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Interview with Joanne Amnott Hoffmann by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Hoffmann, Joanne Amnott

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

December 4, 2000

Place

Potomac, Maryland

ID Number

MOH 249

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Biographical Note

Joanne Amnott Hoffmann was born in Lewiston, Maine in 1936. Her father was the Chief of Police in Lewiston, and her mother was a housewife. Joanne attended parochial schools in Lewiston until high school, and then attended and graduated from Lewiston High School. She continued her education at the Auburn School of Commerce, learning shorthand and typing. She was briefly employed at the Pepperill Manufacturing Company in the purchasing department, before becoming a legal secretary. She first worked for Harris Isaacson, and then worked in the firm of Clifford and Clifford under William Clifford. In 1959, she moved to Washington to become Ed Muskie's personal secretary. She stayed in the Senate office until 1965, when she married Frank "Nurdy" Hoffmann, a Washington lobbyist and Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate from 1973 to 1981. The Hoffmanns and the Muskies maintained personal friendships in later years.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: growing up in Lewiston; father as a police chief; working for Harris Isaacson; working for William Clifford; getting a job as Muskie's secretary; Marjorie Hutchinson; Senate office staff in 1959; Gayle (Fitzgerald) Cory; anecdote about Muskie's first few weeks in Washington; comparison between the U.S. Senate and the Clifford law office;

problems setting up the Senate office; close knit freshman Senate class of 1958; troubles with Lyndon Johnson; committee appointments; type of work Hoffmann was responsible for; babysitting the Muskie children; working with Marjorie Hutchinson in Maine; George Mitchell; John Donovan; marrying Nordy Hoffmann; Nordy's career in the steel workers lobby; Nordy's football career; Nordy's relationship with Ed Muskie; Nordy's interest in labor; Muskie's temper; mood of the Capitol in the 1960s; mood of the Capitol today; involvement in the 1968 campaign; Chicago convention; Nordy as Sergeant-at-Arms 1973-1981; Muskie's career after 1972; changing over to the State Department; disappointment of the election of 1980; being with the Muskies as the Presidential returns came in; Carter's contact with Muskie through the night; Nordy Hoffmann's job loss after the election; and Muskie's legacy.

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Don Nicoll: It is Monday, the 4th of December, the year 2000. We are in Potomac, Maryland at the home of Joanne Hoffmann, and interviewing her is Don Nicoll. Good morning, Joanne, could you state your full name, date and place of birth please.

Joanne Hoffmann: Good morning, Don. Full name is Joanne Amnott Hoffmann, born in Lewiston, Maine in 1936.

DN: And could you spell both your, well all three of your names?

JH: Okay, J-O-A-N-N-E, Amnott, A-M-N-O-T-T, Hoffmann, H-O-F-F-M-A-N-N.

DN: Joanne, you grew up in Lewiston.

JH: Yes, I did.

DN: And your father was a fairly prominent member of the community.

JH: My father was chief of police in Lewiston when I was growing up, yes.

DN: When did he, do you remember when he became chief of police?

JH: Oh, I don't really recall the date, but I guess, you know, he was, I remember him being a young officer when I was growing up. And then he became a detective and then he became chief of the detectives. And I guess then from that became chief of police. And he was that maybe fifteen years I think.

DN: And did that mean that you felt that you had to be on your good behavior all the time?

JH: Yes, all the time, yes, yes. I used to do my homework. Sometimes I would walk from Lewiston High School to the city hall where the police station was and wait for my father and, to drive me home. And I would, I was fascinated by the jail cells. They had like maybe six there at the time because it was a very small station. And whenever there was no one there I just would go sit in there and do my homework, and I thought that was really cool. So that was fun.

DN: Did you go to the public schools?

JH: I went to Holy Family parochial school, and then I went to Lewiston High School to do my high school.

DN: What was it like growing up in a French-American family in Lewiston in those years, the late thirties, forties?

JH: It was nice. Now, my father never spoke French at home, ever, and his whole family was

French. I never quite understood that. My mother spoke French. But I really don't recall my father speaking French to us very much.

DN: Did you grow up as part of an extended family?

JH: Well, my grandparents lived next door to us.

DN: This your father's -?

JH: My father's mother and father lived right next door to us, so we grew up with our grandparents right next door, which was really nice.

DN: And your mother's folks, were they in Lewiston?

JH: My mother's folks were in Lewiston. Her mother had died, but my grandfather, her father, still lived. He lived on Pierce Street in Lewiston in a big block, on the third floor. And he was just a wonderful man.

DN: And did, did both your mother and father grow up in Lewiston?

