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Chandler, Nancy oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with Nancy Chandler by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Chandler, Nancy

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

August 13, 2002

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 361

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Biographical Note

Nancy Chandler was born in August of 1933 in Stoneham, Massachusetts. Chandler's family moved throughout New England, New York and Pennsylvania during her childhood. Her father was a salesman for several different companies including Proctor & Gamble and Frigidaire. She attended Bates College, graduating in 1955. After college, she helped with mayoral campaigns including one for her husband Bruce Chandler of Waterville, Maine. After working briefly in politics at the local and state level, she became a National Committeewoman for the state of Maine. While there, she was also appointed to the Charter and Site Selection Committees for the National Convention. During this time, she worked with Ken Curtis and George Mitchell. Nancy also belonged to the Democratic State Committee and worked on Senator Muskie's 1972 presidential campaign. She held an executive position for the Maine Bar Foundation where she met with Senator Muskie many times through the American Bar Association.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family background; Bates College in the 1950s; Chandler's interest and involvement in state politics; George Mitchell; Bob Hirshon; National Committeewoman years; Maine Women's Lobby; Ed Muskie campaigns; Muskie's temper; people who knew Muskie ; occasions with Muskie; Muskie's role on the American Bar

Association and the Maine Bar Foundation; leadership of the Maine Bar Foundation; Muskie family occasion at the Blaine House; and the Equal Access to Justice Award.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Nancy Chandler on August the 13th, the year 2002, at the Muskie Archives at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start by spelling, I mean saying your full name and spelling it for me, including your maiden name?

Nancy Chandler: My name is Nancy Ann Ramsdell Chandler. Nancy is N-A-N-C-Y, Ann is A-N-N, Ramsdell, R-A-M-S-D-E-L-L, and Chandler is C-H-A-N-D-L-E-R.

AL: And where and when were you born?

NC: I was born in Stoneham, Massachusetts, in August 1933.

AL: And did you grow up in that area?

NC: No, not really. I graduated from high school there, but we moved eleven or thirteen times while I was growing up. My father was in sales and so we were constantly moving around New England and New York and Pennsylvania.

AL: So your father was in sales? With what company?

NC: Well, it was a lot of different companies. He started out with Fridgidaire and he was with Proctor & Gambol, and he was with Spencer's Corset Company, and then he ended up managing the Boston distribution company in Boston. So, I never lived anyplace. The longest I ever stayed any place was six years in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania.

AL: What was it like moving around so much?

NC: Well, you know, when I was younger I thought it was an advantage because I had to make, I had to learn how to make friends quickly and that type of thing. But when I got married I wanted to be in one place when we raised our family, so we did that in Maine, China, Maine, in Waterville and China, Maine.

AL: And how did you decide on Bates College?

NC: Oh, you know a little bit about me, don't you? Well, they had a five year nursing program

back in the fifties, when I graduated from high school. And I looked at Colby, they also had one, and Bates, and Simmons, and decided that I wanted to be a little further away from home than Boston. And I was accepted at Bates, and it was a really great program.

AL: Did you have any prior connections to Maine before?

NC: Well, I'd lived in, I had lived in Auburn, I went to kindergarten in, I went to Mrs. (*name*) kindergarten, which was in Auburn. And I was in the first, I think, and second grade in Auburn, the Lake Street School. And then we moved away from here to Needham, Massachusetts.

AL: And were there any professors or people that you met during your time at Bates that really had an influence on you, or who you remember?

NC: Hm-hmm. John Donovan probably had the most influence. You know, I loved his government course, and he got me quite interested in politics and the political process. And after Bates, I was married at the end of my time here at Bates, and we went to Washington, D.C. Bruce was starting at Georgetown Law School, and that was the year that Stevenson was running for president. And I think that, you know, the motivation I received from John Donovan and my interest in Adlai Stevenson, it was sort of our first foray into politics and we were stuffing envelopes for Stevenson in Washington. It was a disappointing election.

AL: What was it about John Donovan that inspired you?

NC: Well, that's a good question. It's sort of, he just had a lot of excitement about the political process, and he knew a lot about Maine politics. You know, he was really, he had a feeling that everybody needs to be involved in government, and he just was very inspirational in that regard. He was an easy person to talk to, and I was very fond of him.

AL: And this was the early fifties, so it was slightly before Muskie ran for governor?

