Maine politics; 1968 vice presidential campaign; 1972 presidential campaign; George Mitchell campaign; Ken Curtis administration; Central Maine Power (CMP); 1980 senatorial appointment; and Joseph Brennan.

### **Indexed Names**

Beliveau, Severin  
Booth, Philip  
Brennan, Joseph E.  
Brennan, Mary Kay  
Buxton, Margaret (Murray)  
Buxton, Wayne Wilson  
Chandler, Bruce  
Clinton, Bill, 1946-  
Coffin, Frank Morey  
Curtis, Kenneth "Ken"  
Duffey, Joseph  
Erwin, Jim  
Ford, Gerald R., 1913-  
Frost, Robert, 1874-1963  
Gallen, Hugh  
Goodwin, Dick  
Gorbachev, Mikhail  
Gore, Albert, 1948-  
Grandmaison, Joseph  
Greene, Theodore Meyer, 1897-  
Hathaway, Bill  
Hogland, Elizabeth  
Insul, Samuel  
Jalbert, Louis  
Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826  
Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973  
Kelley, Peter  
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963  
Kennedy, Robert F., 1925-1968  
King, Angus  
Kudlow, Lawrence  
Kyros, Peter N., Sr.  
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865  
Loeb, William  
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 1807-1882  
Longley, James, Sr.  
Martin, John  
McCarthy, Eugene J., 1916-2005  
McGovern, George S. (George Stanley), 1922-  
Merrill, Phil  
Micoleau, Charlie  
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-  
Monks, Bob  
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996  
Nicoll, Don  
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994

Payne, Fred  
Podesta, Anthony "Tony"  
Podesta, John  
Rather, Dan  
Reed, John H. (John Hathaway), 1921-  
Richardson, Harrison  
Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945  
Ross, Linwood  
Sahagian, Herman  
Smith, Margaret Chase, 1897-1995  
Thompson, Mary Rines  
Violette, Elmer

## **Transcript**

**Andrea L'Hommedieu:** This is an interview with Mr. Tony Buxton on May the 12th, the year 2000 at the Muskie Archives at Bates College. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Mr. Buxton, I'd like to start just by asking you to state your name, your full name, and spell it?

**Tony Buxton:** Anthony Wayne Buxton, B-U-X-T-O-N.

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

**TB:** I was born December 19th, 1946 in Augusta, Maine.

**AL:** And is that where you grew up?

**TB:** I grew up outside of Augusta in Readfield, Maine, about seventeen miles to the west.

**AL:** And who were your parents, what were their names and their occupations?

**TB:** My mother was Margaret Murray Buxton who was an artist and a teacher from Philadelphia. And my father was Wayne Wilson Buxton who was an artist and a writer from Philadelphia. My father came to Maine in the 1930s, 1920s as a child around Stonington, and when he and my mother were married, after she got off the ferry in Portland from Philadelphia, in Portland City Hall, they lived in Stockton Springs and then Augusta.

**AL:** And what was the Augusta, or the Readfield community like when you were growing up?

**TB:** Well, it was not unlike most Maine non-urban areas. It was agricultural and silvacultural. There were very few people from away. We were from away in the sense that my parents were not native Mainers. A large contingent of people worked for the state and some for Central Maine Power Company, but the, I'd say a solid majority of the residents lived by farming and by working in the woods.

**AL:** And what was the majority of their political affiliation?

**TB:** In the year of 1950, 1960, you know, the 1970s, the Maine rural landscape, including Readfield, retained a very strong Protestant farming Republican orientation. The organizations such as the Grange and the ladies' affiliates to the Grange and the Eastern Star and other organizations were very strong and the communities were very strong as communities. In fact, in my town of Readfield all elections were considered to be nonpartisan as long as there were only Republicans on the ballot. And it was a very solid Republican area. In fact, when I first ran for the legislature in 1970 there were more absentee ballots cast in the town of Wayne than live ballots.

**AL:** Okay. And so socially, what did people do in town? Were they members of these organizations?

**TB:** Yeah, it was an organization-based community. First of all, people worked, secondly, kids went to school, and virtually no one did not work. There really was no such thing as unemployment. If you lost a good job you took a lesser job, and there was always manual labor. In comparison to the current day, technology and machines were absent. I grew up learning how to, well, learning, I grew up using a shovel to earn my way and that was true of most people. Manual labor was readily available on the farms and in construction projects, and so there was very little unemployment.

However, there was no wealth either. It was a challenge for every family to buy a baseball glove or a bicycle for the children, and nobody really minded. I can remember getting on my bicycle and picking bottles in the road, Route 17 from Readfield to Winthrop --- it's not Route 17, it's 141--- from Readfield to Winthrop, and having to get most of the way to Winthrop before I got enough bottles to buy a baseball glove. And that's just how life was. We had a great time. It was an idyllic existence, there were many community activities, many more than there are now. There was no vicarious living, there was no television until I was about ten. And you know, you'd listen to the radio at night but not a lot, and people did things themselves. They did them directly, they did not live through other people as through television or the Internet or any of those things. So, when you wanted something to do you went and found somebody and did it, you went fishing or you went in the woods or, you know, you went for a walk or you got in a fight or whatever you wanted to do. It was a very direct existence and it was very healthy.

**AL:** Now you said there was a very strong Republican base in Readfield. Your parents, what were their political backgrounds?

**TB:** My parents were Republicans, and that was because everybody were Republicans, everybody was Republicans I guess. And my mother was active on the Republican town committee and she enrolled me in the Young Republicans. My father ran the, I think it's gubernatorial campaign of Herman Sahagian who is a famous person in Maine political lore and also in the libel and slander cases of Maine.

**AL:** Was he the one who owned the Fairview Wines?

**TB:** That's correct. And, a self-made man, and he reacted very negatively to being told by the Republican power structure that he had to pay, effectively, a bribe in order to get his Fairview Wines into the state liquor stores. And he used that in running in the Republican primary against Frederick Payne when Ed Muskie ran for the U.S. senate. And it greatly helped Muskie. I don't think there was any connection, but my father ran his campaign, and at that point my parents were Republicans.

**AL:** So they were pretty active as well.

**TB:** They were active; they were not true believers. I mean, you simply didn't have a choice in Maine. If you wanted to get somewhere as late as the 1970s in business in Maine, you had to be a Republican. There was no choice. And that level of rigor and prejudice existed in my experience into the late 1970s in Maine in various pockets.

**AL:** So, what sort of influence did your parents or their activity politically in the Republican party have on you growing up, and how did it, what role did it play in you forming your ideals?

**TB:** Well, let me deviate slightly from that and tell you about the first time I met Ed Muskie. I was, let's see, I was eight, Ed Muskie had been, eight or nine, Ed Muskie had been elected in '54 as I recall and my father was working for the state in the Department of Economic Development, which then occupied a balcony over what is now one of the, one of its hearing rooms. That's how large the department was.

