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Interview with Joanne D’Arcangelo by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

D’Arcangelo, Joanne

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

December 17, 2001

Place

Portland, Maine

ID Number

MOH 323

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Biographical Note

Joanne D’Arcangelo was born on April 20, 1954 in Haverill, Massachusetts. She attended state college in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, then received a teaching assistantship at the University of Maine at Orono and concurrently earned her master’s degree in English. She taught English at the University of Maine at Fort Kent, and worked on the town committee with Dick Davies, a local legislator. She also worked as a press aide to Jim Tierney, as a constituent case worker for House Speaker John Martin during early 1980s, and for Jerry Conley. She assisted with the Carter and Mondale presidential campaigns. D’Arcangelo was involved with both the Women’s Lobby and the Equal Justice Project, and began work with the Maine Bar Foundation in 1994. At the time of this interview she worked for Planned Parenthood.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Maine Democratic Party; 1980 presidential campaign; 1984 presidential campaign; Gerry Conley; John Martin; Joe Brennan; Compensation Commission; late 1980s Maine Women’s Lobby; late 1980s Equal Justice Project; and the Maine Bar Foundation.

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Don Nicoll: It is Monday, the 17th of December, 2001. We are at 1414 Forest Avenue, Portland, Maine, at the home of Joanne D'Arcangelo, and Don Nicoll is interviewing Joanne. Joanne, would you start by giving us your full name, spell it, your date, place of birth, and the names of your parents and siblings?

Joanne D'Arcangelo: My name is Joanne D'Arcangelo, and it's spelled J-O-A-N-N-E, D'Arcangelo is D-apostrophe-capital A-small R-C-A-N-G-E-L-O. I was born in Haverill, Massachusetts on April 20th, 1954. My parents, my dad is deceased, his name was Bernado D'Arcangelo, and my mom who is still with us is Sophie Mazurka, a pre-Anglicized version of the name. And my brother John is, lives in Cleveland, Ohio.

DN: Now, with your mother's name, was she Polish?

JD: She was Polish, she is Polish, absolutely. So that was the original, my, a first, earliest memory of Ed Muskie being Polish and my mother loving him just for that I think, in addition to being a Democrat, so.

DN: And her name was shortened as his was.

JD: Yes, exactly, at some point. On Ellis Island, we imagine.

DN: Yeah?

JD: Yup.

DN: His father came to Ellis Island and apparently the immigration officials decided that Marciszewski was much too long and complicated.

JD: Right, exactly. I think it was probably the simplicity of spelling that made them do it, but it's interesting.

DN: Then did you grow up in Haverill?

JD: I grew up in Haverill, was there until I was eighteen, and then went to a state college in, Massachusetts state college system in Fitchburg. And then came to Maine, because I got a teaching assistantship at the University of Maine at Orono to pursue my masters in English, and it was the only way I could afford to do it. So I came to Maine, I had been here once as a child and that was in 1977, and literally within six weeks of moving here and to the university I knew I would never leave. Just immediately fell in love with Maine and Maine people.

DN: Did you have any family connections in Maine before that?

JD: None at all. We had vacationed here when I was a child, but not on a regular basis, it was just, I think I had been here once, maybe twice.

DN: Now in listening to you talk about your earlier education, it looks, it looks as if you were heading for a teaching career in English. A far cry from what has subsequently been your career.

JD: Exactly, you know, it was, I came to Orono with every intention of getting a degr - a master's degree to teach. And I always, I mean I've always, my, my family has been political, not so much in a party sense. My dad was very much into union politics, so -

DN: What was his occupation back then?

JD: He was a, he was a shoe worker, he was a hand sewer and worked for the Haverill, Lawrence, Lowell, worked in Lewiston, Maine. Actually, that's a very, very early family, probably before I was even born. And so anyway, I came to Maine, went to get the master's degree, got out in the market in 1979 and of course there was a glut of post-graduate fellows in English and it was just, the market was not sustainable for, for folks like me. And I remember that I did do a couple of interviews, because I didn't have a bachelor's of science degree, I had a B.A. and an M.A.. interviewed at a couple of private schools, interviewed for the University of Maine at Fort Kent, and they needed a one year twelve, to teach twelve hours of freshman English, and I was offered the job for eight thousand dollars a year, to move to Fort Kent. So it was not sort of what I had in mind, and I also had, in order to sort of stave off just, you know, to sort of just stay occupied, I became involved with local town party politics in Orono, which is how I made my connection to the Maine Democratic party. I sort of hooked up with a local

legislator, I joined the town committee as sort of a little avocational fun thing to do while I was waitressing and figuring out what I was going to do with my life. I made a connection with Jim Tierney which is how I got to Augusta.