NC: I'm trying to think, I was originally in the class of '55 but, in the nurse, but it was a five year program so I was, so it must have been '50. I started at Bates in 1950, so I probably had my government course maybe in '51. We were here two full years, and then we were gone for two years to Boston to different, I had matriculated to different hospitals, and then came back to Bates for the fifth year. And I was married in between there, had to get permission from the president there to stay in the program married, if you can believe it, back then. And we didn't even have coed dining rooms, you know, when I was at Bates. That was a big issue on campus, the student council was trying to get coed dining rooms.

AL: Oh, see I thought that changed after the WWII.

NC: Veterans were here.

AL: Veterans came back.

NC: They were here, no, they were here but, no, we had no coed dining rooms. We ate in

Rand and the men ate in Commons. And the end result of the student campaign the student council had when I was here was we had one Sunday a month of coed dining. Isn't that kind of funny, when you think about it now. It wasn't that long ago, I mean '58 or so, right?

AL: Were you active in the student government at Bates, or did your activity really come after you went to Washington?

NC: No, I wasn't. We had a tough time with the nurses, I worked on the *Acorn*, no, the *Acorn*? That student paper, the *Bates Student*, yes, I did that. I don't remember, we didn't have a lot of extra time.

AL: Now, after the Adlai Stevenson campaign, what was your next political involvement?

NC: Well, we came back to Maine, after Chris got out of law school, and we settled in Waterville, and I started working on the mayoralty campaigns, you know, Waterville elections. It was a really political city, and they had a lot of people for the elections. There were seven wards in Waterville, and councilors ran, city, you know, the city had a, was run by a city council and mayor system, so there was a councilor elected from every ward. So I worked in those elections. And then my husband ran for mayor and I worked on his campaign. And then I think I got elected to some, secretary or something of my ward and was on the city council for a while.

And then we moved to China, and my interest shifted. There wasn't a lot of, China was a Republican town and when I went to register to vote at the town clerk's office, she had no Democratic enrollment cards. And I was wild, and she said, well this is the only card she had, and I needed to sign up as a Republican. Well I knew, fortunately, I knew enough by then that I didn't have to sign up to be a Republican, so I requested more cards, and said I'd get my own card. So I went to the state headquarter and got cards.

And I think I was on, I was on the state committee I think by that time, I had run for the state committee from Kennebec County. And I was on the state committee for probably four years, and then ran in 1972 for the National Committee. And I was on the National Committee for eight years.

AL: Oh, so you were on our National Committee woman from Maine. And how many did they have?

NC: One.

AL: Just one.

NC: One, one woman and one man. And the state chairman and the vice chairman were also members of the delegation. So we actually had four votes in the National Committee.

AL: Okay, and was Severin the chair at that time?

NC: Yes, he was, yeah. He was just elected chair. For a while I served with George Mitchell,

he must have been the National Committeeman, yes, he was. So Severin was the chair, Vi Pease was the vice chair, and George and I were the votes. And George was on the executive committee, and two years I think into my term he didn't run again for the National Committee, and then I ran for and got elected to the executive committee when Bob Strauss was chair of the National Committee. I was on the executive committee for most of the time I was on the National Committee.

AL: And who was Bob Strauss?

NC: He was chair of the National Committee. He ran against George Mitchell for chair; George lost by one or two votes, tough loss. We were up against a lot of money, a lot of chocolates, and a lot of roses.

AL: And what was it like, did you get to know George in that capacity?

NC: Oh yes, oh yeah, well George is from, you know, basically from Waterville and we were good friends. He came back to Maine about the time, a little after we came, maybe a year or two after we settled in Maine, George came back. He was working in Washington, but wanted to live in Maine, and he came back and got involved in Maine politics. He was chair of the Democratic, oh, you probably know all this from other interviews, but he was chair of the party.

AL: Did you see him develop over the years?

NC: Oh, definitely.

AL: I'd like to have your perspective on how you saw him develop politically and personally over the years.

NC: Well, George was always, I think he mellowed quite a lot, you know, he became less uptight, shall we say, let his hair down a little more. He, you know, you got, he was just so smart and he always had such great ideas, and when problems, political problems would come up or issues, he always was able to mediate and find a way that, you know, both sides could come together happily. It was very interesting to me to think about him being AA for Senator Muskie, knowing some of the grief he took in that job, you know, and then seeing the respect he had for Senator Muskie, and then tremendous amount of respect. He said he would never have, he learned a lot in that job and he never would have given it up if, you know, despite some of the difficulties he had with the temper and other things that he had to deal with.

AL: Did he ever relay any of those examples to you?

NC: Oh, yeah, oh, we've heard a lot of stories from George about Senator Muskie, but I don't remember too many of them right now.

AL: So you were involved in the mayoral, and then you went to the state level, and National Committee woman. What was it like at that level, exactly what was it that you did, how did you, did you represent the state in -?