Anyway, and my father was on a trip through western Maine with Ed Muskie on economic development issues and the car stopped at the house and I could see Governor Muskie through the window, and that was the first time I'd ever seen any political person. Because remember, we didn't have television, okay? So it was a different world, and seeing somebody in the flesh was much more significant than it is now. And it struck me how much he looked like the pictures I'd seen of Lincoln. And then my father came in the house and was obviously quite proud he was with the governor, and went back out in the car and left again.

My parents had very little effect on my political philosophy except that they believed in integrity and literacy and knowledge, and that was not unusual for parents in Maine at that time. Indeed, we'll talk about this I guess, but I think some of the reasons why Ed Muskie was elected in the first place were prevalent in my family, the desire for education, for a better life, for a young family and for education for children.

Education was extraordinarily important to my parents. In fact, that's why they moved from Augusta to Readfield so my sister could go to Kent's Hill School, a private school that had day students from the surrounding area of Readfield, because Readfield had no high school of its own. And that continues to this day for many towns in Maine where you can go anywhere you want if your town has no high school. So education was extremely important in my family, and the discussion of ideas became part of that. And that was to the great disadvantage of any political organization, Republican, Democrat or other, that was not young, alive, and in contrast was ossified, somewhat corrupt and inflexible.

**AL:** So when did you first become politically interested or active?

**TB:** I first became politically interested with the administration of John Kennedy. And for reasons I still don't fully understand, became very powerfully identified with him as a person, that is, I was fascinated by his charm and grace and intelligence. And when he was shot, it was a crystallizing event in my life. It was, first of all, an event that I had to write about as editor of the high school paper, and I can repeat to you today verbatim what I wrote, but I'll spare you. And what I wrote has guided my life ever since, the final line of which was, "May we have the wisdom and the courage to continue." And that's when it became clear to me that my interest in ideas was driven toward a fundamental interest and belief in the primacy of human liberty, the recognition of human dignity, particularly in women who were not and still are not properly recognized, and the right to achieve those results through the political process.

It seemed to me that the protests that America began to see after Kennedy was shot, and that continued through the rest of the 1960s into the '70s, were a healthy exercise of political rights and that that kind of system inherently was longer lasting, and properly so, than any authoritarian system.

And so during the time that America was in turmoil, I went through that turmoil as a person questioning the political process, questioning the war, questioning the role of business in public life, and it really began with the assassination of John Kennedy. And the song, "Bye, Bye, American Pie," is for many people like me an anthem of the development of our, of our political souls. I'm sorry to be so intense about this.

**AL:** No, that's fine, that's great. Where did you go from there? You, that sort of sets where your political interests came in, at what age did you start becoming active?

**TB:** Well, I went off to Bowdoin and I was active in a lot of semi-movements. We would, we called them movements then. They were the highest form of political activity but they were by today's standards ridiculous. You know, we shut down the school for a day in order to have women be able to come to our rooms and our dorms, the president countered by offering to have them come to the classrooms, I mean, it was just absurd. But it was a big step for us and we had marches and so on. Bowdoin was and I think is, as I'm sure Bates is, a relatively docile place when it comes to politics. But that was where my life was centered, and I worked my way through school and actually went to classes some of the time and spent a lot of time in the library reading books that weren't assigned.

But what interested me most was, continued to be the fundamental intellectual and political basis for human freedom. And every issue that came up in the sixties, whether it was civil rights, the civil rights movement, or the beginning of the environmental movement, or the beginning of the women's movement, I dealt with in the context of ideas and in relation to what just seemed so obvious to me, which was the natural right of human beings, of self-determination, and expression of their political preference and will.

And so, while I participated in some of these things, indeed in many of them, it was, I was trying to understand why people would oppose those things that seemed so obviously true to me. You

know, it's obviously true, I spent a month in Russia in 1985 when Gorbachev came to power, and it was obvious to me that the Soviet system would fail because they were wasting the intelligence of their people. They had two hundred million people who they did not allow to think, or at least to use their thought processes in any positive way. As a consequence, they had a handful of people thinking for a lot of people. It's an inherently inefficient system, because it does not recognize the supremacy of human reason and dignity.

So, I approached every issue that way in college. And when the elections came along in 1968 I was still in college, and Eugene McCarthy was running and he came to Bowdoin, and, being a very intelligent man, he came in and read poetry, including a poem by a Maine poet that remains one of my favorite poems today. And I became fascinated that an individual who believed in the kind of things that I believed in could have a substantial effect on the country. He didn't have anything; he didn't have any money, he didn't have a political organization, he just had an idea that the war was wrong. Of course I agreed with that, which made him much more interesting to me.

I then spent the next year analyzing the war and deciding what my role in it would be if I were called. And we went through the turbulent events of '68, culminating really in the assassination of Robert Kennedy. But every one of the violent acts that occurred in that time period, I think, amplified the Kennedy assass-, the assassination of John Kennedy to me, not in making me angry or discouraged but in forging my, my soul in a way, to fight that kind of injustice.

**AL:** Making you very determined about your beliefs and -

**TB:** Right. That's right. I mean, it seemed to me, quite frankly, that if the forces of ignorance or evil thought it worthwhile to take a good person's life to stop the recognition of human liberty and dignity, then the clear antidote was to be willing to give your life in the pursuit of those ideals. And over that year I formed a belief that I would do that, that I would dedicate my life to the recognition of those ideals. But there was this thing called Vietnam, and I was in ROTC, Army ROTC, at Bowdoin. I had always felt that if I were to serve, I had an obligation to serve at the highest of my abilities, and so I did ROTC, finding it incredibly boring, and endured the water bombs from the dormitories we would walk by during drill and all those things. All done in good humor. Some guys would skip drill to throw the water bombs.

And then, the only political event that I was active in was, Charlie Micoletau, who was then either at the Democratic State Committee or on the staff of the senator, got me to organize the Bowdoin Young Democrats one night at Bowdoin, and the next day to go to the Young Democratic state convention with a bunch of votes that we didn't deserve and vote for Charlie for president of the Young Democrats. So that was my, that was the first political event.

And then I just dealt with adjusting to what my obligations would be in the event I were called to go to Vietnam, and did not consider graduate school at all. I thought about it, you know, as whether I should apply or not and I concluded that I was one of the, you know, a lot of kids went to college from my high school class. Fewer went from the surrounding region, that is fewer of the natives went to college. A lot of them just went to work, and some of them went to work in the woods and some in the fields and some of them in jobs in their family's businesses. And I



knew that if I, if I didn't go, one of them would go, that's how the draft boards worked. And I didn't have any greater right to be exempted than they did. So, I decided I would go in the military and, after all our government didn't, was premised on defending the ideals that I had come to believe. And in the fall of 1968 I went in. Is that right? That's right, fall of '68. And ended up not being sent to Vietnam.

