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Kyros, Peter N., Jr. oral history interview

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Interview with Peter N. Kyros, Jr. by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Kyros, Peter N., Jr.

Interviewer
L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date
June 4, 1999

Place
Portland, Maine

ID Number
MOH 107

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Biographical Note

Peter Kyros, Jr. was born on August 21, 1948 in Kittery, Maine to Peter and Alice Kyros. His parents were of Greek ancestry; his father served in the Navy until 1954, attended law school, and returned to Maine where he began practicing law and politics. Peter, Jr. attended public schools in Portland, Maine, then Yale University. While attending Yale, he worked on several campaigns including his father's, Peter Kyros, Sr., and Edmund S. Muskie's. He graduated from Yale in 1970 and University of Virginia Law School in 1975. He worked for Walter Mondale in 1976. He married in 1994. He passed away December 25, 2003.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: his father's career; the Greek community; family involvement with politics; education; debate; the 1954 gubernatorial campaign; Muskie's1955 to 1956 term as governor; the 1956 gubernatorial campaign; the 1968 vice presidential campaign; Muskie's support for Peter Kyros, Sr. in his 1966 campaign; the effect of Muskie's influence on Maine's significance to national politics; and George Mitchell.

Indexed Names

Coffin, Frank Morey
Conley, Gerry
Dunfey, Robert
Flanagan, David
Forbes, Steve
Hale, Bob
Hamm, John
Houston, Frances
Humphrey, Hubert H. (Hubert Horatio), 1911-1978
Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963
Kyros, Alice
Kyros, Joanne
Kyros, Peter N., Jr.
Kyros, Peter N., Sr.
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Muskie, Jane Gray
Nelson, Leonard
Nicoll, Don
O'Leary, John
Pachios, Christy
Pachios, Harold
Poulos, Richard "Dick"
Poulos, Virginia
Quimby, Brooks
Ring, Elizabeth
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962
Shettleworth, Earle G., Jr.
Sills, Mrs. Kenneth
Williams, Harry

Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Peter Kyros, Jr. in his office at One Monument Way in Portland, Maine on June the 4th, 1999 at about 9:30 or 10:00. Mr. Kyros, would you tell me your full name and spell it?

Peter Kyros: My name is Peter Nicholas Kyros, Jr., and it's K-Y-R-O-S. And I was born on August 21st, 1948 at Kittery, Maine in the Kittery Naval Hospital. And I grew up in Kittery. And when I was born my dad was in the Navy. And [I] ultimately grew up most of my life here in greater Portland, in Portland and in Cape Elizabeth. My parents are Alice Kyros and Peter Kyros, Sr. And I have one sister, Joanne Kyros, who is forty-two years old and was born here in Portland, and now lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland. So I am the eldest son in my generation.

And I also had, all four of my grandparents and several of my great grandparents were, they were born, three of those four were born abroad in Greece, but lived here for many, many, many years. My paternal grandmother, the last of my grandparents just died last October. And I now have a wife and two children and am raising my family here in Cumberland.

AL: What were your parents' occupations? I know you said at one point your, when you were born your dad was in the Navy?

PK: Yes, my dad was born and raised right here in Portland, as was my mom. Both of my parents are Greek Orthodox and were raised as part of the, originally as part of the fairly good-sized Greek community, Greek-American community here in Portland. And my mom attended Deering High School and Westbrook College, and my dad attended Portland High School. And then when he graduated from Portland High School, which would have been about, I think, about 1944 or so, '43, '44, he was nominated by then Congressman Hale to go to the United States Naval Academy.

AL: Robert Hale?

PK: Bob Hale, right, exactly, Robert Hale. And was really one of the first, as it were ethnic people, one of the first, certainly the first Greek-American to go, to be nominated from Maine to go to the Naval Academy, and went off to the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Graduated from there in 1948, really just missed the end of World War II. Then spent, was sent a year after that to MIT where he received some further engineering training, and then served in the Navy for about ten years until the mid '50s, 1953, '54. And after that, at the end of his naval career, was, had become involved with the judge advocate general corps, with the legal system inside the armed forces, and suddenly realized that he wanted to be a lawyer.