DN: And who was the, was Jim the legislator or was it -?

JD: No, it was Dick Davies, Dick Davies was the local university side of Orono legislator, who I had hooked up with. And it was, we were moving into obviously the sort of Carter-Kennedy primary, presidential primary back then, and so there was a lot of action going on. So that's how I started out.

DN: And you met Jim Tierney through that.

JD: I met Jim Tierney, he came into town to do a little sort of pep talk for folks, and he was coincidentally at the time looking for a press aide. And I had a master's degree and so, you know, I could, I know how to write a sentence so I can probably peddle myself as a press aide if I needed to. So, and went to work for him. Met him and Libby, came to Augusta, met them both.

DN: Libby Mitchell.

JD: Libby Mitchell. And, you know, it was for about a hundred and twenty five dollars a week, and I thought that was fabulous, and I got to work at the State House and work with all these political folks.

DN: So you were press aide to the majority leader.

JD: Yes, and eventually, you know, just sort of integrated into the legislative aides' office that did general constituent work and did a bit of political work on the side, and just slid headlong into that political scene and just fell in love with it immediately.

DN: Now, I'd like to drop back a minute to your family. You said that your family had political interests and your father was involved in the union activities. And was your mother also active?

JD: My mother was not as active as my dad, although my mom also worked, you know, I came from a very strong working class family, my mom worked in the shoe shop as well, although she was, she stayed more locally than did my dad, and my dad made a really good living for us and always, you know, through his life believed that the only reason he was able to raise a family and have the resource to send us off to school was because he was a member of the union. And very long, I mean this is when he was seventeen years old he, you know, told stories of joining the I. W. W., you know, and largely because he was working the shoe shops even then, he started working in the shoe shops when he was nine. And, you know, he said, they organized us because they guaranteed coffee and doughnuts every morning and so, you know, it sort of was just fundamentally an economic action, an act for him that, you know, as much as it was political. So I come from good stock.

DN: Well, he, he and your mother were obviously pro-union.

JD: Very. Yeah.

DN: And they were Democrats?

JD: Very much so. Yeah, my father never voted for a Republican in his life, and proudly. Yeah, proudly so.

DN: What were their attitudes on some of the issues that you've gotten involved in over the years?

JD: It's very interesting, they were obviously delighted that I went to work for the Democratic Party, and each for their own reasons and different reasons were very proud, and my mom remains so, that I'm working for Planned Parenthood. My dad was very supportive, knew very much what I was doing for work. And it sort of, I think it goes back to, you know, having been both working class, Catholic, ethnic culture, that women suffered shame for, you know, things like unplanned or unwanted pregnancies before marriage. And I think my father always regarded my work on abortion rights and reproductive rights as sort of a political necessity, and had personal stories that he knew of and I think was, you know, just made, on a very sort of basic level made the connection to the work that I do and the sort of unhappiness he saw, so.

DN: So, in, by 1980, you had landed in the political center in Maine. Had you known much about Senator Muskie at that point?

JD: You know, I, as I said earlier, my parents loved Muskie, my mother loved the connection, that he was Polish, that was sort of something, and obviously supported him. And, but I didn't know, I mean I didn't know all of the details of his political career until frankly after he pretty much left elected office and I became much more attuned to the political scene and aware of his legacy and the leadership that he brought to the Democratic Party in Maine. And I loved the idea that, and I think I'm right about this, that he was elected governor and Frank Coffin was elected to Congress, I think, the same year, which is the year I was born. I think, 1954?

DN: Actually Frank was elected in '56.

JD: Gotcha.

DN: But '54, it was a very good year.

JD: Right, was a – now, was that when Muskie was elected governor?

DN: Yup.

JD: Right.

DN: Yup, right.

JD: So it's sort of this little sort of piece for me that I think about. When I think about the span of my life, the length of his work and legacy has a sort of personal connection for me in that way.

DN: Incidentally, when you were born in April of '54, they were just barely lining up candidates to run for office. And in fact you were born I believe just after Ed had agreed that he would indeed run for governor.

JD: Really, that's great, that's great to know. So, and, you know, it was, it's this great, I, you know, my own, I should do some more research but I've always sort of loved this notion that, you know, it was entirely a sort of renegade, uphill battle, knowing what the sort of partisan, you know, the partisan division in the house and senate in Maine. I mean it was run by Republicans and there was Ed Muskie sort of stepping out in the vanguard of going to lead a party that barely existed at the time. It's just great inspiration.

DN: By the time you got involved, the Democrats were in the majority in the legislature.

