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Kneeland, Doug oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with Doug Kneeland by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Kneeland, Doug

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

September 25, 2003

Place

Lincoln, Maine

ID Number

MOH 410

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Biographical Note

Douglas E. Kneeland was born in Lincoln, Maine, on July 27, 1929 to Bruce and Sally Kneeland. Through the Great Depression his family moved many times before settling in Somerville, Massachusetts. They lived in Somerville from the time Kneeland was in seventh grade until the beginning of his senior year in high school. After high school, Kneeland went into the Army for a couple years, and then went on to the University of Maine at Orono for four years. His father, Bruce Kneeland, had several odd jobs including working at the *Bangor Daily News*. When Doug was in school he worked as an editor and as a reporter. The day after Kneeland graduated from college he went to work on *The Worcester Telegram*. He eventually worked his way into a job for the *New York Times* in 1959. He covered four presidential campaigns including the Humphrey-Muskie bid for the presidency in 1968. He was recently inducted into the Maine Press Association's Hall of Fame.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family background; the Great Depression; University of Maine; career in journalism; his job at the *New York Times*; covering the 1968 Humphrey-Muskie campaign; newspaper article on Humphrey and Muskie; Charlie Manson trial; covering Ronald Reagan for the *Times*; covering various events outside of politics; and Muskie's legacy.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Doug Kneeland at his home in Lincoln, Maine, on September 25th, the year 2003, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start by saying your full name and spelling it?

Doug Kneeland: It's Douglas E., as in Eugene, Kneeland, K-N-E-E-L-A-N-D. And one S in

Douglas.

AL: And where and when were you born?

DK: When and where? I was born in Lincoln in July 27 of 1929 in a house down on High Street.

AL: And is that where you grew up, right in this area?

DK: Through the Depression I lived in about fifteen or sixteen different places, my father moving from job to job. And we lived in Bangor and Millinocket, in Old Town, in (*unintelligible name*) and Somerville, Mass. and Littleton, New Hampshire, and all together I think I once counted sixteen moves. At times I, this was always the home base where my grandparents lived and we'd come back here between jobs. I spent most of my younger school years here, and then I was in Somerville, Mass. for seventh grade until my last year of high school when I was back here and graduated from high school here in Lincoln, and went in the Army for a couple of years and then went to University of Maine for four years.

AL: And your parents, what was your father's occupation before the Depression?

DK: He one time, very early, when he first graduated from prep school, worked at the *Bangor Daily News* for a bit, and then he did different jobs, a salesman and various things, and then they ran a corner store in Somerville for about twenty-five years in the later years in their life.

AL: And what were their names?

DK: Bruce and Sally.

AL: And your grandparents lived here all of their lives as well?

DK: Yes, yeah.

AL: And what was your grandfather's occupation?

DK: He was a house painter and paperer. My grandmother had been a teacher and had run a little store for a bit in the early days of the Depression, before it folded, things of that type.

AL: Now, were they both from Maine as well, or did their parents - ?

DK: Yeah, they go back to early days, and the families go back, way back in the, on my grandmother's side the, one of the early settlers here had come in about 1820, mid 1820s, late 1820s and supposedly had walked there as a boy when he was eighteen years old and came up here and settled out about four miles from here and built a log cabin, and later moved up on a hill, and there's a big house on the crossroads up on the hill, an old farmhouse that was built in 1840 that he built, that Chandler Brewster built, and it's still there. I considered buying that when it was for sale when I moved back to Maine, just out of nostalgia's sake, and then I, the

more I looked at it the more it looked like more work than I could do myself. The house wasn't in bad shape, but it just didn't really fit with my furniture.

AL: So you went to the University of Maine for four years? What were your interests in college?

DK: My interest mainly in the newspaper. I was editor of the *Maine Campus* for a while, I worked at the *Bangor Daily News* for, mostly full time for the last couple of years. I had worked part time as stringer and things before that, and it took most of my time. Then I was married my sophomore year, and my wife and I lived off campus down by the river down there on University Avenue, University Place, I'm sorry.

AL: And what was the University of Maine like at that time?

DK: Smaller than it is today. There were about three thousand students there at the time, and not many of them had cars. I was just reading the paper today, the big problem with the parking, which I'm very familiar with, going back and forth there a lot. And we walked to school from off campus when we were married, and they never had a day off for a snow day or anything like that and sometimes through three feet of snow and walk to the other end of campus to classes, and you know what that's like. Classes were much, I don't know that they were a lot smaller, ones that I'm familiar with in recent years, I've done some teaching with the journalism department there and most of my classes were still, maybe it was just journalism, there weren't that many people in them, but there were usually twenty, twenty five people. So I'm assuming there are some bigger classes than that there now.

AL: Do you, when did you realize you were interested in journalism?