So he left the Navy in 1954 and applied to and was admitted to Harvard Law School. So we lived from '54, '55, and '56 we lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And, of course, came back and forth to Maine. We were only a hundred miles away then, so we came every chance we had and spent our summers at my grandmother's house on Dartmouth Street in Portland. And in 1957 my dad came back to Maine and began to be involved in practicing law and getting into politics.

I feel like I'm very, very much the product of my parents and their political views and their upbringing, and spent a lot of my life away from Maine and couldn't get, couldn't wait to get back home. It took me a long time, took me twenty-five years of living and working elsewhere before I was able to, not without some economic sacrifice, find my way back to living in Portland, and raising my own family, where everybody ought to live. Should I just keep going with these, you want to focus the questions or, how should we proceed?

AL: What were their political and social attitudes?

PK: Well they both came from very traditional, very, very traditional Greek-American families. And socially, I think both of my parents were very much the product of that. There was, this was a time when ethnic groups in, still stayed together as ethnic groups. But at the same time, in

order to be accepted in the community at large, you know, I, it was a very complicated world because it was, if you were Franco-American or Greek-American or Italian-American or Polish-American in Maine, I think you probably were, you were still a minority group, you know, and it was a different world. Although, the Greek community I think has always been distinguished in Maine and all over the country by its ability to be, to both preserve its own ethnic heritage and also work hard to become accepted by the larger group.

My grandfather, my maternal grandfather, Harry Williams, who was Greek, was well known as was Harold Pachios' father, Christy Pachios, who died only six months ago. Both of these men were well known in their community as being among the first men who spoke really unaccented English and could kind of mingle with the non-Greek and traditional business community. And that was a big deal. So my parents' social life was, in large part, based on the Greek community. Certainly when my parents were young, growing up, it was certainly expected that, you know, you would, if you, the boys and girls would try to marry Greek people, married Greek kids as it were, and marry inside the Greek church. A thing which, of course, no longer, no longer has much currency.

Politically, you know, these folks grew up in a very kind of classic, again, ethnic atmosphere. And, you know, my, my, both of my grandfathers were like natural Democrats and it's always been a story of interest in the family that Congressman Hale who, of course, was a Republican, nominated dad. And that's always been thought to be a, you know, a sort of amazing family fact. And I think dad just naturally became a Democrat.

The first person in our extended family to be in politics was my Uncle Dick, Richard Poulos, P-O-U-L-O-S, who maybe is somebody that should be on your interview list, because he goes back with the Senator, really way, way, way back into the '50s. And Uncle Dick, who was the bankruptcy, the federal bankruptcy judge here for many, many, many years. He's retired now and lives in Cumberland also. Uncle Dick became involved in the early '50s in the very beginnings of the Democratic revival by being a lawyer and knowing other lawyers, through the legal community. And he was encouraged in that by his father and by Chris Pachios, a little bit. And so that naturally, my father and Dick were first cousins and very close, are still close, very close to this day, and that encouraged dad to get involved.

So really when dad came back from law school, he almost immediately became involved in politics. In fact, I think he was, the summer of 1956, he, is when I think he first met Senator Muskie. Let's see, Muskie was elected governor in '54 and '56, because it was the two-year term. And I believe that dad, that summer when he was still a law student, worked a little bit in the senator's campaign. And that's certainly the first time, I, I'm not sure whether I clearly remember this because I was eight, but there is a photograph of me . . . . Uncle Dick's mother, Virginia Poulos who lived on Beacon Street, just a block away from where Don Nicoll lives right now, gave a ladies' tea for the "Muskie for Governor" campaign for the Greek community in the summer of 1956. And there's a photograph of me, of the senator sitting on the front doorstep of my Aunt Virginia's house with me on his knee. I was eight, and I, I don't remember it, you know. It's not a memory I have, but I see the picture and of course I, you know, that was the summer of 1956, a long time ago. Shall I talk a little bit about what Portland was like growing up? Or have we . . . .

AL: Sure, I have one . . . .

PK: Please, please.

