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## Linton, Ron M. oral history interview

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## **Interview with Ron M. Linton by Don Nicoll**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Linton, Ron M.

### **Interviewer**

Nicoll, Don

### **Date**

May 1, 2000

### **Place**

Washington, DC

### **ID Number**

MOH 186

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### **Biographical Note**

Ron M. Linton was born in Detroit, Michigan on May 7, 1929 and attended Michigan State University, which was then known as Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, where he graduated in 1951 with a bachelor's degree in political science. After school, he started out as a freelance reporter for the United Press and then went into the service until 1954. He became the press secretary to the late U.S. Senator Blair Moody. Upon Moody's death, Linton went to work for the G. Mennen Williams administration, back in Michigan, where he was the secretary of the Department of Workmen's Compensation. He was also serving as the Democratic city chairman in Lansing, Michigan. A couple of years later he returned to journalism with the *Courier Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky. In 1959, he won a competition and was named a fellow of the American Political Science Association and moved to Washington, DC in November. He spent his first four months working for Rep. Carl Elliot of Alabama before going to work with the late U.S. Senator, Pat McNamara. In 1966, following the death of Senator McNamara, Linton left the committee and was hired by a think tank called Urban America where he worked with the Conference of Mayors to create the Urban Coalition. In 1967, he became the first coordinator of the National Urban Coalition. In 1968, he left to write a book and to set up a lobbying firm (of non-lawyers) called Linton, Meals, Riser, and Contoni while simultaneously being invited to work on Bobby's Kennedy's presidential campaign. Upon his assassination, Linton refocused on local politics in the District of Columbia. He is still chairman of the New York Avenue Development Corporation.

## **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: family background; pre-World War II Detroit; the Great Depression; Pat McNamara; McNamara's leadership in the Public Works Committee and creation of the Subcommittees on Air and Water; Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project bill; lobbyists in the 1960s compared with lobbyists today; films "Troubled Waters" and "Evil Winds"; Linton's lobbying firm; and Linton's perspective on Muskie's potential as president.

## **Indexed Names**

Billings, Leon  
Blatnik, John A., 1911-  
Boggs, James Caleb, 1909-  
Byrd, Robert  
Carter, Jimmy, 1924-  
Chavez, Dennis "Denny"  
Clements, Earle Chester  
Cobb, Lee J.  
Conway, Jack  
Cooper, John Sherman, 1901-  
Cramer, William Cato  
Currier, Stephen  
Dungan, Ralph  
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969  
Elliott, Carl, 1913-  
Feikens, John  
Ferguson, Homer  
Fonda, Henry, 1905-1982  
Ford, Gerald R., 1913-  
Gardner, John  
Gladstone, Bob  
Gunther, John  
Heiskell, Andrew  
Hildenbrand, William F. "Bill"  
Holman, Carl  
Holman, Kerry "Kwasi"  
Jackson, Henry M. (Henry Martin), 1912-1983  
Jeffrey, Millie  
Jones, Robert E.  
Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963  
Kennedy, Robert F., 1925-1968  
Kerr, Robert Samuel, 1896-1963  
Kirkpatrick, Evron

Linton, Ron M.  
Long, Russell B.  
McCarthy, Eugene J., 1916-2005  
McCormack, John W., 1891-1980  
McNamara, Pat  
Miels, Hugh  
Miller, Jack Richard  
Miller, Jimmy  
Miller, Joe  
Moody, Arthur Edson "Blair"  
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996  
Mutz, John L.  
Nelson, Gaylord, 1916-2005  
Nicoll, Don  
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994  
Nolan, John  
O'Donnell, Kenneth P.  
Pearson, James Blackwood  
Perrin, Bob  
Pritchard, Allen E.  
Pucinski, Roman C., 1919-  
Ribicoff, Abraham, 1910-  
Royce, Richard  
Salinger, Pierre  
Salter, John  
Smathers, George A. (George Armistead), 1913-2007  
Sullivan, Richard "Dick"  
Taft, Robert A. (Robert Alphonso), 1889-1953  
Thompson, Theo Ashton  
Williams, G. Mennen "Soapy"  
Woolner, Sid  
Young, Stephen Marvin "Steve"

## **Transcript**

**Don Nicoll:** It is Monday morning the 1st of May and we are at the offices of the New York Avenue Development Corporation in Washington, D.C., 717 Fourteenth Street NW. We're interviewing Ron Linton. Ron, would you state your full name, spell it and give us your date of birth and place of birth.

**Ron Linton:** Well, my full name is Ronald Melvin Linton, but anybody that uses that's going to be hung by their thumbs. I'm known as Ron M. Linton, L-I-N-T-O-N, born in Detroit, Michigan on May 7th, 1929.

**DN:** And tell us about your family.

**RL:** Well, I married a delightful redhead forty-five years ago this November, and who is an activist in her, the community, and spends a lot of her time as a watercolorist. I have two daughters, one of whom is, lives here in Washington, the younger one who, in addition to her paid job is in the administrative staff of the Brookings Institute, spends most of the time involved in peace and justice matters in the community. My older daughter is an architect in Boston, Massachusetts.

**DN:** And what about your parents?

**RL:** Well both my parents, my mother, my birth mother died when I was three years old. My birth mother was a native of Poland, came to this country in 1905. My father was born in this country of Russian immigrant parents and spent most of his adult life as an executive in a trucking company, and a very conservative Republican. And my stepmother, with whom most of his life was spent after my birth mother's death, was an ultra liberal left winger and a native born American from Bellaire, Michigan.

**DN:** Now, did you have any brothers or sisters?

**RL:** I have one sister, still alive, living in the outskirts of Detroit with her husband.

**DN:** And you grew up in Detroit.

**RL:** I grew up in Detroit and went to the public schools in Detroit, and went to Michigan State University which was then known as Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, graduating in 1951 with a bachelor's degree in political science.

**DN:** Now, what was it like growing up in Detroit for you as a boy?

**RL:** Well, Detroit was, of course this is mostly pre-war, pre-WWII, I should say now, we've had several after that, was remarkably different than it is today. It was a ethnic community. It had large populations of Poles, Italians, Irish, German, smaller groups of Hungarians, Romanians, almost every kind of ethnic group you can imagine spread across the city, and with a then smaller group concentrated in essentially one area, of Afro-Americans. Probably ten or fifteen percent of the total until the war time, when the requirements of the factories in Detroit and the surrounding areas resulted in an extraordinary number of immigrants from the South, both black and white, coming to Detroit. But prior to that Detroit, the ethnicity of Detroit and its factory base made it a hot bed of left versus right, union versus management activity, and it was kind of exciting to grow up there.

**DN:** And you were growing up during the Depression.

**RL:** That's correct. I lived mostly with my grandfather who was the only employed male in the family through most of the mid thirties. He was lucky to have, he came to Detroit from Connecticut in 1905 because Ford offered five dollars a day, and he worked for Ford until 1932 when he was laid off, but he was lucky to get a job at the Detroit Gasket Company. My own

fathB, my father was bankrupt in that period. Nevertheless, he voted for Landon.

**DN:** The Depression didn't change his mind?

**RL:** No, he voted for G. Mennen Williams in 1954, now was it '54? When did he vote for him? Yeah, I guess it was in '54 because I was working for Mennen Williams. That was his first Democratic vote. And when I found out he did that, I asked him why. He said he didn't want me to lose my job. But his real conversion came very interestingly after the 1960 election, during which, as you know, I worked for John Kennedy and had been an active Democrat for many years at that point.