JH: Yes, they did. My mother grew up in an area called Little Canada. And my father I guess grew up right next door to where we lived. He built a house when he got married on the property that my grandparents had, but I guess he grew up right on Garcelon Street in Lewiston.

DN: What did your two grandfathers do for work?

JH: My grandfather on my father's side was a plumber. He had a big plumbing business, Amnott & Sons, and that was a fairly big plumbing business in Lewiston, as plumbing businesses go, and he was quite successful. My other grandfather was a garbage man. He was on the Lewiston city truck and he picked up the garbage. And he'd find the best treasures for me. And I would wait as, I'd go over there and I would hang over, they had a porch, and I'd hang over the porch and watch him come home and sometimes he'd have a doll that he found or something and he'd bring. He found all kinds of treasures, nice treasures, in the garbage.

DN: And did your grandmothers work outside the home?

JH: No, they did not, no, unh-unh.

DN: And did your mother work outside the home?

JH: No, no. Not many, most people, most mothers stayed home in those days, unlike today.

DN: And in high school were you active in sports or -?

JH: No, no, I did a, I worked on the newspaper and the Booster Club and things like that, but I was not active in sports. Went to the football games a lot but, tried out for cheerleading but

didn't make that. But did do a lot of work on the school newspaper and I liked that a lot.

DN: What did you do after you graduated from high school?

JH: Well, I had planned to be a nurse and had been accepted in Portland at the, I think it was Mercy in those days. But in my last year of high school my mother died and so I decided not to leave home because I didn't want to leave my... I had two little brothers, one was six and one was eight, and my dad, and I just didn't want to leave them. So I stayed home and I went to the Auburn Maine School of Commerce because all I had taken in high school was Latin and stuff to prepare me for nursing school. So I took shorthand and typing at the Auburn Maine School of Commerce. And when I got through with that I worked, I got a job in the purchasing department at Pepperill Manufacturing Company. And I worked there for maybe two years I guess.

And I went from there to, and became a legal secretary and I went to work for quite a few lawyers. I worked for Isaacson & Isaacson and worked for Phil, our friend Phil, his dad. And his dad, I learned so much. His dad was a wonderful man. His dad was named Harris. And he would, when he was dictating to me he would ask me, do you, if I knew what this meant. If I said "No," he'd say, "Okay," and he'd stop the dictation, we'd go in the law library and look it up, and he was a great teacher for me and I learned an awful lot through him. And then I went to work for Adrian Cote, who was a judge, I worked for him. I also worked, kind of moonlighted for Bill Trafton in Auburn. And then I went to work for Clifford & Clifford and stayed there for a long time. And Mr. Clifford, it was a family firm and he was the patriarch of the family, and he had his son -

DN: This was William Clifford?

JH: Yeah, he had his son and, Jere, and he had a nephew, Jack, in the firm. But I was, I became William's secretary and learned a lot in there, too. But I loved it. I just, he was a wonderful, wonderful man and taught me a lot. And I think I would have become a lawyer if I had stayed in Lewiston.

But I remember reading about Senator Muskie, about Governor Muskie being elected to the Senate. And I said one morning as I was taking dictation and all this excitement was because he was the first Democrat in, since forever, how exciting it would be to go to Washington as his secretary. And so, and Mr. Clifford didn't say anything right away, but the next morning he said to me, "Did you really mean that?" And I said, "Yes, I did, I think it would be so exciting." So he said, "Well, I'll get you an interview with the governor, if you'd like to apply I'd like to see you do that." So he did.

And I went to Augusta and was interviewed, but he had a wonderful secretary named Marjorie Hutchinson and she had not quite made up her mind whether she was going to go to Washington with him or not, because she had a family. And so I didn't hear for quite a while. And I called back again, and went back for a second interview. And there were other people that applied I'm sure, but it was several months later I got a call and said that the job was mine if I wanted it. And Margery had decided not to come to Washington so she was going to do the state office in Waterville. And so that's how I got to Washington.

DN: Now, were you interviewed by Margery and by the governor?

JH: Yes, both of them.

DN: Both times?

JH: Both times.

DN: What was it like getting to meet Governor Muskie?

JH: Scary, scary. And exciting, because, you know, I was just a hometown girl from Lewiston, Maine and it was a big step. I just never that that would ever happen and, I mean I had never met any politicians or anything so it was just all very exciting for me. And there was so much electricity around this election and his winning and everything that I was just beside myself.

DN: Now, in all those years that you were working for the lawyers in Lewiston, in firms that were actively engaged, or the members of the firms were actively engaged in politics, you did not particularly get exposed to political activity?