JD: That's right, the house was Democratic, the senate was still Republican. And then the following year, it was '82 or '84, I think it was '82 that the Democrats, was it '84? The Democrats took both the house and senate I think in '84.

DN: I think they took it in '82.

JD: Was it '82?

DN: If I remember correctly. Because that - that I believe was in '83, Jerry Conley became the president of the senate.

JD: Yes, and I worked for Jerry. I'm sort of skipping a year here, but yes, you're absolutely right. And of course, so the first sort of big, you know, the sort of big movement, or the big event, was in 19-, whenever it, was it 1979? That the senator was appointed secretary of state?

DN: In early 1980.

JD: Eighty? And that was just, you know, I remember everyone, there was just incredible excitement about that. And very mixed feelings as well, because I think people at that point sensed that the reelection of Carter was going to be an incredible uphill battle. And so it was just sort of an interesting thought about Senator Muskie stepping out and doing what his president asked him to do, for something that pretty much from the beginning looked like a fairly limited tenure.

DN: What were some of the issues you were dealing with, particularly in that 1980 to '80-, how long were you in the legislature?

JD: I was in the legislature from January of '80 to I think it was August of '84, half in the house and half in the senate. And, you know, it's very interesting because what is most, what I remember most are less the issues, although obviously big issues like the health care finance commission was passed in sort of the latter end of my tenure there, that was a huge little project that I had done some research on; Bath Iron Works moving to Portland was a big issue. But less than the issues were more the sort of mechanics of politics that were entirely new to me, and just fascinating to watch from somewhat behind the scenes.

And it was a real, I mean it was really fascinating as a, you know, as a little legislative aide, either, and I don't have a member . . . a memory of this message being sent quite directly, but it was understood that when we went to the caucuses in February we would of course be supporting President Carter. And it was just a really, you know, I sort of look in retrospect and think, you know, it sort of, I definitely got the message because I was somewhat inclined to support Senator Kennedy in that primary. And then I ended up sort of getting the message that it was the unified front, it was the right thing to do to sort of support our sitting president. So that was sort of my first, it was sort of the first little insight about how politics work.

DN: One of the more dominant figures in Maine politics at that time was the speaker of the house.

JD: Right.

DN: John Martin.

JD: Right.

DN: Had you known John before then?

JD: I had not. I had heard of him when I was at the university because, to the extent that I read the newspaper. But I didn't, and it was, it was great tutoring to work under John Martin. And I, during one period of time we worked for all of house leadership, including John, and I did, you know, I was John's constituent case worker and it was a great lesson about how. And just enduring respect I have for him, even though he and I disagree on many policy issues, not all but some, including the ones I currently work on, but I have this enduring respect for John in, at that time, especially when I was very impressionable and being introduced to politics, that the power of, using his power as speaker was a very good thing for people in Aroostook county. His constituents and the voters came first.

I remember folks calling, constituents calling from well outside his district and enlisting his help to, you know, whether it's dealing with Central Maine Power Company or getting the Department of Human Services to move on something. And it was great fun to be able to pick up the phone and say, "I'm calling from Speaker Martin's office and we'd like you to do thus and such and have it done immediately," it was just. So that was fun, and it sort of really, you know, it gave me a sense of the good of political power and how to use it for people to make systems work, to reduce barriers, to get people what they need, so.

DN: During that period you also would have met George Mitchell, I assume.

JD: Yes. And I did not, I mean I'm, here's where, you know, this is my admission that before 1979, I was not at all familiar with George Mitchell. His name was familiar to me, but I did not know him as a political leader. I knew that he was a federal judge in Bangor. So he was entirely, an entirely new political persona to me when he was, when he succeeded Senator Muskie in that seat. And then I became very involved in his '82 reelection campaign and worked in Kennebec County and organized for him. And that was sort of my first foray into campaign politics and loved it, it was very exciting.

DN: Were you involved at the county level, or at the city level?

JD: At the county, actually at both but at the county level. And know that I had a little bit of, you know, was paid to do a little bit of work after hours, do you know what I mean, to sort of do, I don't know what it was called, this organizing. But I remember we had this little office on the rotary in Augusta and working there every night. And it was, you know, it was this wonderful sort of underdog thing, because Dave Emory was, you know, whatever those statistics were at the time, thirty two to sixty eight, whatever it was. And it was just great fun to sort of see a campaign pull together, to see people motivated from a really good place to sort of help advance a leader. So, it was, great fun.

DN: Now, you went from the legislative work into the party?

JD: Yup.

DN: And you became the executive director?