My father came through Washington about a week after the election, stayed with my stepmother at our house for a couple of days before proceeding on to Florida. And he started at one point . . . . We were sitting in the living room. He started asking me a lot of questions about Kennedy's position on health care, particularly for senior citizens. And I began to get suspicious and I finally looked at him and said, "Did you vote for Kennedy?" He said, "Yes, yes I did." Now you have to understand, this is a man who in 1952 thought Eisenhower was a pinko, he was so conservative. He was for Taft and he thought Eisenhower was a pinko. Now he'd voted for Kennedy. And I said, "Well, how come?" He said, "Well," he said, "I'm retired now." And he voted Democratic from then until he died in 1969. Then he voted his pocketbook, or as he saw his pocketbook.

**DN:** And what led you to become a Democrat?

**RL:** Well I grew up in that household of my grandfather's where everybody kind of convened on the weekends for free meals off my grandfather, it was full of cousins and uncles that spanned the spectrum from left to right. And so I got an ear full of all the arguments and everything, but I basically had . . . . He strongest influence was my father's. And I went off to Michigan State in 1947 from high school, identifying myself as a Republican. In fact became the treasurer of the Young Republicans of Michigan State in my sophomore year.

Unfortunately for the Republicans, I went to the state convention in 1949, 1948, in the early '48, spring of '48 and I was so turned off. We had a real division at that time. I was following a group led by the national committeewoman, Mrs. Dudley C. Hayes. And that would be, today would be identified as the moderate liberal wing of the Republican party, the internationalists, the ones who were concerned about social issues, and it was so thoroughly destroyed by the conservative wing led by John Feikens at that time, that I just threw up my hands and pulled out.

And also I would have to acknowledge the influence of a number of professors that I studied under at Michigan State, Jimmy Miller and Carol Hawkins. Not that they preached Democratic politics, but they analyzed and dissected the history and political science in a way that it was kind of hard not to see where my interests lie. So, that's how I became a Democrat.

**DN:** And after you graduated you became involved in campaign politics, or actually before?

**RL:** I actually . . . . I became involved . . . . I'm trying to . . . . It's hard to remember now, Don.

I think that, you know I started out my career as a journalist, as a newspaper reporter. And I was involved working for the United Press and doing some freelancing so I didn't really become partisan involved politically, even though I was changing my view in what my own interests were. When I was graduated from Michigan State, I went, I was working for the United Press and I went into the service. And so I really didn't get involved in partisan politics until I came back to Michigan in 1954 and became press secretary to the late former U.S. Senator Blair Moody, who had been defeated for reelection in '52 and in '54 was running again to regain the seat. And unfortunately, he contacted [*sic* contracted] influenza, pneumonia in late May, early June, of 1954 and died shortly before the primary.

And it was that primary, with his death, that made Patrick McNamara the nominee for the U.S. Senate. And ultimately Pat McNamara won that seat in 1954, defeating the incumbent Homer Ferguson. And it was with that that I really, I left journalism for a while, went into the G. Mennen Williams administration-- he had been reelected governor-- and began to be deeply involved in local political Democratic party activities in Lansing, Michigan. I was the Democratic city chairman in Lansing for a while, served on the county committee, and I was in the administration, in the Williams administration. I was the secretary of the Department of Workmen's Compensation. Now that sounds, in Washington context, that sounds like I was pretty high up there but in fact it was the third position in the department, there was a director, deputy director and then the secretary. But that still wasn't too bad for a twenty-six-year-old.

I don't know, I start to get, I hanker for a return to journalism after a couple years. I got married and had a child and decided I wanted to return to journalism, so I took a job with the *Courier Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky and we relocated there. And I went back into newspaper work and stopped doing partisan political activity at that point.

**DN:** Were you a general reporter or did you -?

**RL:** Well, I started out as a general reporter and after about seven or eight months I was named the labor editor of the paper. I wasn't sophisticated enough in the ways of the world to understand that was an alternative to pay increase. You got a title. The title didn't mean a lot, it meant that I covered all the labor, labor politics, wasn't much editing involved in it, I didn't have anybody under me. But it was challenging and it was interesting, and I made a good many contacts not only in Louisville, Kentucky but across the country which came to be beneficial in later years.

In 1959 I competed and was successful in being named a fellow of the American Political Science Association and came to Washington, arriving here in November 1, 1959. And that program, you're familiar with it, it's journalists and college professors or associate professors, instructors, and at that time four international fellows were attached to us. There were about, oh, seventeen or eighteen of us in that night class of '59.

I spent the first four months working in the office of Representative Carl Elliott of Alabama for a couple reasons. One, Carl was considered a moderate southerner. I had, my least knowledge of the country was the South, and he also was very involved in labor legislation, and for those reasons I went into his office. And it was an excellent experience, he was an outstanding human

being. Carl Elliott was a wonderful guy, would have been a real left winger if he had come from the North. But there were limitations; if you want to stay in office there are things you're going to do.

But I will digress, if I can tell you one story about Carl, because it taught me a great deal about Congress that, which was the whole purpose of the fellowship. He had a delegation from his home district come see him and had me sit and take notes in the meeting. And it, I don't remember, it had something to do with libraries that he was very much involved in. And they wanted him to introduce some legislation, put some legislation through that they were interested in. And after, he told them, he said he would introduce the bill.

And they left, and he looked at me and he said, "I want you to write that up, get the legislative counsel to draft the bill, and then take it down to Roman Pucinski and have him co-sponsor it with me." Well I kind of looked at him very strangely, Roman Pucinski was a Democrat from Chicago and not particularly known for his interest in libraries and everything. And I was really puzzled and I said, "Well Congressman, can I ask you why, why Pucinski, I mean what's he got to do with this?" And Carl said, "Well, you know, I promised those folks I'd introduce the bill, but I didn't promise them I'd pass it. And with Pucinski as a co-chairman it'll be a signal to the senior members of the labor and public welfare committee that I don't really want it passed." So, so I did as he told me and it never did get reported out of committee, or at least not to my knowledge.

But when my, we spent four months on the House side and then we had four months over on the Senate side. So when it came time to go to the, to switch over to the Senate I was trying to figure out what, whose office to go to. I ran into a man named Joe Miller. I don't know if you know Joe. Joe had been with the Steelworkers, he was a consultant, he was from, from the state of Washington. He also had been a consultant to the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee, which was chaired by Earle Clements, the former U.S. senator and governor from Kentucky. And I had met Joe when I was still in Kentucky.

So I ran into Joe and I said, "Joe, I have to find a Senate office to join for that part of the fellowship," and "you got any suggestions?" He said, "Well let me think about it and I'll call you." He called me the next day and he said, "You're all set, you're going into John Kennedy's office." And I said, "Well," I said, "there's a couple of problems. One, Chuck Daley has already gone in that office and they won't let two, one senator have two fellows." And I said, "I'm not sure I'm for him." My wife overheard that conversation and she said, "What do you mean you're not for him?" And he said on the phone to me, "You're only going to get one chance to be for him so you'd better make up your mind." I said, "Well let me call you back."

I called Millie Jeffreys [*sic* Jeffrey] who was a national committeewoman from Michigan, Democratic National Committeewoman and an official of the UAW in Michigan, and I told her what the situation was. And there had been no signal out of Michigan at that point, we're talking about end of February of 1960 here. But she said, "That's where we're going, Ron, so if you have a chance to get in there, get in there." So I called Joe back and I said, "Joe, I can't work out of the office but let's . . . . What else can I work out?"



So I met with Ralph Duncan who was then the Kennedy staff guy on the labor subcommittee of the Senate labor and public welfare committee, and it was arranged that I would actually be a fellow on that committee staff. A couple of days later Ralph got caught in West Virginia and had to resign because that was . . . . They were getting down to the point now where paid staff people in Congress, regardless of who appointed you, were not going to be allowed to campaign for their members. And that left me hanging again.