DK: I had always wanted to write and always been interested in it, and probably had known that my father was, I had known that he always regretted being out of the newspaper business and not being able to get back in. And that probably influenced me a little, but I really thought I'd wind up writing novels and short stories. And I did a lot of reading when I was young, Hemingway and Steinbeck and all the great writers of the day, and then I thought journalism was probably a little beneath me. Then I got out of the Army and came back to Maine and friends talked me into going to work for the *Maine Campus* and writing a column in there, which I did, and then I had a very good professor there who founded the department, Wayne Jordan, who's picture is on the wall over here, with a newspaper in his hand, and he got me pretty fired up about it and I realized this is what I really wanted to do, and I never looked back after that and never had any regrets.

I had written, actually I had written a column in high school for the weekly paper in Somerville when I was living there, before I moved back to Maine and my last year in high school, and so I had some inclinations that way. But I have, I've always felt really lucky that I'm one of the few people I know who did something he really enjoyed doing and wanted to do all my life and, you know, every moment is not wonderful and glorious, but I never had any second thoughts and I never can remember considering doing anything else or any other kind of job.

AL: And so you started your career at the *New York Times*?

DK: No, I started it in Bangor actually. When I was going to school I worked as an editor and copy editor on the state desk, and then I worked as a city staff reporter. Day after graduation I went to work in *Worcester Telegram* in Massachusetts as a reporter, and I was there about three years. And I went, Wayne Jordan, who had been my journalism professor at Maine had at that time moved on, gone to work as editor of the Lorain, Ohio *Journal*, and he had asked me to come out there and help him on that paper, and I went out, and I was the state editor, then city editor, news editor and did that for the next three years I guess. And then he, there was a falling out with the publisher, and he got ousted, and I quit. And by then was married and had three children, and I quit my job and fortunately got a job at the *New York Times*. I thought I could get another job okay, and I really wanted to work at the *Times* but the, I really had a connection -- Wayne's brother Lou was an assistant news editor at the *Times* and I at least was able to get an interview and get someone, you know, to get me in the door and to talk to the people who were doing the hiring. And they invited me for a tryout and I got to work on the foreign desk at the *Times* as a trial and passed it, and it was very strange kind of thing, I'd never been a copy editor as such. I'd edited copy, but not in that kind of sense if you go to the *New York Times*, especially on the foreign desk. But it, and I understand that the guy who had interviewed me, who had a, the editors who actually made the choice in trying to hire me said, one of them told me one time I almost didn't get the job because this guy was very high on me after he had talked to me but he had told me before he finished that there was no way that I could get hired there, I didn't have enough experience. But he had been so praising, so, giving me such a good recommendation almost killed me because they said, if this guy likes him, there's got to be something wrong with him. Which was kind of weird.

AL: What was it like working for the *New York Times*? It has such a national reputation.

DK: The first years of it were, I mean the first few months anyhow of going in, it's a whole intensity of the editing and all the other things were, it was the hardest work I've probably ever done in the newspaper business. It just, you know, you're very aware of the importance of everything that you're doing, I mean the stories and the accuracy and checking and double checking everything that you're reading. But I survived that, and then I was on the, they had a national edition that they'd started at that time, and I got to work on that for a while, and that was a western edition and that lasted about a year or so and then it didn't do well enough I guess and so they folded that. And I went to work on the metro desk, metropolitan desk, and became the assistant metropolitan editor, and I still wanted to get back to writing and I talked them into letting me do some reporting and had a chance to do enough so that the national editor decided he'd like me to be on his staff and he got me away from the metro (*unintelligible word*). I went to Kansas City for the national staff and worked there for a couple of years, and then Gene Roberts, who was then the Vietnam bureau chief for a couple of years for the *Times* came back to be national editor and, I was out covering the Sirhan trial and Bobby Kennedy's assassination and -

AL: What was that like, covering that trial?

DK: You know, just day in and day out covering the trial, and it was pretty, the people who

were involved with Kennedy, who were around there of course were still very much in mourning over the whole thing. And Sirhan himself was sort of, I think they had, I don't know, he was kind of, it was, he wasn't crazy enough to be, to get out of it with being crazy, but he didn't want to plead insanity of any kind or anything. But he was, it was clear that he wasn't, he wasn't just a fervent nationalist and decided to do this, you know.

AL: Did you have a feeling of how the public was reacting to the assassination and the trial?

DK: Well, I think it had a lot of effect on the 1968 campaign at the time of the shooting. That was the, it changed the whole scope of the campaign because McCarthy and Humphrey and Kennedy going into the, and Kennedy being killed just before the convention and all that, and after he had just peaked probably sort of wiped out the McCarthy challenge in California it made, threw the whole thing off. Probably Kennedy would have gotten the nomination I think at that point in the campaign, and probably Humphrey and Muskie would not have been a ticket in that case, and it would have, it changed a lot.

AL: Yeah, so you think Robert Kennedy really had the momentum at that time.

DK: At that time, yeah, at that point. And it would have been hard to stop him at that point. And I think his not being there, and we'll get into that in a little bit, in the campaign thing, but his not being there had a real impact on the campaign, which I'll talk to you a little bit about as we go along. Because it changed the, he had the whole McCarthy, Gene McCarthy's followers who either were going to sit it out or maybe be persuaded to vote for someone, and Kennedy probably could have brought more of them in at some point than anyone else could have. And Wallace became more of a spoiler because Kennedy wasn't in it I think. It's hard to really figure out exactly how much difference it would have been. I think he probably would, he could have beaten Nixon probably, if he'd been there, and it would have changed a whole lot of things.