NC: Yeah, I used to bring reports back to the state committee. We sent, we put articles in the state newsletter so that the county people could, you know, people would be aware of what was going on. We tried to make it more realistic for people in the grass roots about what was happening on the national level.

The most interesting thing to me, I think, was when I first started, went to the meetings, and saw and met all these people you read about in *Newsweek* and *Time* magazine, and learned that they were just like us, you know, just like everybody else that was working in politics on the state level. You know, it was very interesting to meet people like David Broder, and go to the White House, you know, for events and that kind of thing and, you know, it was just interesting, very interesting. I really enjoyed it a lot. And I was very lucky, I got appointed to, when Bob Strauss was chair, he appointed me to the site selection committee, which was very interesting. We got to tour all over the country to the cities that were bidding for the National Convention. Then he also appointed me to the charter commission, and we wrote the first charter for the National Committee, and I worked with Terry Sanford and got to know him really well. I enjoyed that job very much.

And then Ken Curtis was chair during Jimmy Carter's administration, and I was on the executive committee during that time as well. So that was interesting working with Ken on a different level from being governor of Maine. And he appointed me to the site selection committee, too, and so that was nice, I enjoyed that.

AL: What was it like working with Ken?

NC: We worked very hard. When I was on the National Committee there was not equal representation of women and men on committees. And so we formed a women's caucus, Karin Horbel, a woman from, a National Committee woman from Minnesota and I, formed a women's caucus where we really, we got all the women on the National Committee involved. And other women like Bella Abzug, and Gloria Steinem, and Betty Friedan, we had some of those women involved in helping us, Millie Jeffrey, some of those liberal women helping us to try to bring pressure on the officers of the National Committee to recognize women more and to give them more positions of power in the National Committee, and so forth. And we were successful in that effort, Bob Strauss was, you know, he was pretty amenable to doing that, and so we ended up with equal representation of women on the executive committee, and he appointed some women chairs of different committees. So it was worthwhile.

And we started holding regional women's conferences, and the first one in New England we organized from Maine, and it was held in Faneuil Hall, and I had a committee here in Maine of some of the women leaders in the state, and we had women from Massachusetts on the committee, and New Hampshire, and it was, and we had, Bella Abzug was the keynote speaker, and Barbara McCulsky, it was some really, Helen Hagan Douglas came from California and spoke, so it was a big draw and we had it at Faneuil Hall. Kevin White was mayor of Boston at the time, and so we had all the facilities of his office at our disposal. And it was really, yeah, it was, those were fun times.

We had some conferences for women in Maine as well, that we held in Augusta for the women, you know, potential political leaders and candidates and that kind of thing, to try to get women feeling more comfortable with the political process and willing to run to be delegates and that type of thing.

AL: And did you see an increase in women's participation?

NC: Yes, we did, yeah, uh-hunh, we did. And we, of course on the national level the rules got changed, so that delegates had to be equally divided to the National Conventions between women and men. So that became, the states had to comply with that as well, and so we saw that happen in Maine. When I was first in politics I can remember wanting to go to the National Convention. There was no election of delegates. A group of men got together behind the stage in Waterville, sat around in a smoke filled room, and decided who was going. And it was not a good scene, you know, lots of times they would pick a particularly attractive woman to be a part of the delegation, there might be one token woman and the rest would all be men who knew each other and who were buddies. And I was just sort of repulsed by that whole thing and decided that I wanted to do something about it, so I really did work hard on that. And there were a lot, I had a lot of help. There were a lot of women in Maine who worked on that effort, Liz Hogle and Evelyn Russell, and Vi Pease, and Maralyn Schoenberger from Penobscot County. There were a bunch of us that were active in that effort.

AL: And, I'm not sure exactly what I'm asking, but the Maine League of Women Voters, did that come later?

NC: I don't know. I never, I was too partisan to be part of the Maine League of Women Voters.

AL: Okay.

NC: You know, they really required that you not be political, and they weren't politically involved in either party. They discussed issues, primarily. So it was the women's lobby that came about as, you know, to, that was another later development in terms of getting women involved politically. The women's lobby raised the money for women candidates, and sought women out to run for political office in Maine. That was a wonderful group.

AL: Yes. Was Janet Mills part of that?

NC: Janet Mills was part of that, she was.

AL: And Cynthia Beliveau, or maybe not?