And I got a call from Joe Miller, he said, "Go see John Salter." And John Salter was then administrative assistant to Henry Jackson of the state of Washington. So I went in to see John, I had met him and it turned out that both he and Jackson were committed to Kennedy, were strong Kennedy guys. And John said, "Look," he said, "this is fine." He said, well what had happened, in the interim what had happened is I was asked if I would go to work over in the Esso building as an assistant to Pierre Salinger, and I had to get that cleared.

I called the guy who was the executive director of our program. His name was Mark Furber. And I said, "Mark, I have a chance to work for John Kennedy in the Esso building as an assistant to Salinger." Well, Evron Kirkpatrick was the executive director in those days of the association, who despised Kennedy, he was a pro-Humphrey man. And Mark said, "I don't think Evron's going to stand for that." So I said, "Well, I can understand that." I says, "Mark, there's seven fellows that are currently working in West Virginia for Hubert Humphrey, I assume you're going to bring them back tomorrow." He says, "Let me get back to you."

A short time later he called me and said, "Evron thinks that every fellow ought to make whatever the part-, whatever he wants on the program. And if you want to work in the Esso building, go work in the Esso building, but would you find a cover?" So the cover was that every Friday I would go over and spend an hour or two with John Salter, having coffee and talking about politics of Scoop Jackson's office. And the interesting part of that was that occasionally Jackson himself would walk into the office. And the result was that for years afterwards Scoop Jackson knew I had some connection with him but he never could understand what it was. He never could quite figure out how did I get involved in his office.

But that's . . . . So I spent the next, the rest of the balance of the fellowship working for, until the convention I worked for Salinger and then after the convention, at the convention I put out a daily newspaper, the Kennedy daily bulletin, and then after the convention I worked as a senior advancement man for Kennedy.

And after the election was over, Pat McNamara called me up and said, "Don't hang around there waiting for a job," he said. "Those fellows will be months trying to figure out how to take care of things." So he brought me back as, he was then chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, and he brought me up there as a staff member of that subcommittee until June, when I was asked by the White House to go to the Defense Department with the wonderful title of Director of Economic Utilization Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Installation Logistics. The shorthand of, or the interpretation of my title was simply that I was supposed to get defense contracts into areas of high unemployment.

And that ran against the grain in the Defense Department and it was nothing but a constant

struggle for about a year until in November of 1962, Dennis Chavez who was chairman of the Senate public works committee died and a month later Robert Kerr, who was the ranking Democrat of the committee died. And that put Pat McNamara as *de facto* as well as *de jure* chairman of the committee, and he called me and asked me to come back as his staff director of that committee.

**DN:** What had been your contacts with Pat before then?

**RL:** Well, of course in 1954 I was press secretary for the guy who was going to beat him for the nomination, I don't think there was any question about it. And we never, Moody's position was that he was going to win and there really wasn't anything to be gained by beating up on McNamara. So we never made, issued any statements or he never made any statement, he just never acknowledged McNamara in the race, he ignored him. And so we didn't have any kind of personal tensions as a result of that race.

And after Moody died, I went to work for Mennen Williams as an assistant press secretary, and then after the election was over, the following, matter of fact it was in February of the following year, in '55, 1955, when I was in the Williams administration, Michigan had their annual Jeff-Jack Day dinner. And after that I went to, with a group of people, to a nearby hotel and wound up sitting next to Pat McNamara, U.S. senator. And I said to him, and this is so typical of Pat, I said, "Pat," I said, "you know, about my being press secretary to Blair." And he looked at me and he said, "That's history, we don't need to discuss that." And from that point on we had a good relationship and I worked for him and I did some things for him, and the whole past was just, completely just put out of mind.

**DN:** What kind of a guy was he, and why did he run in that 1954 race against Blair Moody?

**RL:** He was a part of what we called the "Wayne County Courthouse gang". These were Democratic people, this was a group of Democratic individuals who had had a long history in the party but were not admirers and were not in the Mennen Williams camp. They were more traditionalist. They did . . . . They were more trade unionist . . . . They . . . whereas Williams was more oriented to the auto workers as the primary union. And they cajoled Pat into running in order to have some, they hoped, influence into the Williams leadership of the party. Pat had been a Detroit city councilman and had been on the Detroit board of education, and he was a union leader and had been a union leader. At the time he ran he actually had a company that he owned, a plumbing company, pipe fitting company. But . . .

**DN:** Was he a pipe fitter by trade?

**RL:** Yes, he was a pipe fitter by trade. He was born in Massachusetts, you know, but he, and he got, went as far as the eighth grade for formal education. But he was enormously self-learned, particularly in politics. So he was sort of pulled into running, because they felt that they wanted to keep a str--, some arm into the Democratic apparatus as a counter balance to the Williams "leftists", or Williams "liberals" as they called it. That's how he got into that. I don't think he was under any illusions of beating Moody. They didn't have the funding, the support. Moody was a very charismatic New Age politician, had been a reporter living in Washington for,

for thirty years. But the death changed it and Williams won his, that was his fourth term, by a smashing victory and just carried Pat and the whole ticket in with him.

Pat was an extraordinary, intuitive individual. He was a great judge of people, and he knew instantaneously when he was being conned. He was a very pragmatic liberal. He knew where he came from, he knew what his constituency was, he knew what they needed, and he was for it. I mean, he didn't compromise principles. He'd play politics, but he didn't compromise principles at all. He was very shrewd, a very shrewd guy. He also had a wonderful sense of humor. He had a really cutting wit, you know.

**DN:** Do you remember any examples of that?

**RL:** Yeah, I remember one. He was . . . . I can't remember the exact day's circumstances, but it was when one of the civil rights bills were before, was before the senate and it was obviously very contentious and there was a filibuster, a Southern filibuster. Bob Byrd of West Virginia apparently decided that the best place for him to be was in the speaker's chair. And he sat in that speaker's chair all night long. And Pat, and a lot of them had put cots in the back and everything. The guys were sleeping. That wasn't Pat's style, he went home and he went to bed.

And he came back the next morning, came there it was about nine-thirty, ten o'clock in the morning. The Senate was in session. And it was shortly, a few days before when there was a big story in the *Post* about the fact that Robert Byrd had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan in his younger years. The scene in the Senate, when Pat walked in, and he walked in from the front door, you know, not behind the speaker's dais but the other end. And all that whole class of '58, all the liberal guys, Muskie and McCarthy and the bunch were all in the back and they were all laughing and giggling and talking to each other. And Byrd was on the, and the presiding officer and he's banging on the gavel calling, order, order, order. And Pat of course had a booming gravel voice you remember, and he takes this scene in, he looks around, he looks at these guys and he said, "you better watch out fellas or the Grand Kleegal will get you." Well that just stopped the whole place dead, you know, and Byrd didn't know what to do, he kind of turned about three shades of red.

**DN:** Pat must have caused other stirs as well when he became chairman of Public Works?

**RL:** Well, he was, you know, he was on labor and public welfare. And one time in his subcommittee mark up, one bill, I don't remember what the bill was and I was, I don't know why I was there, I must have been bringing something down to him. George Smathers says to Pat, "Now Pat, we don't want any long speeches." Pat looks at Smathers and says, "George, I ain't known for long speeches."

The more fascinating experience on our own committee . . . . You remember we had . . . . The executive sessions then were closed and they were closed to everybody except a staff member who was involved with his member. And I used to sit between McNamara at the head of the table and John Sherman Cooper [R-KY] who was the ranking Republican just to my right, and I sat between them. You may remember this, as a matter of fact. It was on a water pollution bill. When, John Sherman, as you remember, mumbled. He wasn't a very clear enunciator, and he

would say something and Pat was hard of hearing anyway, would say to me at the top of his voice, "What did he say?" And I would repeat what I heard Sherman say. And then he'd say something and Sherman would say to me, "What did the chairman say?" And then I would repeat the chairman to Sherman. This led Gaylord Nelson, at the other end of the table, to suggest that we take this on the road as a comedy team.