AL: Now, during that campaign you specifically covered the Humphrey-Muskie ticket?

DK: I covered, started out, I covered, strangely I went to cover the Republican convention and I wound up going out with Agnew in his initial introduction to the public, and covered Agnew for about a month.

AL: What was that experience like?

DK: A little different. He was not a hard guy to talk to, but, I'm trying to think, I always said that I had had a crew cut when I first went to work, when I first went out to cover Agnew, and then by the time I finished up I had one of these, you see some of these long haired pictures. I always said Spiro Agnew did that to me, the month of covering, being with Agnew, I let my hair grow, didn't cut it again for a couple of years. That was as far as the politics went, but it was. . . .

And then I went with, I did two or three different things during the campaign. I did a number of pieces that were just on the mood of the country, looking at various types of constituencies and taking a town like Worcester, Mass. which I knew, was familiar with, and it was a Democratic town basically and old factory town and stuff, to see how the election was playing with people

there and what effect it, you know, what the hell they were going to vote. It's hard to think back on it and remember what a force among this minority of people that Wallace was. I mean, he was an alternative to people who were upset about the hippies and the liberals who worried about blacks and not worried about poor working folks, white folks. And you know, it's hard to remember how deep that feeling was among a lot of people. And it was hard to overcome, for the Democrats to overcome and bring a lot of those people back into the party to vote for them when they would have, they probably would have voted for Bobby, a lot of them, because he, somehow there was a strange, I can remember people saying, well, earlier on, that they'd either vote for Bob Kennedy or George Wallace. That's a strange combination, but there was that kind of feeling, and I think McCarthy obviously didn't have that many of that vote.

And I thought when, when I was with Muskie toward the end of September, and there was still a lot of unrest on campuses and things if you recall and that we, and he had to my, I can refresh my memory by looking at some of the pieces that I'd done, but he was, his assignment during that campaign, you'll probably hear this from a lot of other people, there were certain constituencies that he was sent out to bring back into the fold. He had, because of his Polish background, he spent a lot of time in some of those, in places like Erie, Pennsylvania, and Buffalo and Chicago and places with large Polish populations, of people of other ethnic groups that would, might still be sort of responsive to his theory. And then sort of, to everyone's surprise I think, he caught on in his Washington, Pennsylvania encounter with a kid from the campus there. That was the start of his appeal to the younger people. And then he spent a lot of time after sort of sank in with the political people in the party that, "Hey," that, "this might really work," that he spent a lot of time on campuses after that, too. So he had this strange mix of going from some Polish hall in Erie, Pennsylvania, and talking to the old folks there and talking about how his family came over and what they did and how important it was for them to realize what America stood for and the values and all, to going to the campuses and listening to the kids and saying, you know, even if he disagreed, well, they got a hearing and all that and they felt pretty good about him.

It surprised all of us at first, you know, covering him, that nobody had been able to get, that all the ones who were turning out were turning out to boo Humphrey and to boo anybody else connected with him. They started out the same with Muskie, and most of these people would have been McCarthy supporters anyhow, you know, early in the primary, and still very resentful and weren't going to be part of the process in any way. And before he got through he had really won over a lot of them. I don't know how many of them voted, but they weren't lucky with putting him on the ground. It was amazing. My first encounters with Muskie were, was not an encounter. I really saw very little of him in person. He was not, looking at the wall up there and you see me with George Bush and Bob Dole and Billy (*name*) and a lot of other people around, and most of them were, sort of mingled with the press some, they were accessible and all of that.

I don't recall ever sitting down and having a conversation with Ed Muskie any time. I don't recall him ever being very inviting to reporters or coming back in the plane and sitting around talking and shooting the bull and stuff. I'm not saying that he never did that, but I don't remember him ever doing it in those days. Maybe things were a little too tense, and they were losing. Those people who are running are not happy when you're losing. And I said, Bob Dole was the best stand up comic in politics that I know and can be a very charming, very funny guy and easy to can get along like that, until he's in a race and if he's losing he's meaner than a snake, and he's

really hard to deal with. And I don't know, maybe Muskie was a little like that in those days, having trouble catching up. I think if they'd had another month they would have won that, but they had, they were making little, gaining ground and maybe another couple of weeks (*unintelligible phrase*).

AL: So you could feel the momentum. And when you talk about how he went to campuses and he was winning over the students, is there any way for you to describe the way, his style and how did he do that?

DK: Happy to do that. If you'll bear with me, and I can read a couple things that he did. I was going to tell you one of the, before I did that I was going to say when I was in Worcester, right after he was elected governor, I had left Maine before he, before that campaign, and I knew about him and always heard of him before that, and then I was kind of impressed just from what I read and heard that his, in his race for governor and then he'd been elected. And as I recall, he took office in '55, I'll doublecheck that -

AL: Yeah, he won in '54.

