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Interview with Robert Nelson by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Nelson, Robert

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

January 25, 2003

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 386

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Biographical Note

Robert L. Nelson was born August 10, 1931 in Dover, New Hampshire to Albert and Alice Nelson. He grew up in Dover, and spent his summers in South Freeport, Maine where his mother was born. He attended MCI prep school for one year, then went on to Bates College. After two years at Bates, the Korean War began and Robert spent two years in the army. He then returned to Bates and graduated in 1956. He attended Georgetown Law School, and worked at the Library of Congress. Just before graduating he began working on the Commission on Civil Rights. He continued this work after law school, working on the commission for a total of five years. He then became the special assistant to the head of the African Bureau and was soon moved into the Aide Bureau. He spent six weeks in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. When he returned he was offered the position of the program secretary in the mission in Brazil and returned to Rio. He stayed there with his wife for two years. He then returned to the U.S. and took over as the executive director of the lawyers committee for Civil Rights. He assisted in forming the Muskie Election Committee, and after working on the Muskie campaign he went to work for Joe Albritton, as vice president of his holding company. He also worked for the *Washington Star*, and was assistant secretary of the Army.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family background; Dover, New Hampshire community; Bates College, class of 1956; serving in Korea; John Donovan; meeting Muskie; Georgetown Law School; Cultural Heritage course at Bates; marriage; working on the Commission on Civil Rights; working in Brazil; working on the lawyers committee for Civil Rights; joining the Muskie Election Committee; Ted Sorenson; Berl Bernhard; Bobby Kennedy; Don Nicoll; beginning the campaign; Ed Pizek; Sumner Redstone; campaigning; planning Muskie's trip to Israel; evolution of the campaign; George Mitchell; elections; Passamaquoddy Project; Jimmy Carter; George Mitchell; Muskie's personal life; turning point in the Muskie presidential campaign of 1972; *Washington Star*; campaign financing; and his time in the Army.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Mr. Robert L. "Bob" Nelson at the Muskie Archives at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine on December 13th, the year 2002, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start just by giving me your full name and spelling it?

Robert Nelson: It's Robert Louis Nelson, R-O-B-E-R-T, L-O-U-I-S, N-E-L-S-O-N.

AL: And where and when were you born?

RN: Born in Dover, New Hampshire on August 10th, 1931.

AL: And is that where you grew up?

RN: That's where I grew up. Except for the summers, we always came back to South Freeport in the summers, where my mother was born.

AL: So your parents, what were your parents' names?

RN: Albert and Alice Nelson.

AL: And your mother was from South Freeport?

RN: From Freeport, right.

AL: And where was your father from?

RN: My father was from Dover.

AL: Okay, and what did they do for occupations?

RN: My father worked for, his whole life, for the New England Bell Telephone Company, and my mother was the school nurse in Dover, but part of that she was an operating room nurse. She went to Colby College and she got a nursing degree, and then moved to Dover to go into the hospital there, and then later on she became a school nurse.

AL: And what was the Dover, New Hampshire community like when you were growing up, in terms of economics, politics, social, religious?

RN: Well, in terms, it was very much like Brunswick, or we'll say Lewiston, it was a mill town. It was north of Portsmouth and the same size if not a little bigger than Portsmouth, which was only about eight miles south of us on the coast, but there were large mills there. And so there was a large French Canadian population, and also the usual run of immigrants. In fact, my grandparents came from Norway and ran a boarding house at one of the mills, and that was, my father was I think the only child born in this country, in 1895, so I was really a second generation Norwegian. And the name originally was Nilssen, N-I-L-S-S-E-N, which they evidently changed to Nelson, to my father's chagrin, later on at the time that they were made citizens.

And we were, it was, my father was very politically involved. There was a heavy Catholic population there, we had both St. Mary's which was the Irish church, and St. Charles which was the French church, and they had their schools as well as of course the Dover schools. And Dover was I think at that time about the fourth largest city in New Hampshire, it was about eighteen, twenty thousand people at that time, so we felt we were kind of a metropolis there.

