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From, Alvin "Al" oral history interview

Don Nicoll

Interview with Alvin "Al" From by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
From, Alvin "Al"

Interviewer
Nicoll, Don

Date
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Place
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Biographical Note

Al From was born in South Bend, Indiana. He grew up as an only child in a Jewish family, attended Northwestern where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism, then went to Washington, D.C. where he worked for Sargent Shriver and the War on Poverty program. He traveled around the south at the height of the civil rights movement. He went to work for Senator Joe Tydings in the Senate District Committee in 1968. He transferred to Muskie's Intergovernmental Relations Committee and stayed on his staff until 1978. He then became Jimmy Carter's deputy advisor on inflation, then as staff director for Gillis Long, who became the Chair of the Democratic Caucus in 1980. From created the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) in 1985 and the Progressive Policy Institute in 1989. In 1991, he recruited Bill Clinton to be chairman of the DLC.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family and educational background; journalism; traveling in the Deep South; working for Senator Tydings; working for Muskie; Intergovernmental Relations Subcommittee (IGR); the Budget Act; legislative work; 1972 presidential campaign; Democratic Leadership Council; Deputy Advisor to Carter on inflation; Staff Director for Gillis; early experiences with Clinton; and the House Democratic Caucus.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Friday the 1st of December in the year 2000. We are at 600 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E. in Washington, D.C. in the offices of the Democratic Leadership Council, and Don Nicoll is interviewing Al From. Al, would you state your full name, spell it and give us your date and place of birth?

Alvin From: My full name, believe it or not, is Alvin, A-L-V-I-N, From, F-R-O-M. I was born in South Bend, Indiana on May 31st, 1943 which makes me fifty-seven years old.

DN: You're approaching middle age.

AF: Right, I think I'm long past middle age.

DN: What did your father and mother do?

AF: My father was a small businessman. He was in a whole host of business activities from the coal business to a little while in the junk business, in the auto parts business, had a hardware store for a couple years, but in the early 1950s I think, 1951, settled down and became a small contractor. And actually in retrospect, as I look back on it, was one of the original niche marketers because he built garages. And what he apparently realized was that in the aftermath of WWII, there were all these sort of prefabricated suburbs that were being built and none of them had garages and in northern Indiana where we lived you needed garages in the winter, and he made a lot of money on that.

DN: These were garages for houses.

AF: For houses. My mother was just a housewife who helped him in the office.

DN: Did you have siblings?

AF: No, I was an only child.

DN: What was it like growing up in South Bend in the postwar period?

AF: Well, it was fascinating growing up in a Jewish family in South Bend, which obviously is a Catholic town, with Notre Dame, after WWII. I would say we had a rather provincial upbringing, you know. It was, we had, my father had two brothers and three sisters and my mother had three brothers and most of our social activities were with the family. We had very few family friends, I mean that I recall, and did very little outside the family so it was very, and my guess is that in the years immediately following WWII for a lot of Jewish families that was not an unusual circumstance.

DN: Was your family a practicing family so that you were involved in the synagogue or temple?

AF: Yes, I mean to this day my father who is now ninety-one and can barely remember anything puts on his tefillen every morning, and we kept a kosher home. And while we weren't orthodox, we were clearly on the orthodox side of conservative.

DN: So you had a fairly strong religious upbringing.

AF: I had a pretty strong religious upbringing.

DN: Did -?

AF: I was always a little bit of a rebel though, so.

DN: Now did you attend public school?

AF: I attended public schools, went to public schools in South Bend, graduated from a public high school, and then got a scholarship to Northwestern in journalism and got my bachelor's and

master's degree in journalism at Northwestern. One of the great ironies . . . . I'll just tell you a couple of little quick stories. One of the great ironies of that was that I got a McCormick Scholarship. Colonel [Robert R.] McCormick, as long term owner and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, was at least in the Jewish community viewed as pretty anti-Semitic and I always used to think he would have been very surprised to realize that his scholarship probably made my career.

DN: Was this an undergraduate or a graduate scholarship?

AF: It was both. Actually, it was a five-year program for a graduate degree. But one thing, South Bend was a small town and while our family was, I would say, a reasonably prominent family in the Jewish community with all my father's brothers and sisters, the, you know, we were basically a lower middle class to a middle class family, I mean we didn't have any money. And I always like to tell this story, my biggest thrill in politics in, when I grew up in South Bend was when I was ten years old a guy who became elec-, was elected mayor of the city came to our apartment build to drive somebody to the polls on election day during a snowstorm and I got to meet him, and that was a pretty big thrill. I celebrated my fiftieth birthday party in the State dining room at the White House. I just think America's a great country.

DN: Now, you have mentioned the fact that your involvements, your social involvements were pretty much with the family. Did you suffer any explicit discrimination that you recall growing up?

AF: I didn't. You know, my father used to talk about stories of, of when he and his friends were in Hebrew school having stone fights with neighborhood kids and all those kind of things. I never suffered any of that. And my generation in my family broke out of that provincialism very rapidly. I was in high school, I went into high school in 1958, started high school in 1958 which was the year after Sputnik, or the year of Sputnik. And if you recall in those days there was a big push to accelerate the education in the United States so that we wouldn't lag behind the Russians in the space effort and they started all these advanced placement classes. And I was put with a group of about twenty-five kids in my high school which whom I had almost every class for four years in this accelerated program. But we were also, it was also right at the beginning stirrings of the civil rights movement and so at least my friends and I moved out pretty quickly into a lot of other activities. We got far beyond sort of the social limitations that we had growing up.

DN: How did your family feel about the changes that you were going through in terms of political awareness and involvement?

AF: I think they found, were perfectly fine with that. I mean the truth is that when you're an only child it's hard to do too much wrong.

DN: What kinds of political discussions took place in your family as you were growing up?

AF: Well, you know, it's a very funny thing but my first political memory was going to the polls with my folks in 1948, I was five years old. Harry Truman was the hero in our household because he recognized Israel. But when we went to the polls, and I just have this memory, the, I

remember somebody putting a big Dewey button on me and I, because I remember wearing this big Dewey button, this is sort of my first political memory. My father, Harry Truman probably made him a Democrat forever. He always talked about Roosevelt, but he also talked about Wendell Willkie who was a Hoosier who ran in 1940 obviously against Roosevelt.

I can't say that we had the kind of political discussions, for example, that I might have with my younger daughter, who is now a senior at Vassar. Because when I was growing up my family, my, and my father was pretty concentrated on, basically on trying to make a living as a small contractor who ran his business out of his house and out of a couple of yards that, lumber yards that were owned by his family. My grandfather had been in the coal business and had two coal yards and we used one of them for storage of lumber that my dad needed to use. And so he used to spend most nights selling, and then during the day would supervise his construction crews, so I mean, we didn't have time for much else.

