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Coffin, Frank Morey, Shep Lee, Edmund S. Muskie and Don Nicoll oral history interview

Chris Beam

Interview with Edmund S. Muskie, Shep Lee, Don Nicoll and Frank Coffin by Chris Beam

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Coffin, Frank Morey
Lee, Shep
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Nicoll, Don

Interviewer
Beam, Chris

Date
August 6, 1991

Place
Kennebunk, Maine

ID Number
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Biographical Note

Frank Coffin

Frank Morey Coffin was born in Lewiston, Maine on July 11, 1919. His parents were Ruth [Morey] and Herbert Coffin, who divorced when Frank was twelve. Ruth raised Frank alone on Wood St. in Lewiston. She came from an active Democratic family, her father was Mayor of Lewiston from 1907 to 1912, and eventually she became a Democratic State Committeewoman.

Frank graduated from the Lewiston public schools, and then went on to Bates College, graduating in 1940. While at Bates he debated under Brooks Quimby, and majored in economics. He then went off to Harvard to continue his education. He started in the Harvard Business School while waiting to be drafted. He served in the Navy Supply Corps, and after discharge returned to Harvard to get a law degree. He graduated in 1947. He then clerked for U.S. District Court Judge John Clifford Jr. before his admittance to the Maine Bar.

His law career began in a Lewiston office, and quickly grew. From 1951 to 1954 he served as

Corporation Counsel to the City of Lewiston, and in 1953 he joined the law firm of Verrill Dana in Portland, Maine. At that time, he became interested in the Maine Democratic Party. Along with Lewiston area Democratic activists, he worked to reestablish the two-party system in Maine. He became Chairman of the Maine Democratic Party in 1954, and worked to field Democratic candidates for every major office for the 1954 ballot. He also created the first permanent staff position within the Maine Democratic Party.

His party building included writing a party platform using public input and surveys. These efforts led to the election of Edmund Muskie as Governor of Maine. In 1956, Coffin stepped down from the chairmanship to run for United States Congress. He was elected, and served from 1957 to 1960, when he stepped down to run for Governor of Maine. He was defeated in that race. After his elected service, Frank was to be appointed Ambassador to Panama by President John Kennedy. When Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon Johnson refused to make the appointment because of disagreements he had with Frank during his Congressional career. He was appointed to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris in 1964. In 1965, President Johnson appointed Frank to the United States 1st District Court of Appeals. He became chief judge in 1972, serving in that capacity for eleven years. He became senior member in 1989.

Frank Coffin has received numerous awards and accolades, and is a highly regarded figure in Maine law and political circles. In 1942 he married a Bates graduate, Ruth Ulrich. They had four children.

Shep Lee

Shepard (Lifshitz) “Shep” Lee was born in Lewiston, Maine on November 13, 1926 to Ethel and Joe Lifshitz. His parents were both Russian immigrants, his mother a housewife, and his father an automobile dealer after the Depression. He attended the Lewiston Public Schools, graduating from Lewiston High School in 1943. He then went on to Bowdoin College, taking a break from college between 1945 and 1946 to enlist in the Navy. He returned to Bowdoin after his service, and graduated in 1947 with a degree in government and economics. At that time, he and his brother also changed their names to Lee to avoid discrimination against Jews in education and in careers. Lee returned to Lewiston after graduation, and went to work at his father’s automobile dealership. Soon after, he became active in Lewiston-Auburn Democratic politics. In 1956, he was campaign manager to Frank Coffin’s Congressional campaign. In 1963, he bought out his father’s partner in the automobile dealership, and eventually took over the entire business. Lee was an active Democrat during and after Ed Muskie’s career. He was a key fundraiser for the Maine Democrats, and loaned many vehicles to campaigning candidates over the course of his career. He retired from his automobile dealership in the late 1990s.

Don Nicoll

Donald Eugene "Don" Nicoll was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1927, and grew up in the West Roxbury section of the city. He is the son of George and Mary Nicoll. He attended Robert Gould Shaw Junior High School and Boston English High School and graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Maine in 1949, majoring in History with a minor in Government. Don met his future wife, Hilda Farnum, also a Colby student, when they worked in the resort town of Ocean Park, Maine, in the summer of 1944. Nicoll began his graduate work at Pennsylvania State College in 1949, where he received a teaching fellowship in the Department

of History. His graduate studies concentrated on American history, specifically the period from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War .. His M.A. (1952) thesis was on the Alien and Sedition Acts.

Starting in 1951, Nicoll and his family settled in Buckfield, Maine where he picked apples and taught part time at Stephen's High School, located in Rumford. Nicoll began working as an announcer for WLAM radio in Lewiston, Maine. He became a reporter and then news editor for WLAM and WLAM-TV. In June 1954, Nicoll left WLAM to become Executive Secretary of the Democratic State Committee at the request of Frank M. Coffin, who has just become chairman. Mr. Coffin was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Maine's Second Congressional District in 1956 and Nicoll went to Washington, DC, as his administrative assistant, continuing in that post until December 1960, the end of Congressman Coffin's second term. Mr. Coffin ran for governor in 1960 and was defeated. After the election Senator Edmund S. Muskie asked Nicoll to join his staff as legislative assistant and news secretary. Nicoll served in that position until 1962, when he became administrative assistant. He continued in that post until 1971, when he became personal advisor to Senator Muskie. He left the senate office in mid-1972.

From 1972 until his retirement in 2005 Nicoll worked as a program and policy planner, first as a consultant (1972-73), then as chairman and chief executive officer of the New England Land Grant Universities Joint Operations Committee (1973-1975), then as coordinator of planning and vice president for planning and public affairs for the Maine Medical Center (1975-1986), then as a consultant (1986-2005). His clients were primarily in the non-profit sector and included, universities, libraries, education associations, health care organizations and social service agencies. He also worked as a volunteer, heading a variety of public policy projects, including the Maine Task Force on Government Reorganization, the Maine State Compensation Commission, the Maine (Mental Health) Systems Assessment Commission, the Maine Consortium for Health Professions Education, the Southern Maine Community Television Consortium, the Maine Special Commission on Government Reorganization (co-chair), the Board of Visitors of the University of Southern Maine's Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, the Maine-Aomori Sister-State Advisory Council and the Governor's Allagash Wilderness Waterway Working Group.

From 1998-2005, Don Nicoll was the Director of the Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Project at Bates College.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Muskie, Nicoll, Lee and Coffin’s first encounters and relationships with one another; challenges for the Democrats in the 1950s; sending questionnaires prior to the 1954 election; Muskie’s 1946 campaign for state legislature; Waterville politics; Muskie’s legal practice; 1954 Democratic convention in Lewiston; problems for some Democrats in the 1954 election; Muskie’s 1954 campaign; television’s role in the 1954 election; Muskie’s strategies in the 1954 campaign; Muskie as a Catholic; cost and contributors of the 1954 campaign; Muskie’s fundraising efforts; Muskie’s support from newspapers; and Muskie’s staff in 1954.

Indexed Names

Arnold, Lorin
Atkins, Edward L.
Beauchamp, Ed
Beliveau, Albert
Benoit, Henry Arthur
Bishop, Neil
Blais, Denis
Boucher, Jean Charles
Brennan, Joseph E.
Butler, Paul
Clauson, Clinton Amos, 1895-1959
Coffin, Frank Morey
Coffin, Ruth Ulrich
Colbath, Ken
Corliss, Edgar
Cormier, Lucia
Cote, Al
Couture, Paul
Crocker, Robert
Crossman, Raynor
Damborg, Peter
Davis, Betty
Dorsky, Benjamin J. (Benjamin James), 1905-
Dubord, Harold
Dunfey, Bill
Fisher, Dean
Furbush, Perry
Gould, John
Grant, Earl
Guite, Roland
Harriman, Averell
Haskell, Robert
Hildreth, Horace
Hussey, Leroy
Isaacson, Irving
Jalbert, Louis
Jones, Bob
Julian, Paul
Kiah, Madelin
Lee, Shep
Longley, James, Sr.
Malenfant, Ernest

McCarthy, Joseph, 1908-1957
McMahon, Dick
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-
Mitchell, Stephen “Steve”
Moran, Edward Carleton, Jr.
Murray, Margaret “Peggy”
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Nelson, Charlie
Nicoll, Don
Nute, Floyd
Oliver, Jim
Poulin, Roland
Reid, Jim
Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945
Sawyer, Jimmy
Semer, Milton P.
Shute, Elden “Denny”
Smith, Margaret Chase, 1897-1995
Stevenson, Adlai E. (Adlai Ewing), 1900-1965
Williams, Maurice

Transcript

BEAM: Okay. This is an interview with Senator Edmund S. Muskie, Frank M. Coffin, Don Nicoll and Shepard Lee. It takes place on Tuesday, August 6, 1991, starting about 1 p.m., at Senator Muskie's home in Kennebunk, Maine. I'm Chris Beam, Director of The Edmund S. Muskie Archives at Bates College. What I want to do today is cover the period of Muskie's career and Maine politics from 1946, when Edmund Muskie was first elected to the Maine legislature as a representative from Waterville, to 1954, when he was elected governor—or to 1956 when Frank Coffin was elected to Congress from the 2nd Congressional District.
Before I begin, I'd like to ask each one of you--starting with Shep Lee, going around the circle here, how you got to know each other. How you got to know Senator Muskie. How you got to know other members of this interview. Shep?

LEE: Well, I came back from Bowdoin College, and Frank Coffin was a bright young lawyer from Lewiston who was corporation counsel, and we ended up on a Community Chest committee together with Father Drouin. And our job was to see if Lewiston and Auburn needed a psychiatrist. I remember that was it, and that's how I got acquainted with Frank. And then in 1950 Frank gave the keynote address at the DeWitt Hotel to--was it the Democratic Convention? I remember being so impressed I wrote him a letter and said I would like to do some work for the Democratic Party. And everybody in Lewiston-Auburn knew Frank, knew him by reputation. He was summa cum laude from Bates. Bright young lawyer and all of that. So I knew who he was and got involved in that way. And through him met Don who was, of course,

executive secretary. And then through them met Senator Muskie. Actually, I first met Senator Muskie as a businessman and a car dealer when I went to a meeting where he was the OPS Director. And I remember all these business people--most of them Republicans--were very impressed with this tall young guy who seemed so fair and what all. So as much for his content.

BEAM: Now you say when you came back--that was when? Back from what--military service after the war?

LEE: Yeah. I'd been to Bowdoin and I'd been in the Navy. Went back to Bowdoin and came back to Lewiston. I grew up in Lewiston.

BEAM: Right, right. And this was-- You met Muskie as OPS Director when--about 1952?

LEE: 'Fifty? 'Fifty-one?

MUSKIE: Well, I was appointed in-- Let's see, I was elected to my third term in the legislature, it would have been '49. No, the election years were even, so I was elected in '50. Well, I was first elected to the legislature in '46, second term in '48, third term in '50. And I barely--I won by one vote in that third election. By one vote. There was a Republican landslide. [Chuckling] But it was the first interim year, and our candidate was Earl Grant. Or was it Jim Oliver?

LEE: This was '48?

MUSKIE: 'Fifty.

NICOLL: That was Earl Grant, wasn't it? Because Jim ran in '52.

MUSKIE: That vote was given to us, but.... Jim Oliver was in '52, that's right. Remembering that Rockland incident where the total crowd, including candidates, were six. Yeah, so in '50 I was elected for a third term to the legislature. Then I was--

LEE: Then you went to--

MUSKIE: Then I was elected--reelected--floor leader. And then I was--I don't know who pushed the buttons to get me appointed OPS Director, but that happened then when the Korean War started. When? About June of 1950?

BEAM: Mmmm hmmm. Yeah.

MUSKIE: And so it wasn't until January--the following January--that it occurred to somebody that it might be a good job for me, a good way maybe to build a political base, although that wasn't in my mind at that time. And so within a week after I was reelected Democratic floor leader in January of 1951--are we in '51 now?--that Truman appointed me OPS Director.

LEE: Now I knew who Senator Muskie was because I was interested in politics, and I would read in the paper that he-- You were the leader of the minority party leaders now. So I knew who he was, but I'd never really met him, I don't think, until that point--until he was OPS Director.

BEAM: Okay. Don?

MUSKIE: I don't remember if I had met Don by that time. Had I?

NICOLL: No, I don't think so.

BEAM: Don, when did you meet?

NICOLL: All right. I first was aware of Frank when he was a corporation counsel for the City of Lewiston. And my vivid memory of that was the famous election that was snowed out and as corporation counsel having been appointed by Mayor Malenfant, you said that the election would be canceled.

COFFIN: This was '52, February of '52.

NICOLL: 'Fifty-two. And after that election that was postponed. Now by law it's going to be held, and Frank thereafter was the dirty double crosser. [Laughter] And then it was in the spring of '53 Frank made a Jefferson-Jackson speech in Westbrook and called on the party to mount the ramparts and change the state of Maine. I was then reporter for WLAM in Lewiston.

BEAM: That was a radio station?

NICOLL: It was radio in '53 until the summer, early fall of '53 when it started a small television station--UHF television station.

BEAM: Now, were you a TV reporter as well?

NICOLL: Radio and TV, reporter and news editor. And during that period from 1952 on, I covered the state house as well as city hall. I saw mostly Republicans because I'd go up for the governor's news conference and cover a little bit with department heads; did not cover the legislature much. We relied on the wire services for most of that coverage. And I really didn't get to know Ed until--well, I think it was the fall of '53. But going back to Frank, Frank had delivered this speech, and our station manager happened to see a piece about the speech. And Denny Shute, who was then the station manager, and he suggested--

BEAM: Excuse me, Don. How do you spell that name--the last name?

NICOLL: S-H-U-T-E. His first name was Elden, E-L-D-E-N. And he was called Denny. Denny

had seen the piece, thought it was interesting, and knew Frank. So he suggested that I interview him for our news program. And I did so, and in those days equipment was so heavy that you didn't go out and do interviews; you'd do it in the studio. And I can remember the studio, and after we were through and we turned the microphones off, I asked him when he was going to stop making speeches and do something for the party. And I had come to the conclusion on the basis of my reporting that the Republican Party was riddled with dry rot--as I think I put it at the time--and was ready for being turned over. It definitely was not popular in '53. The congressman from the 2nd District seemed much more vulnerable. He was an alcoholic. And in those days you didn't report those things in the newspapers or on radio, but reporters talked about it constantly. And we were pretty sure that Charlie Nelson, who was the congressman, sooner or later was going to stub his toe publicly and be ready to be knocked off. And I thought Frank should run for Congress at that time. But he said he wouldn't, but I kept after him over the next several months. Then I think it was in the fall that Louis Jalbert engineered the press conference in reverse in Augusta at the Augusta House. And you and Lucia[1] and Louis and a couple of other people were there. And the reporters who covered the state house—[Lorin] "Doc" Arnold, Pete Damborg, Floyd Nute, Bob Crocker, and I. And we were asked questions. And I think that's where I met you first.

MUSKIE: I don't remember that specifically. That was the fall of '53?

NICOLL: I think it was the fall of '53. It was before the campaign got underway. It was the summer or fall of '53. And I think you would probably, Chris, find in the newspapers from that period--probably just going through the--

MUSKIE: I'm not sure if that's right, Don, because I broke my back in the spring of '53.

NICOLL: Well, then it would have been before that.