It was interesting growing up because my father was, as I said, a very active person around the town. He was on the board of alderman for several years, he was chairman of the school committee for at least four years that I know of, and on it I think about ten, he was in the state legislature. So I kind of grew up around, in a sense, a political atmosphere. As my mother said, the phone always rang at dinner time, everybody was looking for Albert. So it was an interesting way to grow up.

AL: Did that have an influence on you, did that get you interested in politics at a young age?

RN: In a way, because my father always told me, "You owe something to your community and you should serve your community." I think that's probably true of a lot of people who were immigrants, or the children of immigrants in this country, because they came, of course his parents came at a time when things weren't going so well in Norway, they hadn't struck oil yet, like now which, now they're one of the richest countries in the world per capita. At that time

they weren't. So it's, I think that it was, really, there was a lot to that. I mean, I didn't realize it I think at the time, but I can remember as a little guy going down to the ward house with my father and hanging out blotters with his name on them, you know, so those things are kind of interesting.

AL: Growing up in that community, did you get a sense of, I'm trying to figure out how to ask this, what was your sense of the community growing up, did you think it was diverse?

RN: Oh yeah, it was very diverse, I mean, and I think that diversity helped me. It's very interesting, you talk about how did I end up at Bates, and one of the reasons I ended up at Bates is because my mother, who was a Colby graduate, as were her two sisters, but my mother did not like fraternities and sororities, they thought they discriminated, so, and she said, Bates doesn't. Well, I always remember that and really this was a factor, and it's kind of interesting. Bowdoin and Colby both had sororities on, fraternities of course, sororities and fraternities at Colby but just fraternities at Bowdoin. And she thought, and of course we lived twenty miles from the University of New Hampshire, it's very close to Dover, and for that reason she thought that they were a bad influence.

And I know my father, who was also quite liberal as my mother was, my mother was more liberal than my father but my father was fairly liberal, because he quit the (*name*) Country Club there because they wouldn't let Jews in and he had two very close friends who were Jews in town, one happened to be the mayor and the other was a fellow councilman, and so my father thought that was not right. So I grew up in a kind of atmosphere that was very diverse.

My friends were, my friends came from across the spectrum, a couple of my closest friends, one was a neighbor, he owned a drugstore in town, and they were, it was Chate Randall, and his father had two stores actually later on, but he turned out to be a pharmacist, he followed and took over the stores afterwards. And I remember his mother, while Chate's father was a Republican, and we were very, you know, very high, what I call Red Dog Democrats of our family, we got along just fine.

But it was very funny because Mr. Randall, Chate's father, married a person of French Canadian extraction and Chate used to call his mother, we all called her "Froggo," I mean, you know, these things, in those days names didn't mean that much, everybody knew you were kidding. And the (*name*) were Greeks, and we had another Greek family that lived on the other side of us, and I grew up with him. So it was full of people like that.

I remember when a kid name Masinsky came there during, right at the start of WWII, 1940 and '41, he hardly spoke any English and we invited him to join our little baseball team, with the ten years old there, and he was a Polish Jew. But I didn't know he was Jewish at that time, until later.

So, you see, that kind of an effect I think, I really miss this with my own children because we grew up, this is a little bit of a diversion, but what's happened in the next generation and the generation after it, is there is really an economic segregation. I did pretty well, we always lived in nice neighborhoods once I got out of law school, and there weren't any poor people there. But

there were poor people in my home town, and I saw them all the time and I went to school with them, and some were friends, and they didn't have much. The Karigis' for example, they turned out, they had five children, two of them ended up being doctors, one an Air Force colonel, Louis (*name*), my best friend along with Chate Randall, and (*name*) and (*name*) and Lou, they had, they were from French Canadian extraction. So you can see that that had a real influence on me, I think, and I really regret that my own children didn't ever really see that, didn't live with that. I think it's probably hard to do that nowadays, frankly.

AL: And so you went to Bates College.