The most important thing I suppose and I remember about my youth in South Bend, other than my always a little bit of a rebellious nature trying to break out, was that my father demanded unbelievable excellence. He had gone to Purdue for a little while and to Notre Dame for a little while but never got his degree, because his father died when he was about, either in college or about ready to go to college and he came back to work. But he was bound and determined that I would go to college and, if I would get a B in high school, he would be in there talking to the teachers which made me very eager not to get any Bs.

DN: You had plenty of incentive to excel.

AF: Right, right.

DN: What led you to choose journalism as a career and in going to college?

AF: You know, I think, I'm trying to, I think the first, my sort of my first brushes with journalism were in, when I was in high school starting writing, writing sports for the high school newspaper. And I was sports editor of the high school newspaper in my junior year. Gosh, I haven't even thought about this in a long time, I did this column called From Al by Al From, and then became editor of the newspaper. And after my junior year in high school, between my junior and senior year in high school I went to, Northwestern had something called the National High School Institute which was a five-week program they did in journalism and tech and education and speech and a couple other disciplines. And I went to the journalism one and I guess I got hooked, decided I wanted to Northwestern journalism school and applied early and got in, got my scholarship and went off to Northwestern where I devoted most of my college career to the *Daily Northwestern* which I edited in my senior year.

DN: After you graduated where did you head?

AF: I was, I was signed and sealed but not delivered to the *Chicago Daily News* in 1966. And in my graduate year, I was supposed to start in June of 1966 or July of 1966 in Chicago with the old *Chicago Daily News* which is no longer in existence, and in March of 1966 I was part of the inaugural group for a Washington program for the journalism school at Northwestern, the Medill

News Service. And there were about a dozen of us who came out here and our job was to cover Washington for a bunch of small newspapers. I had done my master's thesis on [William] Hodding Carter's newspaper, the *Delta Democrat Times* in Greenville, Mississippi and so, and so I got Hodding to get his program, his paper into the program. And I got the South Bend *Tribune*, my sponsor for my scholarship at Northwestern, to be part of the program so I had these two very good papers. And I had great fun, the, mostly through Harding Carter I got to know people like John Doar, who was then the assistant attorney general for civil rights, and I just got smitten by Washington.

And I ran into a friend of mine named Edgar May, who you probably know. He was a state senator in Vermont and his sister is Madeleine Kunin, who was governor of Vermont. And Ed May was working for [Robert] Sargent Shriver in the War on Poverty, he had been a Northwestern journalism school grad, a Pulitzer Prize winner, and I had met him at school and I saw him when I was out here. And he said to me, "You don't want to go back to Chicago, you're having too much fun here." "Why don't you get in the fray and try to change things?" and asked me to go to work in the War on Poverty where he was working for Sargent Shriver. And I said, "Okay." And I called the *Chicago Daily News* and said, "I'm not coming back." And I went to work for Shriver and Ed May in the War on Poverty and my life was changed from that point on.

AF: The *Chicago Tribune* and the McCormick Foundation gave me my scholarship, but the paper I was going to go to work for was the *Chicago Daily News* which is no longer in existence. And I actually did work as a stringer for the *Tribune* while I was in college. In those days it was big money, I got fifteen bucks a week to call in every day and tell them there was nothing happening at Northwestern. And when I did call in and tell them that something was happening, often the city editor, whose name I won't mention because he's pretty well known, but had very conservative and very narrow views in those days, would just reject it. Like I called him one time to tell him that I'd interviewed Reverend James Bevel, who was one of Martin Luther King's lieutenants, who was up in Evanston speaking at Northwestern. And he sort of told me that King was going to come to Chicago and I called the *Tribune* and I said, "I've got this story. Martin Luther King's going to come to Chicago." And they said, "We don't care what they," (a few not particularly on color remarks) and about two weeks later it was the lead story in the *Chicago Sun Times*.

DN: What was the date that you went to work for the poverty program?

AF: It was in I think, I think, I can't tell you the exact date, I think, well it was June of 1966, I think it was the 26th but I'm not absolutely sure.

DN: And what was your assignment there?

AF: I had the best job in the world for somebody coming out of school. Schriver, I was in the, I worked in something called the Office of Inspection. Schriver did not trust the bureaucrats to tell him what was going on around the country, so he hired a bunch of young journalists and lawyers and sent them out around the country, and our job was to go look at what was happening and write the equivalent of in-depth magazine pieces on for him, on what was happening in anti-

poverty programs around the country. And I got assigned to the Deep South which was Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina and Florida. And in 1966, in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, that was the most exciting place in the country to do this kind of thing, and it was a terrific job.

DN: How long did you do that?

AF: I stayed until the people of the United States decided that Richard Nixon should be president. Not that I had a political job, but I just decided I couldn't stay in a Nixon administration. And so I was there for two and a half years but I had, in the middle of that, I spent four months in the Army at Fort Bragg and Fort Eustis and then, as my basic training and advanced individual training before, as part of my Reserve obligation. And then in, when, in 1968 when Hubert Humphrey and Ed Muskie couldn't quite pull it off the, I decided I was, there wasn't really any point in my staying at the War on Poverty in the Nixon administration so I started looking up on the Hill. And I left OEO right about the time that Nixon took office and in the beginning of February of 1969 went to work on the Hill for Joe Tydings in the Senate district committee.

DN: And what led you to Senator Tydings' office?

AF: I wrote a lot of people and I guess this is on, probably in, this was probably in October of '68, a time when I'm sure you remember well, probably much better than I do, that our ticket was lagging a little bit in the polls, and figuring that I'm probably going to have to get out I wrote a bunch of senators. I got an interview with Tydings' office, with John McEvoy, who's our mutual friend. And he, I was interviewing at that time for a press secretary's job and as it turned out, after the election, that job went to somebody who was a, who had been working in the Humphrey-Muskie campaign. But in, at the beginning of the next Congress, Tydings got the chairmanship of the district committee and called me.

DN: And what was your assignment at the district committee?

AF: I was sort of the, I was the counsel of the district committee but I was really sort of the chief investigator. What I'd do is I did a bunch of hearings on drug abuse and crime in the national Capitol. And so what I would, my, what I basically did was, did in, you know, we went out, looked at what was happening in the district governmentally and wrote a lot of memos on it and then turned those memos into hearings.

DN: Now was this an extension of the techniques that you developed when you were working for Sargent Shriver?

AF: Oh probably a little bit. We also did, you know, began to learn how to draft legislation a little bit. But I would, I mean the, I would guess I would say that the, my limited sk-, my, you know, my, I only learn how to do things one way and my skills are pretty limited, but it's sort of going out, finding out what's going on, writing it down and then figuring out how to present it. So those are the skills I use. I learned those in journalism school, I used them for Shriver, I've used them ever since.

DN: And you were with the district committee from 1969 until when?