JD: I did, and it was a very, you know as they say, may you live in interesting times, it was the Mondale-Ferraro campaign. I went in, as I said, in '84, and that was sort of the, sort of you know, the other side of the looking glass. From the Mitchell campaign when there was great excitement and great motivation, to work in a campaign that worked precisely well, like a well-oiled machine, and very inclusive. And then to go to the Democratic Party, which I loved. It was one of the first years that I also think parties were well resourced I think, and it was not unrelated to the fact that campaign finance reform in the early days had made it possible and necessary for contributions from various places to come through parties. Which was a good, it was a good mechanism to build party infrastructure on behalf of candidates.

And it was also a very discouraging time to have, you know, the presidency, it was President Reagan's term, it was the height of his popularity. It was very difficult for I think our party to articulate a countervailing vision and message that didn't look negative and whiney and sort of, you know, unpatriotic. Not unlike where we sit today, if for very different reasons. But, and while Mondale was, you know, he was wonderful, he was a wonderful party leader but did not resonate with the people, it was very hard to get our message out. And so that was the little, the other end of sort of seeing where we had failed to pick up traction, and that was hard. I remember, I remember crying hard on election night, and other folks, I think that was, obviously that was the year that Libby Mitchell also ran for office and, and suffered a pretty heavy defeat.

So, it was very difficult. It was also great lessons learned about what not to do, how to do things differently. So it was an interesting time to be with the party.

DN: How many staff folks did you have in the state committee office?

JD: You know there were, I think there were three of us permanent, there were three permanent staff people. But during the campaign there were, you know I don't remember the specific number, but we were at least doubled or tripled during that sort of three month period when there was an infusion of lots of resource to do field development and outreach and get out the vote. So it was, you know, it was sort of a difficult campaign year (*unintelligible phrase*).

DN: Who was the state chair that year?

JD: Tony Buxton. Yup. And it was fun, it was fun, it was hard and it was fun.

DN: I've neglected to ask you about your work for Jerry Conley. You said you worked for him in '84?

JD: Um, yes.

DN: Or '83?

JD: It was, it was great fun. I love Jerry. And he, it was, he was sort of this sort of very different mold than Jim and Libby. I mean he, you know, Jerry is sort of the consummate old pol, was, made very clear, and was very clear with me, he said, this is, I'm running one more time to be senate president. I mean, he hauled a lot of water as minority leader for many, many years in the senate and so he wanted to get there and enjoy it and make mischief, and he did, he did some great work as senate president. And it was this really, also this really interesting model of leadership where he had no interest in holding too tightly on the reins. He knew the folks he wanted to surround himself with as committee chairs, who he wanted to empower in the caucus, he gave them guidance, he let them go, and it was just, it was a great thing to watch. Very different than what I had observed previously. And I think the senate did well, it sort of, you know, forged its own independence, not as a, you know, follower of the house.

And one of the most courageous things I've ever seen, even since, is, was Jerry's commitment to a) civil rights for gays and lesbians, which today is of course, you know, very common, it wasn't back then as a need or, he took, he took sponsorship and leadership of that fight. And for the minimum wage, was determined to pass a minimum wage while he was senate president, in spite of the objections of his very good friend, Joe Brennan.

And he was very courageous in stepping out and criticizing the governor publicly, taking and maintaining his stand, and ultimately passing minimum wage. So it was very, it was kind of rough and tumble. And it was also watching how two friends could disagree energetically, and ultimately still be friends.

DN: What is the difference between Joe Brennan and Jerry Conley, other than an issue like

minimum wage?

JD: You know, my first thought was Jerry was, continued to be, and will always be the street smart fighter and will not pretend to be anything else. And it could be, and I think Joe Brennan was also a very smart street fighter, but felt he needed to look like something else sometimes. And I think that may be where, sometimes that tripped him up. Just immediate, immediate thoughts.

DN: After the '84 campaign, how long did you stay in the party office?

JD: I stayed there for two years, until Tony's tenure ended, and then it was pretty much understood that we'd all sort of move on, and that was sort of getting a little bit thrown out of the nest for me. And we had a, in '86, we had I think a really div-, not divisive, but it was a, you know, it was a primary with at least three or four people in it as I remember. Pretty sure. That was the year Jim Tierney ran. And by happenstance, I sort of came upon an opportunity to work with George Campbell who was running Governmental Services, a private consulting firm, at the time.

And this moves into sort of my, and let me say, obviously with the state Democratic party was my first introduction to Ed Muskie because, you know, we organized the Ed Muskie lobster, you know, the Muskie lobster bake and sort of the. We also that, in, when I was in with the Democratic Party, sponsored a, a dinner to honor all former Democratic governors. Which was, and I'm having a, this is a very vague memory so I'm probably not going to be able to be very specific with details, but it was also very, that was fascinating. We were bringing together obviously Joe Brennan, Ken Curtis, Ed Muskie, all in the same room, was our hope. And it was, it was fascinating. They all ended up not being in the same room, as it turned out, but I remember Senator Muskie was there, and

DN: What was it like being with him in that setting and on that occasion?