**DN:** Now, Pat became chairman of the public works committee, and not very long thereafter decided to create a subcommittee on air and water pollution.

**RL:** Well, the story behind that is that he actually did not become . . . . The Senate that year didn't organize. And that must have been when they were having the filibuster problem. They didn't go into their . . . because the whole issue was over whether they were a continuing body or not. So Pat didn't bring me on formally until the first work day of February of 1963 as staff director and chief clerk. But I had been hanging around and I had come to understand . . . . I went, made courtesy calls on all the members of the committee that were expected to be on it. And I was led to understand that Muskie and McNamara, once Kerr died, had come to understand that he would name Muskie as the chairman of the subcommittee on rivers and harbors. And Muskie had an interest in moving the Passamaquoddy project and he was going to be made chairman of rivers and harbors.

So when I went in for my first session with McNamara on organizing and assigning subcommittees, I had brought to him a plan. We had Muskie to introduce legislation for water pollution, Ribicoff had introduced legislation for air pollution that had been referred to our committee. And I had brought him a plan where we would have a subcommittee on air pollution and a subcommittee on water pollution, a subcommittee on highways, roads and highways, rivers and harbors and buildings and ground. And then I listed the subcommittee chairmen that I thought he wanted and was giving Muskie as chairman of rivers and harbors. And he looked at that and he said, "I'm going to be chairman of rivers and harbors." And I said, "Well Mr. Chairman," I said, you know, "that's kind of not consistent with the practice of the Senate. There's never in the history of the Senate, as far as I know, has a chairman of a full committee also preempted the chairman of the subcommittee." He said, "I have been around here six years." He said, "I watched Kerr as chairman of that subcommittee run the full committee, and I'm going to run the full committee, therefore I'm going to be the chairman of the subcommittee." And I said, well you know, "How do we rationalize that?" He said, "We'll put every member of the full committee on the subcommittee."

I'm kind of reeling at this point, "You're saying we're going to have a full committee with seventeen members and the subcommittee with seventeen members?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "It's going to be fun trying to get hearings." He says, "You'll work it out." He says, "You'll take care of that." I said, "What are we going to do with Muskie?" I says, "I understand that he was expecting to be named chairman of that subcommittee." So he looked at my list, he said, "I'm not going to have two subcommittees here on pollution," he said. "Put those together. And we don't want that to be permanent." And he says, "Let's make that a special, so we'll just have that as a special subcommittee on air and water pollution and we'll name Muskie chairman of that." I said, "O.K." And then he looked at me and he said, "Go tell him." I said, "You want me to go down and tell him?" He said, "You're the staff director, aren't you? Go tell him." So

I thought, I went, "Oh boy." And you know, I'd only met Ed Muskie once before that briefly introducing myself, and I thought, this is wonderful, I'm going to go down and tell him that he's not going to have what he wants. But I went down and I was ushered on in. What's her name, his secretary who's dead now?

**DN:** Oh, Gayle, Gayle Cory.

**RL:** Gayle, Gayle, and Gayle ushered me right in. And I said, "I'm here to talk to, for the chairman to talk to the senator about his committee assignment." Gayle says, "Okay." So she pushed a button and he said, "Send him in." So I went in and I said, "Well Mr.," I said, "Senator," I said, "the chairman and I have just finished meeting on the structure of the committee and he wanted me to come down and tell you that he's going to name you chairman of the special subcommittee on air." And that's as far as I got. He said, he looked at me and he said, "Air? Air? What the hell do I care about air for, coming from Maine?" You know. And then I went on to say, "And water subcommittee" on that thing. Well, he wasn't really terribly pleased by this whole thing. But subsequently, because I knew that McNamara would never attend any subcommittee hearings, I worked out a plan that he agreed to in which we had ad hoc regional panels of the subcommittee set up on geographic basis. So that I had a New England, New York ad hoc, a panel for the subcommittee that was chaired by Ed Muskie, so in fact he was able to -

**DN:** This is on the rivers and harbors.

**RL:** This is on the rivers and harbors subcommittee. Rivers and harbors subcommittee in the three, four years I was there, only met once and that was the first meeting some time in March of 1963 and McNamara showed up to preside. And it never met again as a full committee for hearings. It met in executive session a couple of times, but it never met in a full committee for a hearing. Only the panels met. And we had four panels, and that made everybody happy.

**DN:** With sub-panel chairs?

**RL:** Yeah, yeah, with panel chairs, so Muskie chaired the panel that covered all of the rivers and harbors, the projects for New England and New York, which is of course the . . . . It included the tidals, the tidal basin project, which you know that we got passed. You remember how we passed that?

**DN:** Refresh my memory.

**RL:** Well it wasn't any real problem getting it passed in the Senate of the bill, when we included it in the Senate version of the bill. The House, of course, was adamantly opposed. They didn't have it in their version. We had to go to conference. Before the conference, you called me down, you called me for a meeting and said that what we need to do is to set up the conference so that the Senate will act first. And I said, "Don, we can't because the conference, we asked," I think we asked, I can't remember now it's so long ago, but "we asked for the conference and therefore they get to act first on that." A couple of days later you called me and said that every, you'd had the matter researched and there was no rule anywhere that stipulated

that, that it was simply a matter of, uh, of uh -

**DN:** Custom?

**RL:** Custom, and that nothing bound us to that. So we, you and I then met, I don't remember who else, I don't think any, maybe, maybe George was in the meeting, but we met just before the conference. And we knew that what we had to do, what I said at the end, there were two critical points. There was going to be a point where we were going to take a vote. And we had to make sure that the other members of the senate voted the way we wanted them to vote, and the only way to do that was to get the chairman to vote first. And that second that, then after we got all done and before all the members signed the committee report, Muskie would leave the conference to take a phone call that was very important. I'd get everybody to sign and then say, "I'm going down to get Muskie's signature," and then I would get his signature and then I kept on going. I, in fact, basically stole the conference papers.

And we got to the conference and this is all worked out. And of course everybody on the Senate side knew it except the chairman because, and I warned everybody that if the chairman knew it he wouldn't go along with it because he didn't play those games. So we couldn't tell the chairman. We had a member of the House, Republican side, a guy named [William Cato] Cramer [R-FL]. Remember Cramer? I can't remember his first name. He was a smart guy. He figured out what was going on and he kept trying to ask the chairman, he wouldn't come right out and accuse us because he couldn't be absolutely certain, but he kept asking the chairman questions trying to get the chairman to understand that there was a plot going here. And of course it really kind of exploded when we had the vote on the specific question as to whether to include the, what did we call it, tidal, did we call it Passamaquoddy?

**DN:** Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project.

**RL:** And I called the roll for the Senate side, I called the chairman first and he said, "Since when does the chairman vote first?" I said, "I'm just calling you in order here." He says, "All right, 'yes'." And then they went around, and when he voted yes, everybody else, (*sigh of relief*), they all voted "yes". And of course [John] Blatnik [D-MN] and [Bob] Jones [D-AL] were in on it and they went along with it and they voted yes. And Cramer kept trying to get McNamara to understand that he was being, that there was a game going, something was going to happen here. So then we finally finished up and everybody signed it and just before it came his turn to sign it Muskie left, somebody, we had somebody call him to the phone, he knew. And then when everybody signed I took the papers and I took them down, he signed it, and I left town. I went up and spent the night in my place up in the Blue Ridge Mountains which had no telephone, while the speaker was, at that, who was it, was it [John William] McCormack?