**AL:** You did not go.

**TB:** No, I was sent to Korea where I served in the Second Infantry Division on the DMZ for seventeen months, and then was, then came home.

**AL:** What was that experience like?

**TB:** It was a great experience. I really enjoyed the military, I was privileged to serve, I learned a great deal, and I met a tremendous number of good people. It's, it was my first experience in destroying stereotyping. And, not being the most worldly of people, probably a very important experience at that time. I assumed that everybody in the military would be gung ho, to use a military term, about the war, and they were not. What they were adamant about was that once you committed to do something, to do it right. They abhorred killing just as much as I did but they were in the military, most of them, for the same reasons, that fundamentally they felt that they had an obligation to serve a country that was the beacon of democracy and that the fact that the war was either wrong or poorly run or both, should not deter them. And so it was a very interesting experience.

I also learned a lot about leadership and organization, about, of the moral, the moral principles by which we ask people to follow, and what obligation that creates on the part of a leader. So it was a very edifying experience, and I enjoyed it.

**AL:** I have a, I have to backtrack just a second and ask you a couple questions about your time at Bowdoin College. Were there any professors who were particularly influential on you, not specifically in political, but in shaping your beliefs and your attitudes?

**TB:** Well Bowdoin was all-male at that time, a considerable detriment for any educational institution. But the professors were terrific. They were very good teachers as well, for the most part, as well as being learned. The, I majored in philosophy, and I think the person who affected me most was a ninety-year-old professor named Theodore Meyer Greene, who was one of the two or three leading scholars of Kant in the world.

What was remarkable about him was that he brought philosophy down to the personal level of decision-making for all of us. He counseled many students who thought they were conscientious objectors. He didn't have a bias one way or the other, but he made people go through the rigorous effort of determining what, whether they were in fact a conscientious objector. And lots of folks were looking for ways to get out of the war at that point. And he brought it down to daily life. In my final oral exam question he asked, "Do you have an obligation to stop a six-year-old girl from running out into the street and being hit by a bus?" That's the kind of question that I think we run into in all parts of our lives. The obvious answer that we say to one

another is “Yes”. But when you think about it you have to decide why you have that obligation and what it means to the rest of your life. He was extremely moral without being a proselytizer, he just sort of, it was like going and sitting with Socrates. Remarkable experience.

There were many others that were very good. The most important experience for me was to be able to go into the library and just wander, particularly in the rare book section. I once sat reading *Hiawatha* in an original version and I could hear the pulse of the Native American community, you know, in the poem itself. It was a wonderful experience. I wouldn't mind doing it over again.

**AL:** Was Longfellow one of your favorite poets?

**TB:** Yes, yes, Longfellow. Also Philip Booth of Castine, who's still alive. [A] truly remarkable Maine poet, a truly remarkable poet from Maine; far superior to Robert Frost. Robert Frost has, you know, fifteen or twenty really good poems and the rest don't qualify for roadside signs, but Philip Booth's poems are remarkably high-quality across the board. Bowdoin promised to teach me how to think and to express myself. And I didn't think they had succeeded until after I, until I left Bowdoin and I concluded when, I was in the military, that they had succeeded, despite my best efforts.

**AL:** And so at some point after your time serving in the military you decided on law school?

**TB:** No, what happened was I reached a decision about what I would and would not do for my country. I also concluded that having been sent to Korea spared me from death, because I am a relatively aggressive person and extraordinarily loyal, and the odds would have been very high that if in a, if a combat circumstance arose in Vietnam that I would have put myself at risk for others and not survived. I've never said this to anybody before.

So I had, I led a few combat patrols in Korea and there was combat in Korea, even during this time, in the '68 and '70 period, there was a lot of infiltration from the north and we were one of the units trying to stop that. And it occurred to me that I had an obligation to those who had not been spared, and as I shared in the obligation to serve, that I had an obligation to practice what I believed, to put all the thought that I had engaged in on an intellectual basis into practical reality. And so, I concluded that I would try to change the things in our society that I found to be unjust, including the mechanism that created the war.

So I decided to get into politics, and one day, one night I guess it was, I wrote Charlie Micoleau a letter that began with the lines, “From deep inside a foxhole, deep inside Korea,” asking him to find some way for me to get active, and become active in politics. And he suggested that I run for the legislature from Readfield, Wayne, Monmouth and Winthrop, which district had never elected a Democrat. I'm sad to say that I maintained that record.

In fact, in 1964 Ed Muskie carried the whole district by seven votes and Lyndon Johnson by three. It was a rock-ribbed Republican area. But what happened was, I applied for early discharge. In return for staying in a hardship tour in Korea, on the demilitarized zone, for an extra five and a half months, I was granted discharge relatively early, a couple months early,

rather than coming back to the States. I was discharged when I got back to the States immediately, and I immediately ran for the legislature from these towns, putting into action my commitment. And that's how I got involved in politics.

How did I decide to be a Democrat? There was no choice. At that point, Ed Muskie was a senator, Bill Hathaway and Peter Kyros [Sr.] were the two congressmen from Maine. Ken Curtis had been elected governor at age thirty-five. He was young and vigorous. Muskie was wise and experienced. The Democratic Party was alive, functioning, and not willing to accept the status quo. It railed against the establishment that had not done a good job in Maine. Maine at that time was run by a few interests, particularly Central Maine Power Company, and that remained true really up until the early eighties. And it was clear to me, from what I had read of Maine while at Bowdoin and in high school, that change had to occur and that the Democratic Party was that vessel of change. So I, that underlay my decision to contact Charlie Micoletau again and to seek political life.

So I ran for the legislature, I lost to a nice fellow, fifty-five/fifty-five, had a great time, and then went to work in the Curtis administration after participating in the 1970 Curtis recount where, which he won by some, you know, he won the election by some three to four hundred votes. And the recount took two months and was led by attorneys George Mitchell, Severin Beliveau, and Bruce Chandler, all of whom have become friends and mentors to me. And that was the start of my political activity.

**AL:** Now we're talking about 1970?

**TB:** Yes.

**AL:** And what position did you hold in the Curtis administration?

**TB:** I went to work for about four or five months in the state planning office doing some really interesting things, I thought, on focusing the energy of state government on solving problems that had plagued Maine for some time in a variety of areas, particularly in fisheries. And the Curtis administration was looking at ways to regulate over-fishing, ways to ensure that the resource would be there for a period of time, clearly decades ahead of its time. And had their warnings been heeded we would have perhaps not had the same problems we have now. And working with a group of people who included a woman who has since become my wife, Elizabeth Høglund, and some other folks who were fairly interesting, the Curtis administration was strongly committed to changing Maine government. And by the time I got there they were deeply involved in the first ever twentieth century government reorganization. For example, there were seven agencies that dealt with veterans, they combined them into one department, Veteran's Services. And there were many things like that.