JD: You know, I don't have as vivid a memory then as I did, I, obviously before, you know, sort of the first foray was Carol Parmalee. I mean it was sort of working more directly with Carol than, sort of disembodied voice over the phone, who I ultimately got to meet probably fifteen years later in person, which was great. I don't have as vivid a memory of him as I do later with more direct contact that I had with other capacities.

But when I went to Governmental Services we, it was a very interesting, it was, this was one of the first sort of little sort of internal sort of personal shake ups I had politically, insofar as Governmental Services agreed to take on and direct the campaign for a local measure telephone service. This sort of, like, you know, this arcane little issue whereby the telephone company was proposing to charge for local service as much as it does for long distance service, rather than flat rate services. And, you know, the Public Utilities Commission supported it, but it obviously, you know, invoked the ire of every consumer advocate, you know, Bruce, Bruce Reeves, many other, sort of the lefty wing of the party really took this on and said it was, you know, basically (*unintelligible word*) anti-consumerist, it was, you know, corporate, sort of, Ray - you know, whatever, just. It was a very difficult place to be, to be on a side where we were defending the

telephone company, so. So it was kind of, it was very interesting. And very interestingly enough, we were looking obviously for leaders who would say this really does make economic sense, it really is gonna be a (?) benefit for especially low income folks, elders and low income folks. And Senator Muskie agreed.

I have no recollection of who enlisted his support and talked to him about this issue, but it was fascinating that he agreed to be the public spokesperson on this obscure kind of issue that certainly did not win any, you know, great Democratic supporters. And from the beginning we knew from polling data that we were not on the side of the angels and that it was going to be an uphill battle. And it was just, it was great modeling for me, that, um, to see someone who, and from the perspective of today when political leaders, whether they're in, you know, whether they're sort of emeritus status as he was, or whether they're current, they're still serving, they're very, very selective about the issues they want to speak out on, I think, so as not to expend too much political capital. But it was very interesting watching Senator Muskie on this little issue that he genuinely did believe was, had economic import to people that he had worked his whole life for, and agree to speak out on this issue.

So I was asked to go down to sort of work with his staff and go to Washington and go to the Democratic National Committee where we, you know, filmed this little commercial that he was going to do for this little referendum campaign. And, it was, it was great. He actually remembered me from working in the Democratic Party, which I was impressed with. I have a thought, I never thought he would remember. And he was very, you know, in later years I had more exposure to him in the different moods and different kind of incarnations of Ed Muskie, but I remember him being very gracious and wonderful and, you know, did the commercial in one take, so we were sort of in and out in a matter of minutes, so.

DN: What was, what drove him to do that? You've indicated that he agreed on the issue, but did you get a sense from him as to why he thought it was important?

JD: You know, the only, the only impression I have, and I thought about this earlier, was he was very matter of fact about it. You know, it was, it was, and I don't even remember that we had to make any big case, that we had to talk about polling numbers, but that just fundamentally I think he agreed that it was an issue that probably had been misrepresented, that wasn't going to be, you know, from the outset it was an issue that was on first glance it looked like an easy decision. And I think, obviously bringing his voice into the debate may have contradicted people's assumptions about what it was about and forced them to take a closer look.

DN: And how did the, uh, how did the referendum turn out?

JD: Oh, we lost, we just like miserably lost. But, it was one of those, it was one of those big losses that didn't have quite as emotional impact on me as others had had in the past, so it was a good exercise, it was a good exercise.

DN: After that referendum, where did you go?

JD: It was very interesting after, it became clear to me that I was not suited for sort of the for-

profit environment, and so both George and I agreed that I probably had to move on. So, and it was, it was a very amicable parting but it was, and I think, you know, if there's, if I'm grateful for anyone pushing me out of the nest it was George saying go out and do what you -. So for about six or eight months or so I just kind of, you know, I sort of paid the rent. I waitressed, I taught aerobics, I did a project for Senator Mitchell, I organized Senator Mitchell's house parties because we were moving into obviously I think his reelection campaign in '88, and did various projects, one for the AFL-CIO. And then moved to the Maine Women's Lobby, where I became a lobbyist back at the legislature for the Maine Women's Lobby, which was great fun and I loved. And thanks to my good friend and mentor Nancy Chandler, was selected to serve as one of the constituency representatives on the Civil Legal Services Commission. And so that's how I made that next connection with Senator Muskie.

DN: How did you meet Nancy?