DK: He won in '54 and I was in, at the *Worcester Telegram* at that time, and because he was, had a Polish background and his Catholic background, Worcester is a very ethnic town. It's divided in Italians and Poles and Irish and the city council was always made up, you know, with certain, oh, it's going to be two Irishmen and two Swedes, or one Swede and two Poles and whatever and that kind of politics. So there's a Polish holiday of some sort and they were having the usual parade and celebration out in front of city hall, and they'd invited Muskie to speak because of the background. And they, oh yeah, there was drums banging and everybody was excited and finally introduced him and he went on and on about his being the first person of Polish ancestry to be governor of the state, and he was a Catholic and I guess it had been a hundred years since there'd been a Catholic elected, I think there was one back in the 1850s or something, in Maine. And everybody cheered, and everybody cheered again, and he finally stepped to the microphone and he said, "Yes, you know, it's true. I'm the first person of Polish ancestry to be elected governor of Maine," and they cheered again. Then saying the Catholic thing, and they all cheered again, and he said, "But, What I want you to know is, he said, "nobody ever used either of those things for or against me when I was running for governor of Maine," and he stuck it to them. The crowd just kind of gasped. And he did it in a very scolding way, you know, that's not important and it shouldn't be important. And he won me over at that time. And my experiences in covering him, and what I knew of him from following his career and stuff, had always been that ability to be honest and direct and straightforward about those kinds of things.

He was very impressive and he, and I think probably the thing in his run for the nomination in '72, I always felt, and I didn't cover any, I didn't get to cover him during that period and I had looked forward to, I thought he would get the nomination and I'd wind up covering him in the presidential campaign, but he had, he faded. And I always thought that he got too many advisors or too many people from the Democratic Party and the people who knew the way around politics and all that, but they kept him from being Muskie somehow, and he found, somebody convinced him he had to listen to them and do this or don't do that, or don't take a stand on this. And he

always took his time making up his mind about things anyhow; he didn't shoot from the hip very much. But he just got so cautious about what he was going to do or say or where he was going to be on a certain position that it wasn't at all like the Muskie that I covered in 1968 who came out and said the right thing, always seemed to say the right thing and who just trusted his own judgment and answered questions honestly and said, and didn't hedge and try to fine tune things ever. And I always sort of regretted it because, I say, I looked forward to covering him in the fall and that. In Manchester, I wasn't there at the Manchester scene when he was supposed to have wept at the, on the Manchester . . . later. But the, Jim Norton who, and I had covered, we covered McGovern together after that, but was there and standing right in front of him and always insisted that he didn't have tears in his eyes, that it was snowing and there were snowflakes on his cheeks and they melted and, you know, it wasn't that way. Not that it would have mattered if he had shed a tear of anger.

AL: But in that day it was perceived differently. I know that David Broder wrote an article after Muskie's death saying that was one of the, he thought was, I remember the exact words, but that it was a mistake he made in his career to report that he was crying.

DK: That was, he was the one who judged it, first said or wrote that he'd had a tear in his eye or something. I say, and Norton was standing there probably right beside Broder, because they would have been right down in the front row somewhere, and he said that it was snow. I know Broder pretty well, too, and he's a good guy, he wouldn't, nobody else would have admitted that, because that probably cost him the nomination, too. I mean, that went a long way toward, real strange thing when he wound up winning New Hampshire but, pretty well but not by enough, and that was perceived as a loss really. Matter of fact, I was thinking about it yesterday, that there was, I think I knew what had happened. That year instead of covering individual candidates during the primaries, I was covering some of the important primaries like Wisconsin and some of those, and we would go on ahead of the campaign and staying about a month in a town, in an area to cover them. And so he faded pretty badly by Wisconsin and it just, it surprised me because I thought that he would have, if he could have maintained the Muskie that I knew in '68, or covered in '68, I mean, he would have, I thought he'd win in a lock. And as far as the nominating thing, and then he would have, I don't know, I think he could have beaten Nixon. But I thought that, without the Wallace thing and all the other stuff, they would have beaten Nixon in '68. They came close at the end. Not close enough, but it was (*unintelligible phrase*). I was trying to pull out a couple of these.

AL: Sure.

(*Pause.*)

AL: We're now back after a short pause to look over some articles that Mr. Kneeland has in his collection that regard Muskie, and now he's going to read from one of those articles.

DK: This was out of Cleveland in September 28th of 1968, and I said, "Senator Edmund S. Muskie, moving tall and serene through the industrial city to the middle west this week, pleaded for understanding rather than suppression of dissenters among the young and the black, had encountered a new problem strange to candidates for the vice presidency, repeatedly had used