NC: Cynthia was sort of, I don't think she was a leader in that, but she was, you know, she contributed money and that. She may have, I don't really know what her involvement was in that effort, but it was Janet Mills, and Betsy, Dale McCormick and, I'm trying to think of Betsy's last name. She was really one of the prime movers and shakers. Linda Dyer, Barbara Alexander was involved in that. That's all I can think of right now.

AL: And that was more partisan?

NC: Women's lobby, yes, that was all pretty much, pretty much all Democratic women, as I remember it. But it was a state wide group; they met in Augusta and had their fund raisers in Augusta. They really did seek out women candidates, and had workshops to help women learn how to run for public office and that type of thing.

AL: Is it still active?

NC: Yes, very active. I don't know who's, who the officers are now, or who's in charge of it.

AL: What's the next thing to talk about in terms of your involvement that you think is significant?

NC: Well, I thought we were going to talk not about me, but about Senator Muskie.

AL: Okay, and so what's your first recollections of Senator Muskie?

NC: Well, he was a wonderful speaker, but very imposing man.

AL: Do you remember when you first heard him speak?

NC: I can't say that I do. I can't say that I do. But we were delegates to the state convention in Maine, and I think he always was a speaker at the state convention. So in all probability that's probably the first place I heard him speak, probably.

AL: And then what were your other connections or interactions with Senator Muskie over the years?

NC: Gosh, there are a lot, a lot of them. We worked on his presidential campaign, went over to New Hampshire, you know, car loads of us went over and knocked on doors, and did that kind of grass roots thing for his presidential campaign. When he, when I was on the state committee, he used to speak, he spoke to the state committee a few times.

When, I think it was his third time that he was running for the Senate, and he had not been, in the intervening six years, he had not been coming back to Maine as much as he previously had, and there was a lot of feeling among people in the state that he'd lost contact with the voters and, the people that were enthused about his candidacy, and so forth and so on. So we sent word to him, I think through Charlie Micoleau and Severin, that he needed to sort of come back and meet with people. And he just didn't understand that, and he didn't appreciate it at all. But he came back, and I remember a meeting we had at the Steer House in Winthrop, Maine on a Sunday afternoon and there were a lot of us from the state, Kennebec county delegation for the state committee there, and our county chairman Ted Russell was there, and Beverly and Dave Bustin, and Charlie was there. I can't remember all the people that were there. Norma Mann I think was there.

And so Senator Muskie was asking what the problem was, and we told him what the problem was, that he hadn't been around much and he hadn't been, and he hadn't, you know, the people had lost, he'd lost touch with the people of Maine. And he was just livid, and he went into a tirade about all he'd been doing for Maine, of course from Washington. I mean he, physically, he hadn't actually been back here, and he couldn't understand why nobody appreciated this. I mean, he went into one of his real tirades. And one woman at the meeting, and I don't remember who it was, left the room in tears, she was so upset at what he, you know, she'd never seen him erupt like this before and a lot of the rest of us had and, you know, we just took it in our stride.

And when he got done we told him, again, what he needed to do, that he had no women, for instance, on his staff in Maine or in Washington that were visible, you know, there were secretaries and that, people who answered the phone. But there wasn't anybody in a leadership position on his staff. And he did listen, and he did take some action and he appointed Beverly Bustin [Hatheway] as his field representative in Maine, and he got some women involved in his campaign. And shortly after that he hired Madeleine Albright, and you know, things like that began to happen.

I'm not sure it was all related to this meeting, but I think he became aware, you know, I think we sort of helped him recognize that the world was changing, you know, and it wasn't just going to be all men who were going to be in leadership positions any more. I always had just tremendous respect for him, learned a lot from him, and was just amazed at the way he could, you could hear a pin drop when he spoke, no matter whether there were a thousand people in the room or ten, you know, he, people listened and paid attention to what Senator Muskie had to say.

AL: I'm thinking of that story you just told. Could the woman who was upset been Pam Scarcelli?

NC: Yes, you know, it could have been Pam. I was trying to think today who it was. It could have been. In fact I think it was Pam Scarcelli, she was on the state committee at the time. So it must have been more than Kennebec County people at that meeting, because I think she lived in Wilton.

AL: She would have been from Franklin County.

NC: Yes, yeah, yeah, I think that's exactly who it was. Hard to believe, knowing her now. Yeah, that was her first encounter with Senator Muskie.

AL: Well, of course, you're not expecting it I suppose, yeah. And you mentioned Norma Mann. I've never heard of her before, who was she?

NC: She was the, well she, she may still be the registrar of deeds in Kennebec county. She was on the state committee from Kennebec County, and she was an officer on the state committee. I think she might have been secretary or treasurer, I'm not sure which, but I know she was an officer. She worked very closely with Ted Russell. Have you interviewed Evelyn Russell?