MUSKIE: See, if it was the spring of '53, the legislature was in session, and I was then a lobbyist in the legislature. And it was in that fall that I met Frank. Because after my hospitalization I went down to our camp on China Lake and spent several months there just recuperating--swimming and that sort of thing. And that's when I began to have different ideas about what I ought to be involved in in politics. I invited Frank and Ruth to come over, and that was the first time I met Ruth.

COFFIN: Well, there was one other-- I think that was the first time we met. Of course, I had-- Muskie was a very familiar name to me because I lived in Lewiston. And even though we did not overlap in college, I used to have Bill the Barber cut my hair. And I was acquainted with who was who in college. And particularly who was debating, which Ed was. So I had always known who he was. And then, I don't know whether you remember, but at one point you called me and said would I be interested in being

[1]Lucia Cormier

your counsel on the OPS. And I felt that my practice had just started in Lewiston, and I didn't feel I should leave, which I would have had to have done. But anyhow, I always valued that early and completely unresearched vote of confidence.

MUSKIE: The fellow I finally got as counsel died last year, so you see you were-- [Laughter]

COFFIN: This is Milt Semer who was--Milt Semer?

MUSKIE: No, he didn't take it. No, the fellow who took it was at Colby College--a professor. And he passed the bar. Don Allen, I think was his name.

COFFIN: Oh, yes, I remember.

MUSKIE: Awfully nice guy.

COFFIN: But getting back to the first real meeting we had in the late summer or early fall of '53 when Ed invited Ruth and me up to the camp at South China. We had--he cooked a steak outdoors and at that time he was-- You were still national committeeman, weren't you?

MUSKIE: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

COFFIN: Yeah. And I had done some speaking, as Don has said, and we had a common interest. And then we talked about what we could do, and at the moment there was no obvious channel. I was nothing and held no position. And Ed held a position, but it was not at all clear what a national committeeman could do. So we thought we would bide our time and just remain in contact and see what would happen. And then the next thing that I think that stood out in my memory--and I don't know how it happened; maybe you do--but Jim Sawyer, state chairman, announced in the papers that he was appointing me chairman of the pre-convention platform committee. I never knew him, and he never knew me, and I don't know what put that bee in his bonnet. Do you, Ed?

MUSKIE: Well, I think I might have been one, certainly, who thought of it as a result of our discussion at China Lake. I simply viewed it as a way to begin the--

COFFIN: Then at that point, at that point, I call up my reporter friend, Nicoll--

NICOLL: "Early," objected his daughter. [Laughter]

COFFIN: And we decided to-- We had two other members of the platform committee: Jim Oliver and Roland Guite of Ellsworth. And Don was helping me, and we decided to follow an example set by a young political leader in Kansas--fellow named Mike Harder--who was state chairman out there. And we devised a questionnaire--a big questionnaire--and centered it on issues. Sent it all over the state. And then the answers came in, and we held a number of conferences in different parts of the state.

And this sort of built up interest in this pre-convention.

BEAM: How did you hear about Harder's efforts? It sounds like you had some contact with people--Democrats in other states--who were facing the same situation as Democrats in Maine. You know, a distinct minority party trying to establish itself on a firm footing.

COFFIN: Well, I think I'd met him, but I don't-- Do you have any--?

NICOLL: This was something, I think, that you had noted here in reporting and political activity nationwide--or some Democratic literature.

COFFIN: I don't think I'd met him by that time because I had no occasion to travel. But it probably was reading something that he'd done. But this was taking the platform out of the back room on the night of the convention and going public. And that's sort of persisted even to this day. And in fact, we may be overdoing it somewhat.

MUSKIE: Yeah, yeah. No, I think that it's clear that that pre-convention platform idea was a wise one, looking from several points of view. That is that first of all it gave us a helluva lot of coverage in the press. The press thought it quite unique, that here the Democrats didn't have a candidate for a goddamned thing at that point, and they had appointed a non-French person from Lewiston to chair the platform committee. And they couldn't conceive of how Frank could possibly become a member of the state committee because he was not French. And in those days there had to be a French candidate. But then the idea, you know, that we began to talk about ideas before we got candidates, that they thought was novel, and it was. So I think that was a-- Whether it was true or not, I doubt that it came out of Jim Sawyer's mind except possibly in the middle of a nightmare. [Laughter] In any case, I'll give him historic credit for it if he's the one who-- Established contact is right.

NICOLL: ___ turning him down because he hadn't consulted with him.

COFFIN: My first reaction would be indignant ___ the way to do things. [Laughter]

MUSKIE: But anyway, I thought it was a helluva good idea when I heard of it because it was a way to get Frank up front. And in the process not only advance, you know, Frank's political prospects--whatever they might turn out to be--but also put a damned good face on the Democratic Party as, you know, producing--having--credibility which was well recognized by that time. His name was also known--and although his name was Coffin--it really had nothing to do with the death of a party [Laughter] but the expected life of a party.

LEE: Puns for which he is so famous. [Laughter]

MUSKIE: In any case, as far as I was concerned it was a good idea from the start, and it did give Frank that lift politically that he was able to cash in on very soon and the party,

too, as I think this discussion will demonstrate as it proceeds. We ought to finish Don. I don't know when we established a personal relationship.

NICOLL: It was really the spring of '54, Ed. I had been badgering Frank. Then Jim Sawyer came through with that pre-convention platform committee, and I worked with Frank on the questionnaire--preparing it, mailing it and analyzing it.

COFFIN: This includes the important function of licking envelopes. [Laughter]

MUSKIE: It's the only way you can lick your enemies. [Laughter] What do they do now with envelopes?

COFFIN: Well, I think the envelopes--whoever gives birth to the envelopes--they all have the mucilage on it. You just press it.

LEE: They all kind of like ___ the machine.

BEAM: It's probably highly automated. [Laughter]

NICOLL: Then in the spring-- One amusing sidelight on this: While I was busy doing this for Frank, on the side I was also editor and reporter for the radio and television station. And at the time of one of the early programs--public affairs programs on the television station--we interviewed Governor Cross and his Commissioner of Health and Welfare, Doc Stevens. No, not Stevens. [Dean] Doc Fisher [M.D.]. And they came bustling in having just gotten the questionnaire. And Doc in particular, who was a very profane man, was waving the document around and asking reporters and saying: "Have you seen what these silly Democrats are doing now?" [Laughter] "Sending out questionnaires even to the governor and state commissioners." [Laughter] And they thought this was a great joke. In a way it was the beginning of the downfall of that administration.

BEAM: Now, the purpose of the questionnaire was what? Just to sound out what people's attitudes were?

NICOLL: On differences, on issues. Not on the parties but on the issues.

MUSKIE: Building the platform.

BEAM: Yeah.

MUSKIE: As Frank mentioned briefly a few moments ago, the Democratic platforms were produced between the late afternoon when the convention assembled and the next morning ___ platform. [Laughter] I chaired one of those. But, I tell you, that was something! But this was--

COFFIN: This was specific questions on: What do we need? and see the right people on the

coast. What do our sea and shore fisheries programs need? What do we need in conservation or transportation? Industrial development, which proved to be a big issue when Ed became governor.

BEAM: Yeah. Now did you design these questionnaires yourselves? I mean, you thought up all the questions?

NICOLL: It was Frank, not me. I wasn't involved in that part.

COFFIN: No, our committee did.

MUSKIE: Yeah, the committee did. There was a pre-convention platform committee. It wasn't just Frank. I don't know who did the . . . .

COFFIN: Jim Oliver and Roland Guite were the other two members.

BEAM: And how did you select the respondents? Did you have some kind of mailing list of people to send this to?

COFFIN: We made it up. I mean, we just pulled together all the names that we could think of who were acquainted with educational issues, who were sea and shore fisheries. And this, of course, as Don has indicated, would include some people who were in government but a lot of people who were not in government. Universities.

NICOLL: Legal and . . . .

MUSKIE: Also the media. You circulated it to the media. I don't know if they produced anything, but--

NICOLL: They wrote some articles about it. And I think some people wrote in and asked to respond to the questionnaire. I forget the numbers now, but it was a fairly substantial mailing.

MUSKIE: We really did colossal on the coverage. It got an awful lot of attention, more than any other single thing, I think, before the convention to call attention to the fact that we were having a convention and that this was a different kind of Democratic approach to that election campaign. And incidentally, we haven't yet mentioned this especially, the liquor scandal, which had erupted--what, two years, three years before? and which had still tarnished the Republican image even though there had been an election succeeding that scandal and the Republicans won as usual. But nevertheless, in the context of that, which produced some of this Muskie-for-governor talk, it was in the context of that, that this refreshing new reform within the Democratic Party got attention. And it paid off.

NICOLL: Frank, at the meeting of the pre-convention platform committee at the convention the night before it was adopted, there was a public hearing and proceeding by the

committee. And there was a lot of attention there. And the press, the media, the day after the convention--actually on the day of the convention--all of it was very favorable. And it was then that Frank decided to run for state chairman--

COFFIN: No, I think I've--

NICOLL: --oh, member of the state committee.

COFFIN: Just of the state committee. As Ed has pointed out, this was the-- Androscoggin County was solidly Franco-American, and yet, as it happened, there were a number of people like Paul Couture and Albert Cote who were long in standing in line. They were entitled to the position of state committeeman. But I think through a combination of Irving Isaacson going to Eddie Beauchamp--and I don't know whether Dick McMahon was involved at this point, but perhaps not at this point--but through Eddie Beauchamp these other people said, you know, if Coffin wants to go on the state committee, we'll let him. And this is, you know, an act of, I thought, tremendous restraint and generosity. And then after that, then, it was McMahon's fine Italian hand who said, Well, at this point, you know, state chairman is clearly open.

NICOLL: By the way, Frank, wasn't Al Cote a classmate of yours in high school?

COFFIN: Right. He was in my class of 1936. We were--

NICOLL: And as I recall, when they went to Al, Al said he was willing to step aside for you. He was the one who was lined up to be a member of the state committee.

COFFIN: I see. I had forgotten that.

NICOLL: And Fat Albert. [Laughter]

LEE: He was known as "Fat" Cote. He was a very colorful politician. And really, to get the coloration of the kinds of Democrats that we had, especially from the Lewiston-Auburn area, Frank was totally different.

MUSKIE: Well, I think even they were, you know, impressed by the work that Frank had done on the pre-election campaign platform committee and what good that had generated in the class of public attention and all that. They knew quality when they saw it.

COFFIN: I think so. And I've felt all through my political career in Lewiston that the French leaders were-- You know, the senator, Jean Charles Boucher.

MUSKIE: Well, I remember the genius of Ernest Malenfant. You know, he finally became legislator, as you know, and produced a platform, legislative agenda, which came up with the question of How do we fund this? And then got up, you know--that instinct, that spark of genius--he said: "Well, Mr. Muskie," he said, "I understand we have a deficit. Why don't we spend that?" [Laughter] So he's the Father of Deficit Spending

in Maine. And you've heard the latest chapter in that in the last few months. [Chuckling]

BEAM: Well, there are a number of ethnic enclaves--like in Waterville and Lewiston and other places, mostly, you know, Franco-American enclaves--that had long been Democratic. Had these groups sort of been content to be, you know, sort of in ghettos and then all of a sudden, I mean, in the 'fifties started to want to branch out? Do you think that might account for your entre into Lewiston politics?

COFFIN: My own feeling is that no. That they had a good organization in Biddeford and in Lewiston and, I guess, Waterville and Augusta. And they could elect mayors and city council people and county sheriffs. But I didn't think that while they didn't object to having wider power, I don't think they had that outward-going move or momentum or motivation. And I think when we began to move in, we made a deliberate attempt to interest people in the rural parts of the state to come aboard without rejecting what we relied very definitely on, the big organizations in the cities. But we did try to broaden our base.

NICOLL: That was one of the great liberating events in Maine Democratic politics, the election in '52 when Eisenhower was elected. And at that point the leadership of the Democratic Party in Maine--up to that point through the 'forties--no longer had patronage. They lost interest. And this left the way open for Ed and Frank and others to come along. I mean, the young men that had come to maturity during the war to come along and fill that vacuum and change the party. I think that was-- To me that was the real watershed.

MUSKIE: Well, it was little noted at the time, and little noted since, wasn't that true?

LEE: Franco-Americans, I think, always--

COFFIN: I think what Ed said about recognizing quality--

LEE: Wasn't __ in one primary?

COFFIN: Yes.

LEE: There was a Franco-American candidate who was soundly defeated by Frank in a primary in a heavily French population.

COFFIN: They did recognize quality. And I think they would tolerate as a mayor somebody who's never elected __.

NICOLL: . . . . but you know one of the things that we all make kind of . . . in politics . . . . But one thing I noted in covering city hall and covering the legislature and covering Auburn City Hall, everybody looked down their nose at Lewiston. But if you looked at effective government [Chuckling] and responsive government in those days, it was

Lewiston--much, much better than Auburn. You go back and look at what happened in Auburn.

LEE: Well, now wait a minute. If you look at charters--I wrote my major thesis in college on the Lewiston-Auburn city charters and the model city charter. And Lewiston's commission form of government was designed to keep the power away from Auburn.

NICOLL: That's right.

LEE: That's why the finance was ___. ___ jail, didn't he in the--? Didn't he ever go to jail?

COFFIN: I don't think so.

LEE: There were great scandals. Lewiston was not a model city.

NICOLL: No, but in terms of results, Lewiston was much more yeasty and much more productive. And as Ernest Malenfant said to the legislature one day when they were having a hearing on changing the city charter: "They're going to tell you that before the city charter they were selling the city jobs. That's true. [Laughter] They're going to tell you that before the city charter they were putting the money in their pockets. That's true. But then they went to county jail; today they go to the state prison. That's farther." [Laughter] And he returned as one of Frank's clients.

MUSKIE: But that's another issue. [Laughter]

BEAM: I'm glad you said what you did about Lewiston politics. My wife got elected to represent Ward 4 of the School Committee, so anyway.... [Laughter] I want to back track and actually start from the beginning, which I will say is 1946 and ask Senator Muskie what your initial motive was for running for state legislature.

MUSKIE: Well, I think for just a few minutes you've got to go to a period before 1946 because until I moved to Waterville, I had never entertained the idea of running for public office. But the first development, of course, was that I finished law school and shortly became a member of the Maine Bar, the Massachusetts Bar--even took the New York Bar, or contemplated that. But I finally decided although I'd been invited to join a law firm in New York, I finally decided, under the persuasion of the department who offered me that job, to come back to Maine to practice law. My home was Rumford, as we all know. And I took the Maine Bar, I think, in March of that year of 1940. And the Superior Court was holding a session in Rumford at that time. And Rupert Aldrich was the clerk of courts. I'd never met him before. He had only one leg. He'd lost the leg in--

COFFIN: Clerk of courts in Norway or--?

MUSKIE: Oxford.

COFFIN: Oh, Oxford County. Yeah. Right.

MUSKIE: Oxford County. They held a session in Rumford, I think, once a year and one or two in Norway. But anyway, Rumford had one session of the court. I even remember some of the cases that were tried at that time. There was one case where this fellow had committed the crime of murdering a moose. And he was on trial before Albert Beliveau. [Laughter] . . . . that one. Another case at that time: A fellow bought a bottle of Royal Crown Cola, opened it and drank out of it only to find a mouse in the cola. [Laughter] That was another case that was tried at that time. So I had a lot of amusement watching this thing and watching Albert Beliveau preside. That was something else to watch because Albert was always glad to see a young Democrat. But in any case, that's when I learned to know Rupert, who became a life-long friend until tragically he died two or three years ago. And I didn't know when he died at the time.