conferences on question and answer periods with audiences, the Maine Democrat was asked directly or by implication to justify his party's choice of Hubert H. Humphrey for the presidential nomination. While in the past candidates of the highest office may have frequently had to explain away an embarrassing running mate, rarely has the second man had to defend before crowds drawn predominantly from his own party that party's selection for the presidency, telling them if ever there's a question to suggest even indirectly that Mr. Humphrey showed lack of wisdom in choosing Senator Muskie to make the race with him. And with increasing frequency as the senator calls upon his audiences of ethnic groups, labor unions or students to risk injury in order to build trust, there are murmurs in the crowd that he should be running for president. And although those crowds have not been large, they have been growing, and when he has finished his plea for an end to the barriers of misunderstanding and fear and hatred which regrettably still divide some of our people, they press forward to touch him or shake his large hand. Boyish-looking at fifty-four years old, he seems to enjoy the loft of friendly contact but in the startled and shy manner of the bench warmer who finds himself mobbed after tossing in the winning basket in a crucial game with ten seconds to play. Most observers who have traveled with the senator agree he had demonstrated that he may be able to bridge the generation gap, and that his appeals for racial justice and an end to distrust have at least received a fair hearing among voter blocks attracted to the third party candidacy of George C. Wallace. But what of Vice President Humphrey? Can Senator Muskie do something the vice president has not been able to do for himself, satisfy his liberal critics that the "old Humphrey" still lives?

Last night in Cleveland Mr. Muskie tried to do that at a session with about seventy liberal young Democrats, mostly white supporters of the city's Negro mayor, Carl B. Stokes. Those attending had been invited to meet with the senator because they were backers of Senator Eugene J. McCarthy or the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy that were inclined to sit out the election.

After the senator had answered a series of question primarily on Vietnam, a man who said that he had worked with the McCarthy movement for the last year rose and read a portion of a column by Tom Ricker that appeared in the *New York Times* on Thursday. In part, the column said that Mr. Humphrey seemed to be a burnt out case who left his political manhood somewhere in the dark places of the Johnson administration. 'Would the senator respond to that?' the man asked. Leaning on the lectern, occasionally tugging on his left ear, Senator Muskie accepted the challenge. 'There are those who say, well, he can prove he is a man by resigning as vice president,' Mr. Muskie said. 'Well, when he accepted the vice presidency he accepted only two legal responsibilities: one, to preside over the Senate, the next to stand next in the line of succession to the president. Did he prove himself a man by rejecting his responsibility? For what purpose? For his own political advantage? Now, what other ways did he prove himself a man - - I think he proved himself a man by traveling around this country as he does facing his dissenters. I mean, a man is a man in many ways. It is his own life in the first place, and nobody focuses on Hubert Humphrey's life for just the last four years. Look at his whole life before then, it was a great life, it was a life of a great American, a man of courage. If you don't think he had courage, recall the '48 convention. He hasn't changed. I look into Hubert Humphrey's face and what I see there is intellect, compassion and understanding, and courage. I think he is a man, and I think he has proven it'.

AL: That's a nice article. Now as a reporter covering many different politicians, did you find

you had leanings politically, or did you always try to stay very neutral?

DK: I always tried to stay neutral; I always registered as an independent wherever I was. I found myself attracted to some candidates more than others, and I had a special thing for Muskie for two reasons: one that he was from Maine, and the other that I had been so impressed by his talking back to that crowd in Worcester back in my days at the *Worcester Telegram*. I hadn't heard many politicians who could handle that sort of situation and were willing to do it. I think, now he was one of the people I really had, felt, I admired him, a lot of politicians that I have liked okay and some that I haven't, and I say, with Muskie I, even with the traveling with him a lot, I never really got to know him personally at all and, you can see in the pictures on the wall up here, there's George Bush and some of these other people that I, you know, I'd gotten to know fairly well in the times I was covering them. But I, but my own political feelings are probably closer to Muskie's than most of the other people I covered. I tried not to let that affect my coverage of people. I covered a lot of Republicans who were, who didn't really ever have any complaints of my coverage, Ronald Reagan and Bush and, the first Bush.

AL: What was it like covering Ronald Reagan? I mean, if you compare it with some of the others like Muskie or whatever, how was it different?

DK: Well, Reagan was, one very good thing about covering Ronald Reagan from a reporter's point of view (*break in tape*), going from dawn to dusk. Reagan's dawns were a lot later in the morning than most people's, and the dusks were a lot earlier. He didn't like, he didn't really get going too much before eight thirty, nine o'clock in the morning, and he liked to be back in a hotel somewhere and ready for, to go to bed or whatever by eight thirty or nine at night. Most of the other people I covered, we'd wind up getting back in the hotels maybe by midnight or after, and there'd be a baggage call at four thirty in the morning so Secret Service could check out your bags before they put them on the plane. So Reagan was pretty good to cover that way. And he was, he had no real rapport with the press, he didn't deal with the press, he had, he didn't know the names of most of the people, not just the press, but I never thought he knew the names of most of the people who worked for him. And he, just not, to me he always moved like somebody in a, some movie star who walks around with a lot of people who are there, they do this for him or do that for him and apparently that's it. But he was pleasant enough, and he didn't, but he was – I always thought, I think it was the Humphrey thing about, I mean the Muskie thing about '72, the other thing was I never understood why Hubert Humphrey didn't get out of the, didn't pull back, why he stayed in the primaries in '72. I thought he kind of owed it to Muskie to, after some of the stuff that (*unintelligible phrase*), Muskie went out and laid it all on the line for him and almost bailed him out in '68, that I was surprised at his. Humphrey was a good man but he, you know, it just puzzled me that he didn't step aside on that one because he didn't have much chance of winning it, and that might have made a difference.