JD: I met Nancy when she was with the Nurses Association in the legislature. And I'm trying to remember whether, in my mind, I'm probably making this up, in my mind I think I must have had a Democratic party con - . I know I had the Democratic Party connection with Bruce because Bruce was our legal counsel. But with Nancy it's my recollection that I knew her when she was with the Nurses Association, you know, and a great, you know, she's, she was a great mentor to have, just to, just simply to watch, you know. She got pushed around by no one, was fun, smart, tough, and it was great to make a connection with her. I've learned a lot from her over the years.

DN: Now, before we get into the issue of legal services access, do you remember the debate and the work on the compensation commission and salaries or compensation for judges? That was while you were working for Joe, Jerry Conley rather.

JD: I do but I don't, to be honest I'm not remembering it closely.

DN: When, when you went to work, did you work for the commission, or you were a member of the commission?

JD: I was a member of the commission.

DN: While - and you were still part of the Women's Lobby still.

JD: I was working for the Women's Lobby, yes, yes. And had also worked very closely with Pine Tree Legal Assistance in the legislature on advocacy on low income issues. So I sort of had that connection as well as representing women and having worked on some issues related to domestic violence. So I think that was probably what gave me the sort of step-in to that commission, along with Nancy Chandler's recommendation.

DN: As you, as you went to work as a member of that commission, did you have a fee - a strong feeling about what the really important issues were for the commission?

JD: Well, yes. We, the Women's Lobby early on, and the Women's Lobby continues today

which I think is very, which, I feel very proud about the Women's Lobby creating as its niche in concert and collaboration with Pine Tree Legal Assistance and the Maine Equal Justice Project, economic justice issues for women. And certainly it was in the wake of, you know, the Reagan administration and the sort of whatever early reform, or more accurately, the dismantling of the public assistance welfare reform era. And it, you know, it just pulled into relief was, you know, people's suffering, low income people's suffering around access to the fundamentals of food and shelter and justice, I mean access to the justice system. What recourse and what appeals process do they have when they're wronged by the system? Or you know, when most poor people, not most but many poor people find themselves entirely disadvantaged when it comes to fair representation in the courts.

DN: Did you find that other members of the commission shared that view, or were there some disagreements within the commission?

JD: Well that's a great question. I don't remember disagreement. I should have given more thought to this -

DN: Well, that's all right.

JD: Because I don't remember, I don't remember it. My most vivid memories are the public hearings that we held. And we heard directly from, you know, and bless Pine Tree Legal, you know, they were able to organize low income folks to come out and speak for themselves. And just how, you know, and I had worked at the legislature and I had known them from a policy perspective and from the small group of individuals who came to speak at the legislature. But it was the first sort of widespread expo - exposure I had to the level of poverty and its impact on a good, you know, this incredibly high number of Mainers living in all parts of the state.

And I also remember, one of my most, you know, when I thought about a memory from those hearings it was, Senator Muskie was having one of the, he probably headed them all, but I know that the few that I went to, he was there. And I think this one was in Augusta. And Mary Henderson, who is today the executive director of the Equal Justice Project, worked at Pine Tree Legal, was very pregnant at the time, and testified on behalf of some clients she had represented. And I remember Senator Muskie making personal reference to her, not just to the story but to her and her devotion to the issue. And it was just a personal connection and recognition by him of the work that she was doing and obviously the sacrifices those folks made by working at Pine Tree. So -.

DN: When, you referred to Senator Muskie being at most of the hearings that you attended . . .

JD: I think so. I remember that Augusta one anyway, yeah.

DN: Did he spend a lot of time on the commission for -?

JD: You know, I wasn't, it's my memory that he did. I mean, I, the one thing that I, you know, that I can bring from my experience at the foundation and the commission, and even this, you

know, this local measured service referendum, that it's not, that it was substantive commitment that the senator brought. It's not as if he simply lent his name to causes, that he was engaged. That he especially during the foundation, my time at the foundation, he was very much engaged about what was happening with federal civil legal services funding, how the foundation, do you know what I mean, should operate given the new challenges. And so it's my impression that the senator was more than, I mean he never was just a figurehead as I recall, that he was engaged in the work that he lent his name to.

DN: And did you get a sense from the work at the commission what his commitments were at the beginning and whether they changed over time?

JD: I don't, I'm sorry. I'd love to know whether there was a, I don't.

DN: What came across, in addition to his obvious engagement in the issue, what came across to you from his participation?

JD: You know, in every, in all of my encounters with him and the work, whether it was the foundation or with the party, there was a, there was very much a sort of no-nonsense sort of attitude that, that the senator brought to politics. I mean, it was almost, I'm sort of losing my train of thought here, but I, I need another prompt, I'm sort of

DN: Okay, you say he had a no nonsense approach. You've also indicated that he paid attention to Mary Henderson

JD: Right.