COFFIN: I didn't know.

MUSKIE: He died at the time. I learned about it a year or so later. I can't understand that. But in any case, he got around the state; and he was a very respected Republican politician, if you remember. And he heard about Carl Blackington's staff in Waterville. Carl Blackington was a lawyer in Waterville who died about the age of 50. And he had a very active little practice. He did a lot of collections. He had small probate court cases and small criminal cases, but he did very well. But he died leaving a young family. And Rupert heard about this, and he knew Carl and the kind of practice he had, and he suggested to me that I go over to Waterville, you know, to find out what was going to be done with that practice. And old Harvey Eaton was the lawyer for Mrs. Blackington. Harvey was a Republican lawyer. Great credibility. Oh, he's--You could devote a chapter to him in this thing. But in any case, I went over to see him. He was her lawyer. We finally worked out a deal. I bought the practice. There were quite a few assets in it. There was a library that was really worth--by those standards even--$2500, easily. And because of his collections practice he had a lot of--hundreds of--pre-stamped envelopes. [Chuckling] You know, for sending notices and all that business. Christ! There were boxes of these things. I never did add them up to find out what they were worth. [Background Laughter]

COFFIN: Are there any left? [Laughter]

MUSKIE: There was office furniture and of course the collections practice which doesn't walk away from an office. You know, as long as I serviced the collections, I had ready-made clients. And I managed to keep his secretary, who was a great collections secretary. She was a tough old biddy. [Laughter] She made me promise never to run for public office before she'd sign on with me. I don't know as I've ever revealed that secret before. [Laughter] In any case, the assets were fully worth it. And I bought them for $4,000. Then before we finally signed the papers, I asked Mrs. Blackington, I said, "Well, if I could fully pay for this, if I could in three payments, you know, in six months, what would you give me for a price?" She said, "Full payment in six

months?" I can have it for $3,000. So I got that written into the contract. And so I made sure that I made a deposit in the right bank [Chuckling], get my deposit through it, get it going. So five months plus after I moved into the office, I went to the bank and borrowed the $2,000 and saved myself a thousand bucks. [Laughter] The only money I've ever saved since I've been exposed to politics. [Laughter] And the law practice went well for me. It really did. The Blackington family was a lovely family. It was really a way to come into the community.

But what does this have to do with politics? Well, I'd never been involved in politics before. I was a Democrat by conviction, I guess. After all, Roosevelt was elected to office my freshman year. And if it hadn't been for those New Deal programs, you know, assistance to students and all the rest of it, I probably would have had a helluva hard time in graduating from college. And I was, of course, impressed by his philosophy--the New Deal philosophy. So I was an intellectual, I guess, Democrat. And I knew enough about the history of the Democratic Party to know that Harold Dubord, who once ran for governor in this state, lived in Waterville, practiced law and ran for United States Senate. He lost both of those races but came close. And he practiced law in Waterville. So I knew about Waterville's political significance in the state, you know, through people like that. Not that I still had any ambitions for becoming national.

COFFIN: You were privy to a lot of interesting debates in your father's home in Rumford.

MUSKIE: Oh, yeah, yeah. My father--that's still another story. [Chuckling] We'd get to sit down and-- He was a closet Democrat. He was always registered as a Republican 'cause that's the only election that amounted to anything for a Democrat in those days, the Republican Primary in June. So he always voted Republican in June and never voted at all in November. [Chuckling] And there was no secret about what his politics were. All of the mill managers in town--this is a typical Muskie diversion here for Coffin--but all the mill managers in town, you know, the Oxford Paper Company and the other paper companies, they all bought their suits from my father because he was the only custom tailor in town. And by God! They had to sit and listen to his political views [Laughter] when they came to have their try-ons and all the rest of it. They respected him that much, too. So I learned a lot of politics through, you know, from just listen to his lectures. Because he had me learning his trade in Rumford to be a tailor. But in any case, I went to Waterville, knowing that there was this Democratic tradition. And I looked forward to it. In 1940 it was an election year, so I spent my first election year practising law in the town where I . . . .

BEAM: Were you active in the '40 campaign?

MUSKIE: Well, I went to-- I can remember vaguely going to some Democratic meetings--caucuses--of that kind. But I was simply a citizen and interested. And of course I made it a point when I moved to Waterville to introduce myself to all of the lawyers, and particularly the Democratic lawyers, so they all knew I was Democratic in my political views.

BEAM: You're talking about how large a circle of people in Waterville at that time?

MUSKIE: Well... How many lawyers? You don't mean the general population?

BEAM: No, no. I mean, I'm talking about the legal community.

MUSKIE: About 30 I would say. Maybe 30 lawyers in Waterville. A minority of them would have been Democrats. Jim Boyle, Harold Dubord.... Well, Julian, Paul Julian, is not a lawyer, but he might just as well have been. [Chuckling] Half a dozen maybe. And then, of course, they gave birth to a lot of Democrats. You know, Dick Dubord became mayor--won a seat that I lost when I tried. And Dick and I became good friends. Unfortunately, he died very prematurely. But, no, so that Democratic position meant a lot to me, and every one of those Waterville lawyers. I remember Jim Boyle and Harold Dubord particularly. They immediately took an interest in me, and, you know, they were friendly and congenial, you know. They made me feel very much at home, which was important. So Waterville fit me like a glove, I thought. I was a bachelor for several years before I married. And I got involved in a veterans' organization, the AMVETS, which was a new veterans' group after World War II. They formed a post in Waterville and asked me to join. And I did, even though in Waterville the American Legion was a very, very important veterans' organization, one of the biggest in the state.

NICOLL: Wasn't Jim Boyle very active in the Legion?

MUSKIE: Jim was very active in the Legion. And he was a national committee member ___. No, that was the __, but there was one post in veterans' organizations that were--

NICOLL: Was he a state commander or--?

MUSKIE: He wasn't ever state commander, but--

COFFIN: Oh, the adjutant, wasn't it?

MUSKIE: Yeah. He was a fellow that American Legionnaires anywhere in the country turn to when they see the name. And Jim Boyle was a very big Legionnaire. He was one of the founders of the American Legion in this country. Why I knew of his connection was the Democrats talked to me __ Danvers. Danvers never amounted to much, you know. But anyway, that's how I began to fill up my community life because I thought that was important. I wasn't born in Waterville or anywhere near it. I was taking over the office of a man who--I guess he was well liked. And he just ___ that connection was not open entre to the rest of the city.

BEAM: So the person you took over from was a Republican?

MUSKIE: I don't really know what he was. I assume that he probably was if he was anything. I

never knew whether or not he was active politically. I assume that he was not. And if he had the same--well, he had the same secretary I did--first thing she exacted from me was that commitment not to run for public office, you know. [Laughter] The only damned thing that saved me from her was that when the war came on and I had to--you know--I had to go into the service, well, she wasn't interested in holding my office open ___ going through however many years the war lasted. So she left me, and I was able to pick up somebody else. I don't know that we want to get into that at this point.

COFFIN: Did you know--? When did you meet Dick McMahon? Was it after you were on the state scene in Augusta? Or did you become friends earlier?

MUSKIE: Well, Dick, of course was a big American Legionnaire. His father was. And he was a typical veteran, typical type for the Legion or any veterans' organization. Terrific guy. So I got to know him as one of the active and younger Legionnaires. And he was a Democrat. But he developed his political connections and his political life with Dick Dubord. Really, that was the connection.

NICOLL: Is that how he became city treasurer?

MUSKIE: I would assume so. That was the best goddamned political job in the city. I think it paid $6,000 in those days. Hell! Even a Supreme Court justice didn't do any better than that in those days. [Laughter] To make that kind of comparison. But anyway, when I came back--and then I'll break off so you can get up to your line of question--when I came back from the service, I had to start all over again. My law practice had shrunk to practically nothing although Marjorie[2] had done very well in servicing the collection accounts and the other cases that I had. But they'd about run dry by that time, and I knew I had to build a new political base. And so then I began to think about politics, and both parties were looking for candidates from among the young men coming back from the war. Harold Dubord was a fellow suggested by one committee--

BEAM: Excuse me, Senator Muskie, I want to flip over--

MUSKIE: You know, both Jim Boyle and Dubord were staunch Democrats. I mean, both originally _____. And in addition to that we had--there was another young Democratic lawyer--Roland Poole, who had been practising law somewhat longer than I. But he was interested in running for the legislature. And we had two Republican incumbents. Waterville had two seats--still does, doesn't it, in the legislature?

NICOLL: Yeah, but I think they're--

[2]Marjorie Hutchinson

MUSKIE: Are they distributed differently?

NICOLL: They're distributed differently. Some people were representing Waterville and outlying communities.

MUSKIE: Well, in those days Waterville had two, and they were both Republicans. And the Republicans held the two seats for ten years, as I recall. And I knew Roland Poulin, whom I later appointed as a municipal court judge, as a matter of fact. But he was interested in running. He served one term, and that was-- I think he had served-- No, I guess he hadn't. In any case, he was a good running mate. And so we both decided to run on a ticket. And we won. And the issue that we ran on was the soldiers' bonus. I mean, after the war there was a lot of talk about, you know, soldiers' bonuses all over the country. I mean, we have to reward these young fellows who'd gone off to war. And so the governor, who was a Republican then-- Who was it? What was his name?

COFFIN: Barrows was it?

MUSKIE: No, it wasn't Barrows.

COFFIN: What year are we doing?

MUSKIE: He ran for the governorship against--

LEE: Maigret?

MUSKIE: No, later, after I was well known.

LEE: Hildreth?

MUSKIE: Hildreth! That's who it was.

BEAM: Horace Hildreth, yeah.

MUSKIE: Hildreth was governor. And the Republicans had been looking for a way to add a major tax to the state's revenues. He thought this was the perfect way to get a sales tax. So in the summer of 19--what was it?--'46? Yeah, '46. So he called a special session. And his proposition to the legislature was that this was a vote for a bonus for the soldiers--that would pick up one set of votes--and that they fund it with a general sales tax. Well, that was a package that was just a delight to a tad. [Laughter] You couldn't lose it. We soldiers that fought for the war, by God, we're not going to be blamed for a sales tax! [Laughter]

BEAM: Now before the war, had anybody approached you about running for office? I mean, as you were establishing your practice?

MUSKIE: No.

BEAM: Nobody had. Anybody approach you about getting into the Republican Party?

MUSKIE: No. They didn't recognize that hidden genius. [Laughter] No, and it never occurred to me--really. I mean, I took a great interest in every election. I can't remember ever working in one before 1946. But I certainly was interested, and I used to attend caucuses, and I enjoyed my contacts with Harold Dubord and others. But it never occurred to me to run for anything. Here it was important because it was a way of getting better known in the community and building a political base and hopefully an economic base as well. So it was an important thing to do. And hell! I was still single, and there wasn't all that much to do in Waterville. [Chuckling]

LEE: Did you have a room somewhere?

MUSKIE: Yeah, I had a room. Well, when I came back from the service-- Well, in my first stint in Waterville, I had a room. It was a nice room in a nice family, but that disappeared with the war. And when I came back, Mrs. Blackington offered me a room until I could find something that I really wanted. And eventually I got a room just around the corner from the post office as I remember. And I was there very briefly while I got still another one. Yeah, I guess I had single rooms. Let's see, when did I get married? In '48. So for a couple of years there I lived in maybe two or three rooms. But anyway, I was looking for, you know, some way to be active in the community. Get known and make friends. And then added politics to all of that, and there was a way to make a whole life for me. I didn't have a girlfriend at that time. I met Jane after I came back from the war. So life opened up and became very full quite quickly. I was very happy. And it never occurred to me, you know, that I would stop practising law at some point down the line. I had in my mind maybe two terms in the legislature. I thought that might be a good way to get started.

COFFIN: As far as I'm concerned, I don't know how he lived as a lawyer because when he became governor, he handed me some of his cases. And his clients, they practically bankrupted me. [Laughter] No, they were an interesting group. One was Captain Giles, the "Victory Chimes."

MUSKIE: He was ___, you've to admit he was. He was a symbol, too.

COFFIN: Yes, yes he was.

MUSKIE: He was captain of a sailing ship called the "Victory Chimes."

COFFIN: Oh, yeah, he made that, the ___. Yeah.

MUSKIE: The "Victory Chimes." And on Election Day he was adrift in a hurricane at that time off the coast of New Jersey in the "Victory Chimes." And we wondered about the symbolism. [Laughter] Victory chimes in all night.

BEAM: So mostly the legal practice was what? Mostly collections and--?

MUSKIE: I had collections, I had criminal cases, I had probate cases. Nothing very big. I'm trying to think.... I remember the last case I had that I tried before the campaign was a statutory rape case. Little town of-- Oh, what's that little town? Not Freedom. Liberty? Remember those towns Liberty, Freedom....?

COFFIN: Appleton? Monroe?

MUSKIE: I think it was Liberty. Anyway--

LEE: Harmony.

MUSKIE: Yeah, there's Harmony there, too. Yeah, there's a number of those towns with that kind of name. Liberty, I think, is the town where I get this client. And I got her--or him-- This was the husband, young husband, of a two-worker family. The wife worked nights, and he worked days. And they had to have a baby-sitter since they had a child. And it was the baby-sitter, who was about 13 or 14, whose fate got caught up in mine. [Chuckling] In any case, the local minister, who came from Texas--I forget what denomination he was--but anyway, he took an interest in everybody's business except his own, I guess. Anyway, he finally decided that that young husband had been sleeping with this 13- or 14-year-old baby-sitter. They lived in a little house outside the town. And I think Jim Glover--you remember Jim Glover?

COFFIN: Yes.

MUSKIE: You know, he was city treasurer once when that was a Republican. But in any case, he thought he'd like to practice law, but he never wanted to spend any time at it. So he picked up this client that was the young husband and asked me to come in and take it over. Which I did. He'd come down to court and sit and listen, but he wouldn't do a helluva lot besides that. But in any case, we got this guy. And I could never persuade him to admit that he was guilty. I did my damnedest, you know, 'cause it looked like the inevitable. Not that the girl was that attractive, but she was quiet and sort of shy, and it looked like this is the sort of girl, you know, who could be seduced by this kind of a rapscallion. So finally, I said, Well, I'll scare the son of a bitch off. I said, "My fee's going to be $500." "No problem," he said, "I'll raise that." [Chuckling] So he raised the money, and we went to trial. Sullivan was the judge.

COFFIN: Francis Sullivan.

MUSKIE: Francis Sullivan was the judge, and we had a full week's trial. I met the girl's father and her mother's husband. He lived in a concrete house--it was built out of solid concrete. And in the middle of the week there I finally went to see him. And I was curious about this whole goddamned set-up. And the minute I mentioned his wife,

you know-- I was trying to cover all the-- God! did he jump out of his chair and lash out at her. Oh, boy! Jeez, wouldn't it be nice to get him on that witness stand? His testimony won't be admissible, you know, but by the time the judge gets to ruling on it, the jury will have heard it. [Laughter] Well, what he had to say about that woman, you know, wasn't fit to print! It was a good trial anyway.