RN: Right. I went to Dover High School. When I graduated from Dover High School, I was only sixteen and I was the youngest one in my class of about a hundred and eighty, and I didn't turn sixteen until August, you know, and seventeen until later. And so when we came up to Bates, Bates suggested that I go to a year of prep school and so I went to MCI, which was very closely allied with Bates and its dean, and I think it was, not, was Milt Lindholm and then the dean of men who asked, suggested that, and my mother thought it was a good idea because I was a year to two years younger than most of the people in the incoming class and they thought it would be better if I did that. So I went to MCI for a year and then of course came to Bates right after that.

AL: And what was your experience like at Bates?

RN: It was overall a good experience. My first two years I was, I didn't really pay much attention to things and I, you know, my grades were fair, I think they were like, I might have got a couple of B's, mostly C's, barely scraped through geology with a D, and I was still a little immature. But I made close friends, we, some of the people I'm having lunch with today were in my class, (*name*), Bruce Morrison, Don Gacetta. And so then the Korean war came along and I went in the military for two years, during the Korean war, and so I left and I came back after two years in the military and finished up. That's why, originally I was class of '53, but I graduated in class of '56.

And when I came back, everybody ought to go in the Army for two years because it can really make a man out of you, or discipline you, I don't care who you are. And I did it, I mean it really helped me, when I came back I ended up on the dean's list all the time, so you can see where it can really make a difference.

And that's why I've been very careful about my grandchildren. It started with my daughters, my own children, when they were there I said, "Don't let them start school a year ahead of time, don't get them out of a cycle, they need the time to mature." And I think that's true of most people. Somehow, sometimes you don't mature.

I'll never forget coming back to my first Bates reunion, and it was later on in life when I was a, they asked me to come back because I had been appointed by the president as assistant secretary of the Army, and so I did come back and I got a kick out of all these guys in my class, several of them, running around with their beanies on, and you know, I just thought that was terribly immature, I says, "They've never grown up." But they have, and done all right, so that was an

unfair assessment at the time.

AL: In terms of teachers, professors, that you had here at Bates, were there any that particularly had a lasting impression on you, or influenced you?

RN: Oh, clearly John Donovan. John Donovan was head of the political science department, and that's how I originally met Senator Muskie, who wasn't a senator at that time, he was running for governor.

AL: Oh really, how was that?

RN: Yes, '52. Well, it was interesting. I mean, Donovan got us interested because it was a big election coming, and of course at that time, the famous stories were true, Ed Muskie used to come over to the campus and sleep when he was on the road because he was trying to save money, he did that whole campaign on ten thousand dollars, and he was the first guy to ever get on television. And of course, the people with him were very influential, it was John Donovan and Frank Morey Coffin, they were the people, those three guys were known as the Democratic triumvirate around the state at that time, and of course they've all been very successful.

And so, you know, I grew up under that kind of umbrella, if you will, of basically John Donovan. I mean, and I took every course in political science they had, I mean, by the time I got out. And so he really did a lot for me. At the same time, of course, there were others and, you know, some of them stand out, some, you know, just don't have that same effect. I minored in economics because by my senior year I'd run out of political science courses to take except the one to write my honors thesis on, so that was more different than a class.

So, yeah, it had a big influence on me I think, I liked the campus, I liked the school, I got mad at them later when they wouldn't let my daughter in but that's beside the point I suppose. And I've told them ever since, I said, "Don't ask me for money until you let my granddaughters in," so. And it's interesting, my oldest granddaughter who is eleven, her father also went to Bates, and they're from Massachusetts. And so maybe Katie, who's a straight A student will get in, we'll see. If I last that long. But I come up quite a bit, I come up and visit. We have a group of us that went to MCI together and then came here, and (*unintelligible word*) today, except for Jim Moody's coming and he didn't go to MCI but he was in my original class at Bates, so.

AL: I have a question. You said you first met Senator Muskie through Prof. Donovan. Do you recall that incident?