AL: . . . . me go ahead. What were some of the other influences on you when you were growing up besides your family, outside of the, outside of your family and the Greek community?

PK: Well, of course, it was school. I, I, I'm, you know, we came back and lived here permanently starting in the spring of 1957 when dad graduated from law school. And I entered Portland public schools and I went to school, until I went away to college, I went to school for the next ten years on Stevens Avenue. I went first to Theodore Roosevelt School, which is now a condominium at the corner of Brighton and Stevens, and then to Longfellow School further up the road, and then to Lincoln Junior High School further up the road, and then back down the road to Deering High School. And, of course, that's the, that was the overwhelming influence and, in my life, was growing up in Portland in the '50s in the public schools, and made some friends and acquaintances that I have to this day.

Portland was a very different place then, a very small place both economically and socially and, and, not physically, it hasn't, has changed less physically than I suspect people would like to believe that it's changed. But it was a, you know, I had my, I had the universe of my cousins and the universe of my school mates. And to this day, I mean, I, I'm, I've known Earle Shettleworth for example since I was, we've been friends, you know, since the eighth grade. And David Flanagan was in the Portland public school system, John O'Leary was over at, in the Catholic school system, was ultimately at Chevrus.

But I would say that the schools were my, you know, strongest and most powerful influence. And from an early day I was fooling around in politics, because dad was starting to fool around in politics. Kid politics, you know, and the things that go with it. The debate team. And I was the editor of the year book at Deering. And I guess I would say that, that, well just to give you feel for what a different world it was, my mother must have graduated from Deering High School in 1933 or '4, and I graduated from Deering High School in 1966. And I had four or five of the same teachers that my mother had, and that's a world that no longer exists. They had, they had been young teachers, obviously, when mom was a high school student, and, you know, they were all in their sixties and seventies by the time I reached Deering High School. But they, they all remembered my mother from thirty years before, twenty-five years before.

And there was a sense of Portland being, not a small town, a small city, not a town, a city, but of being very well knit. And everybody knew everybody, everybody knew you. There was no sense of, you felt totally secure. You, you know, you could, an eight-year--, eight- or ten-year-old boy, by himself, could ride the bus into downtown perfectly safely. You know, walk up and down Congress Street. There were many different rules. You couldn't, you know, I mean, we were never allowed to wear shorts into town. We were never allowed to carry a Coke bottle as we walked on the street, stuff like that. But several of the restaurants on Congress Street were owned by Greek families. And you could, after school, come in, go to a movie, get a piece of pie and a glass of milk and take the bus home. It was a different world.

AL: Were there any . . .?

PK: Is that useful, or am I just, was it too atmospheric?

AL: No, wonderful.

PK: Okay.

AL: Were there any teachers in particular that guided you or influenced you?

PK: Yes, there were two, two in particular, both of whom my mom had. One was an English teacher, Frances Houston who (these women are both dead now), who I think, who ran the Deering High School English department and who I had for two years in high school. And who I think really instilled in me, my, both of my parents are readers and they both gave me that gift. But Miss Houston, I think, instilled a feeling about literature and about the ideas that were in fiction that was, is something that I have today. And that certainly guided the things I did in college and have guided a big part of my brain through the rest of my life. I still often think of, I'll read a book and I'll think, well, Miss Houston would have hated this or loved this or thought that we should read this again, or wanted to burn this.

And the other one, of course, and I'm sure you find this with other people, was Elizabeth Ring, who not only taught me American history at Deering High School but was for three years my debate coach, and David Flanagan's debate coach. And . . .

AL: What made her so special?

PK: She had an absolutely unique quality which was that, although she was even then old, God knows what old meant, means when you are in the '50s and you're fifteen, you know, we thought of her as being three-hundred-and-fifty years old, but I'm sure she was in her fifties. I think she was the first full intellectual adult who did not treat us as kids. She didn't treat you as a kid in class, and she didn't treat you as a kid when she was your debate coach. She treated you as an equal. She just assumed that you would step up to the plate and we all, Earle Shettleworth and David, we all became involved in her various projects.