In fact, because the executive council still existed, the governor really did not run the government. It was the executive council that really ran the government because the governor couldn't replace a department head, couldn't make major funding decisions even though the legislature had appropriated the money. It all had to go through the executive council. And it was a form of, well, it was an institutional vestige of Republican power in Maine. In other

words, you might be smart enough to get Ed Muskie or Ken Curtis elected, but you're not smart enough to get the executive council elected because the executive council elected because the executive council was elected by the legislature and the legislature was the product of a gerrymandered election process. Remember, this is just about the year that the United States Supreme Court began to speak in *Baker v. Carr* and *Reynolds v. Simms* about the malapportionment of legislatures and in particular the fact that they over-represented rural areas. For example, in Maine at that time, during Governor Reed's administration, a legislator from Rockland died. Governor Reed appointed his replacement. There was no election. These things were common and the Constitutional protections that we take more or less for granted now simply did not exist.

So there was no hope, really, of the Democrats actually controlling state government. They were just sort of a nuisance that the Republicans put up with and bargained with to get things to happen. Curtis was able, through his personal intelligence and charm, to make friends on the executive council and create a lot of change, one of which was this effort to reorganize state government.

**AL:** What was your impression of Curtis as governor? Do you have recollections of him?

**TB:** Oh sure, I mean, he was a great man, he still is a great man. He, he was the embodiment of the Kennedy ideals. From rural Maine, grew up in Curtis Corner not far from here, went to Maine Maritime Academy. He understood what it was like to grow up in rural Maine and have nothing, and yet still not advocate taking from other people to have something, but rather in devoting your efforts to be sure that everybody has a job and that they have an education, they have an opportunity. I thought he was exceptional. He brought a group of young people into state government, and some older people as well, who were really highly motivated. For example, they would take every plank in the Democratic Party platform, and then they were planks that were actually practical, and turn them into a piece of legislation and see that those pieces of legislation got into the legislative process. So that, year after year, term after term, there was constant pressure to have Maine progress forward structurally and institutionally, and substantially.

I think Ken Curtis was able to do more in his eight years as governor than any other governor in Maine history. Part of it was due to his personal appeal to individuals; he was very reasonable and fair. Part of it was due to his ethics; he was honest to a fault and straightforward and could be counted on by people. And part of it was due to his intellectual principles, his political beliefs. He believed in the right things and he carried those things out in everything he did. Now that's not to say he didn't get discouraged and occasionally angry, but he did some spectacular things.

Just to give you an example, my wife, before she became my wife, worked for him and established the first Office of Children and Youth Services, and it was actually within his office, it was in the governor's office. And she would go to rural areas to bring mental health services, some educational services for disadvantaged or disabled children, and similar things that state government was just beginning to create with money from the Great Society, to bear on the problems of children. And the problems were profound.

She went into many homes where there were dirt floors. She went into many homes where the younger children were clearly the offspring of the oldest son and the mother. She spoke at high schools to the older students about how it was not appropriate to have sex with your parents and actually had children come up to her and say, "You're serious, right, I mean, this is not right?" In fact, the area of Franklin county, Somerset county and north was a particularly difficult problem.

And that's the kind of poverty, a parochial, untended need, that Ken Curtis found and responded to. It wasn't a moral issue to him, it was a human health and dignity issue, and wherever he could he reached out for those people. That's a remarkable record that he compiled. You know, what Curtis did would not have been possible without Ed Muskie, but Muskie was a different kind of governor in different circumstances. He had to prove that it was safe to have a Democrat around, which he did.

**AL:** Which meant he had to be cautious and slow going.

**TB:** Right, right. He achieved a great deal, but he did it at a different time, a different era. Remember, it was '54 to '66, twelve year difference between Curtis and Muskie, and of course there had been one other Democrat elected in the meantime who did not hold office long because he died. Anyway, I'm wandering.

**AL:** So, is the next step to talk about 1974 when you managed Mitchell's gubernatorial campaign, or is there something -?

**TB:** Well, if you want to talk about Muskie we've got to talk about '72 and the presidential campaign.

**AL:** Okay.

**TB:** Okay. In 1972 I was hired to work for Elmer Violette who was then the senate minority leader in the legislature and had run in 1966 against Margaret Chase Smith and surprised the political world by winning some forty-four percent of the vote. And he was at that time an icon in the state. He was very well regarded, he was the most prominent Franco-American politician, and a person of substantial personal dignity. He had wanted to run for the U.S. senate again but Hathaway had announced against Margaret Chase Smith and there was no way that he was going to defeat Hathaway, nor did he want to.

So he decided to run for congress, the seat being vacated by Hathaway. And I was hired to organize his campaign, which I did for several months. And then under pressure from Charlie Micoleau and people in the Muskie campaign nationally, I agreed to go to New Hampshire and try to straighten some things out there. So I was in New Hampshire for the last six weeks of the presidential primary there, handling about a third of the state. And we could talk for weeks about this, but the most important points I would want to make to you is that I think the role, Ed Muskie's circumstance as the victim of the Republican dirty trick machine, run out of the White House, has really never been fully discussed publicly. It's been documented but not discussed at

length because it's a negative aspect that we don't like to think about.

I was there in Manchester when Muskie gave his speech against the owner of the *Union Leader*, Mr. Loeb, and when he did not cry. And I was watching TV that night when Dan Rather who, if you remember, had come to fame in America by being the reporter on the spot in Dallas when John Kennedy was shot, when he continued to make a name by dragging down another political leader and said that Muskie had cried. Muskie, and I was, I was standing not ten feet from him, right in front of him, and when I saw Rather's take on the CBS news that night I was stunned. Muskie did not cry. There's no question he was angry, but being angry is a virtue sometimes, not a negative.

With Muskie on the flatbed of the truck at that time were Louis Jalbert of Lewiston, John Martin of Eagle Lake, Severin Beliveau, I think Elmer Violette was there, and a few other Franco-American politicians from Maine. The event had been relatively hastily organized by the Muskie campaign, which was dominated by people who had worked in the 1970 campaign of the U.S. Senate of Joe Duffey in Connecticut. Some of those people are still very active in American politics, John Podesta is chief of staff at the White House, he and his brother, Tony, were sort of in charge of the campaign. Tony was older, Tony's a lobbyist now in Washington for a variety of causes, and he used to head up people for The American Way. And there were many, many people there who have gone on to some prominence.

But one thing they didn't do very well was go to the American Legion Hall and drink beer with the people who were going to be the voters. And I think that tells the story of the New Hampshire campaign of Ed Muskie. The people who were in the campaign were of a different culture than the people they were talking to, who at that time in New Hampshire were almost, I'd say, two thirds blue collar Democrats. New Hampshire is not an agricultural state, it doesn't have a significant forestry industry, it is an industrial state and the campaign simply did not properly reach out to people, it did not properly estimate the anger the people had about Vietnam, including the blue collar people. And the campaign got itself put in a position that it could not, where it could not win.