RN: Well, I recall, he said, Muskie is coming by, he's going to stop tonight, and I forget what we did, I think it was just kind of a meeting and we went to the meeting and that was it. And then I, you know, after that I didn't see him again for quite some time because the war, you know, the Korean war was on and I went into the service, and I guess that must have been '52, I think it was '52, or maybe earlier, I can't really, I have to go look at dates, I'm getting old.

AL: Do you remember what your impressions were at meeting him for the first time?

RN: Oh, I mean, you know, I'm young and I'm, and you know, political science, I mean, you know, you always think, and in walks God kind of thing, you know, it's that kind of a thing, you're very impressionable still at that age. And of course Muskie was a very impressive guy, he really was. He really, because it, even though there was a big break there, when it came time for him to run for president, I got involved again. And I mean, that was quite a few years later.

In the meantime John Donovan had come to Washington, both to work on Muskie's staff and to become the solicitor at the labor department and we used to have lunch, so I did have, did keep up my contacts with Dr. Donovan. And then, then of course later he went south and went down to Bowdoin, and I talked to the head of the department at Bowdoin recently and he says, you know, Donovan, he'd never met him, but he said, "Donovan's legacy is all over this place." So, he was a pretty impressive guy.

AL: And so you then went on to Georgetown Law School?

RN: I went on to law school, right. Well, when I got out of Bates I had two offers, one to teach in a high school, and one to sell insurance. And I says, "I've got to do something because I don't want to do either one of those things." So I called up, I had a friend from my home town, who was also the best man in my wedding later, named Charlie Radcliffe who was quite a famous debater, he was one of the ones who went to England, and he was a senior my freshman year so he took me under his wing and I got the freshman prize in debate, I become a debater, but I only did it that one year, I didn't do it after Charlie left. And it was interesting, Charlie was in Washington and he was the top staff guy for Senator Toby from New Hampshire who was of course, Charlie's a big Republican, but we're great friends.

And so he, I called Charlie up and said, "I think I'm going to come down and go to Georgetown Law School." He said, "Well, come on down and I'll go with you." We went nights, and we did it in three years which you can't do any more. We went at night summer and winter. You don't take a break when you do that.

And we arrived in Washington, he got my wife a job as the secretary of the head of personnel at, what is it, it was then, had a different name, the Department of Education. Then it was part of HEW, that was it, Health, Education and Welfare. And so she got a job, and I got a job at the Library of Congress which Charlie arranged, and that was a very interesting time because going to school at nights, I was at the legislative reference section of the, at the Library of Congress, in what they called their government department, about ten of us, and there was a guy there who really influenced me, his name was Bill Tanzil, Dr. Tanzil, he was head of that department.

And what we did was we wrote speeches and did research for committees and individual senators when they requested it. In those days, Congress was only in about six months, six or seven months, and in those days a very interesting thing was that the staffs, the staffs might be two or three, a congressman might have two or three people working for him, that was all. So I had a lot of spare time, and Doc Tanzil would say, "You don't got any assignment today, go downstairs, we got the best law library in the country, get down there and study," so it truly helped me out and I ended up on the dean's list there, too, at the law school.

So these things, you know, this is very interesting, a lot of stuff is luck, you're at the right place at the right time. And I tell kids that when I interview them, and I tell kids that when I speak. You know, you can't control everything, and most people don't, I had no idea what I wanted to be when I came to Bates. Law school never even entered into my mind. My mother wanted me to be a doctor, I said, I hate science, so I didn't. I don't think she liked it too much that I went in political science. But it's interesting. And then, you know somebody here, like Charlie was in Washington, and you didn't want to go teach or be an, go into insurance, the insurance business. And it's really strange how these things come along, how you make decisions.