AL: In the '68 campaign, did you ever hear people talking about, if it had been a Muskie-Humphrey ticket instead of a Humphrey-Muskie ticket that people thought they had a better chance to win?

DK: Yes, yeah, I think that, and I think I, something I mentioned in this that made that fairly clear that people on the edges of the crowd would say, "You know, he ought to be running for

president.” And I think there was that feeling, and it, his effect on, he was able to at least sort of satisfy the (*unintelligible phrase*), I’ve got a piece in here, where and he went to Southern Cal and, was making a speech there talking to the students, and the student turnout, and by that time this just kept developing as he went along and it was really impressive. I remember the students, they were coming around pretty fast, and I think if he had been the head of the ticket it would have made a difference. He still, the business that he had to keep explaining Humphrey makes that kind of clear, too. And he, of course when he went in to those, the Polish halls and places like that he was working on those people mainly to keep them, to try to bring them back from Wallace. And they were more concerned with the whole racial things and stuff like that, I think, and he had some strong things to say about race. I asked him, I’ll show you in the clippings, I’ll give you some clippings of it, but he was really articulate on that.

AL: How did the Vietnam War factor into this equation, and did you cover specifically some of what was happening in terms of the younger generation (*unintelligible word*)?

DK: I covered a lot of the campus, I won't say riots, but Kent State and a number of others. A lot of it did factor in all through that period. It was beginning to, well actually it was a little bit after the '72 campaign when things sort of quieted down. The thing that probably really made the difference in what happened on the campuses, when Nixon stopped doing the draft, when he stopped calling kids up in the draft, and nobody ever really wanted to say it that much, but there was a lot of correlation between the fact that all these kids on the campus were protesting and the fact that all the guys were eligible to get drafted and didn't want to go to Vietnam. And it was a good reason to oppose Vietnam but that other fact was obviously kind of there and as soon as the draft was suspended things very quickly quieted down on campus. Some of that was from other things, some of it was after Kent State, people said, “Wow, people are getting killed here.” And after the bombing in Wisconsin, somebody put a bomb in the ROTC building there and someone got killed. I did a piece on it right afterwards, I was talking to some of the radical faction up there and the kids were saying, they had a pretty radical newspaper, it was off campus, they were telling me, said we kept telling them how to build bombs and we told them, you know, bomb it and then they said, “They bombed it! Somebody got killed.” A couple of those things had a lot of impact on campus (*unintelligible word*). They didn't really want to go quite that far, they thought they did, but when it happened it, I mean, it's hard to be a peacenik and then be in favor of blowing up.

AL: Right, right. Hold on, let me switch the tape.

End of Side A

Side B

AL: We are now on Side B. Can you talk about some of your other times as a reporter, things that stick out in your mind over the years covering politics? And did you, and I guess my first question is did you ask to go in the direction of covering a lot of politicians, or did you just happen to go that way through assignments?

DK: Well, I did about everything at different times. I was never assigned as particularly the political reporter. I had what I thought was the best of both worlds. For a number of years I was

assigned, I was roving national correspondent for the *Times*, and I got to live in Colorado, California and traveled around the country from there. And what happened was that when Gene Roberts came back from Vietnam to be national editor of the *Times*, he's the one that went on to be story editor of the *Philadelphia Enquirer* later and then came back to the *Times* as managing editor for a couple of years to help them out recently and, but Gene had (*unintelligible phrase*) to come out to Los Angeles and convinced me to leave the Sirhan trial and come back and be his deputy in New York. And I, we left (*unintelligible word*) and went back and did it because I hadn't been back out reporting again for a very long, a couple of years and I really didn't want to go back in the office. But he promised me if I'd go for a year that I could so pretty much whatever I wanted to do, and so I went back to New York and he told me, you know, about the second or third day back I said, "I'm going to take you up on that at the end of the year."

(*Unintelligible phrase*) and Palo Alto sounded like a nice place to live and they, and I got to roam around, and they sent me on all different kinds of stories, and then the political campaign, I got to cover those and the presidential campaigns and things of that type. And then I covered things like the Senate Watergate hearings and stuff like that. I just happened to be filling in at the White House for a week or so when Johnny Apple was on vacation and the Saturday Night Massacre happened and, you know, a lot of those kinds of stories over the years. But I also covered, like the Juan Corona murders, I don't know if you remember those, he killed about thirty guys and buried them in the peach orchards up in California. And the John Wayne Gacy serial killings in Chicago. And so it was a very, you know, wide variety thing. Then I wrote a lot of just Americana stories. I'd travel around and write about what this country's all about, different places.

AL: And when you did those, the famous murder trials.

DK: And the Manson thing, which I did.

AL: And I'll tell you, I can remember as a kid growing up in Maine, hear-, you know, just being a child but hearing Charlie Manson, we would (*unintelligible phrase*). You know, Charlie Manson's after you. But, I mean what, did you interview people?