AF: I think it was April of 1971. Tydings got beat in the '70 election, in fact Tydings and Al Gore's dad, Albert Gore, who were the two senators who got beat in 1970, the only two that Senator Muskie couldn't save with that wonderful election eve speech. And the, but, and then Senator Tom Eagleton became chairman of the district committee. And I had actually, I probably would have wound up working for Eagleton had Tydings not called me for the district committee in 1968. And so Eagleton asked me to stay on, and then through some magic which I'm not quite sure I ever quite understood, I got traded to Muskie for a couple of draft choices in April 1971. I got, McEvoy and I guess you and others brought me over to work for Muskie in 1971 and a couple of people that were on Muskie's intergovernmental relations subcommittee were moved over to the district committee.

DN: And when you went to work for Senator Muskie it was directly on the subcommittee?

AF: I worked first as counsel on the intergovernmental relations subcommittee and then, I think I went to work there, I want to say in April of 1971. And then, and the staff director at that time, was an attorney named Ty Brown, Tyrone Brown, who had worked in the campaign in '68 I think. Or maybe he had started in the, had started in the campaign in, for president, in 1970 and then in '71 moved up on the Hill. And he left to practice law. He was later an FCC commissioner, in, like in November or December. And Muskie made me staff director after that, which I, the job I held until the end of 1978 when he left the committee.

DN: And had you known Senator Muskie at all before going to work for the subcommittee?

AF: Not at all, only by reputation. I mean, everybody knew Senator Muskie in those days because he was sort of our hero coming out of the 1968 campaign and . . . . But I never knew, I did not know Senator Muskie at all personally until I went to work for him. I'm trying to remember, I think the first time I ever met him was when I did a bunch of revenue sharing hearings in early, in April or May of 1971.

DN: That was after you went to work for (*unintelligible word*)?

AF: Yes.

DN: And what was, were your impressions of him when you met him and started working with him the same as those you had at a distance?

AF: Well, I guess, you know, it's probably hard to differentiate now after, you know, so long, both being with him and so long being apart. But one of the things I've learned is, I've had to recount a lot of the history of the early Clinton years now, is that your memory over the years begin, tends to be a straight line. There's a book written on sort of the DLC and the change in the Democratic Party through the Clinton years, all of which incidentally started, its roots were in the Muskie years, in my years with Muskie. But the, but when I read that book what it

reminded me is how many ups and downs there were along the way, because I just sort of remember it as a straight trajectory as you get farther away from it.

But, you know, the thing I always remember about Senator Muskie is, you know, he's sort of a towering figure in many ways. He's tall, a man of just incredible intellect. I don't think I've ever seen anybody who is as smart as Senator Muskie, a man who is extraordinarily thoughtful. The, I've done a lot of national politics since, probably got, had some experience that probably would have been useful in those days when we were trying to win the presidency in 1972. But you seldom, seldom in national politics do you find anybody who is as thoughtful and as conscientious as Muskie.

And then the other side of Muskie was his temper, and maybe it's just my way, but I always, you know, I sort of quickly sized that up. I mean, my favorite story is with, you know, I was walking down the hall with Muskie one time and he's just screaming at me about something. I can't remember what I did, probably something stupid, and he saw in the distance some people from Maine. And as they got into sort of earshot range he stops yelling and he introduces me like I was the king, and then as soon as they were out of earshot range he picks up in mid-sentence.

But, you know, Senator Muskie, the other thing I remember about Senator Muskie is that I must say I just, it had a profound influence on my own political way, is this intense loyalty. I remember one time in the subcommittee Muskie used to give us incredible latitude to deal on his behalf, and I made a deal that he just flat out disagreed with. I mean, he thought I had just made the stupidest thing, did the stupidest thing I ever could have. And he just let me know it, as he was known to do in no uncertain terms, and then we go into the subcommittee meeting and he argued for the deal I made. And I said, "Why are you doing that?" He said, "Because if," you know, "if your word's no good then you can't deal on my behalf." I mean, that just, I mean, just, those incredible qualities that very few, you know, you'd see senators, so many senators who would, if their staff did something they disagreed with would just undercut them and then, you know, which made us a lot less eager to make deals in the future. Muskie always understood that.

DN: You mentioned having a lot of latitude, how did you acquire or discover you had that latitude?

AF: I assume you just sort of, you know, well, I guess the, my case was probably pretty, was pretty unique for a couple of reasons. One is, I was a second committee for Muskie which meant, my guess is that Leon Billings had Muskie much more on his tail than I did on mine, because Leon worked on what was his first committee on public works, his environmental work. Government operations was sort of a second committee. Government operations by its nature was more of a staff committee, staff driven than maybe other committees. But the other, so, but, so the one circumstance was it was a second committee.

But the other circumstance that I think was probably really important was that my first two years with Muskie were his presidential years so he went around a lot. And, you know, one of the things, you know, I've always, you know, been very thankful for in Muskie and later in other bosses I've had like Gillis Long, they've always for whatever reason have, been willing to give

me some latitude. And, you know, I don't know whether it was bec-, I assumed that there was some reason that he decided that I was able to get this, you know, whether he, the early work I did for him he thought was pretty good, whether, you know, guys like you and McEvoy and others who were close to him encouraged it. But in part, you know, I suppose because he wasn't around a lot, I had to do a lot more wheeling and dealing than I would have, on my own, than I would have if he had been in the Senate in 1971 and the early part of 1972.

DN: Did you observe him providing similar latitude to other staff members, to John, to Leon, to others?

AF: Well it's, it, you know, it was hard for me to tell. I assume Leon had a lot of latitude, even though Leon, you know, Muskie spent a lot more personal time with Leon. I mean as you remember when Asbell wrote his book, you know, the, Leon's work was the sort of the centerpiece of it and the counter cyclical revenue sharing was sort of the second story in it, which I handled. And, you know, I think that, you know, I re-, you know, I really don't know how much latitude he gave other people but I, I would, I mean just based on the way he worked with me I would assume that if he had some trust in you he gave you latitude. If he didn't, he could be a pretty strong and overbearing force.

DN: As you worked those years, almost ten years on the committee, what were the major issues that emerged and that you dealt with?

AF: Well you know, intergovernmental relations subcommittee was really a small committee, a small subcommittee when we, in 1971 when I went there, and we turned it into one of the major subcommittees in the Senate. We did a whole host of things. We did revenue sharing. We did counter cyclical revenue sharing. We did a lot of freedom of information stuff. We were engaged, at least initially, in the CIA investigations in the mid-seventies. We were, we did the Sunset Bill, which became a major defining issue for us. We did the, the most important thing we ever did was the Congressional Budget Act, which gave Muskie his chairmanship. We did a bunch of stuff on urban policy, and then we did some of the nuts and bolts things.