And I, the only guy I ever knew that, it's interesting, was one of my roommates at Bates when I was first here, (*name*), and he said from two years old he wanted to be an FBI agent, and I'll be damned if he didn't go into the Navy, get a commission, come out and go to law school right after I did and be an FBI agent. And I just talked to him last night on the phone, got a Christmas card from him, he's retired now. So it's interesting, some people do have that kind of focus, if you would. But when you were in college, and particularly a college like Bates, I mean they do open your mind to a lot of things, and one of the things I've been distressed to hear they don't do anymore is cultural heritage. You probably heard about cultural heritage; maybe you haven't.

AL: A little bit.

RN: Well, you had it only your senior and junior year, and you had three hours each semester, so you had twelve hours of it, and it was like the history of the world starting with philosophy, art, music, politics, you name it. It was culture, where it all came from, what was in Europe, and I hated it. Everybody hated it, and if you didn't pass it you didn't graduate. Some of the kids in my class didn't pass that last semester, they didn't graduate. Now, they did later, but they had to come back and make it up. And, you know, I said, this is the most useless stuff I've ever seen.

Got to Washington, I remember going down there the first time, my wife and I went down to the National Gallery of Art, and I said, now this is a Rubens, this comes, I remembered all these things that I'd learned. And, you know, you find out, sometimes you don't find out until later what these things really mean.

By the way, I was married my last year here at Bates, and my wife was secretary to Milt Lindholm at that time. She came up here with me from Dover and got a job working for him, so we're having lunch with him today. Quite a guy, he really is. Ninety-two and he's still going to the football games with us.

So, in any event these things, I know this is a little, it's, things in your mind tick off another thing, and that's it, you know, that, and I think it's sad they don't have that here today because I think it, I've seen it mean so much to me. We travel a lot, we're interested in those kinds of things, interested in cultural things, and supporters of the Portland Museum of Art and several other things now, because we really think they're very important. And we try to do it with our own grandchildren, take them to classical, and took our own kids to the symphony and the ballet and those kinds of things because they are important.

AL: Now, I'm going to jump ahead.

RN: Jump ahead.

AL: Or you can intervene if I'm skipping important time periods, but you left law school, graduated, and went where first?

RN: Well, I was at the Commission on Civil Rights. That actually happened before I graduated. I left the Library of Congress. What happened is, in let's see, 1958, 1958, '57, the Civil Rights Bill was passed, the first big one, and I, over, back, going back now to when I was just a, the government, in the government relations section at the Library of Congress, Bill Tanzil assigned me the civil rights stuff. It was very interesting because he assigned that to me, we each had specialties, and he assigned on other specialty, and the other one was the House on American Activities Committee. Now, if you ever saw two things that were the antithesis of each other. One was really conservative right wing, and of course the other was very liberal.

And I had done a, not a book, but I had done a, one of the things I did right away because they wanted me to spend about a month on it was going and looking up all kinds of articles on civil rights and the civil rights bills, pro and con. And they published the names of the articles into this, what do you call it, compendium, and sent it out. And in the meantime, Eisenhower of course was the president, and this, the bill established among other things the Commission on Civil Rights, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. His chief of staff, a governor at that time, who had been the governor of New Hampshire, and he got the attorney general of New Hampshire who had worked with him, Gordon Tiffany, to come to Washington to head up the Civil Rights Commission.

And I'm sitting at my, literally sitting at my desk one day in the Library of Congress, I get this call, and this call is from this Gordon Tiffany, and of course I didn't know him at the time. And so, he had gotten hold of a copy of this thing and he said, "Would you, I'd like you to come over here, we're setting up a staff and I'd like to talk to you." So I went over and we got talking, and he didn't know I was from New Hampshire, I said, "Well, I'm from New Hampshire, too, originally." He said, "Oh, what part?" and I told him, and he said, "Oh." And I knew he was a Republican of course because Sherman, he'd been working for Sherman Adams, the governor, when he was, before he went down to Washington as Eisenhower's right hand. And I said, "Well, my father's in the legislature, Gordon, but you wouldn't know him because he's a Democrat," and he started to laugh. But he said, "All right," so finally he says, "well, how would you like to come over here and work?" And I said, "Oh, this sounds really interesting," I said, "Yeah, I'd be interested."