DK: (*Unintelligible phrase*) at the trial, I didn't cover the actual murder, the trial, I covered the Manson trial for quite a while. And the, there was a woman named Thea Wilson at the *New York Daily News* who was a famous trial reporter, she was very good. And she and I, she covered Sirhan, too, when I was there and a lot of stuff together, but we both had nightmares on that, the testimony in the Manson trial, which was sort of strange. We were not, would not have expected to and everything. But the thing with the Manson thing that was so (*unintelligible word*) to kids were the girls who were on trial were, oh, you know, for the most part they could have been anybody's daughters, anyway mostly all but one anyhow, they were pretty ordinary, suburban types and then led fairly normal lives. Susan Atkins grew up in kind of a tough family, in bad family circumstances and stuff, and she was a little bit different that way. But just, it made your skin kind of crawl just thinking about these kids, and they were absolutely, at the time of the trial they were not, they didn't show any kind of feelings, remorse or anything about it. People would, you know, they'd show pictures and show bloody clothing and all those.

And one day, we were sitting right behind the defendants and, you know, like two rows behind them, and they were showing some of these pictures and some of the bloody clothes and stuff, and I looked at, and Susan Atkins had her head down and looking like that, and I said, "Well, somebody finally, she doesn't want to look at it, it's really getting to her a little bit." And about five minutes later she popped up, she had a yellow legal pad on it, and she had pictures of brownies and fairies and stuff and the sun shining, she turned around and showed it to us in the first row, smiled, big smile. It's unreal, you know. It was terrible.

AL: Let me switch gears and go back to Muskie a little bit, and I wanted to know if you ever, you said you didn't deal with Muskie directly very often, but did you deal with Don Nicoll? Because I know that -

DK: I was trying to, you know, it's terrible, it's thirty something years ago and I said, "I know the name and I can't remember." I must have at some point.

AL: Yeah, he was Muskie's AA and was one of the leading members of the campaign.

DK: Right, right, I would have known him at that time, and in fact I remember Shepherd more, and.

AL: What was your dealings with Shepherd like?

DK: Well, fine, yeah, we all got along fine. Usually press secretaries and people don't have too much trouble. Sometimes I do, (*unintelligible word*) wasn't too easy in Nixon's White House, some of them. But, and I was thinking, Eliot I guess was one of Bob's assistants at that time, Eliot Cutler.

AL: He must have been during, yeah, he was pretty young then.

DK: Yeah, he was young, very young, he was probably maybe twenty, twenty-one, something like that. And I'm trying to think of the young woman's name who, oh Lord.

AL: What did she do? I might know.

DK: She was another who worked with the press; she was one of the assistants to Shepherd. I can't think of her name.

AL: Jane Fenderson Cabot?

DK: No, I think she had a French name and I can't think -

AL: Estelle Lavoie?

DK: No. (*Unintelligible word*). It's terrible, I can't think.

AL: Well, I'm not thinking of it either, and I hear the names all the time.

DK: No, you probably have them all, yeah. Sometime later, I forget where I was calling and who I called when I was at the *Chicago Tribune*, and I can't remember what office, I was calling some office in New York, and it turned out I talked to the girl I'm trying to think of, you know, on the other end of the line. Now I can't remember her name.

AL: Now, you still write for the *Lincoln News*, is that?

DK: No, I stopped about a couple years ago. I did that for about six and a half years or something, I wrote a column and editorials and stuff just to keep my hand in.

AL: And now you're completely retired.

DK: Pretty much, yeah. I'm not teaching any more. I did teach for a couple of years, I did some teaching, but when Barbara and I got married I, what happened was I found, if you've been teaching only one class every semester, it was taking me, getting ready for the class and driving back and forth to Orono and then critiquing the papers and stuff like that, it was taking me twenty, twenty-five hours a week probably. And then if you really put yourself into it, and I was probably putting twenty-five or thirty hours, twenty five hours a week or so with writing the column and going down and doing editorials, and then I'd go down on Wednesday and help them put the paper out and actually I'm figuring I'm working fifty to sixty hours a week. Not for money, only some money, a little bit of money, a tiny bit of money. But I didn't think it was very fair to Barbara that I was gonna be getting a pretty full week. But I find I get a little bit bored now, not doing it, feel guilty.

AL: Well, you still have some connections with the University of Maine, so you go down there for events and things.

DK: Oh yeah, we go quite a lot. And we go, I'm on the board of the alumni association and the executive committee and chairman of the publications committee and stuff like that, but that isn't too time consuming. But we spend a lot of time, the big fiftieth, the reunion class this year, getting ready for that this last spring. But now we've got that behind us.

AL: If you look at Muskie and his life and career as a whole, what sticks out in your mind as his biggest achievement or his most lasting legacy?