JH: No, no, no.

DN: And you had no, I take it from what you said that you had no interest in politics in Lewiston itself.

JH: No, no.

DN: Was part of that because of your father's position as police chief, or -?

JH: No, I just never had any inclination at all. I never even thought of it, you know.

DN: And you went off to Washington then in January of 1959.

JH: Fifty-nine, right.

DN: And whom did you meet when you went to the office in '59?

JH: There really literally was no one but the senator and myself that first, the first few months. Then Bob Hewes came, who was his, I guess, I don't know if he was his executive assistant or his AA in the governor's office, and so he came. So there were really only the three of us when we first started out.

DN: When did John Donovan arrive?

JH: I really can't pinpoint. It wasn't, well it was a little while later, maybe. It was some time,

eight months maybe, something like that. Because there was just the three of us for quite a few months.

DN: Who was the third person?

JH: Ed, myself and Bob, so there was just the three of us.

DN: And when did Gayle Fitzgerald arrive?

JH: Gayle, oh, see, I mean it's been so long and all these dates, I don't remember them. But Gayle was working for the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company and she came in to be interviewed one day. She just applied. She wanted, we needed a receptionist and I think it was maybe six months after we had come, she came. And she was from Bath, Maine and so we were really, were looking for Maine people and so we took her on as the receptionist.

DN: Do you have any feelings about those early days, that first six months in the office?

JH: Well, it was hard but I was fortunate because Marjorie came down, Marjorie Hutchinson, before she set up the Waterville office. And she came down and spent about three weeks with me and talked to me about Ed and his habits and what he liked and what he didn't like and all of those things. And, a funny story about Marjorie, the senator and I used to drive to work, home from work every day because he lived up Massachusetts Avenue and I also did.

(Pause in taping.)

DN: You were telling us about driving.

JH: Funny story about Marjorie. She was living at what was then the Meridian Hotel, which was way up on 16th Street, and it was one of the highest points in the city so you could overlook, you could see everything. And we were going to pick her up for dinner, the senator and I, and so he says to me, "Ask Marjorie where she is, get the directions," 'cause we used to ride around with a map and not know where we were for months. And so I came back into the office and said, "Marjorie says she doesn't quite know the names of the streets, but she can see the Washington Monument from her window." To this the senator replied, "Jesus Christ, we can see the Washington Monument from every window in Washington." So Marjorie went down in infamy for that little remark.

DN: What were some of the things she told you about his habits and his likes and dislikes?

JH: Well, it was just, oh man, well you know, what he liked for lunch, what time he liked to be in in the mornings, and how he would dictate, that he didn't like to use a machine that, he liked one on one dictation, and all little things like that, you know, that, a little bit about his tempers and to kind of ignore that, and little things like that. That did help when you're starting off green.

DN: Yes. When, as you were breaking in as his secretary, was it much different from working for William Clifford or some of the other lawyers you'd worked for?

JH: Well, it was because the aura of Washington and being in the capital and in the United States Senate. I remember having been to Washington only once for a school, my high school graduation trip. And then to find myself actually working in the capital for a United States Senator was quite, quite the thing. So that, I just felt great pride and very privileged to be doing this, you know. And I couldn't quite believe that it had happened.

DN: In those early days did you have much contact with other offices in the Senate or the Maine delegation?

JH: With the Maine delegation, yes. With the other offices, I think it was, it became anyway a very close freshman class. And I think they more or less hung together so on the periphery, the older classmates so to speak kind of left you out there. It was difficult, it was, we had nothing, we had a paper clip when we walked into that office. And trying to find what to do and how to do it was like pulling teeth in those days. They didn't have the seminars which they have now and all of those things. So trying to get typewriters and office equipment and all of that was really like pulling teeth. They had a service department but they really had no one to tell you how to go about getting all of this stuff and how to establish yourself.

And then of course there was all the committee, trying to get assignments to committees and things like that, and if you were a freshman you really were the last man on the totem pole for everything. But there was, it became quite a unit with, like Senator McCarthy, Eugene McCarthy and Gail McGee and Phil Hart. And those were all freshmen senators then and they all kind of banded together and they were together all the time, I mean. So, they remained close throughout, and Phil Hart was a particularly favorite of Senator Muskie, they just, he admired him a lot. But they just spent a lot of time together and helped each other out, and they were, all the offices were green and we kind of just helped each other out. But we didn't get too much outside help. Not in those days anyway. And I guess they don't now. In the middle, everything was kind of nice. But I think now it's not the same kind of place that it was when we were all there.