Joe Grandmaison, who ran the McGovern campaign, made the press believe that if Muskie didn't get fifty percent he'd lost, and he got less than fifty percent. But he obliterated McGovern. He beat McGovern something like three to two. But he didn't get fifty percent so the outcome, and that was really the end of the Muskie campaign. It continued on but it, starting poorly out of the block as it did, it did not do well. But my sense is you don't want to talk about the Muskie campaign at great length so I won't, but I just wanted to note that that was my involvement in the Muskie campaign in New Hampshire.

**AL:** Sure. Was there a sense, when, before the incident happened in New Hampshire, what was the sense of his bid for the nomination?

**TB:** Well, it was inevitability. He, he combined a number of characteristics that had not been seen on the national political scene really at that point since FDR. His speech in 1968 on election eve, written largely by Richard Goodwin and modified substantially by Ed Muskie, was a masterpiece of political discourse. It said that there were the politics of fear and the politics of

hope, and that Richard Nixon was advocating the politics of fear and that Ed Muskie urged people to embrace the politics of hope. And of course that was where all of us were ideologically. That truly was the difference between the political parties and it sent shivers of personal affirmation down the spine of most Democrats and really saved the Democrats in the congressional elections of 1968, I'm sorry, 1970, I had the date wrong, and catapulted Muskie into frontrunner status.

And that level of wisdom and ability to communicate were, was or were, greatly in demand in the country. But there also was the intensity of the anti-war people wanting to use the election as a referendum on the war. And while all of us were anti-war, it's like environmentalists, there were seven different kinds of anti-war people, as there are seven different kinds of environmentalists, and McGovern very successfully . . . .

*End of Side A*  
*Side B*

**AL:** We are now on Side B of the interview with Mr. Tony Buxton.

**TB:** The great weakness of the Muskie campaign was that it was the frontrunner. The Democratic party has since become a pastiche of insurrections, and of course the original insurrection was 1968 with McCarthy and then Kennedy, and then throughout '68 to '72 it was the reform, the quote, "alleged" reform of the Democratic party from the McGovern Commission, which only McGovern fully understood in the context of the political environment that existed at that time.

And so by the time we got to '72 people were much more into being insurrectionist than they were in being the status quo. And there was a whole new group of people who had come into the party because of 1968 and events since 1968. In fact, obviously all people who were in high school when John Kennedy was shot had gone to college and graduated and were now ready to get into politics, so it was a different world. And, there was a political structure in each state that was the traditional Democratic Party structure, that consisted of organized labor and farm interests and liberals. And then you have to put on top of that this vast number of people who were issue motivated by the issues of the late sixties and early seventies. And it was a tough environment.

And the Muskie people had to keep the regular party people happy in all fifty states, and court the other people, and that was an enormously expensive burden and required a centralized structure that I think weighted the campaign down and inevitably became controversial. And you've seen many examples, the latest being the Gore campaign, of how to fight that, i.e., the Gore campaign moves from Washington to Tennessee to get the hell away from all the people who want to give them advice so they can get some things done. The Muskie campaign had some leadership shifts, Don Nicoll's role was diminished, George Mitchell's role was increased, but those were at the top and not at the bottom. For example, when I say I ran a third of the state of New Hampshire, I did. I was the sixth person to run it in the course of a year. When I got there people said, "Oh no, not another one." And it took me days to win their confidence. And I did, including Hugh Gallen, who eventually became governor of New Hampshire and who was

very, he was the chair of the Muskie campaign in New Hampshire. But, all the time and effort of the other people was wasted, it was all gone, their efforts had been, had produced nothing because the . . . .

**AL:** What was the cause of such a large turnover?

**TB:** Well, being paid twenty-five dollars a week helped, I think, but a growing campaign, a campaign with shifting priorities, a campaign trying to be a very broad campaign that appealed to lots of people. And then McGovern had the advantage of the insurrectionist who basically says, you know, I agree with you, the following issues are the hot issues, and you don't have to look at the rest of his record.

Muskie had to have a position on everything of any consequence. When he came into my area to go to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, which is of course in Kittery we all know, but, to campaign there, he had to put out a statement on his view on the development of submarines as part of the United States Navy. In order for that to happen, that statement had to go through ten people, most of whom were in Washington, some of whom were some of the leading military theorists of our country. And here I am driving my Camaro down the road with this piece of paper that has his position on it that he hasn't seen yet, right? All McGovern had to do was go to Portsmouth and say, "I believe in submarines and I think we ought to end the war." Muskie had to have a position on the future of the U.S. Navy submarine force. It's a tremendous burden, and frankly not sustainable. And I don't think any candidate since Muskie has sustained it. The obvious exception would be Clinton in the second term, but Clinton's the first Democratic president to serve two terms since Franklin Roosevelt. So, you know, the burdens that were on Muskie were unprecedented and no one has since succeeded in carrying them as the frontrunner as well. We'll see how Gore does doing that. I'm wandering again.

**AL:** Well, let's go to your, the next significant thing in your political career.

**TB:** Well, I had decided based on the Muskie experience, and by the way I left the Muskie campaign after New Hampshire. I did not mesh well with the New Age people who had come out of the Duffey campaign. I liked them personally, but my idea of politics is establishing bonds with people and sharing in a common purpose, and they were more a television age, where you show a TV ad and get someone to agree with the TV ad. It had a higher calling to me and I decided that I didn't want to deal with it.

So I left the campaign, went back briefly at the request of a guy named Larry Kudlow, who had been the field director for New Hampshire and who has since become quite famous on Wall Street, for experiences on Wall Street and in his family life. And I worked briefly in the Massachusetts primary for him and for Muskie and then came back to Maine and ran for the legislature again. Again unsuccessfully. Being on the same ticket with George McGovern was a "wonderful" experience, and I would put wonderful in quotes. I spent more time explaining his position than trying to justify mine and I suffered the appropriate consequences.

The turnout was huge in the '72 election. In fact it was almost twice, in my district, almost twice what it had been in 1970. And we still had the, a pretty powerful Republican machine, a



growing Democratic counter effort, and the Republicans all voted and they voted for Republicans. So I lost that race as well, and wasn't surprised. I decided after that, that I wanted to run a gubernatorial campaign. And the question would be, whose? I knew Mitchell but not well. He had taken the Muskie loss really hard, he didn't like going around Maine and saying, you know, answering the question, "George, what happened?" And that's what he got everywhere he went. Clearly he didn't want to say what had happened, if he knew. So I didn't have any great relationship with him.