We had this little bill that, it was really a pretty important bill and you come to appreciate some of these things as you get older, the Uniform Relocation Act which was the bill that compensated citizens when the government moved in to do a project and took away their property. The, I learned one of my most important lessons on the reauthorization of that bill one year because we had to, we had to amend that act to modernize it because the, with inflation the amounts were far too low, and we passed it. The House was blocking it for some reason. We finally got it passed in the House a week before the end of the session, I think this was, I can't remember whether it was '72 or '74, it must have been '7-, maybe '72. And Muskie had worked in the, and we went to conference and got a conference report a week before the session was ending.

At the same time Muskie was involved deeply in negotiations I think it was on either the Clean Air or Clean Water Act, I can't remember which one. I think it was Clean Water, and that went to the final day. And for some reason the committee that we dealt with in, the House counterpart to us on Uniform Relocation was also the public works committee which did the environmental bills. And so finally on the last day of the session the, this was probably '74 actually. It was the

last day of the session. We're in conference on the public, on the, I think the Clean Water Act or Clean Air Act, and we got an agreement. And the papers came around for Muskie to sign that agreement and Muskie said, "I'm not going to sign it until we file the conference report on the Uniform Relocation Act." Because what had happened is Dick Sullivan, who had been the staff director of the public works committee over there, had just taken that report, the conference report, and held it because he wanted to use it as leverage on Muskie on the environmental bill. And so they made an agreement that bef-, if Muskie signed the conference report, they'd first file the conference report on Uniform Relocation and on the Clean Air Act, I think it was Clean Air Act. And what happened was we lost the vote because they couldn't get it through. It was the last day of the session, everybody was gone, they couldn't, the Republicans asked for a quorum and we couldn't get it. But I'll never forget that.

I got Sullivan back the next year though, because we did the Counter Cyclical Revenue Sharing Bill and we passed it over the objection of Russell Long who was, really had jurisdiction but we just assumed jurisdiction. One of the things we did in those days is we, we were an aggressive subcommittee and we just, Muskie thought that this was a good idea, Muskie and I thought it was a good idea. And so we got enough support in our committee and we reported this bill out of our committee and then offered it as an amendment to a public works bill that had come over from the House, over Russell Long's objections, and . . . .

DN: Were his objections procedural or jurisdictional?

AF: They were mostly jurisdictional. They probably also had to do with the fact that the formula in our counter cyclical revenue sharing was to help places that were hurt by the recession in '74 and '75. And Louisiana was doing, in those days Louisiana and Texas, the oil belt, were doing very well and got very little money out of that formula because it was really a targeted formula. But in any event, so we passed this and part of the deal was, we had gone to Tip O'Neill who was the majority leader in those days. And Tip said, "If you put this, put your bill on the speaker's public works bill I'll make sure the House takes it in conference."

And I'll never forget sitting in that conference, you know, with the House guys saying they weren't going to take this bill. And Tip calls, and he doesn't call Jim Wright who was the, I think the chairman of the conference. He doesn't call Kluczynski who was the chairman of the subcommittee. He calls Dick Sullivan, who was the staff director of the committee, and Sullivan comes back and they took it. And we finally, after two vetoes got it overwritten, but that was my revenge on Dick Sullivan.

DN: Now, you -

AF: Who incidentally is a great guy and a very good friend of mine, but he taught me a lot and I hope I taught him something.

DN: He had served through several chairmen as I recall.

AF: Right, I think, there was a story at one point in the *New York Times* that said Sullivan was more powerful than all but about thirty-five of the four hundred and thirty-five members of the House.

DN: You mentioned the aggressiveness of the subcommittee. Where did that aggressiveness come from? Was it Senator Muskie, was it Al From, was it a combination?

AF: I think it's probably a combination. I mean, I, you know, there's some people who think I'm aggressive but I, and, but I think the, I think what happened, there were a couple things. One, probably the most important actually, was that government operations in those days was sort of an all purpose committee and Muskie being, coming out of the '68 and then '72 campaigns was a national figure. And it gave us an opportunity to get our hands into a lot of things that we might otherwise not, and he always had a lot of interest in doing that. And so I think part of it was that Muskie was such a dominant legislator. And so if something came up, I mean, just to give you an example of something that would change the course of American history, and I think was one of the most important things in, that led, you know, ironically almost twenty years later, to the Clinton presidency because it helped change our party.

I'll never forget sitting with Muskie one day when he was still sort of smarting from what happened in 1972 and the way the Nixon crowd, you know, sabotaged his campaign. And the, I may get these numbers wrong, but somewhere in all these memoranda that are piled up here on this table, that are all in the library incidentally, I would make copies and send them all to the library with the right numbers. But I think it was, I think Nixon sent a budget up in the end of 1972 of, for that fiscal year, of something like two hundred and forty-eight point seven [248.7] billion dollars, I mean some, it was either two forty-seven point eight [247.8], or two forty-eight point seven [248.7]. And Chuck Percy, who was on the committee, offered an amendment to some bill that was going through the committee to put a spending ceiling on, at the Nixon level, two for-, I think it was two forty-seven point eight [247.8], and Muskie turned to me and said in words that I will not repeat here, "What's so sacred about two hundred forty seven point eight [247.8] billion dollars?" And immediately offered an amendment to make it two hundred forty-seven [247] billion. Just because that's just the way he was sometimes.

And that whole battle sort of triggered a process that got, that led to the creation of a commission that Senator McClellan led to study the budget process that in turn within six months led to the development of the Budget Act that created the budget committees and the Congressional Budget Office. But, you know, Muskie's legislative dominance was so incredible. We were in, the Budget Act was done in a different subcommittee than ours, in fact they created a subcommittee for Lee Metcalf in 1973 and gave him the Budget Act. Nobody thought that that was going to turn out to be such an important deal. But we were on that subcommittee and Muskie just didn't like the way it was going, the discussions were going. The Congress in, I think the late forties, had attempted to create a budget process and they had done it too rigidly, and it had collapsed of its own weight within a year.

And Muskie thought that the bill that Senator [Sam] Ervin and Senator [John] McClellan with Percy I think had put in was, had the same problem. He wasn't quite sure why, but he just had that instinct that it wasn't going to work. And so we went to a mark-up one day and this was, I'll

never forget this, I mean, Muskie just started talking and he talked for forty-five minutes about his concerns about this.

End of Side A
Side B

DN: . . . . the tape of the interview with Al From, December 1st, the year 2000. Al, you were just talking about Senator Muskie and the budget (*unintelligible word*).

AF: We were in this mark up on the Budget Act and Muskie was just not comfortable with the rigidity of the bill. And so he started, he just got the floor and started talking and talked for forty-five minutes and sort of outlined his arguments of why he was concerned, said he wasn't quite sure, you know, how we ought to remedy it, that. Then as he, as Muskie was wont to do, put it in a historical perspective. And at the end of that Bill Brock, who was a freshman senator and to that point not much of a friend of ours, came up to me and he said, "You know, Ed is absolutely right and if he's willing to deal with something we used to call back door spending, then I'd love to sit down with him and see if we can't do an alternative." So I went to Muskie and I said, "Bill Brock came up to me and said 'if you're willing to deal with back door spending we could do an alternative,' he wants to work with you on an alternative." And Muskie said, "Sure, I want to do it." I said, "Now you understand that you just passed over the president's veto in 1972, the largest back door spending bill ever," which was the Clean Water Act. And he said, "Yeah, I know I did that and it's not the way we ought to legislate, it's the way we had to legislate."