DN: When, during those early days Senator Muskie was having some troubles with the majority leader, Lyndon Johnson, over committee assignments among other things. Did you get much feedback on that -?

JH: Well, every enc-, I got the feedback after each and every encounter, when he would come back to the office. But he really didn't let him walk over him. I mean, I kind of admired that because Lyndon Johnson was quite powerful then and he was the boss and the law. And we really wanted to be on the foreign relations committee and he was determined to keep him off, which he did for a while. And so there was quite a bit of animosity there.

But, you know, they just played the old boys game and so, you know, underneath it all they managed to be able to work together. But it was testy, it was hard. I think it was hard because I think when you're governor you're used to having things happen and you're, you're the one and you cou-... I think it was hard at first for him because he was one of one hundred and not the boss. And I think that took a lot of adjustment. I think that was hard for him. Things happened

too slow and he couldn't make things happen, and he got very frustrated with, you know, with things like that, that took a while.

DN: What were his particular committee interests? You mentioned foreign relations that he couldn't get on because of Johnson. What were some of his particular interests in committees in those early days?

JH: He was on government operations, as I remember, and quite a few subcommittees under that. And then his big thing was clean water and so he really started in on that from the very beginning, being very interested in the environment. And he was the first. Nobody talked about clean water or any of that stuff in those days. And so he really geared himself to those committees that really were interested in the environment.

DN: And what sort of involvement did you have with the Maine delegation that was organized at the time and met fairly regularly?

JH: Yeah, you know, I don't really recall very much about, I know he went to the meetings, and I just don't recall that much about the Maine delegation.

DN: Now, as time went on, you had additions to the staff. We've mentioned Gayle Fitzgerald, and we've mentioned John Donovan who came on board. How did the staff expand at that point, was this something that you and John and Bob Hewes did, or -?

JH: Yeah, and we got several interns. We really tried to get Maine people. We had one girl from Connecticut, but most of the staff was from Maine. And then we got, we got George Mitchell and his wife. And his wife worked for, she worked on one of the banking committees and did a lot of subcommittee work on the staff, and that's how she and George met.

DN: She had originally worked for [Henry] Styles Bridges as I recall.

JH: Right, and then she worked for Frank Beemis I think, who was on, I can't remember the name of that. I think it was one of the government operations subcommittees that she did work for, and that's how she met George.

DN: And as you progressed into the sixties, probably there were additional changes when John Donovan left at the end of 1961, or the end of '60 actually, and early '61. No, excuse me, I'm misremembering. John left at the end of 1961, not 1960.

JH: That's when you came in, isn't it?

DN: I came in in January of '61 after Frank Coffin had been defeated in the gubernatorial race of '60, and worked as legislative assistant, which was one more addition to the staff. And then John left to go to work for Secretary Willard Wirtz in the Department of Labor at the end of '61.

JH: That's right, I'd forgotten that, that's right, he did go to Labor, yeah.

DN: And you saw the office steadily changing and -

JH: Expanding and changing, more committees, more subcommittees.

DN: How did that affect your work with the senator?

JH: It didn't, because his, my work with him was just kind of a really one on one. I did do office managing for a while, but I kind of phased out of that and really just did the personal stuff, so was basically really his personal secretary and not much else. We really didn't go into the other areas, legislative or any of that.

DN: And what were your duties as his personal secretary?

JH: Dictation, dictation, dictation. That was, you know, when you took longhand shorthand, and did a lot of that, did scheduling. I did all of the scheduling, appointment scheduling, kept his office books as well as his personal financing, home financing, paid the bills, got him to, went to some receptions with him, scheduled all of those things, that kind of stuff.

DN: Did you find the demands on his time increasing during that period?

JH: Yes, yes, a lot. He was gaining stature and was very, I think, well liked. His word was his word and I think when he worked with his colleagues they knew that if he said something he would carry through with it. And I think he, he slowly, his reputation slowly grew to one of admiration by his colleagues I think, a lot.

DN: Did you have incidents of that admiration that you recall?

JH: Well, no, I guess. I just always felt very proud of him and the fact that he was also from Maine and had started from way, way back as a young man and became governor and became senator and... I was always very proud of him and proud to work for him. I just thought that he was a very honest, hard working, fine man.

DN: As you worked for Senator Muskie as his personal secretary, you've indicated that you had some involvement with the effects of being in the Senate on his family, so you must have gotten to know the family pretty well.