There were other people thinking about running, including Peter Kelley. I knew Peter well. Peter was a state senator from Caribou and I got involved with Peter establishing, attempting to establish the Power Authority of Maine that would have left, made the state of Maine the only entity that could build new power plants in Maine. It was a public power concept that came out of New York state, but was amplified by some New York lawyers to be more of a monopoly here. It was drafted as though it were a part of New York state law, which meant there were no environmental controls and there were a lot of things that were wrong with it. And we pushed it pretty hard, and what it was, really, substantially it was public power, but what it really was was the first political attack on Central Maine Power Company in Maine's history.

CMP had been formed at the turn of the century, and since about 1917 had been phenomenally powerful in Maine. CMP at one time owned Bath Iron Works, the Bates Mills here in Lewiston, all kinds of mills all over Maine. They built the Champion Mill in Bucksport, paper mill, they were an engine of economic development and eventually came to be owned by Samuel Insul, who later was convicted of stock fraud and became a symbol of the need for the Securities and Exchange Commission. But the point was that CMP had been very politically powerful for decades and we challenged that. We did it by initiative petition, collected fifty thousand signatures in the cold of winter. In fact, I remember collecting signatures on the steps of St. Augustine in Augusta and having the pens not write because the ink was frozen. It was a fascinating experience. That's a whole different set of stories. We lost about sixty-forty in the referendum, CMP spent a lot of money, it was pretty ugly, but it was the beginning of the end for the political power of the entrenched utilities.

At that time in Maine, if you wanted to run for office, you would go to, on your many stops, you would stop at CMP and they would have coffee with you and they would show you their latest poll and show you how you were doing. They had their own polling operation, their own political operation, they gave a fair amount of money, and they took no prisoners. They were serious, serious people. In fact, the *Maine Times*, when it began, used to do an annual survey of the most powerful people in Maine and it always involved the president of CMP. That has changed over time, and that's for the good. CMP's interests were not political, their interests were economic. But inevitably they were used by the power structure of the Republican Party as an asset and that's an inappropriate role for a business, particularly a monopoly business that serves the public good.

**AL:** I want to make clear because I may have not, I've missed what you said. But did their power, are they not as politically powerful because, in some way, their power decreased by political means, or their power decreased by legal, or the laws changed?

**TB:** This is a long story, but I'll tell the short version and answer your question. CMP's political power decreased because the institutional Democratization of Maine increased, okay? And that happened in a variety of ways. First, it happened by the election of popular figures like Muskie and Curtis who ran state government well and who could be trusted. Secondly, the reapportionment efforts led by many, and I've worked on every one of the reapportionments since 1970, reapportioned the Maine legislature so that there was one person, one vote, which gave power back to the urban and suburban areas, which tended to be more Democratic.

And so the first legislative election following the 1970 apportionment was the 1974 election when Mitchell ran. And Mitchell lost, but the Democrats took over the legislature for the first time since 1964 in the Goldwater landslide when they didn't even want to have. And they didn't keep it then, but they took it over in 1964 and, but I think for one two-term, two-year period since then the Democrats have controlled the Maine legislature, right. So you can see that the implementation of these political principles of respect for dignity and respect for liberty, when put into effect in Maine, changed the institutions of Maine dramatically.

In 1974 when the Democrats took power, the first thing that they did was they abolished the executive council. So then the chief executive became an executive, the will of the people expressed through the election of a governor actually meant something in terms of changing policy or creating policy. And the Democratic Party was really rolling; it was as good a political organization as this country has ever seen. I don't mean in terms of getting out the vote, it was very good at those things, too, but I mean in terms of soliciting ideas and turning them into policy.

For example, the platform hearings of the Democratic Party would go on in twenty different places at that time in a given year, and would involve some of the leading intellectual lights of the state of Maine. And they would listen, interest groups and citizens would show up and make their case for a particular policy, and if they were successful it went into the platform. And if it went into the platform, it went into legislative form. And if it went into legislative form it got in front of the legislature, and it might not succeed that year or the next year but it succeeded eventually if it were worthy. And when you think about it, the political process can't get much better than that. It was not dominated by money, it was not dominated by a particular group of people, it was a process. To some extent, that has fallen into disarray because of the weakening of the political parties in Maine, not just the Democratic Party. But that's another topic for another discussion.

I think it happened because of the change in the political institutions as affected by the leadership of the party. During this time, for your purposes, Muskie's role was that of a deity. He never, well that's not true, he hardly ever expressed his point of view. For example, in a referendum issue, it's very common now for the governor to endorse or oppose a referendum. Muskie would never do that, he would say, "I'm going to vote, people may know how I'm going to vote, but I'm not going to tell anybody how to vote." The result was that everyone was encouraged to have their own opinion. No one would say, well, King's against it or Muskie's against it, or Mitchell. It was, they were making up their own mind, it was the exercise of democracy.

That encouraged referenda and referenda flourished as a means of changing things, starting with the public power referendum in 1973 and then in the Longley years the Bigelow Preserve, and in a variety of other referenda. And since then they've become even more common. Muskie's role as a deity, however, was not the same as the role of the staff. The role of the staff, all of whom had a political personality of their own, each of whom had one, their role was significant in the party; they really helped recruit candidates, they helped raise money, they helped foster ideas, they helped make people from outside of Maine available inside Maine as examples of what good could be done through the political process. They were very significant. Easily as significant as the Curtis staff people, and some of them went back and forth.

There was, you know, mild antagonism from time to time but nothing like we see now in our congressional delegation. The roles of the congressmen were different; they were just campaigning full-time. But, for example, when I ran for the legislature in 1970, the first thing that happened to me was a fellow named [Linwood] Lenny Ross came to me, and he was in the Curtis administration. He said, "Well, Tony, you're a candidate, that's great. Are you a notary public?" I said, "No, I'm not, what the hell is that?" And he said, "Well you need to be a notary public to register voters." Everybody who was active in the Democratic Party then was a notary public, and everybody registered voters. And when you were sitting down having a beer with, you know, some college classmates who were getting together at reunion, you said, "By the way, are you registered to vote?" And you had registration and enrollment cards in your car and, you know, we registered tens of thousands of people every year.

I came to Lewiston in 1970 when the eighteen-year-old vote passed on a project with the League of Women Voters, dragging Republicans behind me screaming. It was all nonpartisan of course. And in one day we registered and enrolled the senior classes at St. Dominic's High School, which was then huge, Lewiston, and Edward Little. We added over fifteen hundred new voters to the rolls in one day in three hours. We registered a lot of people to vote during that era who were eighteen to twenty-one, and in every town. In fact, every candidate was a notary public, every candidate did registration drives and gradually we overcame the numerical advantage the Republicans had. How the hell did I get on to this, what was I talking about?