LEE: The woman was the mother of the girl?

MUSKIE: The mother of the girl. She was the one who worked nights.

LEE: Oh, I see.

MUSKIE: She was the one that-- Why I didn't guess that, you know, guess that, you know, guess there was something funny going on earlier anyway. I played it very carefully, and I put the father on the stand finally. And we went through the family life and the girl and all that. But finally I asked him a key question which I had carefully phrased. Jesus! did he jump. [Laughter] I watched the county attorney. He sat there frozen. He couldn't believe this fury. But he woke up enough to say: "Object! I object!" [Laughter] And the judge, of course, upheld the objection, but I'd got the one I wanted. And so I got an acquittal. It was more complicated than that, but that's the dramatic ___. But then I hung around the courthouse; I had some other things to do. When I finally left, I walked out of the courthouse, and there by the outside door was the whole jury, waiting for me. And the chairman of the jury came up to me, he said: "Mr. Muskie, we just want you to know that wherever you come from, we're coming to ___." [Laughter] So when I won that goddamned election I thought to myself: Think of your legal career. [Laughter] And then within a week I got a phone call from a prisoner up in Skowhegan jail. I'd say he was in his fifties, and he'd been picked up on the same thing. [Laughter] Although I think in his case it was his granddaughter.

LEE: You had some good clients. [Laughter]

MUSKIE: He said that he had read about this case and thought I was the lawyer for him. Well, he was a helluva lot more candid than the other guy--no question about his guilt. He said she liked it. [Laughter] He never heard from me again. So I agree, some of my clients.... But that's the way you build up a client base. None of this, I assume, will appear....

BEAM: Well, it's all being recorded.

MUSKIE: Well, you've got to get a little sex, I suppose, in there. But it was a lot of fun. I got a lot of drunken driving cases in those days. Every young lawyer did, I think. I had pretty good luck with those, too. I guess I just had an honest face. [Chuckling]

BEAM: Good luck in what? Getting them to admit guilt or getting them off? [Laughter]

MUSKIE: Getting them all acquitted. I remember one client I had who'd been picked up for drunken driving. He had a bad leg and a cane. And he got picked up--his car had gone off the road and ended up quite a few feet off the road in the deep snow. And when the officer testified to get a conviction, I said: "You weren't there when my client went off the road?" "No." "Well, how did you know that he'd been in the car?" "Well, there were these round holes where the cane had gone into the snow." I said, "How deep was the snow?" "About two feet." I said, "There were clear round holes?" [Chuckling] He got off the road in two feet of snow? [Laughter] I mean, he gave me pot shots __.

BEAM: Now these were cases you had while you were in the legislature? While you were--? I mean--

MUSKIE: Oh, sure. I was practising law. You don't think I could-- Well, I hadn't told you, but I was paid $800 a year. Of course you had to have some other income.

BEAM: Now how much time did you spend on legislative activities as opposed to your legal practice?

MUSKIE: Not as much as they do now because we really met once every two years. Occasionally there was a special session, but not very often. I had three special sessions my last year. And I think the three all told consumed six days. Because we had ways for cutting it short. But otherwise than that it was less than six months every other year. I think the first one--the first I served--we got through about Memorial Day. That was the longest legislative session up to that point in the history of the state. So that it didn't take an awful lot of time. It was a lot of fun, it was interesting. And I was lucky in becoming a leader. So I counted that-- Well, I served four years and then became OPS Director the last one. And it gave me a chance to get acquainted all over the state. If you read that article by Lorin Arnold you'll find that, you know, Republicans--Republican legislators--practically quit filching my best supporters. Because I wasn't a mean and nasty guy the way I became later. [Laughter]

BEAM: Well, what were your committee assignments when you were in there?

MUSKIE: Let's see, which ones did I--? Either Legal Affairs or Judiciary. I think we only had one. One of the big issues, which you'll find if you want to read that story, was that in fact the Democrats were left off committees. If I remember the statistics, 80% of the bills that were introduced in the legislature were sent to committees where there were no Democrats. It was one way they had of keeping us quiet. There weren't many Democrats anyway at that time. How many? Fourteen or fifteen in the House.

NICOLL: I think that was it.

BEAM: Out of how many?

MUSKIE: Two or three in the Senate. So we didn't have a large group.

NICOLL: About 10% or less in both the House and the Senate.

BEAM: Yeah.

MUSKIE: And they never organized to produce a program or anything of that kind.

BEAM: You mean you didn't have a caucus of any sort?

MUSKIE: Oh, we met occasionally, but a caucus in terms of an effective group preparing an agenda and a legislative program and all of that? No. Well, we did soon after I got there, but that was not the environment, that was not the practice. They just ignored us. And that's what I used as the first issue, the fact that they ignored us.

BEAM: An issue where? In the legislature--

MUSKIE: In the legislature.

BEAM: --or when you ran for office?

MUSKIE: Oh, they didn't ignore me when I ran for office. No. No, I'm talking about the legislature.

BEAM: Yeah. And how did you make this an issue? Did you make it an issue in the press or?

MUSKIE: I made it an issue on the floor. As soon as they announced a committee assignment, I added up the number. And I knew that we were going to be ignored. We didn't have any--as I remember--we didn't have anybody on Judiciary Committee, for example. I don't think we had anybody on Legal Affairs Committee or on Appropriations Committee. I mean, there's the bulk of your committee work in any legislature. And they just took it for granted. They were very open about it. And when I made a point of it, they just brushed it off. So I wrote to every state in the country to find out how minority legislators would feel. Unfortunately, there I didn't get as good evidence as I would have liked because in the Southern states the minorities were Republicans; [Laughter] Democrats weren't the casualties as they were up here. But I used the right states, you know, to make my point. And, I mean, Lorin Arnold used to make a lot of that issue in his column. And I'd make it every damned legislature. The next time I came, same damned thing. They didn't improve any. And I'd corner the Republican floor leaders, you know, in the hallways as the press gathered around us to listen to what I was saying. Same damned thing. I mean, you can make a lot of issue out of one-party government.

LEE: Who were the key leaders in the House on the Republican side in those days?

MUSKIE: Silsby. I think Silsby was one. He later became a judge. Bob Haskell was president

of the Senate. The speaker of the House then was a very attractive young--well, middle-aged--guy from-- I'm trying to think of the name. Yes, I can see his face now, but I can't think of his name. He really should have been a Democrat, I think, but he came from one of the small counties that were all Republican. Very nice guy, but they all played the same game. You know, one of the important appointments was the--what was the committee that was created between sessions of the legislature?

NICOLL: Oh. ___. They don't have it anymore.

MUSKIE: It was supposedly charged to watch the legislative scene in between sessions and come to the legislature with recommendations for changes and restructuring and that sort of thing. And even substantive legislation. I was told, you know, quietly that I was going to be appointed to that committee. Well, I tweaked their nose a little too much the last days of the session, so I didn't get the appointment. They'd do that sort of petty thing that didn't do them any good. But, I mean, the weakness is a one-party government. You know, once you get to play that game--as we did for how many years now? Six years--you know, you can get the public attention. I think we've gone through a lot of the implications of that kind of government. You don't have accountability; you don't have opportunity. You know, you have conservatism; there's no room for liberalism or progressive kind of thinking. All you had to use is your imagination a little bit, and they gave you plenty of time to use that [Chuckling] because they wouldn't give you any work to do. So it used to be fun. It wasn't a chore. If they'd given us work, I wouldn't have enjoyed it as much probably.

BEAM: [Chuckle] Did you find yourself becoming immediately the spokesman of the Democrats in the legislature? I mean, were other Democrats in the legislature at the time making that kind of point?

MUSKIE: Well, I'd say there was one--Louis Jalbert--who very much wanted to be the leader but never did succeed in becoming the leader. He was a Democrat from Lewiston whose integrity was constantly subject to challenge by people in both parties. You know, under-the-table stuff. How much there was to that, I don't know. There might have been. I never got interested in that. He became a strange sort of supporter of mine, but he also wanted to be a leader. He was envious, too. But it's funny because--he's dead now--but over the last six or seven years before he died whenever there was a clipping in the Lewiston papers, he'd send me a little note and enclose the clipping. He was very, you know--

LEE: Was this after he was defeated, after he'd run for--?

MUSKIE: But he did some of that before, too. He always referred to me as "the big guy." Not always--at the beginning, no. I wasn't a big guy at the beginning. [Chuckling]

LEE: You became....

NICOLL: I remember on the steps of the Lewiston City Hall in 1954 at the end of the

convention, Louis poking his finger at you [meaning Muskie] and saying: "You're all through, Muskie. [Chuckling] You're all through." I was standing there with a reporter, and Louis was furious at you over something.

MUSKIE: In '54?

NICOLL: This was '54. After the convention was over, and we were coming down. And I for some reason was there. And Louis was very angry . . . .

MUSKIE: What was he angry about?

NICOLL: I don't remember, and I'm not sure I knew at the time. Just seeing him there--

MUSKIE: I hadn't decided to run yet.

NICOLL: That's right. And he said, "You're all through Muskie." Poking his finger the way he did. [Chuckling]

MUSKIE: Well, he was a strange, strange guy. I never could give . . . . ___ wasn't a friend of mine, but I could never really dislike him. There was something about him.... He was certainly persistent. And when he died he had the reputation of being "Mr. Democrat," not me. I mean, the newspaper pundits, you know, referred to Louis as "Mr. Democrat." That was his cherished title. Yet perhaps that was enough for him. And how he got to be elected in Lewiston year after year when he made all the enemies that he did there is strange. And they all had a part in the story for many years. __ all need them. [Chuckling] They were loyal, you know, they really were. I mean, we all went to dwell in Lewiston.

LEE: [garbled sounding] _____ he and I used to have--

MUSKIE: I never really disliked him. He had drama.

COFFIN: I was saying at lunch with Shep and Don that at this early stage when we--you--started to build the party, this was a very unique time. We owed nothing to anybody. There were, at least at the start, there was very little prospect of anybody getting elected that year. We were setting out to build. And we were talking about issues. And it was about as pure a time for politics, as I suspect as existed. Just then the people that we found and who joined up were just wonderful people. It was a great--

NICOLL: It might be well, Frank, if you and Ed could talk about the search for candidates for that '54 election. That's a-- [Laughter]

COFFIN: Yes, I'll start.

MUSKIE: This is Frank's, I guess. I've told this story so many times, I'd like to hear a different version. [Chuckling]

COFFIN: Memory is not always reliable, but we came to the convention and the platform had, as Ed said, received a great amount of publicity. And then we had Averell Harriman come and address us.

BEAM: Now this was when? The convention, the Democratic convention?

COFFIN: 'Fifty-four, yes.

BEAM: And when did that take place in '54?

COFFIN: I think--

MUSKIE: March.

COFFIN: --March.

BEAM: March '54?

COFFIN: And Averell Harriman came and spoke to us. And it wasn't that he was such a great speaker, but he was a distinguished statesman.

MUSKIE: Let's see.... Who else did we have? We had Dorothy Vredenburgh.

COFFIN: Dorothy Vredenburgh was a handsome woman.

MUSKIE: She still does her same job.

COFFIN: Really?

MUSKIE: Calling off the delegates' names.

NICOLL: She's Dorothy Vredenburgh Bush.

MUSKIE: Yeah, that's right. She married a fellow named Bush. Her last name was-- Yeah, she's still there; I heard her. She was there in Atlanta.

COFFIN: I'll be blazes!

MUSKIE: And then there was Mike Kerwin from Ohio.

COFFIN: Yup. Youngstown.

MUSKIE: Yup, Youngstown, Ohio.

COFFIN: I'd forgotten that. But then the papers came out saying that we got into, you know,

first gear and then second gear and now we were back in reverse because we didn't have any candidates. [Chuckling]

NICOLL: ___ Jim Oliver.

BEAM: Oh, he would be what? First District? Yeah.

COFFIN: And he'd been a recent convert to the Democratic Party.

MUSKIE: He had run for governor in the previous election.

COFFIN: And he had been a Republican congressman. Well, at that point, after I became state chairman shortly after the convention, and with Dick McMahon and Don and Tom Delahanty and others, we were trying to put together a ticket.

NICOLL: Colbath.

COFFIN: And Ken Colbath.

NICOLL: “The Colossus of the North”.

COFFIN: And you were willing to run for Congress, I think.

MUSKIE: I wasn't too enthusiastic.

COFFIN: You weren't enthusiastic, but we were all trying to get an older person to run for governor. And we tried to get [Edward Carleton] Carl Moran [Jr.] in Rockland who had been the sitting congressman under Roosevelt in the early 'thirties. That's twenty years or more ago. And then we tried to get Harold Dubord.

MUSKIE: We tried to get Dubord. We tried to get Clint Clauson.

COFFIN: And Clint Clauson.

NICOLL: And Edgar Corliss.

MUSKIE: Edgar Corliss. That's right. From Bridgton. [Chuckling]

LEE: Now there's a name you never heard in chicken farming. [Laughter]

MUSKIE: I would never have thought of it on my own. [Laughter]

BEAM: Now excuse me, Frank. Didn't the--? The convention didn't select candidates?

COFFIN: No.

BEAM: It didn't.

COFFIN: No.

BEAM: Well, who would select the candidates? The convention came up with the platform?

COFFIN: We'd had the primary elections in June, and so people would hopefully--if we got a good ticket and they'd put their nomination papers in--they'd be nominated and we'd hope there wouldn't be any primary fight. But we couldn't guarantee that.

BEAM: So the purpose of the convention was to come up with a platform. Is that correct?

COFFIN: Yes, that's right. And to elect the members of the county committees and this and that sort of thing.

BEAM: Mmmm hmmm. Okay.

COFFIN: Well, I don't know at what point-- Perhaps you should say now at what point you agreed to become candidate for governor.

MUSKIE: Not at the convention.

COFFIN: No. It wasn't until sometime after that.

MUSKIE: We left the convention having in mind certain of electing one of these people that you've mentioned and then-- Well, Perry Furbush was another one. Perry Furbush. There were five or six that we thought would be good candidates.

COFFIN: I know we were thinking of Henry Benoit for Congress, and maybe we asked him for the Senate, too.

MUSKIE: There was a lot of ___ for the Senate.

COFFIN: Yup.

MUSKIE: It was important to get the governorship because there was no chance of getting good people for the other spots and things--the United States Senate and Congress and even the legislature. We didn't have enough candidates for the legislature to elect a majority if they had all won. So it all depended upon getting a candidate for governor. And I was not one of the first names that came to mind. And I wasn't interested, really.

NICOLL: And you were still recovering.

MUSKIE: I was still recovering from a broken back. And at the convention Mike Kerwin, I think, was the fellow who thought I ought to run for Congress. That's right; he's the

one. He knew Charlie Nelson. I think they were pushing me and assumed when they left, that if I ran for anything it would be for Congress. But anyway, our objective was to find a candidate for governor. And I think Harold was the first we tried.

BEAM: Harold Dubord?

MUSKIE: Yeah.

BEAM: Yeah.

MUSKIE: I don't know if he ever seriously considered that at all.

COFFIN: My impression is that none of these-- Now sometimes we'd go together to talk to these people--or more than. And they really would turn us down out of hand. I mean, they didn't sleep on it even overnight, I think.

MUSKIE: Even Clauson who became a very eager candidate [Laughter] a few years later.