We all hung around the Maine Historical Society, which was really a hoot because then it was really just a genealogical society and, of really old Maine people looking up their really old relatives. And Miss Ring was the chairman of it and, or certainly was, I suspect was an officer back then. I'm not sure exactly what, in, you know, this, we're talking now '63, '4, '5, '6, what role she held, but she admitted all of us kids. I mean, that's where Earle got his great love of all the great things that he's done since then.

And she treated us as grown-ups. She treated us, intellectually, as grown-ups. She would pile us in the car, her car, and drive us off to a debate tournament. And on the way, you know, she'd be doing eighty miles an hour in her big Chevy Impala, one hand on the wheel, three or four kids in the back seat, you know, fourteen-year-old kids, all dressed up in blazers and ties. And she'd

say, "Well, now let's go over your arguments for the debate the you're going to make, let's, I want to hear them again in the car." And it's a wonder, the way she used to drive, that we're all alive today. But there was a sense of, you were being treated as an equal. And that was, that was extraordinary, really extraordinary.

AL: What was the debating style, the debating style that she taught you? Do you remember what points about debating she tried to drive home? What were the most important aspects?

PK: You know, I think she encouraged us, I, I think that, she was a big one for rehearsals. And I still have pictures in my mind of being upstairs at Deering late in the afternoons, you know, endlessly practicing, practicing, practicing. And in fact, in those years I'm proud to remember, I haven't remembered this for a long time, she did have in us a couple of championship teams. A couple of us won the Bowdoin debate championship one year, and we won a New England championship one year and we won the Maine championship another year. Teams that involved David Flanagan and myself and a few other people and, God, it was fun.

You know, we were, she would sit there and make us do it over and over again and help us refine it. She had her methodologies. She was a big one for four-by-six cards, her whole life was on four-by-six cards. And she kind of communicated that, three-by-five and four-by-six cards for different things, but basically it was drill, drill, drill. She, there was a nineteenth century quality about Elizabeth Ring, you know? Sometimes you read that, that the Victorians thought of children as just kind of miniature adults. And there was that quality about Elizabeth Ring in the way she treated us.

AL: Did she ever speak of Brooks Quimby?

PK: Sure she did, oh yes.

AL: Can you tell me a little bit . . .?

PK: Not much, I, you know, but I do remember that she would, from Bates?

AL: Uh-huh.

PK: Yes, oh yes, yes, and we used to go . . .

AL: Ed Muskie's debate coach.

PK: Yes. And we used to go to the, there was a tournament at Bates in those days, we used to go to Bates for a tournament. And Elizabeth was, was, Miss Ring was very much plugged in to the intellectual life of Maine and all that sort of thing, there's no question about that. Yeah, she did, she did. And Bates, Bates and Bowdoin, I'm trying to remember, where did she go to college? She went to Colby, didn't she? I think she went to Colby, I can't remember. And even then she was already working on the book which she used to carry around, big notebooks, one of her, she wrote a couple of books. But one of them, the famous one, was in process already and it was already kind of a joke that 'when was she going to finish it' and so forth and so on. And

then of course she retired and, you know, after I graduated in '66.

You know, she loved my dad and she was involved in his campaign and she, she, she loved my dad. She loved what he stood for at the beginning, and who he was and how he presented himself. And she was one of the people who introduced dad to a very, to a group of older kind of Yankee. I mean, to, for example old Mrs. Sills, Mrs. Kenneth Sills who lived, at that time, up on the Western Prom. I remember Miss Ring taking all of us, mom, dad and me to tea with Mrs. Sills. And Mrs. Sills endorsed dad and got involved in his campaign, because she was a great old-fashioned liberal; a kind of Eleanor Roosevelt liberal. We're not talking about Senator Muskie, is this all right?

AL: That's okay, that's fine.

PK: Okay, so, so yeah. It was, to bring this all back, it was a, this gives you a feel for what Portland was like at that time. It was, and what Deering was like and what the, you're right, there are these teachers who had a great influence. And there was a greater sense of integration between your school life and your, and life. I sometimes have the sense now, I have very young children, even at my age, that there's this, there's a level of separation. My parents were not uncomfortable bumping into Miss Ring and Miss Houston and other people, John Hamm, who was the vice principal of Deering and then the principal of Deering, in a social context that might not exist today. It was just, it was different. It was more, life was simpler and more integrated. The level of subtleties that we think we have today, that we think are good, are, didn't exist then. And it, you know, isn't clear that that wasn't better.