**AL:** That's okay. George Mitchell's campaign I think is, we were starting to talk about that. Why did he lose?

**TB:** Well, there are a lot of reasons why George Mitchell lost. Let me give you the history here. Mitchell was unknown when he started in 1974. He had a, I think a seven way primary, some people who were running for governor because it was a good thing to do, and some people who were serious. The most serious candidates other than Mitchell were Joe Brennan and Peter Kelley. The race ended up not being close because Mitchell was a very good candidate and very well-organized and raised enough money. Brennan had a lot of support, Kelley somewhat less, the rest of them were marginally involved. Erwin barely beat Harry Richardson in the Republican primary. Richardson was running as sort of a liberal Republican. Erwin had run a terrific campaign in 1966 for governor and a poor campaign in 1970 so he was very well known, and he just barely squeaked by.

During the campaign, Mitchell was initially behind Erwin because Erwin was better known.

Longley was not a factor, Longley started out with ten percent of the vote, it was all Lewiston, Androscoggin county, and a little bit in Lincoln county. And his numbers stayed ten, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, in that area, through all of our polling. Now, we weren't polling as often as you would normally poll now, which is every day. I don't recall how many we did but I suppose it was probably four or five polls in the course of the campaign, and there was some done by other, other people we had access to, I'm sure. And, on the Thursday before the election, two things happened. First, the *Sunday Telegram* completed a poll that showed that Mitchell was ahead by ten points over Longley and Erwin. Erwin was still in second place, but starting to fade. Secondly, the *Bangor Daily News* endorsed Longley.

Longley knew that the poll would come out in the Sunday paper so he did a television ad, last minute television ad, and used his business contacts to get it on television late on that week, and it came on on Sunday. And it, it was a wonderful piece of political advertising. It's Jim Longley sitting in a chair saying, "They say we can't win." Then in his Irish accent he said, "Let's beat 'em big." And it captured what was a growing hostility toward the political parties at that time very well. It was, 'let's tell the politicians they can't tell us who to elect.'

And we had won, Mitchell had won, every paper mill town in the primary. He lost every paper mill town in the general election. And the alienation of those workers is a, because of their alienation they're a good, I think, barometer of political alienation in society. Mitchell won everywhere in the state but Androscoggin County. Longley won only Androscoggin County and he won the election.

In retrospect, I think Mitchell lost because he was not an emotional candidate, he was an intellectual candidate, very rational, reasonable, intelligent. The poll, we did a poll after the election, I raised some money and Bob Monks' people raised some money and we went in on a poll. And the poll showed that Mitchell had met more than twice as many people as any other candidate and that most people rated him as the best candidate on the issues, but they voted for Longley. People would call up, you know, crying, saying, "I'm sorry, I voted for Longley, I didn't mean to do it, I just, I got in there and the devil took my hand and made me do it." Longley was a master of emotion; he's a master of the closing sales pitch. That's why he, at that time he insured one in every seven people in the state of Maine to his insurance company. And he knew how to persuade people and he did a great job. He ran a vigorous campaign, it was anti-government, and the fallout of Watergate was that the two parties, not just the Republican Party, but the two parties were in need of reform.

In a critical distinction that shows George Mitchell's integrity but not necessarily his political prowess, when Richard Nixon was pardoned by Gerald Ford, both Erwin and Mitchell said that the pardon wasn't in the national interest. Jim Longley said, "There they go again." And it really resonated with the people. It wasn't something that showed up on the radar, you know, of polling or anything, but I think it sort of set Longley apart and he ended up winning thirty-eight percent of the vote, I think Mitchell had thirty-five. There are others with better numbers, I'm sure.

It was clear to us on the Sunday night before the election that we were in deep trouble. My father, who was retired at the time, had been leafleting the Jay mill and came into the Jefferson-

Jackson Day dinner that was being held here in Lewiston and said, "Look," he said, "Tony, I've been at these mills for weeks, people are throwing things back in my face and they're saying bad things about Mitchell." That's, that was when it really hit home to me.

**AL:** That he hadn't reached them.

**TB:** Well no, he had reached them. It was that Longley had reached them, okay? That they were upset about Nixon, they were upset about Watergate, and they were going to take it out on somebody. And maybe Mitchell had reached them, maybe he had not reached them, but he certainly had not reached them emotionally. And that is an indication of who he was at that time, you know, a very cerebral person.

However, the first person to pick it up was Ed Muskie three weeks earlier. He had been, maybe it was two weeks, he had come in the state to campaign for Mitchell and he did his own schedule and did his own thing. And there was a debate being televised by Channel Six, and Channel Six was then owned by the family that owned it for many years, and Muskie was in talking to the woman, Mary Rines Thompson. So Mitchell and I waited for him to leave that meeting. And he came out and he looked at me, not at Mitchell, and he said, "Tony, there's a problem out there." He said, "I've been in Lisbon and Lewiston today and I've talked to a lot of Democrats who are voting for Longley and you've got to do something about this." And the difficulty with doing something about it was we weren't picking it up in our polling. But Muskie, being the supremely intelligent political person that he was, having a great understanding of people, picked it up first. And here Mitchell wasn't picking it up, okay? People wouldn't say it to him, but they would say it to Muskie.

So, you know, we did what we could. We never went after Longley. We had to count on Erwin not fading. And there had been, that balloon had been blown up many times, Jim Erwin's balloon, and the air was leaking out of it faster than we knew, and I think he got less than twenty percent of the vote. But whatever he got, it all went to Longley and we lost the truly alienated Democrats and a few more from Androscoggin County, and that was the story of the election.

In retrospect, it was an important building, character building experience for George Mitchell. He would not be the person he is today were it not for that loss. He went sort of into seclusion politically, became, as Ken Curtis might have said if he were asked, sort of a dead persona in politics.

**AL:** For how long?

**TB:** Three years. And, you know, there had been a kitchen cabinet in his campaign, I had been the campaign manager, and we continued to get together. And one of the issues always was, "Well George, what are you going to do politically?" And he had basically concluded he was all done.

But he had set about the task of ferreting out why he lost. And what perplexed him was that the formula that he had followed of addressing the issues rationally, progressively as others had done, had not worked. And I think he realized that his campaign had been too devoid of emotion

because, in fact, he had approached it as an intellectual problem, not as a cause. He went back and read, you know, Jefferson and Lincoln, many of the great liberal Democrat political thinkers of the ages and tried to put what was happening in America on the level of alienation and antagonism into context and understand it. And he did not emerge again until Muskie was, well until Carter won and he was appointed his attorney. And then of course when Muskie was made Secretary of State, he became Brennan's choice for the U.S. Senate. I assume others have talked to you about why that happened. Good. Anyway, I think that's why he lost and I think that's why he became who he became.

**AL:** Actually I should say I think, I don't know if their perspective or knowledge is the same as yours about why he became senator, or the senatorial choice.