And so Bill Brock and Ed Muskie and Charlie Shultz and one staff guy from Brock and me went down to that wonderful hideaway we used to have called SB4 in the basement of the Capitol down by the garbage dumps, and one afternoon designed what was the, (*unintelligible word*) became the Budget Act. And Muskie and Brock presented it as an alternative. And you know, we sort of worked it through committee and, by Muskie's really legislative skill which, you know, was astonishing, beat the two, you know, ranking Democrats on the committee, Ervin the chairman and McClellan who was really the ranking member, got them to finally compromise to our bill.

And then went through a whole process where, with Senator Bob Byrd, who tried to represent the interests of all the committee chairs, 'cause one of the things the Budget Act did was sort of harness the free reign of the committee chairs. And Byrd, who had his own fish to fry with the leadership and knew the rules better than anybody else, who could put us through this awful process in the rules committee for seven weeks night and day. He had, the staff directors of the subcom-, of the committees met trying to redo this Budget Act and somehow we were able to withstand it all and in the end come out with pretty much the bill that Muskie and Brock had put in.

But so, you know, when you, I guess what started me on this was the aggressiveness of the committee, and part of it was just when Muskie got into an issue he just, he dominated it. You know, in, at the beginning of, in, I guess this was at the end of 1974, Sy Hirsch did a bunch of stories on the CIA. And I had made a deal with Bob Smith, who was Ervin's staff director of the

committee, who wanted to borrow a staff member of mine to help Ervin on his Privacy Bill. And I said, "Okay, we'll do that but the deal is that when CIA reform bills get in they come, they're referred to intergovernmental relations." And he agreed to that and so that happens.

Well, when that happened, we had a committee chairmanship change, Ribicoff became chairman and he wanted to keep these bills and so we made some sort of, I can't remember what kind of a deal, but we sort of jointly worked on those things. But we had had some dates scheduled for CIA hearings and when you got hearing dates on Muskie's schedule you didn't want to give them up even if you didn't want to do those hearings. And so we decided to do hearings on the fiscal conditions of states and cities, this is like in January of '75 I think, and from that we decided to put in this bill called Counter Cyclical Revenue Sharing.

But the point is, what we were always trying to do was see what the, you know, hot issue was and then see if we could move into it. And I think it was a combination of Muskie's sort of dominance of an issue when he got into it, and sort of my natural aggressive nature that made that, that turned that subcommittee. I think by the time I left it was next to permanent investigations for the largest subcommittee in the senate.

DN: How did Senator Muskie deal with his colleagues who were also fairly strong-willed people and had a tendency to dominate? After all, Sam Irvine had been a towering figure in his own right, and John McClellan had run that committee in earlier years with an iron hand.

AF: Well, Muskie actually dealt with those senior members. I mean, a lot of, I mean Muskie's mere presence overwhelmed a lot of members of that committee. But he dealt, it was fascinating actually the way he dealt, I mean he dealt very skillfully with McClellan and I'll give you an example of that. The, with Erv-, Ervin was a really interesting relationship. I mean, Muskie was no shrinking violet as you well know, but you know, and if a senator would ask him to do something that he didn't want to do he'd grumble at us, you know, at least. He may not say anything to him but he'd certainly grumble at us. But when Ervin asked him something it was different, he'd call me over and say, "Senator Ervin asked me to do this, can I, is it possible we can do this?" I mean, I think Muskie had enormous respect for Irvine as, you know, as, you know, as the great Constitutional lawyer that he was. And I, so I think, the only senator I think that Muskie really, that I ever saw him really defer to was Ervin.

You know, there are other senators like Russell Long, he thought he was going to try to strangle every time he saw him, but, and we had incredible battles. The McClellan thing is interesting. But the time I was there McClellan had taken over the appropriations committee basically, I mean, I'll tell you two stories actually about McClellan, one before, when he was still chairman of (*unintelligible phrase*), and one when he was, after he took over appropriations.

But Muskie, I think Muskie and McClellan probably had a pretty good relationship that certainly preceded my time there, because the first story was during the, during the Muskie presidential campaign. The, we did a lot of work as Senate offices were prone to do in those days, when the rules were not quite as tight, that we reinforced the campaign including, I had a bunch of volunteers who were sitting in our subcommittee office, interestingly enough not paid by the

subcommittee. We were pretty straightforward about how we used the payroll, which a lot of offices weren't in those days. If you recall there was a big investigation in 1975.

And, in fact, we had a bunch of volunteers who were sitting in the subcommittee office who had done some negative research on one of the candidates and their, it's off the historical record, on McGovern during the primaries. And we had a, it turned out, a secretary in our office who was sleeping with a Capitol policeman who was living at Jack Anderson's. And so all of a sudden, one, you know, Anderson calls me one night at midnight, having called Muskie I think the same time and Muskie just said, "Talk to me," and was going through this payroll and, I mean, it was a pretty straightforward, able to show him how we used the payroll and the payroll all went for act-, (*unintelligible phrase*) government legitimate activities.

But he did do a column on how Muskie was doing this stuff on, you know, that, it was pretty tough on McGovern during the primary contest. And that after-, that day, just by coincidence, the day the column appeared, Muskie was campaigning with [George] McGovern. And we had a government operations committee mark-up, so I was a little nervous, I mean I was in those days a little, I was, you know, twenties, in my twenties, and there's old John McClellan who was not exactly known as the nicest guy in the world, and Muskie wasn't around. So I go into this mark-up and McClellan, I walk in and McClellan says, "Come here." And I said, "Holy," you know, "holy shit." And he just looked at me and he said, "Who's the leak, we're going to get him fired." And that was all. I'll never forget that.

But how Muskie handled McClellan in the Budget Act, McClellan, who was a sponsor with, I think with Ervin, of the original Budget Act proposal. Muskie was convinced that if, that if that act were enacted it would be so rigid that it would not work and furthermore it would limit the power of the appropriations committee in ways that he thought would be unacceptable to McClellan. Well McClellan at that point, you know, came around very rarely to governmental operations committee stuff. But I arranged with Jim Calloway for one mark-up to get McClellan to come. And he came. And then with Senator [Bill] Brock we, and I told him, the deal we made with McClellan and Calloway was that we would make sure there were no votes that day. So Brock was cued that every time a quorum went into the room he left, so there would never be a quorum in the room so nobody could ever force a vote. And Muskie talked to McClellan for, you know, an hour or so basically, that was, you know, everybody else was there but that was what this was about. And at the end of it McClellan says, "I can't take this bill," and that was how we got our compromise. So the answer is he dealt very skillfully with him.