AL: What was the Portland community like politically when you were growing up, and what changes did you see happening over the years?

PK: Well you know, that's a hard question for me to answer because it was, for me it was so personal. I would have a hard time, to be honest, saying that I had deep political views about issues until, kind of until I went away to college, because for me politics was so personal. It was about my family. My dad, very early, got involved in politics. You know, from the time I was ten or twelve years old I knew as, as regular casts of characters in our house and that, people that were around us, the senator, Frank Coffin, Don Nicoll, you know. This makes me realize how old Don must be getting - and my dad - and it was very personal. I was for dad, I was for the senator, I was for . . .

AL: Right, hard to stand back.

PK: Yeah, it's hard for me to say that I was involved because I wanted the minimum wage to go from seventy-five cents an hour to a dollar an hour. That isn't true. I was involved because my dad was involved. And, on the other hand, I was, you know, in 1960 I was twelve, and it's the rare twelve-year-old that cares about the minimum wage. I remember however, putting up posters for John Kennedy, very clearly, going around stapling up posters for John Kennedy on phone poles. Because it was something that dad was doing and wanted to do.

There certainly was a sense, to answer your question about change and the feeling of change,

there certainly was a sense in Portland in the sixties, beginning literally with 1960, with 1958, '59, 60. I mean, I expressly remember my parents coming home, and this is a very early political memory. I don't remember sitting on Senator Muskie's knee but there's a picture of that. I do remember, in 1959, my parents coming home from a party in Augusta at the Calumet Club, which I don't think exists any more. It's sort of a private social club, a French, Franco-American private social club, and saying to me, "We just met Senator Kennedy from Massachusetts and here's his autograph." And they got, they got Jack Kennedy's autograph, they, and I remember that very distinctly. It was the first autograph I ever had.

And dad said to me, I remember this so clearly, "He's going to be president some day. He's going to be president, and we're going to be for him; we're going to be for him for president." And certainly, from that time, there was a wonderful sense among a community of people here in Portland, and statewide, that a lot of very, very, very bright people, very bright people, were coming together to do something really exciting and fun and progressive. Just a tremendous sense of that. And that involved Frank Coffin and Don from earliest days. And obviously the supreme central figure in it was Senator Muskie, for whom all these people already had the complicated feelings of affection, respect, fear, and just admiration that people had for Muskie from the first moment they met him. And, that's how I would explain it. There was a great sense of, you were in at the beginning, the moment of take off, the moment of birth of a new progressive Democratic party movement. It was very, very, very exciting. And it was, it had to do with Augusta, but also moved very quickly to the federal level, the rebirth of the Democratic Party in Maine and of the progressive movement in Maine.

AL: I'd like to hear about your father's 1966 campaign. How did you, to begin with, how did you, David Flanagan and John O'Leary come together to manage that campaign?

PK: It just happened because we were around, you know, we, it, we organized for fun, because we were all involved in all this in the, in a high school. There was this, it flows really naturally out of this great sense of excitement that was happening then. And we, we organized a thing called the Maine Teenage Democrats, there was this teenage Democrats thing. And in that we were hugely encouraged by all the grown-ups. Because we were kids, there's no, it shouldn't be, we shouldn't make it sound, it was different. It was not part of the world in which whether as part of Vietnam or on the Internet or whatever, kids today, truly kids have political views. We were kids, it was the '50s and early '60s, and we were, we went to the Democratic state convention, we went to county conventions, we had fun. We made posters, and we organized the teenage Democrats.

And then all of a sudden, there were a few of us who, around Portland, who knew dad. And dad had been, dad loved to have all of us around him and he, it just naturally happened that we were really deeply involved in his campaign. And the senator and Don encouraged dad to run. Dad had been first district chairman from '62 to '64, state chairman in '64. And '64 was a, was a very, very, very important year in Maine politics, because of Johnson and because it was, because of the presidential election and the great outpouring of energy for LBJ. And it's hard to believe how exciting it was then.