AL: No, who is that?

NC: You ought to put her on your list. She was the wife of Ted Russell, who was the Kennebec county chair for years and years and years. And Evelyn was very, very active in politics, and she worked, you know, she was just a solid, dependable worker.

AL: She still live in the Waterville area?

NC: She lives in Winslow on a, or, yeah, I think it is, it's on a farm, family farm. Her husband died and she's been living on this farm, and I think some of her kids live with her.

AL: I wonder if that's the Russell family that was close to Floyd Harding?

NC: Now, well no, they all, we all knew Floyd, they knew Floyd, but I don't think that, I don't think so but I don't know, you may know the answer to that. It's so interesting you knew, somebody else must have told you the same story about that meeting.

AL: I've heard a little bit of it, and I, but it's good to drop her name and see if it reminds you.

NC: Yeah, that's really interesting.

AL: And Maralyn Schoenberger, who's the wife of a University of Maine professor.

NC: Who died.

AL: He's passed away, and she's still living?

NC: She is.

AL: In the Orono area? Do you think she would have things important to talk about?

NC: She may have been at that meeting, yeah, I think she'd be very (*unintelligible word*).

AL: But in general she would be pretty informed?

NC: She would be; she was on the state committee for quite a while. Yeah, I think she'd be a good person to talk to. She was a, also on the rules committee at the National Convention, in 1972 I think.

AL: Now what instances did you interact with Senator Muskie, and have recollections of?

NC: Oh God, there's been a lot of them. It's, probably Bruce told you about the dinner we had in Philadelphia where he blew up at me?

AL: Yes.

NC: Over Bobby Kennedy?

AL: Yes.

NC: We were talking about the Kennedys and I was exclaiming over what a wonderful attorney general he was, and Muskie erupted in this restaurant. I've forgotten, we were out to dinner with Bob Hirshon and the senator, and I don't remember who else was with us, it may have just been the four of us. But I sort of think there was someone else. And he said that Jack Kennedy had no right appointing Bobby Kennedy, it was purely nepotism, and he was ranting on about it. So, and I just, I argued back with him and said that I thought he was wrong, and of course he didn't like that. You don't win any arguments with him.

AL: No.

NC: No. Did you know him?

AL: I did not know him. But I've interviewed enough people to know.

NC: It was fun, it was a wonderful, fun evening. We picked him up in a limousine. Bob Hirshon was president of the Maine Bar Foundation, or the Maine State Bar Association, one or the other at the time, but I think the Association. And he picked, he had a limousine given to him by the American Bar Association, and so we picked Muskie up at his hotel in a limousine. He was to be ready at a certain time. We got there and Muskie was having a nap. So Bob went in and Bruce and I waited quite a long time in the limousine for him to come to, get dressed, and be ready. And then he took us to, before dinner, the senator had some friends in Philadelphia, and I can't remember who they were, they were heavy contributors to his political, his presidential campaign, and they had invited him for a drink before dinner. And so he took us with him, and we went to this really nifty apartment in Philadelphia and ran into some other people from Maine who were also there. It was fun. But I just don't remember their names. Carole Parmelee probably knows who it was, but I don't remember.

And Bob Hirshon was very instrumental, or was the person, who got the senator involved with the American Bar Association. Up to that point in his life, he had not had any involvement with the Bar Association that I am aware of. And Bob and the senator hit it off like I have never seen. It was like a father-son relationship. He just adored Bob, and Bob felt the same way about him. And he stayed at his home and got to know his family well, and I remember going to his son's Bar Mitzvah, and the senator and Jane came to that as well. They became really close friends, and he might be somebody you want to talk to.

AL: Yes, he's on our list. How old was he at this time?

NC: Bob was married and the father of two children, so I would say he was -

AL: Mid-thirties?

NC: Late forties.

AL: Late forties.

NC: Maybe, or mid-forties. He's now the president of American, yeah, interesting, from Maine. Yeah, yeah, and he got the senator on international relations committee at the Bar, so that brought, started bringing him to ABA meetings, and then so we, I used to see him more frequently because when I was exec of the Bar Foundation, our meetings coincided with the ABA meeting.

AL: So the Maine Bar Foundation meeting coincided with the ABA meetings in Maine?

NC: Our national meetings. When the Bar Foundation directors of each state got together, we got together at the same time the American Bar Association had their annual meet-, biannual meetings. They met in February and maybe October, I guess it was, or September. It was twice a year and met in different parts of the country.

AL: Now how did you become, come to be in charge of the Maine Bar Foundation?