**DN:** McCormack was speaker then.

**RL:** The speaker then, yeah, and he was livid about it and he told Dick Sullivan, counsel for the House public works committee, to go get those papers back from Linton. And, but Dick couldn't find me, you know. He told me afterwards, he said, "You wouldn't have fought me would you, if I did find you?" I said, "No," I said, "and that's why I left town so you couldn't find me so

there couldn't be any confrontation."

Well I came back the next day, precisely at noon I walked into the senate chamber. By this time McNamara had got over being mad and thought it was pretty funny. And I walked into the senate chamber and put the papers down on the Secretary of the Senate's desk, and as I did McNamara got up and moved the adoption of the conference report. And of course it was unanimous consent and that was it. And then we sent it over to the House and that put them in the position to either reject the entire bill or accept the entire bill rather than cutting out one thing and sending it back. That's how we got the Passamaquoddy passed at that time.

**DN:** Fun and games. But now Pat had created these panels and the air and water pollution subcommittee. How did he propose to staff these subcommittees?

**RL:** Well, he didn't propose to staff anything. We had, I had four professional staff members and seven administrative, and one of those professional staff members was a fellow named John Mutz. And [Stephen Marvin] Steve Young [D-OH], who was a member of our committee from Ohio, was really down on Mutz and something he had said about Chavez after Chavez's death, and he was running all over the place about firing John Mutz. And Mutz was supposedly handling the air and water stuff and it wasn't, didn't take too long to know that he was not on our team.

And in fact, after, right after, you know, when this was all set up in February, Muskie was out of the gate like a thoroughbred horse moving on the water pollution stuff. And so we were having meetings with the Public Health Service, and it began to dawn on me that the Public Health Service had a lot of knowledge about our strategy and our thinking. We didn't think they were the greatest friends in the world for moving ahead on what Muskie wanted to do. And I planted some information with Mutz and no one else, and sure enough it came back through the Public Health Service, so we figured he was a sieve. And I confronted him and he acknowledged it. And I went to McNamara and I said, "I want to get rid of him. I need somebody to do that work." And McNamara said, "We didn't hire him. We ain't gonna fire him." Bob Perrin who was McNamara's administrative aide was standing there, he said, "Well, that's an enlightened personnel policy." He wouldn't let me fire Mutz. So I had no choice, I had created a project for Mutz, something to, researching materials, construction materials, told him, "You go off and do that. I don't want to talk to you or see you again."

So now I'm down to three professional staff members. What I did was get hold of Murray Stein, who was then in charge of water pollution in the Public Health Service and who was in our judgment and as it turned out, a strong supporter of where Muskie wanted to go. And I got Murray and through Murray jumping around the Public Health Service to the secretarial level at HEW to permanently assign, or to detach and assign, not permanent, but to give us Ted. What was, do you remember Ted, oh, Polish fellow who was one of Murray's professional guys over there, and he assigned him to the committee . . .

*End of Side A*  
*Side B*

**DN:** This is the second side of the first tape for the Ron Linton interview on the first of May, the year 2000. Ron, you were talking about a staff member from the federal water pollution agency assigned by Murray Stein. His name was Ted, and neither one of us remembers his last name at the moment.

**RL:** No, that's a shame. He was actually detailed by the secretary of HEW to the committee on a full time basis and worked with us and was housed with us. The only way I would do it is if he would be housed there. And so he became a staff member for that subcommittee and he was excellent, he was a great guy.

And then we moved, we really moved, Muskie really hit the ground running, of course he had a lot of background in the water pollution from his gubernatorial days and he knew where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do. And so there wasn't an awf . . . it wasn't like air pollution in that, which I'll get to in a minute, but in the water pollution he did not . . . . There was no getting up to speed. He knew what was in the bill, he knew what he wanted to do in terms of policy and he just told us what it was, to get it organized and get it structured so he could move it. And we moved that bill in five or six months. It's the Water Quality Act of 1963. We passed that, sent it to the House, and we couldn't get them to act on it.

It was the next congress, we passed it again in January of '65. And lo and behold, like a month or so after we repassed the bill, the key opposition to the bill in the House side, a congressman from Florida, and I can't, I'm not, sorry, Louisiana [Theo Ashton Thompson, D-LA], and I cannot recall his name at this point, died. And that resulted in the collapse of the opposition on the House side, and Blatnik and Jones then were able to put it through. We passed that bill early in 1965. And that was, for itself, was a very significant bill in that for the first time it made enhancement of waters a policy of the federal government. Up to that point the enhancement of waters was not in the federal statute and that put that in, gave a whole new emphasis and direction on how we were to go about it.

But the funniest part of that bill is that when it, going back to '63, I prepared the opening remarks for the first hearing for the chairman, for Senator Muskie. And we had worked out, you and I and the others, you remember, we had a bipartisan approach there. We'd meet, you and I and Bill Hildenbrand [legislative assistant to Senator J. Caleb Boggs (R-DE)] and Pritchard Thompson [*sic* Allen E. Pritchard, Jr., administrative assistant to Senator James Pearson] would meet, but we'd also had some meetings with the Conference of Mayors and the League of Cities to focus on what ought to be the amount of federal contribution to this program. And so I wrote this up based on all our discussions, and in there it had Muskie calling for a twenty million dollar annual federal appropriation. And I took that down to him, you weren't there when I got my head bit off, and he read this and everything was all right until he got to that paragraph. He said, "Twenty million dollars," he says, "I can't propose that kind of money coming from Maine. They'll call me a spendthrift." Well in the end he proposed it.

**DN:** How did he get it by the Republican members?

**RL:** [J. Caleb] Boggs [R-DE], as you remember, Boggs was pretty supportive. They, a hundred million dollars for five years did not at that time seem to distress them. It distressed Muskie



more than they did, than it distressed them. Pritchard counted votes and he knew it was twelve to five, twelve Democrats, five Republicans, there wasn't much sense in fussing about it. And they had other things that they wanted in the bill in terms of protection of the state programs, that. In the end Muskie compromised on some things and we went out, if you remember, we went out of that sixty-three with no minority report, only individual comments by Cooper. And by '65 Cooper wasn't there, so we went out with no minority at all. We passed that bill eighty-eight to six or something.

**DN:** How did Ed Muskie work with his colleagues on that committee?

**RL:** Well, Ed was a, you know, he was a fascinating personality. He could be difficult but he, but even when he was difficult he was stubborn, and you and I know he was stubborn. Even when he was stubborn he was stubborn in a way that you couldn't get mad at him. And . . . but he never demeaned anybody, you know. When he worked with the other members, the other senatorial members, he never made statements or comments or acted in a way that deflated their egos or made them defensive or treated them . . . . He just, he had a real knack of being able to carry on debate without people getting personally angry in terms of the debate on that.

He did, you know, he had a great relationship with Caleb Boggs. And Jack Miller, you know, Jack was a funny guy, he was a Republican from Iowa, essentially a conservative but he never seemed to take an ideological position on these things. He'd make his statement, make his comments, push for what he wanted and then accept reality. I think [James Blackwood] Pearson did the same thing, from Kansas. They were more, they unders-, they accepted reality. But the key to the thing is, is that Muskie did not make people mad.

**DN:** And how did he work with you as a staff member?

**RL:** Well, I think I got less chewed up by him than any one of you guys working with him. Only a couple of times did he really jump all over me and one of them was that twenty million dollars. He didn't . . . . When I had to tell him about the committee thing, he got, he was obviously pissed off but he didn't jump all over me. I don't remember, I know there must have been at least one other time when his temper got the best of him with me, but basically I never experienced very much of Ed Muskie's temper. He, I always found him to be a very thoughtful, except when we got in the argument about Vietnam, a very thoughtful, he'd listen.