BEAM: Is that because the Democrats were in such a minority? Because, I mean, today I would think any number of people would be interested in being asked.

COFFIN: Yes, that's it exactly. I think that's--

MUSKIE: Oh, there's no question. No question.

NICOLL: Hadn't won an election in 20 years. Running against an incumbent governor. Margaret Chase Smith was at the top of the ticket. Eisenhower had just won two years ago.

COFFIN: Well, anyhow, at some point Ed-- We had to have our decision made on candidates by, I think, mid-April-- somewhere around that.

MUSKIE: It had to be 60 days before the primary, which was in mid-June. So that would be mid-April we had to have candidates. And they had to have X number of signatures on their papers to be on the ticket.

COFFIN: As I remember it, Ed at last accepted and said that he would be governor. Then we got-- Jim Oliver, of course, was already in the--

MUSKIE: We got Paul Fullam.

COFFIN: For Senate.

MUSKIE: Yeah. It was important to get him second.

COFFIN: Mmmm hmmm. Well, you got him, but then you lost him. And so this is the story I

want to tell because we had Jim Oliver for the First District and Tom Delahanty, a fine candidate, for the Second District. And then Ken Colbath-- Well, we had trouble filling that spot. But we finally felt well, at least he's honest and a good businessman. And he proved to be a great guy.

MUSKIE: A helluva campaigner!

COFFIN: But before that Ed is right that the second spot was very important, and it was the splendid history professor in Colby, Paul Fullam. And he spoke--could speak--very well. A handsome man. But then it developed that he had a heart problem. And so he withdrew. And I can remember being down in Lewiston on, say, the Thursday before the Monday when papers had to be filed. And I was on the phone calling people--Calling a grocer in Gorham and calling various people: "Would you please run for the Senate." This is against Senator Margaret Smith, who was, of course, at the height of her popularity. And so I spent all afternoon trying to call people. And our only criterion was at this point just somebody who was honest. [Laughter] But then Ed called me late in the afternoon and sent word to us: Paul has agreed to run. And we just let the word out, and the papers were all over the state. And he got more signatures than he needed in just a couple of days.

NICOLL: I think it was about the Thursday before the Monday on which the papers had to be in ___.

COFFIN: But then Paul Fullam later told the story of what changed his mind because he did have a heart problem and within a year he had died, after putting on a terrific campaign. But he was walking near his home in Sidney, Maine, with his little son, Conway. And Conway looked up at the sky to see the night plane to Boston and said: "Is that the plane that's carrying the bomb?" And Paul Fullam, you know, was really shaken by his son's attitude of hopelessness. And he decided then come hell or high water he was going to run. And he did a beautiful job. He didn't win, but he cut down--

LEE: He added a lot to the tone of the campaign. He was rather an-- His oratory was reminiscent of Stevenson's.

NICOLL: He was the only person I ever heard who could come in and talk to rank-and-file Democrats about Aristotle and get them excited. [Laughter]

COFFIN: And he would also talk about campaigning. He'd speak a great deal about Afghanistan.

BEAM: Afghanistan in 1952?

COFFIN: Yeah. And we slower types would say: "What on earth is he talking about--that?" Of course, in retrospect, he had put his finger on a very important part of the world and things that were being done even then. Fateful.

MUSKIE: Yeah, he died that autumn, I think, after the election, didn't he? No, no! I was governor. I had become governor. So it was about a year after the election.

NICOLL: It was late in the winter because it was just about time for the decision about the 1956 campaign. And Paul had been talking about possibly running for Congress in '56. And he died. I think it was in November, December __.

MUSKIE: That was a real loss. But he certainly played a role in '54. And Ken Colbath was great. Well, the whole ticket, you know. Ken Colbath wouldn't have won unless we took that whole ticket together. Fullam wouldn't have. Delahanty wouldn't have. Jim Oliver, of course, was already a candidate. But then we got enough write-in candidates for the legislature in the primary to elect a majority if they'd all won. So that that was a significant-- And the campaign started then. I mean, the Republicans-- I guess we ought to get this in the record--the Republicans, the pro-McCarthy Republicans, had to take up a candidate to run against Margaret Smith in the Republican primary.

BEAM: Right.

MUSKIE: His name was Bob Jones.

LEE: That's right.

MUSKIE: Bob Jones.

LEE: You went to Bates with him.

COFFIN: Yes, he was a fellow Bates man.

MUSKIE: Young, good-looking guy who'd been smitten by the McCarthy charisma, whatever it was. Which hasn't improved in the years since. [Laughter] The media, of course, looked on that race as the race of the year, you know. Which suddenly just disappeared in June when Margaret overwhelmed this guy. And then the focus was on us. I mean, we had these months from April to June to establish our own campaign approach, and we'd been going from little town to little town and making use of that time without any contest in the party, within the party, to start the momentum for the fall. And it worked very well.

LEE: ___ the Republican Party to vote ___.

BEAM: Oh, is that right?

LEE: _____.

BEAM: Well, what do you--? Now, in '54, of course, you won the governorship. But none of

the other four candidates won for either Senate or the three Congressional districts. How do you account for that? I mean, why weren't the Democrats able to pick up at least one Congressional seat?

MUSKIE: Well, of course you've got a-- You just can't pick this up in this conversation, but the fact is that the obvious target was the governor. Not because he's been proven in court but because he had a certain ineptness about him and ___.

COFFIN: Well, I suppose so, but I mean you were clearly the, you know, the best campaigner. That is, you were the one on whom the lightning fell--and appropriately so--and a lot of it was personal. That is, it was not a party thing so much as it later became. That is, as the party began to get credibility, that was more and more important. But at that point, I think it was Ed Muskie and people who would-- A lot of Republicans-- We had to have a lot of Republicans. And we had people coming out of the closet and saying: "We're Republicans for Muskie!" And at a certain point--I don't know when it happened--but long before I felt-- I guess I never really felt we had a chance to win, and that was a surprise to me when we did. But it wasn't a surprise to you. You had gotten some feel as you went around the state that-- But Paul Fullam did well. He cut Margaret's majority of 90,000 to about 50 or less.

MUSKIE: Well, this was true across the board. On election eve, when we were getting the returns--I don't know what the practice now is because the reporting, I guess, is a little different--but in those days the first towns, the first precincts, to report were the tiny little towns that were mostly Republican, out in the boondocks, you know, and way up north in Aroostook County and elsewhere. We all knew what they were, and so we would all get up to watch what came in from those towns. And immediately, in those little towns, you know, where there weren't any Democratic votes the previous times, there were four or five. Up where, you know, the number of Democratic votes doubled. So by ten o'clock, even though the statewide total didn't indicate victory, we knew the damned thing was coming. And I don't know-- I forget how many counties we carried. I think we carried all but Hancock and Waldo?

COFFIN: I don't know.

NICOLL: And Lincoln.

MUSKIE: And Lincoln. I think three out of sixteen. Well, that was quite an achievement. So it was personal. And well, also I was the most visible. I'd done-- You saw that column from two years earlier. And I had been OPS Director, conducted a program there that made my name rise up.

COFFIN: Well, as OPS I think it's true that you-- This did one thing for you that nothing else had done and that got you all over the state.

MUSKIE: Yeah, it really did. There were so many small businessmen that appreciated the fact that we were not enforcement minded. We were compliance minded. So we sent

teams of people around the state to help them meet the reporting requirements and the record-keeping requirements. And we handled each of those cases as an individual case. It did an awful lot of good. There were people in, you know, across the river up in Aroostook County and in--

BEAM: Saint John's.

MUSKIE: Saint John's Valley where it was like a triumphant parade when I walked along Main Street in those towns up there because they remembered me from OPS. They appreciated it. And I always liked the county anyway so I always liked going up there. So I knew an awful lot of people from those-- And that helped because they spread the word, those people, you know. That's one advantage of running for office in Maine anyway. It's a state where word-of-mouth advertising is terribly important. And if you've gotten to know people and they like you, I tell you, it's really something when you've got them. And for some reason-- Well, I had never run for public office, really. I mean, running for the legislature was not nearly the same.

COFFIN: When did you--? Can you remember when you first felt that things were going well in the campaign in '54?

Tape 2, Side A, MOH 023

BEAM: All right, this is Tape No. 2. We were talking about the 1954 campaign, and--

LEE: When did it take off?

MUSKIE: Well, of course, there were a number of take-off points. One was--we've already discussed--and that is putting the ticket together. And overcoming the problem of Paul Fullam. I mean, that was a helluva lift to me because I think I'd already announced for governor on the assumption that Fullam was going to be on the ticket and the others. When he called me--I think he called me to tell me he'd decided he really shouldn't do it--that was quite a blow. So we overcame that, and you know, everything seemed to be going right. The convention had gone well. The pre-convention activity had gone well. We'd gotten the attention of the media. There was good spirit, good feeling in the party; you could sense it all over the state. We'd even--Frank had--managed to bring out of their hibernation a lot of the old-time Democratic leaders of the party who had given up on us a long time ago. There was the president of Bowdoin College--President Sills [Kenneth C.M.]--who had been a candidate once himself, I think.

COFFIN: Yes. Wasn't it the Senate in 19--?

LEE: Yes, President Sills was a candidate in the 'teens.

MUSKIE: I remember when Frank managed to get--I don't know--maybe a couple of dozen of these people together, and we had a big picture in the press on the front page of these

old--

COFFIN: Leonard Pierce, Helen Donahue, Walter Davis, Philip Clifford.

MUSKIE: Henry Benoit. I mean, the names had, you know, brought respect from Republicans. And so we had become respectable, you see. And in addition to that we'd gotten some light. And it was just fun to be part of it. And then we had our own private campaign going because of the Smith-Jones contest going on in the other party. And the Governor had helped us very much when he was asked about his opposition and he said: "Well, Muskie isn't the strongest candidate they might have picked, but you know...." [Chuckling] That helped me. It was the first of the ineptitudes of which he was so-- [Laughter] A lot of things were going right. Really, when I really began to feel that I might become the stump speaker, it was up in Rangeley. I don't know what the hell I was doing up in Rangeley, but we were going into as many rural areas as we could. And I was interested, of course, in the conservation issues and the fishing. And Rangeley was a place where my father used to take me when I was a boy, so I knew the Rangeley area. So we went up, and there happened to be a couple of active Democrats. What was his name? One was the owner of the grocery store there. Anyway, there was a handful of them.

COFFIN: I know, Bob Something.

MUSKIE: But anyway, they put together a rally. I forget where it was held. It was in Rangeley Village as I remember--maybe one of the hotels. And I spent the afternoon talking to some of these old-timers about conservation, about Rangeley, about fishing and about the problems in these areas. And Rangeley used to be a helluva summer resort for out-of-staters. So we went and did a lot of reminiscing about that. So that night when I got up to speak, I really didn't know what the hell I was talking about, and I don't remember now what I talked about. But all I know is that I caught fire for some goddamned reason. And, you know, I forgot about rigid speeches and all that ___. I had something I wanted to talk about, and it just flowed. And it had apparently an igniting effect, you know. The crowd got very enthusiastic. And I began to like it and enjoy it.

And so I acquired, I think, the beginnings of a campaign style that night and that I embellished as the campaign went along. And it was amazing the crowds that we drew from then on. The spark began to spread, and people got excited, and we got these editorials in these small-town papers. And, you know, from that time on-- And then you ran into it on the street, you know. And I remember one very astonishing development. We haven't mentioned television, but television, in my judgment, was a much bigger factor in the results in '54 than the media had ever credited to television. I think it may well have been the thing that tipped the scale. Because it came at the right time, and we'd never had television of any kind in this state--

NICOLL: That was the first election in the state with television. And immediately after the primaries, we put on a half-hour show. It all had to be live in those days.

BEAM: Oh, really!

NICOLL: They didn't have videotapes. You could do films, but that was very difficult and not very good quality. So we set up a program--a half-hour program--and had all of the candidates on. And we repeated it in Bangor.

BEAM: Now who set this up, Don? Was this set up by the WLAM or network or--?

NICOLL: It was set up by the state committee who'd bought the time. And we designed the program and scripted it. And we had Ed and Paul Fullam and Jim Oliver and Tom Delahanty and Ken Colbath on. And Frank moderated the program. And then we had-- The wives were there. And we interviewed the candidates. I think we could tell a story about that. I don't know whether I'll tell it or-- [Laughter] Well, listen, this is pertinent. We went out to [Henry] Henri Benoit's. We've mentioned Henri Benoit. He was the son of the founder of Benoits. He lived in Cape Elizabeth. And we went out there to prepare for the program. And everybody gathered and decided on the format. This was on the afternoon of the program. And the approximate time each candidate would have.

MUSKIE: These were all ad lib speeches.

NICOLL: All ad lib speeches. And Frank and I went off to prepare the opening and the other parts of it. And then Frank was typing away what he had to say. And Henry was always the impeccable host and was pouring drinks for people. And Frank did not note that his glass of whiskey sitting there kept getting refilled. [Laughter] He would take a sip, and he'd come back and ____. Frank thought he was just consuming the one glass.

COFFIN: Getting more and more brilliant as they say. [Laughter]

NICOLL: By the time we got to the television studio, Frank's speech was a mite thick. And I can remember being in the control room and watching this and seeing Frank come on and saying [slurred]: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Frank--" [Laughter]

COFFIN: Oh, now, now! No! No! He's exaggerating a little bit. [Laughter]

NICOLL: I don't think anybody was aware of it except me.

COFFIN: And anyhow, we had a good program. And then, as I remember it, wasn't it right after that that our Republican opposition showed with the governor and Fred Scribner and--

BEAM: This must have occurred what time during the year? The election was in September, right? So this was when?

COFFIN: Well, I would think it would be in June.

BEAM: Was it in June?

COFFIN: Was it really that early?

NICOLL: Oh, yes. I think it was the Sunday afternoon following the primary. We had arranged before the primary that we would put it on.

COFFIN: Anyhow, it's the visual contrast I thought was important because our people all, I think, spoke very well and were eager. And our opponents just looked sort of dead and passive and not very lively. I think-- In other words, television aided our people. You also have to bear in mind that this was so early in the days of television that our TV budget was about $2,000. But we could buy 15 minutes of prime time for $100 and a $15 newspaper ad on top of it. So we probably spent more than $2,000 but not much.

BEAM: And this was which--? This particular show was aired when?

LEE: Seven o'clock.

BEAM: Seven o'clock?

COFFIN: Early evening. That's another thing. Politicians today would never think of trying--even if they could afford it--of buying time from seven to seven-fifteen or a little longer, seven-thirty. But it was so new in those days that people were interested and they would listen.

MUSKIE: Well, the stations won't sell that kind of time to you today. You can't buy 15 minutes like that because-- You can buy 30-second spots, and that's about it. But I remember, talking about the impact of the camera, first time we went on television in Bangor. And I think that station's on the top of a mountain.

NICOLL: Yes, it's outside of town.