JH: Yes, very well, and I used to babysit, not babysit but I used to, because they had a housekeeper. But whenever they went out of town I used to spend the nights with the children so that there would be somebody familiar there with them at all times. So I got to know the kids very well. And Martha was just a baby then, and Ned was a little devil. He was about eight I guess at the time, so, yeah, I spent a lot of time. Used to spend a lot of holidays with them when I wasn't going back to Maine with my family. And so Thanksgivings and Christmases I used to spend there with them which was really nice.

DN: And so you became part of the family?

JH: Yeah, I did.

DN: How did they react to life in Washington after the early years in Maine?

JH: Oh, I think they, I don't know. I think the children loved Maine and I think they would have probably been happier to have stayed in Maine, but I think they acclimated like all children of political families do. But I think it was hard at first because the parents are gone so much more. Where they all lived under one roof and worked under one roof in Maine, this was very different when the parents were, Ed went to Russia, he did, took lots of trips that he didn't do before. So they were gone a lot and I think that was hard on the children, it always is.

DN: You've mentioned the Maine connection. Were you involved much in the working relationship between the Washington office and the Maine office?

JH: Yes, yes, I worked closely with Marjorie, all the time, all the time and, on scheduling for him up there. And in the summer in those days we used to have a recess in the Senate and I'd, we'd go up and work in the Waterville office whenever we adjourned. So I was up there maybe six weeks or something, so I did work up there a lot.

DN: Where did you stay when you went -?

JH: With Marjorie, I stayed at her house.

DN: And who worked in the office at that time in Waterville?

JH: I don't think anybody, there was just Marjorie and I that worked in the office. I think she really, she didn't really have anybody in the office with her. Once in a while she'd get help but not very often, she really handled the office by herself.

DN: How important was case work for the office in Washington and the office in Waterville?

JH: Very important, very important, and Marjorie did a wonderful job with that. I mean, she was very meticulous about that and very sensitive to the fact that, you know, this was what really our job was, was to help the people who came to us as much as she could, and she did a lot of case work. And then of course, we got, we, as time went on we got a wonderful gal named Jane Fenderson. She did a lot of case work for us, and so as we expanded she did get help from our Washington office a lot. But, at the beginning she really did handle all of the case work up there, and it was a big load.

DN: I want to go back to Gayle Fitzgerald and get some of your recollections of Gayle, the kind of person she was, the kind of work she did, and how her role in the office evolved while you were there.

JH: Well, it's kind of hard to talk about Gayle. Gayle was really one of my closest friends, and I miss her a lot. She was our receptionist for quite a number of years. Let's see, maybe five years, four, probably, and she was very good on the telephone. Gayle liked to talk on the

telephone so she made a very good receptionist. She was always happy and bright and happy go lucky so she kind of kept us happy. She took over I think after I left and kind of eased into a lot of the family stuff when I left. And so became very close to the family as well, and all the children loved her. And I used to, every once in a while I would take her with me when I would spend the night so she was used to doing that and she kind of took that duty over. And she just stayed with Ed for a long, long time. She went to the Secretary of State's office with him, and so she was with him for a long time and she was a very good family friend, and the children looked to her for a lot of things.

DN: Did she, during the days when she was officially the receptionist, did she do more than a receptionist job?

JH: Well, we tried to give her, you know, different kinds of odds and ends. Gayle did not take shorthand and she did not type very much, so basically the phone was her forte, but she would do odd things when asked. She was always willing to do whatever was asked of her.

DN: As you mentioned earlier, George Mitchell joined the staff in 1963, and what do you remember about George as a young staffer?

JH: Well, I liked George from the beginning so I'm not surprised that he's done as well as he has. He was a very promising young man then, and he certainly has shown us how far he went. He, the thing I remember the most about George is his smile. He had such a wonderful smile on everything, nothing phased him, everything, it'll work out, it will work out. And so you couldn't really get him too flustered so he was a wonderful leveler in the office. And I only worked with him maybe a year and a half, almost two years I guess before I left. But he was (*unintelligible word*) -

DN: You were in the office until?

JH: Nineteen sixty-five.

DN: Two of the other men who worked in the office were John Donovan of course, the first administrative assistant. What about John and his style?

JH: Well, John was funny. Impish is how I'd describe John. He was, and he was one, too, that wasn't flustered very much. But he was good, he just, he was good with the staff people and I think he was good for the senator, too, because he kind of low keyed everything and kind of toned him down a lot, and I think he was very good for him.

DN: Chip Stockford?

JH: Oh my, that's a name I hadn't thought of in a long, long time. I remember him as being very tall, and he was press secretary as I recall, wasn't he?

DN: For a short time.

JH: I think so, for a short time. I really don't remember too much about Chip, except that he was very tall. And I don't think I worked with him very long.