He was a . . . . And the thing of it, he was a great cross-examiner. He probably would have been a fantastic prosecutor. But you know, because you worked for him, you'd bring what you proposed in to him, you'd bring your memos in to him and he'd read them and then he'd start asking questions. And I mean they were tough and you had to have answers and if you didn't have answers he didn't accept what you were putting forth to him until you brought the answers back on that. I didn't take umbrage at that. And I had my . . . . My chairman McNamara, he didn't have the same prosecutorial capability, he had a simple measurement: if he didn't understand what you were talking about, his answer was no. He just, "No." That was it.

But no, I enjoyed greatly my interaction with Ed Muskie. I found him to be extremely stimulating, a very demanding individual. We didn't, there was no sloppiness. When we

finished up with the work on a piece of legislation it was a pretty good bill. It represented compromises because we had to get votes, but it was a pretty good bill, pretty good legislation.

**DN:** How did, speaking of the drafting of the legislation, how did that subcommittee deal with the subject of the senate counsel? Do you remember?

**RL:** Oh, well there was a meeting of the committee when we presented the first draft. Most, the bill actually had been drafted before I got to the committee. I don't, I think it was drafted outside the Senate. I don't know where you guys got it drafted on that, when he -

**DN:** Essentially with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, your old partner Hugh Miels and company.

**RL:** I think that was, because you introduced, Muskie introduced what became S. 649 before I became the staff director. Then we had the bill and there was a meeting, I can't remember, there wasn't a mark-up on the bill, it must have been just a review of the subcommittee. And Gaylord Nelson, who I had known as governor, was a friend of mine. He said "Who's counsel?" And I said, "Well we don't," and Muskie looked at me, and I said, "We don't have a counsel on the committee." "Well who drafts the bill?" And I said, no, he didn't ask who's counsel, he asked me, he said, "Are you a lawyer?" That's what it was. He looked at me and he said, "Are you a lawyer?" I said, "No." He said, "Well who drafts the bill? Who drafts this stuff?" I said, "I do." He said, "Well, shouldn't you get a counsel to draft this?" And Muskie said, "Well, we could use legislative counsel." And I said, "Well you can on that, but you don't need to."

And I said, well . . . and I will tell you that when chairman McNamara asked me about naming a counsel to the committee, I told him that, "If you name a counsel to the committee that's who's going to run the committee staff and I'm really not interested in being here just to push paper, so it's up to you." The subject was dropped and it was never raised again, and we never had a counsel on the committee while I was there. And I did from time to time use senate legislative counsel for technical assistance on the stuff, but basically we drafted in our, on the subcommittee with our offices, with Muskie's office, George was in on some of the drafting and with the Hildenbrand job, with Marge's office, we drafted all our own stuff.

**DN:** My recollection, by the way, is that when we sent the legislation each time to the senate counsel, it was with an instruction: you may check for words of art, for concurrence with existing legislation, you may not touch anything else.

**RL:** That's true, yeah, I had forgotten that. Which was quite different than the House side where what was his name, the red headed fellow that they used, wonderful guy, great guy, but he drafted almost everything the House had.

**DN:** And Dick Sullivan was their principal staff spokesperson but not the drafter.

**RL:** No, Dick didn't do anything. He didn't have anybody who really could draft on the committee itself.

**DN:** Now we've talked about the members of the committee and the staff interactions. What about interactions with the lobbyists during that period?

**RL:** Don, that's really interesting, you know. Do you realize how few lobbyists there were in those days? I mean, I was talking about that the other day, the difference between life here in the sixties and in the nineties. I don't think we had a half a dozen lobbyists that came by. Most of them were from West Virginia and the steel companies. There was a couple of people would come by from the chemical industry. And then we had the Conference of Mayors and the League of Cities, and the most persistent lobbyist was from the coop-, the electrical cooperatives, fellow named Leon Billings who would come up and drive me crazy. But we didn't have a lot of lobbyists on that thing and Muskie always sent the lobbyists, when they tried to see him directly, they always were sent over to see me. And it was rare that he would see lobbyists on the legislation. I don't know that he ever saw any that I'm aware. He might have, but I know there were a lot of times when lobbyists wanted appointments over there and I'd be called from, by Gayle, to come over there, they wanted me to sit in on it. He didn't let the lobbyists get between himself and committee staff. He involved us in everything.

You know, go back for a minute, about McNamara's attitude about this. We started to touch on that. I want to tell you, when we finally put everything together he told me, he said, "Look," he said, "I'm pretty much in agreement with the directions that I think Muskie wants to move in water pollution. I don't need to have all this stuff cleared with me. Just kind of keep me aware of any really serious conflicts that might emerge, but generally let him run with that stuff. Give him all the support and back up he needs," he said, "I'm not going to get into it."

**DN:** And he was supportive throughout.

**RL:** All the way through, yeah. In fact, when we took the bill to the floor Muskie managed it, but McNamara would roam around, would come over and whisper things in Muskie's ear about what different members were saying. He'd come over and he'd say, "You've got a couple of senators back there that are complaining about something, you'd better address such and such." And he was totally supportive with the legislation and what Muskie was doing in that field.

**DN:** Did that change when the subcommittee got into the air pollution field?

**RL:** No, no, it did not. Even with the automotive reaction Muskie, McNamara was still supportive. McNamara was not a partic-, was not a captive of the automotive companies. And the unions to the best of my recollection did not interpose themselves on pollution issues on behalf of the management at that time. So we didn't have a lot of pressure from the union side on the air pollution stuff. And as an example of the fact that McNamara was not a captive, you know, he was intractable on the idea of bonding, of allowing federal funds to be used to pay off bonds on highways.

And Russell Long was, when he was majority leader, came to McNamara in the cloakroom one day. He wanted McNamara to agree to a provision that would allow Louisiana to bond for highway building and then get paid back out of the highway trust fund. And McNamara . . . . No, Russell was not majority leader, he was chairman of the Finance Committee, and McNamara

just said, "No, no." And Long started to harangue him on the fact that there was a tax bill coming before his committee that dealt with the excise taxes on automobiles and he was going to find it hard to, for him to relieve the automobile companies of those excise taxes. And McNamara stood up, he was six-foot-two, towering over Long, put his arms on his shoulders, he said, "Russell, we wouldn't want you to do anything that was not in the public interest, would we?" And walked off. But, no, he never interposed. I have no recollection at any time of McNamara ever raising any questions or being, or having any concerns about the legislation that was coming out of Muskie's committee.

**DN:** You indicated that the water pollution legislation, S. 649, came from Muskie and his office. How did the air pollution legislation get started?

**RL:** Well, the bill was introduced by Ribicoff, but basically there were two or three others, would put them together. And Muskie, in the first meetings we had, and after we finished, we finished with the water pollution and then we moved on to air pollution. He didn't . . . he professed that this, you know, he didn't know a lot about it, and then he proceeded to establish a very interesting fact about him and that was his amazing ability to assimilate information, because he began to read, to ask questions, to look at issues. And it was not a very long period of time, thirty days, forty-five days, something like that, before we had a chairman who knew where he wanted to go, what the issues are, what the critical aspects that we had to address were on this thing. And the longer and the more he got into it through that period of time right on, on. I mean, I left you all there in '66 but you had a lot more air pollution after that. I think by the time Ed Muskie left the senate, there wasn't anybody who knew more about air pollution in terms of national policy and national interest than he did. He just mastered the subject, and he mastered it very quickly.

**DN:** And most of the air pollution legislation came to a head after Senator McNamara died and you had left the committee.