NC: Well, it was a brand new position that the Bar Association was advertising. They wanted to separate off the Bar Foundation from the Bar Association and make it a 501(c)3 organization that could raise money to help poor people to have access to the judicial system. And they, IOLTA had just come in to being interest on lawyer's trust accounts. I don't know if you're familiar with that concept, but in a law office there is a client trust account that doesn't earn interest, and it can't accrue any interest that can benefit the, either the client or the lawyer, and those funds from all the different clients are merged into one fund that sits in a bank someplace and earns no interest. So the bank really ends up being the victor here. And somebody had the bright idea that we could earn interest if that interest went to bar foundations and helped poor people have access to the system. So banks naturally fought it, but eventually it became adopted, and there's been a couple of Supreme Court cases that have been lost on the part of people interested in not having IOLTA succeed.

So they wanted to get that program started in Maine and they were looking around for somebody and they advertised, and Ed Bonney called me, he was executive director of the Maine Bar Association at the time, and I had known and worked with him for many, many years because he was executive director of the Maine Democratic Party for a long time, all the time I was on the state committee, and I'd known him for a long time. And when I was executive director of the Maine Nurse's Association, I used to see Ed at different meetings and, you know, we kept up our friendship when we, when he left the Democratic Party and I went to work for the Nurse's. So he said, you know, you might be interested in this job. So I looked the ad over and talked with Ed a little bit about it, and talked to Bruce about it, and I decided maybe I would apply. I had been at the Nurse's for ten years and I wanted a change. I think, my feeling was ten years in one job is, you get kind of, you start to get kind of stale. So it seemed like an interesting challenge, so I applied for the job, and Howard Dana was head of the search committee and he called me the same, that evening after I had my interview, and said I was hired. I started out in one room over the Bar Association, and we later grew, and now the Bar Foundation's located in a different building in Augusta. But we got the IOLTA program off the ground, and once that program was

launched, then the next logical step was to do a legal needs study of the poor, find out what the poor people were lacking and what they needed in Maine.

So that was when I think I called George Mitchell. He had just finished being majority leader of the Senate, to see if he might be interested in heading up this project in Maine. We were looking for a luminary, somebody that would attract some attention. And George had other fish to fry at the time, and he suggested Senator Muskie. He said that he thought that Senator Muskie might be interested in getting back in touch with Maine people. Well, I was just so thrilled to think maybe Senator Muskie might want to do it. Shortly after that conversation with George, we had a Bar meeting, a winter Bar meeting, was in Denver, Colorado, and it was a very cold meeting, and Senator Muskie was there. And I had talked this over with Bob Hirshon, who was president of the Bar I'm quite sure at that time, and Kinvin Roth who was president of the Bar Foundation, and he was also Dean at the law school at the time, and we all thought it was a great idea to see if Senator Muskie would be willing to head this study up.

So we invited him to dinner, he was at the Bar Association meeting, and we invited him to dinner in a hotel in Denver, terrible cold, snowy, awful evening. Senator Muskie came, wasn't feeling well, had a bladder infection, his sister had died either that day or the day before. He was down in the dumps about that, feeling very blue. I remember he got up two or three times during dinner because of this bladder infection, and it just didn't seem like a very good time to be presenting this project to him, but it was our only shot to see him in person, all of us. So we went ahead and outlined our ideas and plans with him, and he said he wanted some time to think about it and that he would let me know, or I could call Carol in a couple weeks and see what he'd decided. So a couple weeks went by, and I'm kind of vague, but it seems like he might have called and I might have talked to him on the phone, some questions about exactly how we saw this thing unfolding and, I think I did talk with him a couple times about it, and Carol as well. And then he agreed to do it, and he wanted to have a hand in how we were going to orchestrate getting the information.

It was his idea, as I recall, to have public hearings, and we scheduled seven public hearings around the state. We put together a board for this project. I don't know as we called it a board, we might have called it a steering committee or something of that nature. We had a lot of, you know, we had the Chief Justice and we had, you know, a lot of big name people. The governor was an honorary co-chair, Governor McKernan. And it was a very high powered group of people.

Anyway, we plotted out this legal needs study and how we were going to go about it, and the core thing that we did was this, these public hearings. And we had questionnaires that went out to legal service attorneys and people that represented the poor, and some of the organizations that, community organizations that, you know, I forget now what they were called, that worked with poor people and helped them become organized and taught them how to get their rights.

AL: Let me just stop and flip the tape over.

End of Side A

Side B

AL: We are now on Side B of the interview with Nancy Chandler.