DN: Well he came after George left.

JH: Yeah, so I don't think I worked with him. I think he had just come on and I was gone.

DN: And why did you leave?

JH: To get married.

DN: And whom did you marry?

JH: Well, I married a fellow named Nordy Hoffmann, and he and Ed were very good friends and that's how we met.

DN: What was Nordy's full name?

JH: Frank Nordy Hoffmann.

DN: And Nordy is -

JH: Nordy was a family name, Nordoff was his mother's maiden name and I guess his middle name was Nordoff and he was always called Nordy.

DN: And Nordy at the time was doing what in Washington?

JH: Well, when we first came to Washington, Nordy was, had set up the legislative department for the United Steel Workers of America. He was in the labor movement. They had no legislative department when Nordy came, with the steel workers, and so he set that up and that's how he and Ed met I guess because he became a lobbyist for the steel workers and was on the Hill a lot. And he and Ed became good friends, and I think their families were good friends.

DN: Now, had Nordy been a steel worker?

JH: No, no, no.

DN: How did -?

JH: I think he came out from, I think after the Navy he went to work for Phil Murray who was the big labor, steel labor guy. And I don't know what he did for him at that particular... I think he drove for him for a while and that's how he, I know he used to drive him everywhere. And he just went up in the ranks I guess, and finally was asked to set up the legislative department in Washington for them. And that's how he became a Washington man.

DN: He was a graduate of Notre Dame?

JH: An All-American at Notre Dame, played for Knute Rockne on his last team, '29-'30 team, and was a big football star I guess but had never played football in high school or anything. He was just a walk-on, and became a big football star.

DN: And do you know what his major was in college?

JH: No, I do know he graduated from law school but he never did practice law. But I don't know what he majored in, probably football after he (*unintelligible phrase*).

DN: And then he, now did he play after graduating?

JH: No, but he did coach. He coached for Notre Dame for a while. He coached also in Kansas City, but decided he really didn't want to do that so he, that's when he went to work, he went to the Navy and then came out and went to work for Phil Murray.

DN: Now had, where had Nordy grown up?

JH: Seattle, he was a Seattle boy.

DN: And then migrated East as a result of going to college.

JH: Yeah, never went back to Seattle after that.

DN: You and he married in 1965?

JH: Yes.

DN: And was he still with the Steel Workers then?

JH: Yes, he was.

DN: And how long did he continue with them?

JH: Probably, let's see, '65, I think, another five years I think, six years after we were married. And then he was asked to become director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee by Senator Muskie and so he left the Steel Workers to do that.

DN: Now as a legislative representative of the steel workers, a lobbyist, he had encountered Senator Muskie?

JH: Yes.

DN: And what was it from your perspective that brought them together?

JH: Well, you know they were, how did they? I don't know, I guess Nordy just took a liking.

Nordy did an awful lot of lobbying on the Hill, and there were a few congressmen and senators that he kind of took a liking to because of their character and what they stood for, and as he said, “no bullshitting”, whatever they told you was, you knew you could count on. And so I think he started working with Ed and he admired him a lot, and I think they just became good friends.

DN: And in the late sixties he got even more involved with the campaigns, the ‘68 vice presidential campaign and the ‘70-‘72 presidential.

JH: I think he had done a lot with, when Jack Kennedy [*sic* Bobby Kennedy] was running in California and all of that. He was very active in all the campaigns I guess. He worked, did a lot of work for Hubert Humphrey and just gave a lot of his time campaigning, and did some for Ed.

DN: What were Nordy’s major public policy interests during that period?

JH: Well, anything having to do with labor, you know, that was his big, his big thing. I think that was the one and only thing really that he was mainly interested in, whatever affected labor.

DN: And what, you’ve mentioned that he admired Senator Muskie because he was a straight shooter, if you will. Were there other qualities that appealed to him?

JH: Yeah, the fact that he had me as his secretary. And I have a thing in my wedding albums, a quote that the senator wrote. You know, he was very upset when I said I was leaving and was kind of upset with Nordy, and he made it, he put it in writing in our book at the wedding reception, so he wasn’t too happy with that.

DN: But he forgave.

JH: But he forgave, yeah, so we remained close, close friends throughout our married life.

DN: Now, Ed Muskie was reputed to have a temper. Did Nordy Hoffmann have a temper, too?

JH: Yes, he did, he did. So maybe that’s what got them together.

DN: How did -?

JH: But his was, did not go off as often, so.

DN: Let’s talk a bit about the famous Ed Muskie temper. What seemed to trigger it?