**RL:** Yeah, your bigger bill. We did -

**DN:** There was a preliminary bill.

**RL:** We passed a bill in '65 that, it was, that for the first time imposed limits on tail pipe emissions. That was a fairly critical bill.

**DN:** Was it, no, '65 was the time -

**RL:** Well, didn't we do that, no, I don't think we put the limits on in '65. But we did, oh, that's thirty-five years ago.

**DN:** Yes.

**RL:** But we passed a bill in '65. It was air pollution and it had a solid waste component in it too. And we did some things in '65, I don't, I think it was '72 before you put the act with limits. In fact, Muskie was not of a mind at that point to actually put limits on. He wanted, I know

what we did, we required that the administration would have to establish limits and, of course, that, yeah, that's what it was. They were supposed to do it, they didn't do it, so the next time around he said, all right, they didn't do it, we'll do it.

**DN:** My recollection is that in the earlier stages his focus, our focus, was on ambient standards.

**RL:** Yeah, that's right. He did not, he was reluctant to impose by statute tail pipe emissions. But we set it up so that the administration, whoever was going to handle it, I guess by that time we already had EPA, then EPA would have to establish it. Then by the time we got to, what was the next round, '69, '70?

**DN:** Sixty-nine, '70.

**RL:** Yeah, he changed his position. I remember asking him, I ran into him and I said, "Now wait a minute, in 1965 you didn't think it was a good national policy to have tail pipe emission standards and now you're for tail pipe emission standards. How do you explain that?" "Nobody else will do it."

**DN:** In 1965 as I recall, we made a trip to Detroit in connection with the legislation.

**RL:** I don't remember that trip, Don.

**DN:** When the department, or was this '66? When the department came in, the companies came in when asked to address the question of improving performance, reducing emissions, and said, "We can accomplish this but it's much too heavy a financial burden. We have no problems with the technology, but it's too heavy a financial burden." And the administration came in and said they ought to do it but they're not capable of doing it the very next day. And at that point we went to Detroit. I thought you were with us on that trip.

**RL:** I don't think so, Don. I think that was after April of '66 and Pat died in early, late March, early April of '66 and Jennings Randolph became chairman and immediately replaced me with Dick Royce. They left me on the payroll, he was kind enough to leave me on the payroll for a few months to find something else, but pretty much in those days when a chairman died they buried the staff director with him. And I almost immediately after Pat's burial no longer had any responsibility for anything on the committee. And I think he did that after that.

**DN:** After that. Now, how long was Senator McNamara ill before he died?

**RL:** Well, he had had some previous problems but we didn't think they were life threatening. In January of 1966 he made his speech on the floor announcing that he would not seek reelection. That was his 'Thanks for the Use of the Hall' speech. You remember that. You remember his statement there when he got up, about a five minute speech, and in the end he said, "All I can say is fellas, thanks for the use of the hall." He went into hospital somewhere around early March and he died a few weeks after.

**DN:** Now it was around that time that Leon Billings was hired as a staff person.

**RL:** Well, as soon as Pat became ill and I knew it was going to be terminal, I went to Ed and I said, "Ed, Pat is going to die," and I said, "it's not going to be too long after that I'm going to be removed, Randolph's going to remove me from my role. Now I don't know what kind of relationship you have personally with him, and it's not . . . . That's not going to be significant here. But I do think that you need to insist that you have somebody who you name on that staff that reports to you, controlled by you, and can only be fired by you and not by Randolph." Otherwise, my concern was that, and I knew Dick Royce very well, I mean I liked Dick, but the facts are facts.

I felt that Dick would try, would control everybody, every staff person and would control them from his view of Randolph's attitude. And Randolph was a liberal but he had a lot more pressures on him from the steel and chemical industry, and it struck me as a lot less likely to stand up against them, and I was concerned that Muskie would find himself without the kind of staff assistance within the committee that he needed. So he asked me if I had any recommendations and I said, "Well, you know, this guy Leon Billings has been driving me nuts for years but you ought to talk to him and see what you think." And so he, I told Leon to give him a call. He went in, he had the interviews, and Muskie hired him. And I think he was hired before I actually left the committee. We had a little overlap on that.

**DN:** And you then left the committee and where did you go at that point?

**RL:** Well, I, let's see that was 1966, but I left the committee in the summer and by the fall I was affiliated with an organization that doesn't exist now known as Urban America. It was a kind of a think tank supported by Stephen Currier, the Currier funds. The Currier of Currier & Ives and his philanthropic funds supported Urban America which was a think tank dealing with urban issues and urban problems. And the role they brought me on to work with the Conference of Mayors in creating, and what we did create the following year what is known as the, what was known as the Urban Coalition. And that was my charge from '67, and I was the first national coordinator of the National Urban Coalition, which was created in July or August of 1968.

And I stayed there until January of '69 and I left that position for two reasons. One, I had a contract to write a book on environmental pollution and I just knew I could not be essentially executive director of a national organization like that and at the same time write a book. Second, and probably more importantly, the chairman of the National Urban Coalition was Andrew Heiskell who was the publisher of *Time* magazine, of *Life* and *Time* and all that, I forget whatever his title was. He did not have the kind of time or position in, that was necessary to really drive this, you know, the kind of name that was needed. And I certainly didn't have it. I mean, I was the staff and the whole issue was money raising, raising the funds, getting the attention.

And so we together we got John Gardner who was then secretary of HEW and induced him to take on the chairmanship of the National Coalition, which he did until he created the Common Cause and then he gave up the Urban Coalition which was taken over then by Carl Holman who became the president until Carl died. And as an interesting aside, I'm chairman of New York Avenue Development Corporation; the president of New York Avenue Development

Corporation is [Kerry] Kwasi Holman, Carl's son. So everything comes around.

**DN:** Yes. I'd like to take you back to the Senate days and some of the things that were done around the legislation, particularly the films about air and water pollution that you organized and you were the senior producer as I recall.

**RL:** Yeah, I was the producer on that. We, I really should have probably kept notes and dictated. You know, I can't really remember right now how we came to do the first film. I think, Don, that I had come to know somebody who had had experience with documentary films and raised the idea that you get the message across a lot, to a lot more people a lot better on film than you will just a typical Senate written report. And I guess out of that I made some contacts and found out that we had an agriculture department, HEW, CDC, the Air Force; everybody had some kind of film capability on that.

And I came down and we talked, and we talked to Muskie, and he thought it was a good idea, and then the whole question was getting McNamara to do it. And, of course, McNamara's first question, you know, he thought everything we spent came out of his own bank account because the first question was, "Well how much is that going to cost?" And I said, "Well, you know, actually all, we probably don't need to spend more than about five thousand dollars to pay a script writer. We'll get everything else from the federal executive branch." And he signed off on it. And then I brought in my concept of the script and who we wanted. And we were going to get Lee J. Cobb to play in this thing, and Anne Bancroft, and I actually got tentative commitments. And I took it down to McNamara and he read this stuff over. He says, "Hey, this ain't Metro Goldwyn McNamara," he says, "that's too ambitious."

So we cut it back to kind of a standard thirty-minute documentary, but we did get, if you remember, Henry Fonda to narrate it. And CDC provided the cameras, the Corps of Engineers provided us with some assistance, the Air Force provided us an airplane to fly the whole bunch of us around, and Lookout Mountain to do the editing and final film production on it. We probably spent in that period of time, probably today, what would be the equivalent today of about a quarter of a million dollars to make that film, called "Troubled Waters" narrated by Henry Fonda.