Johnson came to Maine, I have to turn my brain over on this, but Johnson came to Maine for a

rally in ‘64 in front of the City Hall, which . . . . At that time Harold Pachios was on . . . . Is Harold on your interview list? We’ll talk about that after. He should be. Harold Pachios was on the White House staff, he was assistant press secretary. And we all got involved in that presidential campaign. And then beginning in ‘65 really Don, I mean, the senator had gone to Washington in ‘58 and, you know, dad was being really encouraged to run. And so he ran. And we all just naturally became very, very involved with him.

It’s, it is a little too strong to say that we ran his campaign, but we really were deeply involved in it and we really were just kids. I mean, on a day-to-day basis, it was kind of an extended family effort. All my relatives were involved. Gerry Conley was deeply involved in dad’s campaign. Leonard Nelson was involved in dad’s first campaign, helping to raise money, as was Bob Dunfey, who really brought kind of modern fund raising techniques to the Democratic Party in Maine. And David and John and I; myself more on kind of operations and schedule and politics, and David and John already were showing at that age their extraordinary intellectual skills, extraordinary. And, you know, we were high school kids writing speeches and position papers and press releases for a congressional candidate, which really was unheard of then. I mean it’s not unheard of today, but it was unheard of then. And it was just great; it just happened. And it was very complicated because, you know, we were all going off to college. But dad was elected anyway. So that summer of ‘66 we all just worked our hearts out, and that was really fun.

AL: Did you do things such as arranging town meetings . . .?

PK: Yeah, we arranged events, we did all that. Oh yes, yes, we had a regular, politics was really on a different scale then. I remember very clearly that my father’s, I remember working on the budget. And I remember, you know, being like eighteen years old and sitting down with advertising people of whom there were very few. It was a much simpler situation, figuring out the television budget, the media budget. Dad I think was the first, one of the first, candidates in Maine to have, to do the strategy that Steve Forbes, the presidential candidate is doing today, which is of running commercials early to establish his name identification. That was kind of unheard of, and we had that idea. And I remember very clearly that my father’s budget for the 1966 campaign was fifty-two or fifty-three thousand dollars. That was an enormous sum back then, an enormous sum. A hundred dollar contribution was a lot of money back then, and, yeah, we did all that.

My mom was very deeply involved in fund raising, very deeply involved, as were my relatives. Uncle Dick and all my relatives were involved in dad’s campaign. So, yeah, it was a family affair and we did it all. We did the scheduling, we did the politics. Dad was, in his early years, a very, very good speaker and was just on the road day after day after day with us. We had a headquarters and we were, we were behind him. And we even . . . .

You know, it was tough in the fall of ‘66 because I was going off to, I graduated from Deering in ‘66 and, you know, went to Yale in September. So I missed, I came back every, I sp-, I mean my freshman year at Yale, freshman fall at Yale I spent, you know, three or four days a week. And I had a car, I was given a car, which was taken away from me after the campaign. And I drove back and forth every Thursday and Monday to come up every weekend and work on the campaign, which was very unusual, something you don’t forget. And David and John the same

way, they were sending stuff back and forth.

You know, it was before the, television was important but was not as big a deal. Radio was important. But I mean, things like the signs on the buses were really important, bumper stickers were still really important. And the candidates went out to much smaller events all day long, coffees and teas and, it was a different political world. But you had to, still had to produce a press release a day, and, you know, my dad's were done by high school kids. And then we all, you know dad was elected in the fall of '66. And, you know, he had, I'm following your outline here, he did have, you know, of course, Muskie campaigned for him.

AL: What kind of things did Muskie do?