NC: And then my work with Senator Muskie was very intense for the next three years. You know, I talked to him frequently, he came to Maine many more times than I ever envisioned that he would. He took an extremely active role, and I think he was very glad to get back to Maine and mingle with the people. We set things up so that most of the time he stayed overnight with either old friends like Charlie Lander, or with some other people that were involved in the project, you know, that he could talk things over with; very infrequently did he ever stay in a motel. When we went out to the public hearings, some of those times we stayed, he had, we both stayed in motels. But most of the time he stayed with friends.

And he chaired the public hearings for the most part. I think there was maybe one or two hearings that he couldn't get to for one reason or another. He worked it out with his law firm in Washington so that there would be no expense to the Bar Foundation for his coming and going from Washington. And initially, he came on I think it was the Bar Harbor Express or something, a little small airline, and I can remember meeting him in Bangor. The first hearing was in Machias but he wasn't able to go to that hearing, but the second hearing was in Aroostook County, in Presque Isle, and I remember picking him up in Bangor, and he got off that plane and he said to me, "Never again," he said. "You can't take somebody my size and put them on an airplane like that. Don't you ever schedule me on that airline again." From then on, we had a car pick him up in Boston and bring him up to Maine, and he was much more comfortable with that arrangement and it was just so. Sometimes he could fly into Portland, but other than that we had a car for him because it just was hideous for him, and so uncomfortable, and he was just miserable. I can remember that he was standing, talking on the phone for some reason. He had a phone call in the airport while we were waiting for the luggage, and his luggage was going around on the corral, and I didn't know what his luggage looked like. It was the first time I had been picking him up for this. And he hollered, put his hand over the phone and hollered over to me to go get his bag, and I looked at him and I said, "I'm not going to get your bag, I don't even know what it looks like. Maybe you should let me hold the phone and you go pick up the bag." And that was the last confrontation we ever had for the next three years.

He was just, we had a really nice time on that trip. And I had a little Saab, a little red Saab, and I worried about whether he was going to be able to fit in it or not, but he was quite comfortable in that Saab and drove all over Aroostook county, we had two different hearings up there. And he just talked a lot about his political campaigns and his family, and it was just a very sort of intimate time in terms of getting to know him, and I really enjoyed that a lot. And I learned a lot, and I learned a lot about him and I learned a lot from him. And we had, I learned a lot about his personal habits which kind of amused me. He used to tell me all the time that he'd given up drinking martinis and that he only drank wine, and I noticed whenever we got the restaurant, first thing he ordered was a martini. So, it's talk, and his actions never sort of did jive. But I learned what he liked to drink, and I used to carry a bottle with me, and when he'd get in his room I'd let him get settled for a few minutes and then I'd wander over, knock on the door, give him his liquor so he could at least relax and have a drink before he had to go out and have dinner and stuff.

And in the mornings I used to get a kick, I'd pick him up in his room and we'd go out for breakfast and he, and people in the, this is especially vivid in my mind, from Aroostook County, because most of the rest of the time he stayed with other people. But we were doing the motel circuit up there, and we'd go into the restaurant and all the heads would turn, and it had been years since he'd been a senator in Maine. And everybody would look at Senator Muskie and, "Oh, there's Senator Muskie." And waitresses and everybody just knew him. And he always ordered corned beef hash and eggs, and he always said, never failed to say, "Now don't you tell Jane about this." It may be the only time he ever got corned beef hash. But, yeah, a lot of people would come up and ask for his autograph, and I think he really enjoyed that, you know, he, like he -

AL: He didn't feel bothered?

NC: No, he liked the attention, you know, this was, I'm sure many -

AL: Enough years later?

NC: Yes, I think so, you know, I really think so. But he was wonderful at those public hearings, and he always asked, he was very patient listening to the stories and he would always ask follow up questions, and really tried to get at what the problems poor people were having accessing the judicial system.

AL: So people from the community could come to these hearings?

NC: Uh-huh, yeah, we advertised them in the papers ahead of time. And I'm sure a lot of people came just for the star quality, to see Senator Muskie. But there were a lot of poor people, Pine Tree Legal organized their clients to come and to talk about their difficulties in getting representation. You know, they had guidelines and a lot of people weren't eligible to be represented, yet they didn't have enough money to hire a private attorney, so there were a lot of people who fell through the cracks. And we heard a lot of very heart rendering stories at those public hearings. And I don't know if you have a copy of the report.

AL: We do.