DK: Let me think. He had a number of them. He didn't have enough time as secretary of state to really kind of make much of a mark there I guess. I thought his impact, his, to me just having covered this section, the thing that was most impressive was his, the way he handled himself during that campaign, (*unintelligible phrase*) he could do. You're talking about two very different constituencies; he's going from the hard working immigrant society in the little Polish halls and whatever they were, to the college campuses in some of these big colleges in the country. He went to absolutely opposite ends of the political spectrum, and to be as honest and convincing as he was with both without seeming, there's nothing in what he was doing and what he was saying that ever suggested to me that he was being, doing this political, I mean that this was motivated by political. I say this here and this over here, the things he said weren't

contradictory, and he wasn't telling one audience one thing and another something else. But he was really respectful to both audiences in giving some respect to their points of view, but also sticking with his own and preaching tolerance and everything to the people on both sides. And, you know, I just really admired his integrity and his, what I thought was obviously real. That's rare in politicians, even the best of them. I mean, even people who are really pretty good people do, they can do, waver a little. That's one of the things that I thought. I didn't see him performing in '72 that much, but I thought that he had gotten pushed and pulled a little too much and that one, he wasn't just being Muskie and just, which is a very, very, very nice place to be, and very admirable trait.

Most of the others that I, you know, I say even people who I admired (*unintelligible phrase*), what they did was still their own advancement in politics and things always really very much on their mind. And the only time I ever saw any evidence of that I thought in Muskie was in that '72 race, and even then it was more because, I thought he seemed uncomfortable in himself in that which I never noticed any time before. He always seemed to be very comfortable in his own mind with what he was doing and saying, and not arrogant and anything. But, I think, you know, obviously a long career in the Senate in which he was very effective. And his environmental work was terrific, and probably for the state of Maine probably had more impact than anything else that he did that I know of. I mean, generally it impacted the country, but -

AL: Did you have a sense that even if you lived out in Iowa that Muskie had clout in the country?

DK: I think so. I think he was respected that way. I think Maine has been really fortunate over the years in the Senate delegation with its, you know, we've had very few, I can remember when I was first working in Bangor we had a couple of, one very bad senator, [Ralph Owen] Brewster, and then we had, you know, who was a McCarthy ally, and we had others who were so-so. But from Margaret Smith on to Muskie and Mitchell and others who have done very well, and I think Snowe and Collins are doing okay, you know, they're not of the stature of a Muskie or Mitchell at this point, but at least they have some minds of their own, or at least represent what they think their constituents represent. The other thing I was trying to tell you with Muskie, you probably have heard his campaign jokes.

AL: I don't know if I have. Tell me.

DK: I can only remember one of them I can think of which is not really, I saw he could tell jokes in person, he probably was pretty, I mean if he had just friends or something like that, but I can only remember one. He did tell them occasionally on the, he wasn't Bob Dole, but he had one. I think we were down in Texas when he was telling about this, somebody in an audience, telling about a Texan who came to Maine, and he wanted to see a Maine farm, Texas rancher or something. And so some farmer, somebody took him out to the farmland and walking around the farm looking at the, and he asked the guy, the Texan asked, he said, "Now where is your land?" And the farmer said, "Well, that line of trees over there, or go way over to that and then you go up that way and see the stone wall up there, goes right up to there, and over to that road." He said, the rancher looked and he says, "Well, I'll tell you", the guy asked him about is ranch I guess, he says, "well", he says, "if you take your car and you drive all day, you just about come

to the end of my land.” The farmer says, “I had a car like that once.” That was one of Muskie's favorites.

But, I said, we had no real personal, some of that, I was trying to think about it, you know, that was right after the Secret Service protection for candidates came, after Bobby Kennedy's assassination. And they were just awful for the first year, in '68. They was all new territory for them, and they started out thinking that we were the enemy, newspaper and television people, they thought we were the most dangerous people they ever saw I guess, because they would, you know, try to keep us away from the candidates and everything they could to keep the candidates sheltered. By the second time around, next campaign I covered, they had figured out that we were the best shields they could think of and so they would let press people, they would use us to shield the candidate, (*unintelligible word*) around the candidate so they (*unintelligible phrase*), and we get hit first. That was smarter than the other. But that first year they were all nervous, and understandably after Martin Luther King and Kennedy. But, you know, it just may have been that was part of the problem, they were kind of segregating the press. I can remember in Iowa and Harold Hughes had was governor of Iowa, and he was having a thing, and the Democrats there were for, Muskie was there and it was some kind of a party for, kind of a cocktail party or something, and there's a couple of us (*unintelligible word*) on down and I think Eliot was standing out in the middle of the floor and he waved me in and I started to go in, and the Secret Service guy came up and gave me a shove. And I, being a not very nice person, told him to keep his hands off me, and he didn't take kindly to that and I was surrounded by Secret Service and then the cops, a couple cops who were there. And the guy said, you know, and there was a policewoman there, and he said, “You're cussing in front of a woman, you know!” I said, “You want to take me over to Harold Hughes? He's the most profane man in Iowa, and tell him you're going to something to me because I cussed in front of a woman.” But that was the kind of thing you ran into for a while. I think the Muskie people, Eliot and some of the others, told them to let me in, stop harassing me.

AL: Any other recollections?

DK: No, took too many recollections.

AL: Well let me just end by letting the listeners who will listen to the tape later know that just two weeks ago you were inducted into the Maine Press Association's Hall of Fame for an excellent and long journalism career. So I thank you very much for your time.

DK: And I've enjoyed it.

End of Interview