DN: - and her personal commitments. How did the no-nonsense approach play out?

JD: Let me think about this. He, you know, I'm trying to describe it in a way that is, all I keep thinking of is that sort of Ed Muskie projects a very different image of political leader than what we typically see today. You know, sort of the "did not suffer fools gladly", is less about, far less about image than about content. He was very serious and it sort of was his ability to connect to the sort of fundamentals of politics, which means improving life for people, improving the quality of life for people. And it was very personal. I just need some more prompts I guess, I'm sorry, I just haven't thought about this really.

DN: No, no, that's Do you remember any incidents, any encounters at hearings, or any deliberations of the commission?

JD: Well, I have, I do have a memory, I mean he definitely used the hearings not just as, these hearings weren't just about people conveying and imparting information to the commission. He really used it as a little bully pulpit to sort of educate whoever was listening about his vision of what, of how a justice system should be responsive to people. And it was in a way that, I mean, it was a way that was not sort of grandstanding or showcasing or. But using it in a way that looked more like dialogue but very much conveying his vision and message about what he expected, the role he expected government to play for people. And the entitlement that every,

that every person should have in terms of access to justice.

DN: In the end, what was the major contribution of the commission? (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JD: I think, a) it brought, it had the authority, the personal and political authority that Muskie brought to the work, so that it was noticed and attended to by the legislature, to the, as, as much as it could possibly be. I think the commission did not get everything it had recommended, but it definitely elevated, at least in the legislature and probably in the, in the general public, a higher awareness about why access to the courts, and access to legal representation for everybody is real, is crucial. And clearly, I think it held out also the expectation that leaders in the court system, in the legislature, saw the value of keeping the courts and the third branch of government in the sort of political scheme as a, as a legitimate and important political commitment by the legislature.

DN: Now when the commission's work was done, did you move directly to the Bar Foundation?

JD: No. I think that was in '88, and I moved to the Bar Foundation in '94

DN: Oh.

JD: - so it was -

DN: You continued with the Women's Lobby?

JD: Continued with the Women's Lobby until the end of '89, until 1990, and then worked with the Family Planning Association as both their, as their development director and then moved into their public affairs director position, which was the lobbyist position. And then when Nancy retired, I was encouraged to apply for the job and thought it would be a great little different direction for me to pursue, and I'm really glad I did it.

DN: How long were you with the Bar Foundation?

JD: I was only with the Bar Foundation two, I think two and a half years, just under two and a half years. But I also felt it was a really, it was a very good and important time to be at the Bar Foundation. Being an executive, a second executive director to a first executive director who had been very high profile and very much identified with the organization made it a challenge for me to sort of, sort of find my own place. And at the same time do some, continue some really important work and ways of leadership that Nancy had defined, and at the same time do some things differently. So it was a great challenge for me professionally. And to sort of step out of the sort of direct advocacy that I had been doing largely on women's issues into something that was very different, and getting to know and understand the court and legal system better.

DN: Did you, in the course of your work with the Foundation, find that you were working on implementing some of the recommendations from the commission?

JD: Yes, yes.

DN: And did you have encounters with Senator Muskie during that period?

JD: Absolutely. He was very much engaged as he had been every year on Law Day activities, and I think came two or three times during the course of my time there to support some foundation work and events. Very much engaged, very much, and it was incredibly encouraging and inspiring to see someone who was fairly elderly at that point still emotionally committed to the issue, intellectually engaged, and in command of the issues, very much aware. I mean, it was right in the wake of the Gingrich revolution and the Civil Legal Services, I mean the Legal Services Corporation was badly compromised by federal legislation that basically prohibited federally funded Legal Services Corporation grantees to do impact litigation and legislative advocacy. So it essentially gutted the ability of both programs to make long term sweeping reforms on behalf of low income folks. And so the senator became very much engaged in us trying to retool and contribute to the sort of planning and thinking about how do we retool the legal services system in a way that those services were not entirely

End of Side A
Side B

DN: . . . side of the interview with Joanne D'Arcangelo. You were just saying that the spinoff to the legal services program occurred about then.

JD: Right, and, but with the help of Senator Muskie, who again sort of used the bully pulpit to convey the importance of this work, we were able to help set up the Equal Justice Project. And I'm trying to remember as well, we were, the big project during that time, and also because of, because of the economy, because of the increased reliance on private funding sources because of the changes in the federal funding, we undertook an effort to get banks who were participating in the IOLTA program to increase their level of commitment to IOLTA by essentially increasing interest rates.