MUSKIE: And the next day I went through the paper mill in Brewer. That's it--the paper mill in Brewer? And I tell you I was astonished at the recognition. That one--that was the first one, I think, in that part of the state. I don't know, I think we had this one over here earlier. But there couldn't have been many television sets in Maine. But every one was watched by a helluva lot of people. [Chuckling] Really. It was the most astonishing impact I've ever felt. Well, I guess I've felt more than that in the 1970 pre-election day speech. That was a national audience. But that was an astonishing experience to have that many people that I'd never seen before-- And you know what a paper mill is like. You've never been through a paper mill? You ought to go through it as a candidate sometime. It's quite an experience to get people to notice you. But to notice you in the way they did our candidates that day in that mill was a

real eye-opener for me. I would have spent the whole budget on television after that one experience. And that was just a helluva lot of people that saw a live Democrat for the first time in their lives, you know, in that campaign. Fortunately, the exposure was favorable. Or at least we thought it was. And it worked, I think.

NICOLL: We started with candidates who were very natural and responsive-- And people in Maine were so used to thinking of Democrats as something else. Suddenly they were seeing young people who were interested in them and concerned. Very straightforward. And in that opening show we did have the wives there. We had arranged that the closing of the program would have the wives come on the set and would greet some of those. So the last scene that people saw as the credits rolled were the candidates and their wives talking very informally and easily. So you suddenly had in the living-rooms, attractive to a good many, people who were seeking office. And Ed was superb. I've often marveled at your skill and timing. because we never knew, when we had the joint programs, how we were going to come out at the end--precisely? Because you had a Jim Oliver who might go on a little too long. Or a Ken Colbath who was very nervous and might stop two minutes short of his time. And Ed had this impeccable sense of timing in television, and would end it right on the line.

BEAM: Now whose idea was this for this show? Between what you and Frank and--

COFFIN: Hard to say who, but we sort of coordinated-- The state committee did the coordination and the fund raising. But then the candidates themselves would be-- It wasn't as if we gave orders to them or they to us. We would-- On important things we'd consult.

BEAM: Well, the reason I asked is because television has turned out to have such a major impact on political campaigning that-- And in 1954 was such an innovation. I was just curious to know, you know, who really perceived the impact of this?

MUSKIE: It was not professionally structured at all. I mean, in addition to these major candidates that we've been talking about all afternoon here, we tried to bring in local candidates to anticipate and get some benefit from these television programs. And we had to do this in a half hour at the most--sometimes less than that. But they'd all been campaigning, and they had little messages. And it didn't have to be professional. You didn't need interpreters, you know.

COFFIN: I think this is television but without the vices of television today. That is, it wasn't a sound bite. It wasn't something that was highly programmed and with an advertising specialist going over the 30 seconds. It was candidates saying their own words and often-times impromptu, as Ed has said, for quite a period of time, you know. It was not-- Fifteen minutes even, if not longer, so you couldn't fake it. And they did have a chance to see what that candidate was like.

MUSKIE: And probably the fact that it was new made us look better than we were. [Chuckling]

COFFIN: Yeah.

MUSKIE: You know. I mean, my friend Joe, he can talk like that? [Laughter] And actually it was pretty amateurish if you looked at it-- It was effective as hell, I can tell you that. It was effective as hell.

BEAM: Now you did it in Bangor. And I presume-- Now did you in Portland as well?

NICOLL: Portland and Bangor were the only places we could go on.

MUSKIE: And on the night before Election Day, you had to do them both. So what we did, we did the Portland one about six o'clock, and we did not have a Maine Turnpike at that point. [Chuckling] Then we had to get to Bangor at the top of a mountain by eleven o'clock.

NICOLL: And it was a stormy night.

MUSKIE: And it was a stormy night. And in order to get there in time for eleven o'clock, __ the eastern part of the state, it was quite an adventure.

COFFIN: The elements favored us, too, because toward the end of the campaign in September--just a few days before the election--we had pretty much run out of things to say, and happily a hurricane came along. So we holed up in a hotel room in Portland and just waited the storm out. And the next day the governor helped us out by going up to Washington County and telling the people there there was nothing that they needed to be bothered about if they'd only get some "get-up and get" and resolve to work hard and overcome the storm. It was wholly up to them.

MUSKIE: And in the middle of it we heard about the "Victory Chimes" problem. [Laughter]

BEAM: Now when you went into the '54 campaign, did you have sort of an overall strategy as to how--I mean, what groups you were targeting perhaps? Or how you were going to conduct the campaign?

COFFIN: Yes, I think we did. Although I don't think we ever said this is our overall strategy. But we had done the thinking on the platform; we knew what the issues were. We knew we had to attract, of course, all of the Democrats, a great many of the independent votes, but a great many--or at least a decent number of--Republican votes. So this was-- And we also wanted to do better in the rural areas than we had ever done before. The basic theme, I think: It's time for a change and two-party government. Which was not the kind of sophisticated campaign that you might have these days. It was probably not so partisan because that was the theme. So it may not be a fair test of politics as played in a very partisan ____. [Sound of an airplane right overhead]

MUSKIE: The nerve! He's out in the yard. Do you think that's him? [Laughter]

BEAM: Some kind of noise, anyway.

COFFIN: So the combination of that--that set the tone. We were not out to offend people or be excessively partisan. And we would show that Democrats were real people and attractive people that could be relied on.

BEAM: Well, what sort of issues did you home in on?

MUSKIE: Well, I would say economic issues ____. "Two-party government" embraces everything. But primarily, of course, the state was behind the times economically; had been for a long time. During some of my amateurish research I found that the seven most Republican counties in the state had lost population from 1900. And the population of each of these counties was less than in 1900, and you can cover any goddamned issue on earth under that rubric. And this really hit home in these counties. Number 1, they're small--the population is small--and old. All of these families--a large percentage of them--are families whose children have gone away, and not stayed because there was no opportunity. And I can remember making that--I really honed that speech, you know. You had to go up to the ___, you know, where that bridge is before you go into the middle part of town. Every time we had a rally like that in one of those little towns, that's the speech I gave. Christ! You could almost see tears coming down their cheeks as they listened to this. Remember up in Houlton? Remember that? There were two towns where the Republicans had learned--they'd gone to the Probate Court in South Paris, Maine--and had learned that my father was an immigrant, that his name used to be Marciszewski. That he had changed the name for the benefit of his kids. They learned all that, didn't quite dare to use it, didn't quite dare to use it in the way that their instincts prompted them to use it. But in any case there were two counties--two towns--Houlton and what's the one north of Pittsfield?

NICOLL: Dover-Foxcroft or--?

MUSKIE: No, no. On the turnpike.

NICOLL: Oh, Newport.

MUSKIE: Newport. Where the local minister did use this, did campaign. Two rock-bound Republican towns, and both went Democratic in that election. Never went Democratic again unless they did last time __ particularly good time. But this is what made two-party government possible in this state. This is why people didn't go out and vote. In 1954 the total vote cast was 240,000. The last time I ran, in 1976--I don't remember more recent figures--it was over half a million. Now the population of the state hasn't grown that much. Between those two dates these people had learned that turning out to vote could make a difference. And they could vote for anybody they wanted to, and they would make a difference. This is how Jim Longley, the

Independent candidate for governor, became governor. Because people knew it was their vote that could make a difference. So that message, which we began to sell in '54, has been a growing message and had a growing impact ever since. I think Maine is about as independent a state politically as you can find in this country. Because it's small enough so that they communicate easily, they share information easily, share points of view easily, and communication is easy. It's not that expensive--although by many standards damned expensive compared to 1954! [Chuckling] But in any case, once you've got a theme that hit people--I got it first up in Rangeley. There's a nice sense-- There was a lot of emotion tied up in these Maine issues. We call them economic issues, we call them education issues-- You can call them any damned-- Anything that has to do with the kinds of services that people ought to expect from their government. And they know what you're talking about.

I mean, this state has done a helluva job since I was governor in improving secondary education by changing the system to a school-district system. There were high schools in Maine when I was governor where the population of the high school wasn't big enough to have a senior class graduating every year. There were schools with only a single or, you know, one or two graduates in a year. And they were all chopped up into little communities, little villages, little towns. The idea of a regional approach to problems hadn't been thought of, hadn't been used. So since that time there have been a lot of important reforms in the government of Maine communities. The town where I was born--graduated from Stevens High School. It was one of the--what would you say? 18--largest high schools in the state when I went there probably. Well, then they had economic difficulties up there. And it's a town adjacent to Mexico--Mexico and Rumford are twin towns you can call them. And they'd had to close Mexico High School and combine Mexico and Rumford High Schools into a single high school, using the Rumford school, because of the economic situation. Largely a merging out of a paper mill strike within the last ten years really did terrific damage. Now it's a single high school. You know what it's called, Don?

NICOLL: No.

MUSKIE: Mountain Valley.

NICOLL: [Chuckling] Is that right!

MUSKIE: Mountain Valley High School. There's no longer a Stevens High School.

LEE: Isn't that something....

MUSKIE: There's no longer a Mexico High School, but there's a Mountain Valley High School, and they're turning out good athletic teams. They closed up the old Stephens High School. It was actually boarded up.

NICOLL: Is that right!

MUSKIE: It's actually boarded up.

LEE: Where's the Muskie Auditorium? In Mountain Valley?

MUSKIE: It's in the Mountain Valley High School. They kept the name of the auditorium. Great auditorium! It holds about 2,000 people. And they have a lot of events other than high school events there that attract crowds. It's probably been a good thing from that point of view. But the state has become a different state in that respect. And people are __. Well, Maine people are known to be independent-minded and down-to-earth and all that. But I think they've become even more so than in the years of the past.

LEE: Did anybody raise the issue of your being Catholic in that first election?

MUSKIE: No. But that they combined, of course. Well, I remember the lead paragraph in the story the next morning. The first Democrat in 20 years. The first son of a Democrat. The first Catholic ever. They had all the firsts, all those unattractive firsts, in that opening paragraph in one sentence. [Chuckling] Somebody told me the next day that, you know, if the election were held tomorrow, you'd lose. [Laughter] That's right. I'd forgotten that. Oh, we've had-- Well, we did have a Catholic governor before.

NICOLL: He was appointed.

MUSKIE: Cavanaugh. Yeah. But I guess he didn't parade his Catholicism very much.

BEAM: But nobody in the opposition tried to raise it?

MUSKIE: No, except in Newport and Houlton. We had a Catholic priest up in Houlton. I ran into him recently. And he'd give us the poop on what the opposition was saying. [Chuckling] The night we had that big rally up there in Houlton, he walked around the streets in the town and ___ the front porches to find out how many people were listening. And he came up with a count of just under a thousand. But if you looked out, you know--we were speaking on a lawn somewhere--if you looked out around you, you didn't see anybody. I mean, people didn't parade [Laughter] their prejudices and biases that way in Houlton.

COFFIN: I remember in '60 when Kennedy was running, and I was running for governor.

MUSKIE: Oh, you really got called ___.

COFFIN: I was on the street in Lisbon Falls, and the priest came by, and of course my background is Baptist. But the priest --everybody--was thinking that I was also an Irish Catholic. And so the priest says [mimicking a brogue]: "Ah, Mr. Coffin, you're doing a fine job. And don't let them know you're a Catholic." [Laughter]

MUSKIE: You know he cost me-- Kennedy in Maine has certainly cost Frank _____. Well,

although the way I guess his life turned out I guess ___.

COFFIN: Not complaining. [Chuckling]

MUSKIE: But we were all heartbroken, of course, over that. But that's what killed Kennedy in Maine. And it left me alone. We didn't have a congressman that you could count here or anybody else. I think we lost control over the legislature that year. That was the low point after '54, I think, in terms of election results. Now I don't know how to predict the future.

BEAM: Now how much did the '54 campaign cost? Both overall and for Muskie's race?

COFFIN: Well, we have a figure, and probably it's too low. It may be somewhat in excess of that, but by at least our accounts, $18,000 for--

MUSKIE: For the five races.

BEAM: Is that right?! That's astonishing! I mean compared to today, even with inflation.

NICOLL: Yes. I suspect that the maximum if you figure out what may have been spent by some of the Republicans, Muskie and a few others ___.

MUSKIE: Even if you added for inflation in, it's inconceivable that anywhere in this country you could elect a governor, you know, let alone the other four.

BEAM: Yeah.

NICOLL: But that brings up another thing about the strategy of the campaign. It was to be a unified campaign of all five candidates. I mean, their schedules were planned together. The radio programs, that we're going to talk about. Three weeks before the election, we ran three programs a day, five minutes each, on most of the radio stations in the state. Morning--early morning--between 7 and 8, mid-day between 12 and 1, and evening between 5 and 7. And the candidates recorded 15 shows, five directed at the morning audience, five at the noon, and five at the evening. And we had three candidates in each district--Congress, Senate and Governor. And they rotated who would speak. And that was always a unified campaign for all of the candidates.

MUSKIE: We didn't waste any money. [Laughter] And bumper stickers we bought a thousand at a time, as I remember. That's all we could afford. But we made sure that every goddamned one of them ended up on a car that was on the road a lot; the driver committed himself to keep the bumper sticker on the car. They really made an impact.

COFFIN: There was only one candidate who did better than us in bumper stickers, and his name was Ausable Chasm. [Laughter]

BEAM: How do you spell that, Frank? [Laughter] Was he a local candidate?

COFFIN: No, no, that's a place in New York.

BEAM: Oh, oh! I see. Okay. All right. [Laughter]

MUSKIE: That little joke was used a lot.

BEAM: Okay. Now where did most of the money come from? Was it just small nickel-and-dime donations? Did you have any big contributors?

COFFIN: Well, no. Nothing big.

MUSKIE: The whole thing wasn't big. I mean, if one man gave $18,000 that wasn't big. No, they were small. We got--Well, one way we raised money we contributed money to the national campaign on condition they return the money to us. I mean, we wanted to have a credit with the national campaign, but we didn't have any money to waste or to spend on it. Isn't that the trick we pulled on that one?

COFFIN: I think so. And we're talking, like, that would be about a, $2,000 or something. Labor would give us $2,000. But most of the rest of it was from people around the state. A hundred dollars would be a big contribution here. Several people would give $500. But most of it was nickel and dime.

NICOLL: And the money was collected throughout the campaign. We didn't have a lot of ___. As I remember, ___ the treasurer of the state committee.

COFFIN: This was before we had the full-time services of such geniuses as Shep Lee who's done much better jobs since then. [Laughter in background]

BEAM: Were you active in the '54 campaign, Shep?

LEE: Not really. I really didn't get involved in any real way until Frank ran for Congress in '56. In '56 I had volunteered a little ___. And then watched and went to meetings and stuff like that. But I remember the first fund-raiser we had for $100. I'll never forget arguing with you and Don, saying: Who the hell's going to pay $100 to come to fund-raiser ____. And it was a great success! [Chuckling] ___ when it comes to $100 ____.

BEAM: This was a what--a fund-raising dinner?

LEE: Like one of these--a fund-raising dinner for Ed _____.

MUSKIE: Well, we've certainly become a very effective fund-raiser organization as the years have passed. The beginnings were very modest. But it did the job. I think in 1940--I

mean these figures are going to be very-- My campaign for governor cost about $40,000. Wouldn't that be it, somewhere in there?

NICOLL: 'Fifty-six.

MUSKIE: 'Fifty-six, rather.

NICOLL: Yeah, that's about right.

MUSKIE: And in 1958 the Senate campaign may have hit $100,000. I mean, what happens in politics, I mean you spend the money that you get. And, of course, by the time I was a senator, running for reelection as a senator, you know, you could raise almost as much money as you didn't want.

COFFIN: The one thing we wouldn't borrow. The most that we'd do-- I remember with great affection George Mitchell's brother-in-law, Eddie Atkins, a printer. And he gave us credit so we would run up quite a bill on printing but eventually pay it.