And it got tremendously wide exposure on that thing. Then we finished that and we had a, as you remember, we actually had a premier down at the Motion Picture Association, and all the senators down there and everybody thought it was fantastic, you know. It had Muskie on there and they had McNamara on there, they were all very happy. So we went on and did the one on "Evil Winds," that was the one that we did on air pollution. And it's, I don't know if any has been done since but those were of course the first time in the history of Congress that any committee issued an official report of a committee on film.

**DN:** How did the . . . . Now the members of the committee were very pleased when the film came out?

**RL:** That's my, yeah, I thought everybody was pretty excited about it.

**DN:** Did they have any questions when it started, or were they open to it?

**RL:** No, you know, we really didn't talk to, I, Muskie was all for it and then I sold McNamara on it. We didn't really talk to anybody else about it. Any more than we would on a documentary report. I mean, it was Muskie's subcommittee. I don't remember anybody, no one that I recall ever said, "What are you doing that for?" Particularly when we spelled out how we were paying for it. It was all, it was really actual cash out of the bank from the congressmen's five thousand dollars for the guy who wrote the script. He didn't do a very good job, we had to rewrite it.

**DN:** Now, did Sid write, Sid Aronson write the script, or was he the film maker?

**RL:** I can't remember, I don't remember as it was Sid Aronson.

**DN:** He was pretty involved in that.

**RL:** Had a guy named Bert Shannon from the Agricultural Department who was supposedly the director, and but I don't remember the rest of the names.

**DN:** Now, you went on the Urban Center, the Urban Coalition and you also kept your finger in politics a bit during that period.

**RL:** Yeah, very much so. In terms of Bobby's campaign in New York, which I was still in the Senate when he ran for the Senate, but then I related, I stayed related to what was going on there. But in, when I left the Urban Coalition in 1969, no, it wasn't '69, it was '67, yeah, 196-, no. No, no, I know what it was, it was January 1968 when I left there. We formed the Urban Coalition in the summer of '67, Gardner came in and took over in January and I went to write my book, but I also set up a lobbying firm which eventually became known as Linton, Miels, Reisler and Cottone. And we opened, Hugh Miels and I opened our offices on April 1st of 1968. And few days after that I got a call from John Nolan and John was an attorney over at Steptoe & Johnson but he had just left, taken a leave of absence to join the full time Bobby Kennedy for President staff.

And he called me saying, "We've got a desk for you over here and you need to come over tomorrow and start working." And I said, "John, I just can't do it. I mean, you guys knew you were going to run for president, why didn't you call me before I opened the offices? But I've got these new offices open, I've got commitments, I've got banknotes," I said. "I can't do that," I said. And he said, "Well when are you going to be available?" And I said, "Well I probably could take assignments after June." He said, "Well look, why don't, as soon as the primary, California primary's over, you meet Kenny O'Donnell and he'll give you your convention states that you'll be in charge of."

So that was set up for a meeting in the Mayflower Hotel for breakfast on the day after the California primary, when I was going to get my three convention states that I would have responsibility for. Well, I went to bed before, when I knew that Bob had won the primary in California, about ten-thirty, eleven o'clock I went to bed. And when I got up in the morning I



didn't turn the radio on and I was driving to the Mayflower Hotel when I turned the radio on and learned that he'd been assassinated on that thing. Kenny was there waiting for me but we didn't get any assignments that day. And that, I, that was kind of the end of my national political involvement. I didn't do much politically after that, on a national basis. I sort of turned inward and jumped into the District of Columbia and became very involved locally politically after that.

**DN:** Talk a bit about Hugh Miels and how you two came together, and also if he was involved in the sixties.

**RL:** Well, Hugh was, of course Hugh played a critical role in all of Muskie's interest in the pollution program. He was out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was a planner by training, and he was, when I first met Hugh, was in the Kennedy campaign in 1960. He was involved in that, and he had left the League of Cities who he had worked for and was in the campaign. After the election was over, he went into Housing and Home Finance, he was an assistant administrator over there until Sid Woolner and Jack Conway, for whatever reasons, decided that he wasn't their man and drove him out. That was probably 19- early '62. And he went then with the Conference of Mayors, he became, John Gunther was the executive director and Hugh became the legislative director of the Conference of Mayors.

And I was then at the Defense Department at that point, I had seen Hugh a few times because we had developed a personal relationship. We really weren't involved at all on any of the issues stuff. But I think at that point he was already up on the Hill working with you in Muskie's office and the others who were interested in, it was mostly water pollution, he was heavily into the water pollution side. Then, of course, when I was, when McNamara became chairman and I was named the staff director, I mean, that was like a gift from heaven to Hugh and he was on the phone with me almost immediately. And we started immediately working together, him from the Conference of Mayors side and then me on the committee side. And all the resources of the Conferences of Mayors was made available to us as we were working on this legislation, not only on pollution but, of course, he was very into the whole transportation activity as well, so we worked on that.

Hugh had, he left the Conference I think before I left the committee, and he went and joined Bob Gladstone and Hal Weiss who had a development or a planning firm or something, he was with them. And I left the committee and joined Urban America and from there began to build the Urban Coalition. Hugh wasn't very happy at the Weiss-Gladstone thing and I talked him into joining me at the Urban Coalition, so he came down and worked with me on the Urban Coalition. And then when I left the Urban Coalition I talked him into joining me in finding clients who, and doing lobbying. And we formed that firm and the firm, it, I think we were probably the first non-lawyer firm and non-PR firm to represent multiple clients. There were a lot of lawyers representing multiple clients, and there were some PR firms that represented, but there was no one who said we're neither lawyers nor PR types, we're just plain old lobbyists.

And the other aspect was, is that of our first clients five or six of them were public agencies and only two were private sector clients. And in the history of our firm we always, our client base was always about eighty-five percent public agencies and about fifteen percent private sector agencies, so we were kind of different than most people in that.

**DN:** Was most of your lobbying congressional lobbying, or?

**RL:** Predominantly congressional, but we did a fair amount of the administrative law, administrative grant stuff, and some out in the states.

**DN:** Mostly urban related?

**RL:** We were transportation, we were heavy in transportation which was largely urban, water resources in the pollution field. We represented, and I was executive director of the Association of Metropolitan Sewage Agencies for fourteen years. We had association with water agencies, the National Association of Urban Flood Agencies. All those kinds of groups that we, that were our clients and that we organized and worked for.

**DN:** What were your impressions of Ed Muskie in connection with the 1968 and then the 1972 campaigns?

**RL:** Well, I was, of course, I was excited about the idea of Ed Muskie being on a national ticket. I went out to that Chicago convention as you remember in '68. I was too much out of the picture of everything at that point and I didn't stay for the whole convention, and so I never really got pulled into the vice presidential campaign. And then of course when he ran, when he was going in '72, I mean I just, I just still today regret that I did not somehow or other find my way in to play a major role in that and I, you know. I'm colored by my view of Ed Muskie and my knowledge of Ed Muskie, but I think he would have made just such a superb better president than what we got in terms of Nixon, Ford and even Jimmy Carter. I mean, Ed Muskie had talents and capabilities that would have made him probably one of, a really great president if, you know, that's how things go. Who knows why. But it was in my view a very severe disappointment that he didn't get that nomination. Could we have beaten Nixon? I don't know, you know, who knows that.

**DN:** What were some of those qualities that you thought would have stood him in good stead as president and how are they related to his senate career? Excuse me, let me interrupt there.

**RL:** I got lunch at noon.

**DN:** Oh, well that's - (*pause in taping*). We're going to pick up a few words from Ron.

**RL:** You asked me what were the qualities that I saw in Ed Muskie that made me feel that he would make a superb president. He had the capacity to draw people to him, and that's a critical element, I think, of what makes a person capable of being president or a leader of anything. But that capacity largely was because of his mental capabilities. People liked to relate to Ed - . . .

*End of Side B*