PK: Well Muskie, in the fall campaign, Muskie would, came up and would go to events with him. And we really, the ticket appeared over and over and over again. There was, there was much more integrated campaigning, once again, than you have nowadays. And again Don Nicoll was the, was the supreme coordinator of all that. Don was already emerging as the person who, really Don had a true strategic capacity. And he, he . . . . I see that you've asked a question about Jane here, and Jane, of course, whom I've known since those days. Jane was Don's assistant, Don's eyes and ears, and carried out Don's assignments. But really it was Don who played the strategic coordinating role of trying to take a step back and saying, "Now how do we." I mean the job of strategy is to say, 'How do you, what are all the resources that we have, and how do we dispose of those resources, dispose them, along what lines do we use our resources to achieve the goals that we have?' And Don, Don has always had that capacity, he's always had that set of skills. And that's, I think, where he first really showed it, when he began to . . . .

Muskie . . . . Right away from the federal level, starting in '58 I think, two things were perceived about Maine politics. One was that Muskie was a special talent, there was never any question about that from the day one. Whether he was on the stage in Maine or the stage in Washington, or anywhere he went, you knew that this was something out of the ordinary. The second was, from the Democratic Party's federal perspective, national perspective, there was this real resurgence of the Democratic Party in Maine. And after '64 a realization that, jeez, you know, these congressional seats, these senatorial seats, these electoral votes, they could be part of the national Democratic strategy. There weren't very many of them because Maine is a small and distant northern state, but they were, you know, if you were willing to commit the resources and work at it, this guy Muskie had changed the ball game, he had changed the rules of the game.

And Maine, which, you know, as Maine goes, dot, dot, dot. That was, that wasn't the case any more. It wasn't, these were not necessarily automatic Republican electoral votes up here, or automatic Republican congressional and senatorial seats. And that, particularly because of the Kennedys in Massachusetts, even though by this time, of course, President Kennedy had been killed, there was a focus on the interesting change in Maine politics from the national perspective. And, already a sense that Muskie had wrought some fundamental change up here by being who he was and approaching the issues the way he did, with the level of seriousness that he did.

And so Don had a very major role, and so did the senator. They were, they brought national resources to bear, they brought Muskie's skill and personality to bear. They funneled national political money up to Maine, all of which was a big deal. And Don early on had a sense of, very early on, you know, how to do a TV spot properly, how to do a Aserious issues@ TV spot. If you go back even now, somewhere in my massive files in the basement of my house, I still have a red rope wallet that contains Don's, Frank Coffin's speeches and press releases; would have been probably from his 1962 congressional campaign, '60 or '62. And they're just extraordinary.

Don had this sense that you just had to, you had to talk about the issues, no bullshit, you had to talk. You had to make a list of the issues that people really cared about, this is kind of before serious public opinion polling too, you made a list of the issues and you took them one by one. And you made a speech about each, and you made a press release about each one, and you made a television spot about each one, and a radio spot about each one. And you put them into your stump speech. And that, in a pretty focused way, and that was new. That wasn't the way things were done.

AL: I'm going to stop right here for a moment.

PK: Okay, all right. I'm sorry . . .

End of Side A, Tape One
Side B, Tape One

AL: We are now on side two of the interview with Mr. Peter Kyros on June 4th, 1999 in his office in Portland, Maine. Could you talk about your involvement in Muskie's 1968 vice presidential campaign?

PK: Sure, I could. I was in college at the time. I went to college in the fall of '66 and so in the fall of, somewhere in fall of '68, I was about to start my junior year. I think one important name that has been left out of my, my monologue so far, has of course been George Mitchell, who by that time was, along with Don, a very senior staff member of the senator. And in the summer of 1968, of course we all went to the, to the convention and, you know, just had a great time. Maine was a, and Muskie were just huge, huge centers of attention at the '68 convention. And, you know, it, there was a side of the '68 convention which, of course, was the dark side. What was going on on the streets outside. And it was just, it was a very, it was a very complicated time, but we were all thrilled, absolutely, absolutely thrilled when, when Muskie was chosen.

And, you know, it was irresistible to me to, to not be involved in the vice presidential campaign. It was just literally, physically irresistible to me. So, I can't remember clearly how I forced my way in, because I had to, because no one could imagine that you would not be in school properly. You know, Peter was in college. And so basically, I think I went to the dean of my college at Yale and said, AI'm going to be working in the campaign.@ And, I can't remember exactly how many various permissions I had to get, because I really was going to be cutting a lot of classes. And I did do a college project related to the campaign. They were really flexible and wonderful about it.