DN: Did he simply try to roll over them or did he try to get them to -?

AF: Well, there may have been some senators that he tried to roll over, but I think if Muskie respected him, a senator, he would, at least in my experience, he would usually try and almost always succeed in winning them over on his, the logic of his arguments.

DN: I'd like to drop back to the presidential campaign which you've mentioned. You observed that as a member of the Senate staff and the staff of a subcommittee. What did you feel about the way Senator Muskie was handling that campaign individually as a candidate, and as the campaign was evolving from the time you arrived in April? No, no, you were there -

AF: April of ‘71.

DN: Seventy-one.

AF: (*Unintelligible phrase*), that’s really an interesting question, and particularly in light of my subsequent experience of going, particularly going through the ‘92 campaign. And incidentally this year traveling with Senator Lieberman on, for most of the last part of his campaign.

I think my overall impression of that campaign, more than anything else, was that Ed Muskie probably, had he been the Democratic nominee, probably could have gotten elected in 1968 or 1976 but not in 1972. The circumstances, the anti-war feeling, just, and Muskie’s own nature just sort of conspired to make that an ill-fated effort, probably from the beginning. That was the year McGovern changed the rules, the McGovern commission changed the rules, and McGovern knew the rules. But, you know, the, and I think that, you know, McGovern took advantage of the rules that he had written in ways that Muskie never could have and probably, you know, I mean . . . . And the truth is maybe we weren’t good enough in the campaign that I suspect a lot of it was that, you know, all of us had grown up, and certainly Muskie had, in a system that was so entirely different that quick accommodation was not one of his great skills on this front.

The other thing is that I think Mu-, from my, my over all impression is that Muskie was too thoughtful to be a good presidential candidate. And I mean, I can re-, I remember so many times when we’d do speeches and give them to him and he’d say, you know, “I need to talk to Clark Clifford” or Charlie Shultz or somebody. And by the time he’d finally get all the feedback done the idea had been stolen by somebody else.

And I just, you know, I often felt in the 1992 campaign, and I don’t mean this in any disrespect to George Stephanopolis, but here’s George, a thirty-year-old kid on the plane with Clinton. And Clinton, who I personally believe is this incredibly talented guy, most talented, single most talented politician I’ve ever known and a very dear friend of mine. But, you know, I cannot imagine Ed Muskie on the plane with a thirty-year-old kid making, you know, telling him he ought to do something and him doing it without checking with other people.

Now Clinton, he was, the Clinton circumstance was sort of interest-, it was a little different in a sense, because I always believed with Clinton, we’d spent two years together developing the message that he ran on, so I never worried about Clinton because I figured George would never give him, if George gave him bad advice Clinton would instinctively do the right thing, which I think he did most of the campaign.

But in the, but Muskie was a guy who wanted to talk to his advisors, his senior advisors, and he had the best, I mean Clark Clifford, Paul Warnke and Charlie Shultz and probably a lot of others that I didn’t know because I was pretty young in those days, and Harry McPherson and others. The, and so, you know, that’s not a g-, that temperament doesn’t work any more. I mean, being on the airplane with Lieberman this year, and you probably did this in ‘68, but you know, things happen so fast now and you just got to . . . . I mean my role on the airplane with Joe was as his

friend to say, “Wait a minute, the campaign wants you to do this but, you know, this isn’t you, you know, and you got to make sure you do it in a way, if you’re going to do, if you’re going to make this argument you got to do it in a way that is credible and that works for you.” The, but the pressures over here are so fast and when you’re the presidential candidate it’s much tougher.

And I just think as we got into the sort of breaking into the information age of politics, the kind of skills and the kind of speed that it demanded, it was sort of apparent, abhorrent to Muskie’s nature. The other thing, I think, is that I just sensed that Muskie probably didn’t have the physical stamina that, and I remember the stories in the campaign that Muskie would get up, you know, get up in the morning to campaign, Humphrey was already out campaigning. And then he’d come in at night and a little later he’d see Humphrey coming in at night. The, you know, but so I just thought, and of course the overwhelming factor was the Vietnam war and how it just skewed our politics that year. I just thought that for a combination of reasons that ‘72 being the first transition year into a new system, and Muskie’s nature, and the war, it just wasn’t his year, but he would’ve been a great president.

DN: You mentioned earlier that many of the ideas and concepts of the Democratic Party and politics that you developed in the Democratic Leadership Council came from your Muskie years, and I’d like you to talk a little bit about that and how that emerged.

AF: Well, Muskie taught me a lot about politics. I mean all this is old hat to you because you lived it with him, I just, he just told me about it. But, you know, one of the lessons he always told me is, one of the things he always told me is that we, to have, whenever we introduced a major bill we had to have a Republican co-sponsor, chief co-sponsor. Not just on the bill but a chief co-sponsor, so it was always Muskie-Brock, Muskie- [Willliam V., Jr.] Roth, Muskie-Percy, whatever it was in our committee. And the reason he always used to say was because when I was governor of Maine we didn’t have enough Democrats in the legislature to sustain a veto so I needed to work with Republicans. Well that was a very important lesson because it leads to more centrist politics when you have to work with the other side. As Bill Brock once told me, as we were fighting some fight and Brock was our chief co-sponsor, he said, “When you got Ed Muskie and Bill Brock on a bill, there’s a lot of people in the middle to get, so we’re going to get the votes.”

But Muskie had that sort of Yankee streak of fiscal responsibility in it and the, you know, one of the things that I spent a good part of my time with Muskie working on were things like the Budget Act and the Sunset Bill. And I remember going up, when Muskie did his speech to the Liberal Party in New York in 1975 and did that great line about, “It’s time for liberals to start talking about fiscal responsibility without feeling uncomfortable.” When he spoke to the platform committee in 1976 and it was, we were doing the Sunset Bill, and he talked about Roosevelt’s legacy of innovation.

Well those are things that have become the core of the New Democrat movement, you know, as I define the New Democrat movement that sort of shaped the policies of the Clinton administration, the Clinton candidacy and allowed him, I think, to win. I mean, fiscal discipline was right at the core of that. Muskie was the first guy in the Democratic Party to understand the importance of it, you know, and our first principle is, that we always talk about is opportunity for

all, that in the information age and the 21st century if you're going to be a party of opportunity you got to be a party of private sector economic growth. And that means the government has to get its fiscal house in order. It's a first principle, core principle of this movement, what we're probably more noted for than anything else. I mean, you know, if you think about it, after three decades of deficits it was a new Democratic president who had given us our first balanced budget. Well, a lot of the, you know, the intellectual strand that led to that came out of the Muskie years.

The whole idea of innovation in government, one of the most important things that Clinton did was, is reinventing government initiative that was led by the vice president. But even more than that what we, that sort of a core principle is party that believed in activist government, that we believed that you always had to modernize government. To this day, whenever I speak I always use the Roosevelt quote from the Commonwealth Club speech that new conditions impose new requirements on government and those who conduct government. That's been a mantra of this movement. Muskie recognized that. It's right at the core of his platform committee's testimony in 1976 when nobody was talking about it.