DN: And IOLTA is?

JD: Interest on Lawyer's Trust Accounts, which is a sort of creative funding system that allows the private bar to, and clients, to contribute to civil legal services for low income folks. It's a creative, kind of creative financing mechanism that allows interest on trust accounts to accrue to the benefit of low income folks who can't afford access to civil legal services.

So, and I remember right into the, you know, right on into almost the last months of his life, the senator was engaged, we talked many times. He wrote editorials for us, he, as I said, he came to Maine I think at least a couple of times during that two year period for Bar Foundation work. And, you know, he was, you know, I'm trying, want to get a sense of what, the personality of Senator Muskie because it's, and I've always sort of wondered whether he was the same personality through his whole political life, but he had this, you know, this great sort of irascible, sort of didn't, you know, clearly was not thinking about image almost at any point of time when he was, you know, leading or speaking or advocating on behalf of what he believed in. And it

was great inspiration. I don't know if that came at the end of his life, but it certainly is in contrast to I think what we typically see today among politicians who are weighing a number of variables about how they project into the world. And the senator just had this very consistent, straight ahead, eye on the prize, you know, putting the issues and putting the philosophy first as opposed to his own sort of political image.

DN: Now, one of the other individuals who had been engaged in trying to overcome the effects of the Reagan cuts and the Gingrich cuts, was now Judge, Justice Howard Dana.

JD: Right.

DN: Did you have an opportunity to observe any interactions between Senator Muskie and Mr. Dana?

JD: You know I, no, but I would have loved to, I'm sorry. (*unintelligible phrase*) I mean, certainly on a, you know, there were, I didn't get to observe them closely enough but I would love to sort of hear about them or read about them at some point.

DN: They came from very different

JD: Coming from very different, absolutely different ends of the spectrum. That is one really interesting lesson and learning I had at the Bar Foundation, that to have conservative Republicans and someone like Senator Muskie who, you know, before liberal was a suspect concept, brought that vision to the whole civic legal services fight. And it was, and it was fascinating, because whereas, you know, Senator Muskie clearly believed in leveling the playing field and ensuring this fundamental right for all people regardless of economic status, this sort of countervailing perspective from the more conservative ranks is that preserving access to the system is absolutely key. And is, to a very conservative view of government, that you must maintain the orderly access to appeal, to seek justice, or else you foment revolution. And it was just sort of an interesting sort of dual perspective from very extreme and, you know, sort of the extremes in the spectrum. And to come into sort of common, obviously common, partnership to fight for the same thing.

DN: In the work of the commission, and then the work you observed from the Foundation, did those two perspectives that led to the same conclusion ever clash?

JD: I have to say it, I'm trying to think about this. I think there definitely was a departure on, for example when we were seeking ways to continue the impact litigation and legislative advocacy, there were definitely, obviously on the piece of legislative advoc-. I don't think there was ever any disagreement that impact litigation was something that needed to be vigorously supported. But the concept of legislative advocacy and to what degree should civil legal services include that piece was a point of disagreement. Because a lot of great trouble making can happen at the legislature, and you're not just talking about, you know, preserving its system. You're talking about dividing the goods, and deciding where public resource goes, and so that fundamentally I think goes to the different, you know, political philosophies between the two parties. And the ability of disenfranchised folks to have more power to do, get out and get their

fair share, so.

DN: Do you recall any debates in which, on that kind of issue, in which Senator Muskie was involved?

JD: I don't.

DN: Okay.

JD: I don't.

DN: After, now you were with the Foundation until when?

JD: I was with the Foundation until the end of '96, December of '96. So it was about two and a half years. And it was, it was sort of a, we had made great progress with this, the banking interest rates project, and I really wanted to bring that to a conclusion. And so then it seemed to be the right time to leave. The senator also passed away when I was at the Bar Foundation and it was, you know, it was one of those moments where. And I had, I had talked to the senator not long before he went in for leg surgery, and he was planning on coming to Maine, he was planning on coming up and we were actually going to enlist him to participate I think in a Bar Foundation event. You know, and it's not, the senator was roughly the same age as my father, and so it's, you know, there was, it was this, I never expected him to die. I mean, it was one of those, he was just continuing on, and it was one of those, it was silly. And I remember thinking, how did I not think this could happen, he was elderly, he was, you know, but it still came as a shock to me even though he was eighty something, eighty-four, eighty-three?

DN: He was eighty-two I think.

JD: So, it shouldn't have come as a surprise, but it did. He'd always been there, he was incredibly vigorous, it was, of course he's going to be back and continue in the work.

DN: Thank you very much.

JD: You're welcome.

End of Interview