JH: You could probably answer that better than I could, Don. I think frustration. A lot of the times was frustration, not being able to, or not having his way in some instances, but mostly frustration I think at not being able to get things done as quickly as he wanted to, or bring about the result that he wanted. And, you know, meetings and meetings with no progress. And I think, frustration is the key word, I think, that would make him. And of course, you know, he would get angry at his staff every once in a while, too, as we all experienced that. But, you know, once it was over it was over, so we all got used to ignoring it.

DN: What sorts of things, what kinds of demands did he place on the staff?

JH: Well, I had long hours, I mean I was there as long as he was there. I was early in the morning and late at night. But he really, as far as I was concerned, he really pretty much gave me free reign. I mean, I never really, unless I goofed on something, I really pretty much was my own boss, and I think he pretty much expected once he gave you something to do that you did it, and he really wasn't one to check up on anything. You really had to remind him to do things more than he reminded you.

DN: I'm going to pause here and turn the tape over.

End of Side A
Side B

DN: We are on the second side of the interview with Joanne Hoffmann on the 4th of December, the year 2000. Joanne, we have talked a little bit about the climate in the Senate when you first went to Washington and to the Senate office of Senator Muskie. What was the mood, the atmosphere, the set of relationships as you recall them between Senator Muskie and his colleagues on both sides of the aisle as you moved into the middle sixties?

JH: Well, I think it was reverent. I think they, even if they disagreed they were still gentlemen. And whatever was done during the day, at five o'clock it was over and whatever arguments or, whatever difficulties they had encountered on committees or whatever, I think people, they were just more affable, more genial towards each other, more courteous. I just base this on the fact that I hear over and over again now that Nordy, who later became sergeant-at-arms of the Senate. People say to me, "Nordy wouldn't like it up there now, it's just not." And I still have, I'll see quite a few senators and their wives and the climate up there is totally different I gather from what it used to be when we were there and when Nordy was there. And that it's very bitter and not much fun any more. So I hate to see that, and I know that Nordy would not like that 'cause he loved the Senate and he loved being there, and it was a very different atmosphere than what I get the picture of today.

DN: What about relationships with other members of the Maine delegation? Particularly Senator Smith?

JH: I think it was, I think they worked together. I think they worked together and were cordial. And I don't recall anything that was particularly, I don't recall a lot of friction in their relationship. I think, she was the only woman senator then and it was quite an accomplishment for her. And I think that Ed understood that. And I think they, you know, they managed to, not that they didn't have their disagreements from time to time, but I think they worked well together.

DN: Now, we were talking about Nordy and involvements in the campaigns, including Senator Muskie's campaign for vice president in 1968, and then the presidential nomination effort in which Nordy got involved. Do you recall much about the '68 campaign?

JH: Well, not that much. I did do a little bit of stuff. The biggest thing I remember about it is being under the podium, taking notes from Ed and typing away, typing away, something I had not done for him for four years. In fact, I think somewhere in this house I still have his yellow handwritten sheets of the speech he gave that night.

DN: This is the speech at the convention?

JH: Yes, uh-huh, yeah. And so I felt like I had never left because he was constantly changing it and I was under the podium typing away.

DN: What was it like being in Chicago?

JH: Oh, that was an unbelievable experience. We were up on the top floor and I remember the Secret Service outside the windows on the, they had like balconies outside the windows, and all kinds of stuff was being thrown out from the floors below, up, urine bags and things like that. And it was just unbelievable. We'd go to the convention hall and have to go down through the kitchen and get to the cars that way because they did not want him going through the lobby and the bombs, the, and the stink bombs in the lobbies. And looking out the window from his suite and seeing the crowds in the park there and, it was just an unbelievable experience. You could not believe that you were in the United States. It felt like a revolution in some other country. It was very, an emotional experience and not a very nice one for our country I don't think.

DN: Did you sense a change in the mood through the campaign, or was it still pretty ugly toward the end of that election?

JH: I don't think it was very nice throughout the whole thing, yeah, yeah, I don't think it was.

DN: Did you get involved with the campaign after the convention?

JH: No, I did not, no.

DN: And what about the 1970-72 campaign?

JH: No, I didn't, no. I had a child and that's what I did.

DN: Did Nordy talk much about that campaign?

JH: Oh yes, 'cause he, he, you know, every once in a while when he got frustrated and upset with some of the things that were going on in the campaign, he would fly out to wherever they were and spend a couple of nights and show his temper, and then come back home. So, you know, he stayed pretty involved and, you know, met with Ed every once in a while and, counsel him or try to help in any way he could.

DN: After that campaign in, was it '73 that Nordy became sergeant-at-arms?