NC: You do, yeah, and so when the whole thing ended, all the hearings and the, we, the report was written up, we all worked very hard on that. And we had, Kinvin did a lot of the writing, I did some of it, and then we had a woman who edited the whole thing at the end. And then of course Senator Muskie had to approve of it. I'm just trying to think of her name, it's in the book if you have it, I can't think of it right now. Kaye, I think it was Kaye, she was a professor at the university. Kaye Evans was her name, yeah, Kaye Evans, and she did the editing. And then Senator Muskie had to approve of it, and you know, there were parts of it he wanted edited and changed, and we did all that. And we had a final meeting of our steering committee before the book went to print.

And then we organized, through John Martin's office, an appearance with Senator Muskie at a joint session of the legislature, and that was just a time to remember. And he gave the most

stirring speech about what he had learned, you know, during the course of this legal needs study, and made a very ardent plea for them to fund legal services and, for the elderly. Legal services, period, for the poor. And it just happened that the times were such that it wasn't, there just wasn't any money at the legislature at all, and as much as people wanted to come forward to help the cause, it wasn't possible. So John Martin set up a piece of legislation that proved to be very worthwhile in the end. It was sort of an open ended piece of legislation as I remember that set up a fund, but didn't fund it. So the legislation was on the books, so when the time came that there would be some monies, that the fund could be funded without having to go through the whole process of getting it on the books. And that turned out to be the avenue that was used when they, they attached, I think they added a fee, when people pay fines; this was after my time with the Bar Foundation, so I'm a little vague about it, but when you get a speeding ticket or something like that, or you had to use the courts, I think there was an add on fee that went into this fund. And so it began to raise more money for, which was really neat.

Anyway, it was during that time that the senator addressed the legislature that I got the idea, having listened to him about his days at the Blaine House and his kids living at the Blaine House, how much it might mean to him if he could spend another night at the Blaine House. And the issue was, the governor was Republican and I had no in with either Jock McKernan or his wife, Olympia [Olympia Snowe]; I mean, worked with them, knew them, but, so I appealed to my friend Howard Dana, who was Jock McKernan's major fund raiser. And Howard was also involved with the Bar Foundation, and very much involved with the study, and he thought it was a great idea. So he went to Jock and we ended up setting up a night for Senator Muskie and his whole family at the Blaine House, and they were all invited back. And the governor put on a dinner for Senator Muskie, and I was invited and I was just so thrilled to be invited. It was fun, it was just a lot of fun. And Frank Coffin came, and I ended up getting seated at the table with Senator Muskie and Frank Coffin, so I heard a lot of interesting stories from the past that night. But that was a fun time, yeah, it was a lot of fun.

But there was a lot, one time he, we set up a meeting for him to go over to Pine Tree Legal in Portland and to talk to the staff there about what they were doing and, you know, those people are all overworked and they work long hours, and they don't always get a lot of job satisfaction because things kind of don't always go their way. He gave a very inspiring speech to them about, you know, the ups and downs of life and all, and he just made a tremendous impact and gave them all a real boost, you know, in terms of what they were doing. And so out of that came a real admiration for him by Nan Heald, who was executive director of the Pine Tree Legal, and she ended up setting up this, I don't know what they call it, it's a night to honor Ed Muskie.

AL: The Access to Justice Award?

NC: Yeah, yeah, that's right, and that's held every year, and I think Jane went last year, so the senator is remembered on an annual basis. That all came about as a result of the legal needs study, and of Senator Muskie going over to the Portland office of Pine Tree.

And we asked him once, one of the projects of the Bar Foundation was the Volunteer Lawyers Project, where private attorneys volunteer their time at the Volunteer Lawyers Project office which was space that we rented from Pine Tree. We asked him if he'd be volunteer lawyer of the

day and make some calls, and sure, he was willing to do that. We thought it would, you know, we'd get some, get a reporter in and get some publicity and it would stimulate other attorneys to join the project. So he did that. The first call he made was to John Jabar, who used to be Muskie's AA in Maine when he was in the Senate, and they had an unhappy parting of the ways.

But anyway, he ended up on that phone call sort of mending fences with John Jabar, and got him to agree to take a case for the Volunteer Lawyers Project, which I found quite interesting. Having lived in Waterville and having known the other side of that whole issue, it was very interesting to me. Of course no one else in the room knew anything about it, but it was very interesting how it, see, the staff person at the Volunteer Lawyer's Project, Chuck Harringer who was from Portland, just pulled his name out of the hat, to call.

AL: And it happened to be.

NC: It happened to be John Jabar. That was interesting. I don't know, I think I'm running out of steam here.

AL: Well, we can end for today, and I'd just like to say thank you very much.

NC: Yeah, it's fun to meet you Andrea, I think this is such a -

End of Interview