And so I appeared in Washington at the headquarters. And I basically spent the fall of '68 in and around the Humphrey-Muskie headquarters and had a variety of jobs. George Mitchell was . . . . Of course Don was, had a very major role and was with the senator on the plane. George was back and forth a lot. And I worked as a kind of special assistant to George and did, you know, just had a set of experiences.

I mean, what was I then, I was, would have been, 1968, I would have been twenty years old. You know, I just had the most extraordinary set of experiences that you can possibly imagine because, by working for the top aides to the vice presidential candidate, I had access to everybody. I mean, whether I was acting as a messenger carrying a piece of paper from A to B, or whether I actually was sitting in a meeting silently, taking notes for somebody who wasn't there. Or whether I was, I remember one of the jobs I had to do, I mean, you know, we're talking about a different world of communications, you know. I don't think we had a fax machine in '68, okay? I don't think the fax, I don't think the portable facsimile machine had been invented yet. And I do remember going in, of course dad was in Congress, so we lived in Washington. My parents lived in Washington, which made it easier because I had a place to stay.

I mean, that kind of was, and I remember going into the headquarters. One of my jobs was to go in very, very early in the morning and gather up . . . . They always could get the *New York Times* or whatever they, some newspapers out on the road, but the communications world was a different world, and I had to gather up various pieces of information. Humphrey's schedule for the day, headlines from like the *Washington Post*, and I would, various things like that, memos that had come in. And I would sit at an old fashioned teletype printer, I mean like something from, that you would see in an old movie now. And I would pound out a summary of these things and send it to the teletype on the campaign plane. It was, you know, no computers, none, zero. No word processors, you know; typing, old fashioned IBM typing. And so I, and a couple of times I got to go on the plane in '68 and, you know, it was just a, it was a wonderful internship, it was a really privileged internship.

I don't think I was conscious at the time of how privileged it was. Because, you know, I was, and this has always been both a problem and an opportunity for me, I was the son of someone who was, you know, my dad was in high office, he was a big person in the Democratic Party in Maine, he was a member of Congress. You know, I used to drive to work in a, in Washington, in a car that had a, the number one license plate, first district of Maine. And everybody, everybody knew my dad in the headquarters and knew that he was a congressman, which was good and bad, because sometimes you felt you were being treated, you were being given something to do or being included because your dad was your dad and so. And, of course, you only wanted to be included because of your own brilliant talents. But I do recognize, and I did at the time, that I felt like a sponge, you know, because here was a real national presidential campaign. And I got to see it, not from the bottom up, but from the top down.

AL: And you, did you also get to observe Mitchell?

PK: Tremendously. And I think it's really where we got to be intimate friends, really close,

close.

AL: Has that continued?

PK: Ab-, to this day, to this day. And George already was showing his tremendous intellectual and his intellectually refining skills, just extraordinary.

AL: In what ways?

PK: Well, George has, you know, he was an extraordinary staff person because he had a way of taking any set of issues that had to be decided, any set of questions, and simplifying them and clarifying them. That to me has always been George's great strength. First as a staff person, I'm sure as a judge, although I never appeared before him as a judge, and then as a United States senator. And I'm sure that's, I'm sure it's that set of skills that hugely contributed to what he did in Ireland. He has a reductive capacity that's really extraordinary. Something which I think he learned from Muskie, although he is a true natural. And it was great to work with George, you know, it was just so much fun to work with George.

And then at the end of that campaign, of course, you know, Muskie was, I guess the only correct word is the word that everyone uses, and it's 'elevated', you know. Muskie won that campaign. He, it just was amazing. At the end of that campaign Muskie was, you know, Humphrey lost. Nixon won and Muskie won. And there was this tremendous sense, at the end of the campaign, that a really important new person had walked onto the national stage and we all, everybody knew it and we were all very excited about it. And Muskie was the de facto leader of the Democratic Party at the, after the defeat in 1968, no question about that. Let me, can we break for one second . . .?

AL: I'm going to go ahead and stop.

PK: Okay, great.

End of Interview