MUSKIE: No, we never ended up a campaign in debt __. The most expensive one that I ran was '76; I think it was $350,000. I didn't need to spend that much.

COFFIN: One time after the '54 campaign when we thought we were through, we weren't quite through because after the election Paul Fullam had become, I think justifiably, aggravated by a last-minute speech by Senator Smith in which she criticized some of the things he said--unjustly--so he thought. And I think he was right. So he wanted to have his time. Not equal time because the stations wouldn't give him that. But we financed--we made it possible--for him to have 15 minutes to respond.

BEAM: How important was organized labor in terms of your support, both in money and in terms of leg work?

COFFIN: The money was not a great deal of money. You know, the total might be a couple of thousand dollars, something like that. Because we didn't have that much more. It was a sizeable contribution, but only that size. In organization, it was never quite so-- I think we had the vote of labor, but not because of leadership cracking the whip.

NICOLL: It was a mixed bag. The state AFL-CIO president Ben Dorsky was a Republican. And some of the building trades were Republican. And really right through the textile workers ____ and the Teamsters. They gave some help and then the paper-workers. But the state AFL-CIO was not a force and that had cozied up to the Republicans for so long that, you know, they were not _____.

COFFIN: That's true. The fact that Ben Dorsky was a Republican sort of was evidence of the extent to which this had been a one-party state.

NICOLL: I remember making a speech--this was after the governor--and I think I got myself in

trouble with Ed and you, Frank. I went up to Madawaska ___. It was the first time I met Emilien Levesque, president of the local _____ at the earlier speeches _____ and stressed the importance of labor moving from the position of playing both sides of the street and waiting for crumbs off the table from the Republicans. [Chuckling] Dorsky was absolutely livid _____ at the time. [Laughter]

COFFIN: Oh, that reminds me of--I guess it was in that '54 campaign the cropped picture?

MUSKIE: Oh, yes!

COFFIN: Tell Chris about that.

BEAM: Was that in the Boston Herald?

COFFIN: Yes.

BEAM: I had read it was the '56 campaign--the regular reelection campaign.

NICOLL: That's right. That's right.

MUSKIE: I think it was '56. Each campaign, you know, the Republicans found __. My favorite one really wasn't that one. My favorite one was the one inn which we--and I guess this was '54 or '56--I ran into this Republican strategy up in Rockland. The radio station there was--I don't know how the owner was registered, but he was very friendly and very favorable at the beginning of the '56 campaign, you know, about June or thereabouts. I'd gone up to Rockland to make a speech--I forget what it was--but in any case, he said, "Governor," he said, "I've got something that you'd be very interested to hear," he said. "I just got the whole campaign ready to be taped-- (I guess he was going to use a tape) radio tapes for the Republican campaign, the gubernatorial race." He said, "I just received them, and I went through them and refused to run them." I said, "Have you sent them back yet?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, could I come up and listen?" So he played the whole goddamned outfit. You know, what they had planned to run for the next several months. And it was all attacking me, tax and spend and all that amateur stuff, you know. So after he got through with them, I said, "Could I copy them?" And he said, "Sure." So then we bought 15 minutes of time on television and got a machine to play these tapes from beginning to end, [Chuckling] one at a time. And I began the 15 minutes by saying: "Look, in every campaign there's a place to educate the public about the issues and talk about the politics and all of that. But this is the sort of thing that the other side is going to do. And I thought you'd like to hear it." So I ran the whole goddamned thing. [Chuckling] The year's product.

COFFIN: How long did it take to run the 15 minutes?

MUSKIE: ___. Unless the last reel went over. [Laughter] And I just sat there listening with everybody else.

COFFIN: I had forgotten that.

MUSKIE: That was a good one. Yeah, the cropped picture thing. This involved an instance when I was governor. What was it, a strike over in Lewiston?

NICOLL: Yes.

MUSKIE: What were they?

COFFIN: I guess it had to be '56 because it was--

MUSKIE: Textile workers.

COFFIN: Governor with Labor standing beside him. Yeah.

MUSKIE: Well, they had done the strike, and I had done my best to offer my services to try to resolve the issues and end the strike. And so the highlight of that initiative on my part was a picture--a front-page picture--in all of the Maine papers which showed me in the middle and a representative of--Denny Blais. Actually, Denny Blais of labor and Louis Laun of Bates Manufacturing. And so in that campaign it had to be the governorship. It doesn't matter; the effect was the same. But in any case, when we got to the campaign-- Was it the Boston Herald?--

BEAM: Yes.

MUSKIE: The Boston Herald ran this cropped picture leaving Laun out of this and the picture just with me and Blais. And Blais looked awfully grim, you know, and intimidating. [Chuckling] So they __ it and _ the Boston Herald ran it as a front-page editorial--headline--you know, implying that I was in labor's pocket. Well, my answer to that was to run the original picture in a similar fashion. I bought the time, ran the picture, described where it had taken place and how they tried to portray it. And I think that had even greater effect than the other one that I have just described.

COFFIN: Sure.

MUSKIE: Really, by today's mucking business, it was so innocent, really, you look back. [Laughter] Now it's hostages in Iran.

BEAM: ____. [Chuckling]

MUSKIE: Then, of course, in the Senate campaign there was the vicuna coats.

NICOLL: Yes, and Bernard Goldfine.

MUSKIE: And Bernard Goldfine, right.

BEAM: Let me change the side here. Okay. You said Richard Nixon played a role in the '54 campaign?

MUSKIE: Well, he appeared.

BEAM: He appeared. [Chuckling]

COFFIN: And was he effective or did he make--?

MUSKIE: I don't think he was. I mean, I answered him, and I said this is our election; it had nothing to do with him. We don't need him to come in here. And I don't know what words I used, but he ___. I said to him Maine people were their own thinkers. I just pointed it out __ the presidential campaign or the vice-presidential campaign or the campaign for Maine public offices. And it worked. Well, I don't know how much of an impact he made. I don't think he made any at all.

BEAM: Now in '54 what was the attitude of the state paper--the state newspapers--say, like the Morning Sentinel, the Lewiston Sun, the Press Herald, the Bangor Daily News towards--well, actually all the Democratic candidates, the Democratic campaign?

COFFIN: I thought that the Portland papers, beginning with the platform at the time, they gave us a lot of space. And I think they felt that politics was getting more interesting. And they were fair. This doesn't refer to whether they endorsed somebody or not. But on the whole they covered everything we did. They would print our speeches, our releases.

BEAM: Mmmm hmmm. What about the other papers?

COFFIN: Oh, I think the Lewiston papers did the same thing. And I don't know-- Bangor, I guess, was always a tougher nut.

MUSKIE: It was always the worst, yeah. It has softened a bit over the years from time to time. I think actually they're a very good paper, even in covering politics. I mean, they're not always fair--

COFFIN: No. Well, their news is good. I mean, their--

NICOLL: But they're a lot keener on the whole now on trying to put balanced coverage than they ever were in those days.

MUSKIE: Did I ever tell you guys how they happened to endorse me in 1970?

COFFIN: No.

MUSKIE: Really? I haven't--I guess maybe I haven't shared that. But we were-- It was 1970

because that's when I was running, and Neal Bishop was my opponent at that time. Anyway, we went up to Razor Crossman's farm early in the campaign. You know where that is?

COFFIN: Corinna or--?

MUSKIE: Up there somewhere. And I went up, and, you know, he always has a good party when he has it. So when I got there, I, of course, mingled and met everybody and looked around. I didn't see a goddamned reporter from the Bangor News that I recognized. So I decided, you know, to make an anti-Bangor News speech. [Chuckling] I had plenty of material to draw on from over the years. And I really laid it into them, you know? And I didn't have a written speech, I just ad libbed--had fun. That's the way I looked at it. So anyway, I went back to Washington, and in a few days I got a letter from--

COFFIN: Warren?

MUSKIE: --Warren. And he enclosed the copy of a story out of--I think--the Boothbay Register, is that--? Yeah. They had a reporter covering that speech. And in that column they'd covered it pretty goddamned fully as far as I could see. He enclosed it, and he said, "I'm sending this along to ask you whether or not it was accurate. Because if it is," he said, "it creates problems for me." Well, I couldn't figure out what kind of problems it could create. But anyway, I wrote to him, and I said, "Well," I said, "I did not have a text, and so I'm not sure. But as I read it, it looks pretty accurate. It looks pretty much like what I said." And I said, "To give you some of my motivation," I said, "I enclose a few editorials from the Bangor Daily News that I thought needed a reply." Well, it wasn't long, they endorsed me. [Laughter]

COFFIN: What were the problems that this was creating? Was he saying that because he was thinking of endorsing you, your attack gave him problems? Or what?

MUSKIE: His problem was, I guess, that he was second guessing his decision to endorse me, that he had planned to endorse me. Which wouldn't have been very hard with Neal Bishop on the other side. [Chuckling] I mean, to put that in perspective. But in any case, I mean, we've always gotten along well personally. So apparently he had been giving some thought to endorsing me and maybe welcoming the opportunity. He suddenly sees this-- [Laughter] He gets hit with this damned fish. [Laughter] I always enjoyed that. And they've been kinder to me ever since. I don't know. Of course I'm not running for anything anymore. And that wasn't the last-- I don't know what they did the last time I ran. But they do a pretty good job. I thought they treated Brennan a little rough this year.

COFFIN: The weeklies. How did they--? Were they split for you and against you? You know, John Gould's Enterprise would have been against, and--

MUSKIE: You mean in '54?

COFFIN: Yeah.

MUSKIE: Well you saw that--

COFFIN: Yes, I saw this. They said that the weeklies were split.

MUSKIE: Let's see, how did they split? I think the-- Which ones? Well, the Brunswick area--the Brunswick paper--is not a weekly. It's a--

BEAM: It's a daily now, but wasn't it a weekly back then?

NICOLL: Maybe it was a bi-weekly then.

MUSKIE: But they used to do well by us. The Patriot-- What was it? The Commercial up in Bangor?

NICOLL: The Bangor Commercial was the evening paper. And the Patriot-- I'm trying to think. Was that a short-lived one in Bangor? Or was that a __?

MUSKIE: I don't remember where that-- I said the Patriot when I was thinking of the Commercial earlier.

NICOLL: Of course the Ft. Fairfield Review.

MUSKIE: The Ft. Fairfield Review.

NICOLL: What about the Rockland Courier Gazette?

COFFIN: Would have been against.

NICOLL: That was for ___.

MUSKIE: I think less enthusiastically so, but-- But we didn't get a helluva lot from the weeklies, I don't think.

NICOLL: Most support we got was attention spaces, and the political columnists, who were intrigued with the Democrats, finding them a lot more interesting. But it was Damborg [Peter Damborg, Gannett Newspapers], Penley [Edward Penley, Lewiston Daily Sun] and Lal Lemieux [Lionel A. “Lal” Lemieux, Lewiston Evening Journal] were all paying attention to the Democrats.

MUSKIE: Yeah, we got a lot of coverage. And essentially fair.

NICOLL: Oh, yeah.

MUSKIE: Essentially fair. That's all we ever asked for anyway. I mean, people, after all, kind of get suspicious if the press treats you too enthusiastically. [Chuckling] You don't realize that always, but that's true.

BEAM: Neal Bishop had a--I guess it was an organization of Republicans for Muskie. Was it a-- How important was that effort?

MUSKIE: Well, I think-- He always thought that he had permanent possession of 33,000 Republican votes who always voted for him or whoever he voted for. He thought they were in his bag because that's roughly the number that he got in the campaign when he ran against Cross.

LEE: That was '52, wasn't it?

MUSKIE: I think it was '52. Cross was one of the candidates--Republican candidates--for Governor. And who was that third one?

COFFIN: Roy Hussey.

MUSKIE: second, in Augusta. There were the three of them.

COFFIN: Roy Hussey, yeah.

MUSKIE: Hussey--that's who it was. But he always figured that that 33,000 votes were blind followers of Neal Bishop. And so when Frank-- No, in my race, he decided to support me. So he bought some radio time. I think that's what he did. I don't know if he had some advertising time or not.

NICOLL: I think there were some newspaper ads.

MUSKIE: Yeah. And in addition to that--whether it was his group or another group of Republicans--they had a huge billboard in Newport made.

NICOLL: Well, that was Ike and Norris Friend. [Phone ringing in background; pause on tape.]

BEAM: Okay. I'd like to wrap this up. It's getting near four o'clock, isn't it?

COFFIN: Yeah.

BEAM: I'd like to bounce back to just a couple of questions I had to ask. I was looking through some correspondence that you had written when you were in charge of the main fund for Stevenson-Sparkman in 1952. Exactly what was your position in that campaign?

MUSKIE: I was national committeeman.

BEAM: National committeeman.

MUSKIE: I'd resigned as director of OPS, went out to the national convention, and was elected national committee member in that campaign. Of course, heard Stevenson's convention speech of that year. He was not at that time a candidate nor was he interested in being a candidate so far as anybody knew. But in any case, he made an enormous impression not only on the convention, but the country. And we had no way of raising money. I mean, we still had the September election, didn't we?

COFFIN: 'Fifty-two we did, sure.

MUSKIE: Yeah, sure we did. We still had a September election so, you know, traditionally there'd be no Maine campaign effort of any consequence to be involved in. That wasn't true in the 'thirties when Roosevelt was running, of course. But by 1952 and thereafter, I don't think anybody turned their hand in September, or in.

COFFIN: No.

MUSKIE: Am I getting my elections right here?

NICOLL: Yeah, I think ___.

BEAM: Yeah.

MUSKIE: So, in any case, they did establish the Stevenson-Sparkman Fund. And I was running--for all practical purposes--I was running whatever campaign there was being run in September for our state candidates. And so I agreed to try to raise some money, largely by a mail campaign, out of my office in Washington or Waterville to run a radio campaign speech. As I remember it, I managed to raise something like $5,000.

COFFIN: Simply nothing short of fantastic! [Chuckling]

MUSKIE: Yeah, and so we were able to carry every Stevenson speech. Well, I don't know that I want to state it that broadly. But in any case, it was an effective effort and did a lot of good. He still lost the state, but he was widely admired by people who voted against him. That was the case throughout the country. So I felt it was an effort that was worth making. I did have some fun with Brad Hutchins, who was the Republican national committeeman at that time. What the hell was it? Well, if my memory was fresher, ___ I'd tell you, but I can't remember enough of it to tell you. But anyway, I did that, and I sort of felt I'd earned my job as national committeeman.

BEAM: Do you think it had any impact on--any follow-through impact on--the 1954 campaign? I mean, were there contacts made? Had you gotten any extra publicity that might have built some momentum for '54?

MUSKIE: I wouldn't think so. I mean, it wasn't that massive an event, but, you know--

BEAM: How much time did you spend on it?

MUSKIE: --it was done out of my law office, and I had one secretary. I forget where we got the mailing list as a matter of fact, it must have been the party people largely.

NICOLL: I think that list was very important for __.

MUSKIE: Later?

NICOLL: For fund-raising. We used that a good bit.

MUSKIE: Well, we did the best we can [could]. And I must say that I remember being very much impressed with the response that I got. It may be that my association with it produced some of the response, but I was primarily certain that Stevenson had made that kind of an impact in Maine as he had elsewhere in the country. I was thinking about him the other day.