So, you know, you take that and you take things like the Kennedy ethic of civic responsibility and the importance of internationalism and values. I mean all those kind of things which, a lot of which I learned from Ed Muskie, and in importance from Ed Muskie, those are, that's the way we redefined our party. And in fact when Muskie died, I did a column in the *New Democrat* magazine where I went back, and we can find this for you if you haven't seen it. We went, went back to the early Muskie speeches and sort of traced how I think they were the antecedent for really what led to the Clinton presidency.

DN: Are people like President Clinton aware of that heritage, or lineage?

AF: Probably to some degree, but probably not as much as they ought to be. I'm sure that, you know, the, I would guess that President Clinton is a little, is somewhat aware of it but probably not, you know, doesn't, I'm not sure that he would think of the Muskie, of the Muskie years of the seventies as, as being as much the antecedent of it as maybe the Gillis Long years of the 1980s in the House Democratic caucus where, which, first again, where we sort of resurrected it. But the intellec-, I mean the intellectual strands, I mean all of them, because I was the, sort of the coherent link in all this. It went back to Muskie. And Muskie shaped the kind of politics that, you know, has forever driven Maine. And the, our deal, I mean in, when I went to work after, when I left Muskie I went to work for two years -

(*Outside interruption.*)

DN: I'd like to ask you if you would to review your career since '78 when you left the staff.

AF: Well, I left the staff when, in, at the end of 1978 when Muskie left the government operations committee and went on foreign relations. And he actually offered to move me and most of my staff over to the budget committee. But I decided, I came to a very important career decision which was that in the Senate there was no natural progression from staff director to senator. And so I left, went down to the White House, worked for two years as deputy advisor to

the president on inflation, I'm embarrassed to tell you that, for Jimmy Carter. As, I was a deputy to Alfred Kahn, and which now gives me great joke lines when I speak, because I always thank whoever introduces me because they never tell, they never say that, for not reminding people that I was deputy advisor for President Carter on inflation, and that for those who thought Carter couldn't do anything, get anything done, we got the inflation rate up higher than the president's positive ratings in the polls. But in any event, and then in -

DN: (*Unintelligible phrase*) one could observe by the way that you were doing precisely what you started doing for Sargent Schriver in looking around and then reporting on what you found.

AF: Right, right, that's exactly right. The, but then in, obviously President Carter was beaten in 1980 and I became staff director of the House Democratic caucus for a wonderful guy who, named Gillis Long, who died in 1985. But Gillis Long was a congressman in the Long family from central Louisiana. He always said he was from the poor part of the family and in fact part of his health problems were, was that, part of his health problem was that he had malnutrition as a kid.

But Gillis was a remarkable man who got elected in 1963 or '62 from redneck central Louisiana and came up and made his first vote to expand the rules committee so civil rights legislation could get out, and got beat in 1964 by his cousin Speedy [Oteria] Long who ran against him as the man who voted against the south. But Gillis, like Muskie, was a man of great principle. And when he finally came back up after the Voting Rights Act to call the blacks in his district (*unintelligible phrase*) voters, he was fearless because he figured, you know, what's the worst that could happen to me is I get beat again, right. He'd already had that happen, and he did quite well. But Gillis put together a group. I became, he got elected chairman of the Democratic caucus in December of 1980 and hired me immediately to be staff director. And we began working with a group of young members of Congress including Dick Gephardt and Al Gore, Les Aspen, Geraldine Ferraro in those days, Bill Gray, to really begin to modernize the Democratic Party, to change its message.

And a lot of the stuff we did, because I was doing a lot of the staff work on it, went back to the Muskie years because we'd sort of had that hiatus in the Carter years. But I think, you know, the political impetus for what we'd done with Muskie was we had this '72 debacle and we had to get this party back to the mainstream again so we could win. And so having gone through another debacle in 1980 these young House guys were interested in it and we started doing a lot of the idea stuff that then eventually led in the, after the [Walter] Mondale election in '84, to the creation of the Democratic Leadership Council.

And, you know, I think, but because there was a direct linkage between the House caucus activities and the DLC, most people who study the history will, you know, go back to the House caucus but not to the Muskie years. And, you know, in a sense the Muskie, the link to the Muskie years was, you know, was that I was part of both things. But in any event, my own career, I did the House caucus from 1981 to 1985. I was about ready to become staff director of the joint economic committee in 1985, in January 1985. And two days before Gillis was supposed to be elected chairman and I was going to be staff director, he died of a heart attack and . . . . But we were in the process of organizing what then became, was to become the DLC

and Sam Knight and a bunch of those senators who we worked with came to me and asked me to do the DLC and I started that in 1985. I've been here ever since, and 1989 we put together the Progressive Policy Institute.

And in 1991, April of 1991 I did the smartest thing I've ever done in my life which is I went down to Little Rock, Arkansas and I said to a young governor, I said, "I got a deal for you. If you become chairman of the DLC we'll pay for your travel around the country, we'll help you do an agenda, and you're going to be president some day and we're going to both be important." And he said, "I'll do it," and he did, and the rest is history.

DN: What led you to Bill Clinton at that point?

AF: Clinton was one of the original guys who signed on when we started the deal, see. He started getting active in 1987. And interestingly enough the link was the Muskie link, at least my first link to Clinton, because Bruce Lindsey who was Clinton's, you know, sort of number one alter ego, I had known from the Muskie days because his wife, his former wife Bev, worked for Muskie as a secretary. And so I'd known, Bruce at that point was working for McClellan, or for [Mark] Pryor I think up here, and so I knew him. And so when, after we formed the DLC and Clinton was part of it but not particularly active I called Bruce and said, "Why don't we get him to this event." And he came and from that point on he was hooked.

And he, in 1988, in '89, it was actually Jan-, I'm sorry, it was April of '89 when I went down, I'm sorry, not even '91, April of '89 I went down to Little Rock. But in, you know, throughout '88 and '89 he came to a bunch of DLC events and I just looked at this guy and said, "I've never seen a political talent like this, this guy will be president." And so I just went down there and asked him, he said sure, and, but the . . . . I mean Clinton has, had, has a lot of the intellectual capacities that Muskie had but he, but he is sort a deft modern politician, he has no peer. As we have learned.

DN: Now, you mentioned the House caucus which you staffed. There was no comparable group in the Senate, although you said you worked with senators.

AF: The, well the group, the House caucus is the, I mean there is a Senate caucus. It just, and they meet every, I guess they meet every Tuesday. But the House caucus is, believe it or not, it's the organization of all House Democrats and it has had sort of a, you know an, up and down history. It is the, believe it or not, it is the oldest political institution in the United States other than the speakership of the House. But, the House Democratic caucus is, but the, it goes through periods where it doesn't do anything but organize the House and then it doesn't do . . . . What we did in part because Gillis was sort of the guru of the young members and, again, I guess because he and I were both pretty aggressive, when he took over the chairmanship the reason he came to me was, he said this can be a really, a vehicle for reform.