**TB:** Well, there was a night when Mitchell won the primary in 1974, when he asked Peter Kelley and Joe Brennan and the others to endorse him at a press conference. And I don't recall who else came but I know Brennan came. He [Brennan] did so over the violent objection of his first wife, and he came to the press conference, he participated enthusiastically. On the way home with Mitchell, he was sitting in the back seat and he cried.

**AL:** Brennan.

**TB:** Brennan did. And Mitchell then understood how much of a sacrifice Brennan had made to come to the endorsement. And throughout his private life thereafter, Mitchell made a great effort to be kind to Joe Brennan because he respected him and Brennan's marriage ended, and this played a role in it.

**AL:** Is there a reason behind her adamancy against Mitchell?

**TB:** The Brennan campaign was a classic Irish campaign, okay? They had no polling, there was a lot of emotion. Joe was a good candidate, he was a very good candidate. He was young and handsome and very Kennedy-esque and they really thought they were going to win. In fact they had no clue how outgunned they were.

We went to the Democratic --- The first time they figured out that they were in trouble was with the Democratic state convention in May. When we got there, we had so many delegates supporting Mitchell, and then the state convention had two thousand people at it, that we didn't have anything for them to do. So we gave every delegate, we gave county chairmen and town chairmen from our campaign, cards with every delegates name on it; 'go find out who everybody's for'. The cards were back in two hours, and I think we had seventy-five percent of the delegates to the convention. And we had made no effort, no particular effort to do that, and that was an example of how well-organized we were. And Mitchell's television was as good as anybody else's, or better, and he performed well and he had a lot of friends. So the Brennan people really never, never were in the race in our view. They had a moment when they were clearly gaining ground but it wasn't close, and I think there were a lot of hard feelings.

In retrospect, the things that created hard feelings were minuscule events, they did not involve candidates, of course, they involved the staff people and supporters, but you know, they were the

usual things of tearing down signs and the kind of things that people get all bent out of shape about. We tried to keep all that stuff to a minimum but in a hot primary some things happen that you can't control. And I think Brennan's wife, Mary Kay, was a very competitive person, she was very bright, very competitive and probably advocated, I don't know this, I don't have any reason to believe this, but my guess is that people on the sidelines for Brennan advocated a harder role in the campaign, a harder line with Mitchell, and he probably declined to take it. I mean, the same thing happened with Mitchell, I mean every candidate gets urged to take a harder line than they ultimately take, that's why they're candidates and become public officials, because they have better judgment than the people who support them. So I think that's the reason.

Anyway, Mitchell was always grateful and was always kind to Brennan, and that extended to, you know, when they were practicing law again they cooperated on some cases. And I think they built up a mutual affection that, I don't know as I would call them best friends, but I think it, it's the kind of bond that people who have shared in a disappointment have.

Brennan became attorney general, of course, when the Democrats controlled, and so his star politically was much higher than Mitchell's, and it remained that way through 1978 and up to 1980 when effectively he rescued George Mitchell from the federal judgeship that all the rest of us would have died to have occupied. The only, the person that he could have appointed and was urged to appoint other than Mitchell was Curtis, but Curtis had endorsed Phil Merrill in 1978 for governor over Brennan and there were some very, very hard feelings over that. It was not going to happen.

**AL:** And it was also the Muskie influence of wanting to appoint Mitchell as well?

**TB:** Yes, yes, I think that had a, that had a role, but remember, Muskie had never done anything for Brennan in Brennan's mind. So, you know, 'thanks, thanks for your suggestion.' I was not, I've never been on the inside of the Brennan organization for two reasons, a) I was never invited, and b) I'm not sure there is one. But I don't think there was any condition that Brennan accepted or that Muskie attempted to make. I think he said, "I hope you appoint Mitchell."

There were other people who were being fairly seriously considered, John Martin was among them, and the Curtis people opposed Martin. It became a pretty, pretty rugged competition, but Mitchell was probably the best person to nominate at the time. Politically, Curtis might have been better, but in terms of continuing Ed Muskie's political vision and his approach to the world, there was nobody better than Mitchell available.

**AL:** Did you feel that Mitchell had learned a lot from Ed Muskie?

**TB:** Yes, yes, I mean, I think you've -

**AL:** Could you see it in their, maybe not in their styles or the way they thought or processed things?

**TB:** Well, both were extremely bright, and they were bright in different ways. Both were very

logical; Muskie was extremely logical, Mitchell was ridiculously logical. In fact, most of Mitchell's arguments centered on the device of reducing your argument, extending your argument to absurd levels so that therefore if it were not correct at an absurd level, it couldn't possibly be correct at a practical level. He's developed others since then. Muskie argued in a similar way.

Frank Coffin argues almost in Oriental logic, and I say Oriental in the positive non-racist sense, that is, it's what called the *neti-neti* in philosophy: if it's not this and it's not this, it must be this, and you can see that in Frank Coffin's opinions. That's a passive approach to logic.

Muskie was more aggressive, more on top of the issue and dissected things combining practical understanding and the application of reason or logical principles. Mitchell learned that by arguing with him. The stories are legion about Mitchell and Muskie getting into an argument when Mitchell was working for him. And they would argue for an hour and Mitchell would lose and he'd leave the room, and then he'd go back in and they'd argue for another hour, and they clearly enjoyed it. What Muskie did not transfer to Mitchell, which is very interesting, is the hands-on touch with people. And I don't know why that was the case, I think it may be that Mitchell was never exposed to, that much to Muskie at home.

**AL:** The early years.

**TB:** Well, to the early years and also Muskie at home, you know, with people. He had a personality that made people feel really privileged. Mitchell has since developed that skill, or let that part of his own personality flourish. And you saw that in particular in his reelection campaigns to the senate and in his work nationally on behalf of issues for the Democratic Party or Clinton or his own issues. And I think a variety of things contributed to that, that culminated in his being the first American that I know of to turn down a United States Supreme Court judgeship so that he could be in love. You know, that's the, the old George Mitchell never would have done that. And I'm personally pleased that he's progressed to becoming that kind of person, but I'm sure he is as well. He might not agree with my interpretation of it.

I think Mitchell benefited greatly from Muskie's contacts, and I mean that Mitchell became personally known to the establishment in Maine, both Republican and Democratic. He became respected, he solved problems for people, worked on issues, he picked up a fair number of clients from that experience. When he went to work at Jensen, Baird [law firm] he immediately attracted clients to that firm who had issues that needed his skills and they weren't particularly lobbying skills, they were in many cases litigation skills, so it clearly benefited him to be part of Muskie's inner circle. And he became the heir apparent to Muskie because there was no one else like him, like George, on the staff. Don Nicoll was a, in my view, a classic chief of staff. His personality was that of the senator. George was his own person, and while he served the senator I think he was thinking about his own future as well.

*End of Interview*