JH: Let's see, yeah, '73 to '81.

DN: And during that period, you say that the general tenor of the Senate continued as it had been in the sixties?

JH: Yes, it was, it was just, it was nice up there. Everybody was pretty friendly to everyone else, which is unlike the case now.

DN: And what kinds of involvement did you have with the senator's office during those years? Some, none?

JH: What, when Nordy was sergeant at arms? Well, it was, his job involved a lot of the protocol part so it was, as far as, basically the job is running the Senate. But protocol was a big, big portion of it so there was a lot of social stuff that we did with senators and every major head of state that came, and so there was a lot of entertaining and stuff like that that we had to do as well. So I got involved in doing that kind of stuff. And then Nordy did initiate from his office, which had never been done before, kind of a tourist. We hired a woman to do the special tours like they have at the White House, of the Capitol, not the public tours but the special tours for members and their families and for the heads of state and people like that. So I got involved in a lot of that kind of stuff.

DN: How do you think Senator Muskie was reacting to his continued service in the Senate after the '72 campaign? Was he continuing pretty much on the same level, or were his interests and concerns shifting?

JH: I don't know, I think he was torn. I think he, I just think he wanted to do something else, but I don't think he really wanted to leave. I just think he was extremely torn about what he wanted to do after that. I think a lot of excitement of it, or the, what he could do was kind of taken away from him I think. He just really wanted to be effective in whatever he did and I think he saw that kind of waning. But he loved the Senate, so, he had a hard time I think.

DN: And how did he react to going to the State Department?

JH: He, I think he, the idea of being Secretary of State, I think he was very excited about. But I remember being alone with he and Jane and Nordy one night, and he was really talking about it and he just wasn't sure that he wanted to do that but felt that if a president asked you to do something you should do it. So I think with that in mind he just bit the bullet and did it.

DN: How did Jane feel about the change?

JH: Oh, I think she adapted and she just went along, you know, she just, and then got to like it I think, you know.

DN: As you look back on Senator Muskie's career and life, what are your feelings about the qualities he brought to bear and are there any special memories you have of those years?

JH: Oh well, I think what he did for the environment is just, I mean we, our children and our grandchildren will be living with the effects of that forever. And if it hadn't been for him, maybe somewhere down the line someone would have, but he started it and I think that is his biggest contribution to what he did in his lifetime.

Memories, there's a lot of them. I remember a particular one during the election when Nordy and I were at the State Department the night of the election when Ronald Reagan won. There were just the four of us at the State Department having dinner, and Nordy knew that his freshman class, quite a few of them would be losing their seats that night.; So we were all kind of, we had a quiet dinner in the dining room and we were all watching the returns, and President Carter kept calling the Senator because he wanted to concede and the Senator was trying to talk him out of it each and every time. But he did call several times, and so it was kind of a very memorable evening. And all of a sudden I hear Nordy say, "Jesus Christ, I've lost my job," because we didn't ex-, even though he knew quite a few senators would lose, he did not expect to lose the Senate, and in so doing lost his job as sergeant-at-arms.

And shortly after that the president asked the senator to come down to the White House, and so we all went down there but Nordy did not come with us, just Jane and Ed and I went down and Nordy stayed. He said, "I'm not leaving, I've got to watch this," so he wouldn't go. And we went down and I'll never forget walking into the, you know, when you walk in to the small reception room in the White House, and Jimmy Carter was standing there all by himself. There was not one other soul, I'll never forget it. And on the way down Ed kept saying, "I don't know why he, of all people, is asking me to come to the White House," because he never felt that they were that close even though they worked well together. But so be it, we were there, just the four of us. And his family and all of his aides, there was no one around, they were all at the hotel. And pretty soon Rosalynn came down and then we all went to the hotel together with the president.

But it was just a memory I'll never forget, to walk in there and see the lone figure of the president just standing there. And I remember going up to him and kissing him and saying that Nordy, you know, sent his best, but he was glued to the TV and just tears were coming down his face. And it was a very significant memory of one of the last days of Jimmy Carter's presidency and Secretary of State Muskie.

DN: Is there anything else you'd like to say about Senator Muskie or family or the Senate years?

JH: Well, I just think that I was very fortunate. I have felt privileged to have been able to come to Washington and to know him and to work for him. All the days were not picnics but it was a wonderful experience, and I think he was a wonderful man for the country and I think we were very lucky, and very unfortunate that he never became president of the United States. To this day I'm still very close to the children. Jane and I have dinner once or twice a week, and I guess we'll always be close.

DN: Thank you very much, Joanne.

End of Interview