COFFIN: I was thinking of names like Molly Dewson and Sumner Wells.

MUSKIE: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, there were people like that on the Maine coast, summer visitors, people who had moved to Maine who had once been summer visitors, that sort of thing. It was an intellectual community, I think. But I think we got a lot of response from, you know, the people who were still loyal to the Democratic Party. The people who supported us later in our own races. So I'm sure it had some fall-out. It was important in my judgment to keep the party active even in the campaigns where we weren't more directly involved. That's why I ran for Democratic national committeeman. It wasn't a very important job then.

BEAM: How much time did you spend on it as opposed to your law practice?

MUSKIE: Oh, I'd have no way of knowing that. Well, all you had to have was a man interested in the message, and you didn't have to write the Gettysburg Address every time you wanted money. [Chuckling] All you'd have to do is-- You know.

COFFIN: Yes, because in those--you didn't have a president. No, we had no patronage.

MUSKIE: We had nothing at all. And I certainly wasn't getting rich on my practice by that time. But it was a labor of love that I found enjoyable. Well, with my first, you know, after I had quit as a bureaucrat, it was my first effort as a free citizen. [Chuckling]

BEAM: How much support did you get from the Democratic National Committee in terms of your effort in '52 and in '54?

MUSKIE: Oh, you don't get support <u>from</u> the Democratic National Committee; you give

support to the Democratic National Committee.

BEAM: Oh, okay.

MUSKIE: At least that was my story--experience.

COFFIN: Well, yes, I remember in the spring of '54 we had Paul Butler come.

MUSKIE: That's right. They helped in that campaign.

COFFIN: No, no. Steve Mitchell [Stephen Mitchell, Democratic National Committee Chair]came. We had a big reception for him at the Lafayette Hotel. And then the same day at the Bangor House.

MUSKIE: Now what year was this?

COFFIN: 'Fifty-four.

BEAM: Now who's Steve Mitchell?

COFFIN: Steve--? The national chairman.

BEAM: The national chair--

MUSKIE: It cost us money?

COFFIN: Yeah, my money. And Don said, "Oh well, you can advance it, and we can pass the hat later on." [Chuckling] Well, we did pass the hat, but we didn't get much. So I think that was the tiny sum that I bankrolled the party on that day, you know, several thousand I think it was.

MUSKIE: Well, Steve Mitchell ___?

COFFIN: Well, they were both very supportive.

NICOLL: Steve came in and was very supportive and encouraging, but about all he could offer was moral support at that time. They didn't have any money. And then Paul Butler and--and this is the beginning of a whole other story--but Paul Butler was very supportive during the 'fifties. And they did a great deal to build a national organization, regional organization. Bill Dunfey, for example, of New Hampshire, became regional coordinator and we had very good working relationships with them. But in '54 about all we got was maybe a thousand dollars.

COFFIN: I tell you who did help us in '54, now that I think of it. Some of the state organizations; that is, I remember Dennis Roberts of Rhode Island. They were excited about what you were doing. And I think also the Massachusetts state

committee. But, you know, small amounts of money, but nevertheless for one state could give money to another state is pretty unusual.

NICOLL: There was not a lot of interest in Augusta. [Laughter]

MUSKIE: Things change. Things change.

BEAM: Now after the September '54 victory, you had to think about what you'd do when you got into office. Did you have any kind of-- How did you put together a staff and a program from the time of the election until you were inaugurated?

MUSKIE: Well, it doesn't take a lot to put together a small staff. [Chuckling] This is the staff.

COFFIN: Well, you know, all of a sudden he was faced with the fact: My God! I've won!

BEAM: Yeah, yeah.

COFFIN: But you did gather-- At the Blaine House we would go up every night practically. Tom Delahanty. You had Maurie Williams, a financial expert, who had been in state government. And he became a very key worker--invaluable in terms of putting dollar figures on programs and--

NICOLL: He got rid of the bodies that were buried in other departments. [Chuckling]

MUSKIE: And there was another state institution that existed at that time that was helpful. And that was the hearings conducted by the-- What's that committee called? It's a legislative committee. They conducted hearings on the budget.

NICOLL: In the fall . . . .

MUSKIE: In the fall . . . it was a governor's committee . . . .I mean it was created by law to assist the governor and __ his budget. It included what--two senators ___?

BEAM: Not the Executive Council?

MUSKIE: No, no. Nothing to do with the Executive Council. Just two to three members of the legislature. Two House members and one senator, as I remember--vaguely. And of course you had--

LEE: Weren't there two Legislative Research? I mean, I can remember the Legislative Research.

NICOLL: __ existed between the ___.

MUSKIE: Maybe it was called the Budget Committee. You know, I don't know.

NICOLL: I can remember rushing back from campaign trips with you so you could go to the budget hearings.

MUSKIE: Yeah. But they were very useful because they were created to assist the governor. I wasn't the governor yet, but I was the governor-elect. And so it became my first opportunity to use the state bureaucracy to serve my interests. Because they all had to testify before these three legislators and the governor. The governor presided over these hearings. So you had the whole state bureaucracy at your fingertips, and all you had to do was figure out how to use it. And I found over the four years that I was governor that the state bureaucracy responded pretty positively to me as governor. Whether it was the personal feelings toward me or whether it was a bureaucratic responsibility that they accepted, they might have faked . . . ., I don't know. But they would really dig into new ideas to the extent that they had that inclination. So we got a lot of benefit from that. Now, in terms of the political slant we were looking for, we had to do a lot of thinking of our own.

NICOLL: Tom Delahanty, Dick Dubord, Irving Isaacson.

COFFIN: McMahon?

NICOLL: [Richard "Dick"] McMahon.

MUSKIE: There was a guy from up around Newport who was interested in industrial development. He never really produced much for us but--

COFFIN: Not Perry Furbush?

MUSKIE: No, not Perry. Newport. Incidentally, we forgot earlier to address Perry's involvement in this very much. But we looked for ideas wherever we could find them. Of course during the campaign we had not been in a position of structure. There's a lot of difference between a party platform and a legislative agenda.

COFFIN: This group would meet quite often at the Blaine House in the evening after you and the establishment had had your hearings. And you put together your message. And was it then that you developed the concept of the supplemental budget and the basic budget?

MUSKIE: That's right. That's right.

COFFIN: And the basic budget was just the raw--the bedrock stuff. And then the things that we wanted to do that were extra would be in the supplemental.

MUSKIE: Yeah, but we described it a little differently than that. Because what I was concerned about, you know, I knew we had to have more money. I mean, it didn't take long to figure out that we couldn't continue state government as it was without more money, let alone new ideas or new initiatives or anything of that kind. And we didn't want to

get hit with this, you know, tax-and-spending accusation that they always like to throw at Democrats. So what we finally settled on, let's find out what it would cost to continue doing what the state government's now doing; we called it "current services." So we put a price tag on "current services." And we got what the hell it would cost the budget office and Maurie, of course, who had a background in this as well. So we did our best. It's not easy to do, but it can be done. Because even "current services" change with, you know, with a change of circumstances that apply in a particular program area. But we decided that was the thing to do. We had to find out what it cost to continue government as it was then. Because that, after all, we could do nothing about. That's what was in place when we got there. That's what the Republicans had done. "Current services" is what they had done. Inadequate in many respects; we could point out the inadequacies in education particularly. Inadequate in many respects and insufficient--that is, new programs were needed--in other respects. So that was "current services." Then we said everything else that needs to be done we're going to call it--put in the second budget--"supplemental budget." And the interesting thing is that those two still exist. Those two <u>still</u> exist. And so the result was that the deficit wasn't made to look like a deficit. It was made to look like an opportunity to provide more service.

And I remember that experience I had with that-- Remember somebody gave me a collie dog after the election? And I had to find a place to get him trained. I didn't want him to ruin the Blaine House. [Chuckling] So somebody recommended this farmer down on the road to the coast somewhere. I had to go down the paved road and then get off on a dirt road and then a logging road and finally you get to this fellow's farmhouse, you know? The minute you saw him and his environment, you knew he had to be a Republican and an old one at that. [Chuckling] So anyway, we talked about the dog--I'd brought him along--and made a deal on the dog. And when that was all wrapped up, he said: "Governor, I want you to know," he said, "I've been following what you've been saying to the legislature." And he said, "You've been asking them for more money, and goddamn it! They ought to give it to you." [Laughter] And I knew we had it made. Yup. That was my first vote of confidence.

Well, but anyway, that's the way the budget was put together, and it helped. All through that--I think that was the secret to the first term. The fact that the budget held. They didn't pass as it was. They didn't want to provide the money for the building program, remember? And they wouldn't buy my tax-- I offered them either an increase in the sales tax--change of history [Chuckling]--an increase in the sales tax or an income tax. My preference was the income tax. But their preference was the sales tax, but their higher preference was nothing. So we didn't get any extra money, which turned out to be a good thing. There are a lot of interesting stories about the legislative sessions. But we got virtually everything we asked for.

NICOLL: Including reorganization of the economic development program.

MUSKIE: Yup.

NICOLL: There was a story about Bob Haskell and Jim Reid.

MUSKIE: You ought to read that book written by Hansen and who was the other one?

BEAM: Lipman?

MUSKIE: Lipman and Hansen. They covered that pretty well.

NICOLL: Sometime we should review the campaigns when people like Perry Furbush and Dick McMahon and some of the others played absolutely critical roles.

MUSKIE: Yeah. I suppose I ought to reread some of those books. Jog my memory. Amazing how much you forget.

COFFIN: I'd just like to say that Dick McMahon was unique. He looked like a fat Irishman with a big fat cigar.

NICOLL: We referred to him as Friar Tuck. [Laughter]

LEE: So you looked upon him as, you know, just an ordinary--able--but ordinary politician. Yet underneath that rough exterior there was really a very fine idealist--a practical idealist--and a very good politician. He was really a wonderful person.

BEAM: What was his role in the campaign?

MUSKIE: Well, he was the right-hand; he drove me, he traveled with me. He was bright enough, you know, to be an intellectual support. And he was a big man in the American Legion so he knew legionnaires all over the state.

LEE: And the Knights of the Road. [Laughter] When you read the Lippman book did you--?

BEAM: Yes, I did. Yeah.

COFFIN: He's got a wonderful story about I was sleeping with Muskie's ___. [Laughter]

BEAM: Right. I remember that.

COFFIN: Was he sleeping next to the wall? Or was he--

LEE: Yeah, he was sleeping next to the wall. And he kept complaining about having to climb over him.

MUSKIE: You knew how he died?

COFFIN: No.

MUSKIE: Well, he had diabetes, you know. Bad case of diabetes.

LEE: He'd lost part of his leg or--?

MUSKIE: He lost both.

LEE: Both.

MUSKIE: Up to the knees. And he always knew this was going to happen to him because it happened to his father. But he refused to change his lifestyle. He enjoyed a drink; when he wanted one, he had one. And I guess he was in the hospital--several times of course. And finally-- He had a camp or cottage out at Snow Pond, and he was there with his-- Did he finally marry?

NICOLL: Married a second time.

MUSKIE: Yeah, he married a second time, and she was terrific. But anyway, he finally decided: By God! He'd had it. He planned it. And he just had himself an extra slug of scotch one day that he picked; he was dead the next day. I'd seen him in the hospital, I think, it was the day before or two days before. He was just as cheerful. He hadn't changed a goddamned bit.

COFFIN: What a guy! And then Dubord was a very bright spirit, too.

MUSKIE: Yeah. There were a lot of them.

COFFIN: Yeah. And Don's right. You should really--

MUSKIE: Yeah, you shouldn't get the impression that this, you know, is--

NICOLL: Yeah. The state committee people--

MUSKIE: So many....

NICOLL: --out in the field trying to recruit workers from among the Democrats still ____. _, the state treasurer,.poor Louis Labbe, the state committeeman. And Frank was getting money in and spending it just slightly faster than he was getting it in. And Louis would look at his books, and he'd stand up with visions of going to state prison [Laughter] and saying: "We have receipts of $565.35. And bills of $725, by which we have a deficit of--" [Laughter] He'd not seen as much money before, and it was going out faster than it was coming in.

MUSKIE: A lot of those Democrats, you know, they weren't liberal. They were as conservative, you know, in terms of money spent--I mean, staying within your resources and all that. But they gave us support. You can't forget them.

NICOLL: That's very true. Including Aunt Jane.

MUSKIE: Yeah.

NICOLL: [Chuckling] Aunt Jane is Jane Kilroy who was known as Aunt Jane because she was George Mitchell's aunt.

BEAM: Oh, I see. Okay.

MUSKIE: She's not still alive, is she?

COFFIN: No, no. She'd always sing "The Star-Spangled Banner."

LEE: _____. ___, Madeleine Kiah, Peggy Murray, and Betty Davis.

MUSKIE: Edrie is in a nursing home. I think she's got the disease from--

LEE: Alzheimer's?

MUSKIE: Alzheimer's.

COFFIN: Edrie?

MUSKIE: Davis [Mrs. Julian Davis, Machias].

COFFIN: Oh, really!

MUSKIE: Yeah. Her mind left her very quickly after Julian died. It's amazing how fast she went.

COFFIN: My memory of all of those people is vivid. Each one had a very strong personality, and many of them were difficult to deal with, but they were very loyal. [Laughter]

MUSKIE: Oh, yeah. Up at the Muskie Clam Bake on--when was it, Sunday?

COFFIN: Sunday.

MUSKIE: We went up to North Raymond. There were a lot of those old people up there. I remember one sharp little old lady came over to me. I was eating my lobster. She came over and said, "We always remember you. Before these were over you always got up and you gave us a quietly cheering speech. You'd give us something to go home with at that point." [Chuckling]

COFFIN: I was-- In what you've said this afternoon, I think I was least knowledgeable about the time when you discovered yourself as a stump speaker. Because it certainly

wasn't true at the beginning, and it certainly was true at the end and has been so ever since.

MUSKIE: Yeah. I sure do enjoy it. When I've got something to say, I'd rather make an ad lib speech than any other kind, you know.

NICOLL: That I can attest to. [Chuckling]

COFFIN: We have a sort of an understanding among us that there is one written speech that Ed has. And it serves because he never gives it. [Laughter]

BEAM: I was wondering if we had it in our holdings. [Laughter]

NICOLL: That's the mysterious ___.

BEAM: [Chuckling] Well, I'll have to go-- I was going to go back and look in our speech file, see what we have.

MUSKIE: Well, the secret to it really is that you've got to-- Number 1, you've got to care about what you're talking about. You've really got to care. And you've got to have some emotional feeling about it yourself. You can't put on what you don't feel. And then you've got to be able to look at the audience--and not as a mass. There are some speakers who pick one person in the audience to look at. Well, I don't quite do that. But I feel a helluva lot more comfortable if I'm not looking down at a piece of paper, you know. And what you see, you know, just fills your mind and gets your wheels turning. And before you know it, you're saying things that you didn't realize you were going to say. That's when I really like it, when I find something to say that I didn't think about, but it's there. And I mean it, and I feel it. And it's the product of something, you know, that I've been thinking about or reading about or what not. I try to think.... What can we do for you?

BEAM: Well, I think that's it. I think, why don't we wrap it up. We've been going for about three and a half hours, and we're almost near the end of the tape. I really appreciate your coming here and doing this. This has really been, I think, really fruitful. So I'll stop it.

End of Interview