And we, the House in those days when he took over had open meetings and so it never met and did any business because everybody was using it to posture. And we closed the meetings and put together a small committee in the House to really begin thinking about new ideas. And Tip was always a little suspicious of us but, in part because Dick Bolling, who was Tip's closest ally,

was also Gillis' best friend. Bolling always kept Tip from absolutely crushing us. And we were smart enough to figure out that we had to play in venues that were outside the official activity of the House and so as we did these policies to try to redefine the party we'd aim it with the mid-term party conference and not trying to turn them into legislation and those kind of things, and got these young guys to write, to basically agree on these policy papers that began to ironically define the party in a lot of ways that Muskie tried to do through his legislative actions.

And we also crea-, in those years created the super delegates because as you recall in the 1980 Democratic convention the only thirty-nine members of the House who even went is delegates. And we thought that part of the reason the party was going way out, the presidential party had lost sort of its way was because people who got elected to office weren't participating in it anymore. And so we created the super delegates during those years when I was in the caucus.

And the, then in 1984 when it became clear that Mondale was going to get just clobbered, I went to [Robert] Strauss and Gillis and I had talked about trying to bring in governors and senators. And Chuck Robb those days was governor of Virginia and head of the Democratic governors and we started working with him, and Strauss connected us with a group of senators that included [Samuel] Nunn and Lawton [Mainor] Chiles [Jr.] in those days and, about twelve or thirteen senators, Gore became one of the originals. He was actually in those days on our House caucus committee. And the, part of that effort, those sort of discussions, when Gillis left, had to leave the caucus because of the caucus rules, we decided to try to put together this group that included senators, governors and House members to try to reshape the presidential party after we lost forty-nine states. And I wrote the memo that sort of triggered all this, and they came to me and said, "Okay, figure out how it ought to be organized."

All that time I was going to be chairman, or I was going to be the director of the House, or the Joint Economic Committee but when Gillis died that wasn't going to happen. And so they came to me and said, "Why don't you do the DLC?" And my friend, Chuck Robb, who just lost his senate seat but to whom I will always be grateful, said to me in 1985 when I said, you know, "I'd like to do this but, you know, I can't do it for three months and then have it go under." And he said, "I will guarantee to pay your salary for a year even if it goes under after three months if you'll do this." And he did, and I did, and it didn't go under.

DN: Did you ever discuss the DLC with Senator Muskie?

AF: It was never even, well, I'm sure, I'm sure, yes. In, you know, one of the, in, but not, you know, not in great detail I'm sure but one of the most important things and one of the things that I'm most pleased I ever did is doing the stuff about the Muskie Center at the University of Southern Maine. And we had a little committee that used to meet and, you know, for a while, and I seldom went to any of the meetings. Lee Lockwood, who worked with Senator Muskie and with me, with Senator Muskie and has intermittently worked with me ever since, including at the DLC for a while, used to always represent me.

And for one, some reason or another about two or three months before Muskie died we were having one of these and I said, I'm going to go this time and I had to spend, you know, a couple of hours with him and I'm really delighted that I did. You know, I don't really remember having

any detailed conversations with Muskie even though I'm, you know, I'm just trying to jog my memory about this. We did talk a little bit about it I think at the '88 convention because it turned out that, in fact the guy who's in the office next to me here, works for me, Ed Killgore, wound up writing Muskie's speech to the '88 convention and I think we talked about it a little then but, you know, not at any great length.

DN: As you look back on the times, particularly in close observation of Senator Muskie, are there any other aspects of either his career or his contributions to American public service that strike you?

AF: Well, yeah, one that's very important and probably again had a lot to do with some of the stuff that I've done in my career. Muskie believed that politics was an honorable profession, and the, it was, I remember those discussions, a lot of discussions with him about that because we went through a period when on our committee everybody was trying to limit, you know, do all the lobbying reform acts and all those kinds of things. Muskie was always very hesitant on all that stuff. Muskie thought, you know, that public service was an honorable profession and he didn't think it ought to be treated as if they were a bunch of crooks. And, you know, that always made a very, very big impression on me.

I believe, you know, I believe that politics, you know, there are a lot of people who want to take politics out of government and, you know, Muskie sort of taught me that politics and government are intertwined and it's what makes our democracy work. I'll tell you one story that to me, actually I think I ended my column on Muskie with this, one of the great lessons Muskie taught me about our system of governing.

In 1973, February and March 1973, Watergate was just beginning to unravel. We were having a hearing in, at IGR, and we had this new young group of Democratic governors from the south including Carter and I think Bumpers, and John West, and I can't remember, and the Republicans asked if they could have [A.] Linwood Holton come up to testify. He was head of the governors' association so we basically had to let him do it. And we're doing this hearing, it's probably on Nixon's new federalism, and this shows, this is sort of an indication of the ti-, of the differences in today and those days. At eleven o'clock was the wire service deadline in those days for the afternoon papers, and at a quarter of eleven Holton interrupts and goes through this outburst about attacking the Senate and Senator Mansfield for being inefficient and not moving President Nixon's program and all this kind of stuff. And Muskie leaned over to me, and I'll never forget this as long as I live, he said, "You know, in a few months we're going to appreciate the inefficiencies of the Senate, because they will have saved our liberties." And, you know, the, I mean, I guess to me the Muskie years, I mean I've been blessed. I've been blessed with an incredible array of experiences in my life and, but to me, you know, in many ways in a sense of developing my own political philosophy the Muskie years were the formative years.

And so I just look back and say that, you know, I was blessed to have that opportunity. I was honored, you know, there were all, a lot of people who dealt with Senator Muskie found him very difficult to deal with because he had a temper. I figured out a very simple way to deal with him, I was able, you know, I seldom, you know, it wasn't that he never yelled at me, but I mean I learned how to parry those outbursts and I just enjoyed so much the opportunity to learn and to

do things that, you know, I never dreamed I'd be able to do. And that sort of launched my, you know, it was another, sort of another major launching point in my career, so those were, those are great years.

And I just hope that Senator Muskie's contribution to the political debate is, you know, is appreciated so this is, it's a good thing that you're doing this. You know, as I've looked back at the President Clinton years that were scarred by impeachment but, you know, Clinton has played an enormous role in modernizing progressive politics all over the world. I mean, if you look at what's happened in England with Tony Blair and in Germany with [Gerhard] Schroeder and in Latin America with [Fernando] Cardoso and [Ricardo] Lagos (*unintelligible phrase*), it's, you know, an incredible contribution and a lot of the antecedents to that third way philosophy came in the Muskie years so I hope he gets credit.

DN: Thank you very much, Al.

End of Interview