And I got like a triple grade jump to come over there. He was setting everything up new, so this, I think I was like the eighth person hired over there on that staff, and then helped him put together, and my job was as his special assistant, and so then helped put that together. And that was very interesting, I learned a real lesson there. The lesson is, if you want to go into the government, find a new agency to go in and you, the sky's the limit. You get into one of the old ones and you'll sit and rot and die, and might end up grade eleven or twelve or something. And after five years there, well, of course I was there five years, and by that time I was a super grade.

AL: What's that mean?

RN: Well, that was, well the grades run one through fifteen, and then super grade for sixteen, seventeen, eighteen and nineteen, they're now called U.S. Executive Service. And I was, so I'd gone up very quickly, and that's where I met Berl Bernhard, he was another associate there, and later we set up the law firm.

But in any event, what happened during that time was just fascinating, I mean we did all of the hearings down in Mississippi, you know, and we had some very interesting times in Mississippi and Georgia, Alabama particularly. I remember one we went in and we sat down, Berl and I went in and sat down with, with Berl and I can't remember who it was, with Judge Wallace, who later ran for president. And when he wouldn't release the voting list, and he said no, they're state and they're under my control. And he was very nice, very gentlemanly all the time (*unintelligible phrase*). It was a fascinating time.

So, we were in, I was at Civil Rights Commission for that five years, and that was really a very interesting experience because our commission was made up of six very distinguished people, there was John Hannah who was the president, a Republican president of Michigan State University was the chairman, Father Ted Hesperin from Notre Dame was on it, and then dean, what's his name, (*name*) Carlton, the former governor of Florida, who was a real segregationist. And also John Battle, who was governor of Virginia and a segregationist, so there were two segre-, really three segregationists, and the other one was dean of, I forget his name, he was the dean of the law school at Southern Methodist University. And then the only black was, that was the head of law school at Howard University, Dean Johnson.

This was a very interesting time to watch these people and how they interacted. It was very interesting because the people who became the closest were Ted, was Father Hesperin and John Battle, the segregationist, and they loved each other. They're totally opposite in the way they thought, I mean, and they had these great arguments, and we used to sit around and listen to them.

And when we'd go on trips they'd often come, even the three that were from the South, the segregationists, and we made a pact when we started out, we would not stay in any hotel that discriminated. And of course at that time there was a lot of discrimination, so we ended up staying many times in military installations, (*unintelligible phrase*), because they couldn't discriminate.

I remember story which is an interesting story, and that is that we'd gone down and we were, I believe it was in Nashville, it was, there's a college there, it was a college, it was an integrated college, and, Meharry, Meharry Institute I think it was, Meharry. So we all met in there, and Father Ted came in, we all called him Father Ted, and he came in and he went up to the registration desk, and I remember it was a Baptist institution I believe, Baptist, you had your kids on the desk, young students on the desk, that's what they did at those places, and this was their guest house that we were staying in, and he looked at him and he said, "You're a Catholic priest, aren't you?" And he says, "Yes." And he says, "We've never seen a Catholic priest here before." Well, Father Ted thought that was really funny. But that's not the best part of the story,

because we went out to dinner afterwards, he told us where to go, and I remember it was this rainy night, dark and rainy, and we're coming back up to, into the campus, and we're walking along and we're going over to the guest house, and Father Ted starts to cut across the lawn. And you can't see it at night, there's a wire there to keep people off the grass, and he trips and goes right over. And he didn't get hurt or nothing, he got up, but of course he was a mess, and he just looked at us and he started to laugh and he says, "Divine retribution for staying in a Baptist guest house." Isn't that a great story? That's really cute. It really happened.

AL: He had a great sense of humor I can see.**RN:** Oh yeah, they all did. We used to go upstairs, Governor Battle loved Jim Beam bourbon, he always had his Jim Beam bourbon with him, and we used to get, say to the staff, he'd say, "Come on upstairs, come on upstairs, we're going to sit around and have a, we'll have a bourbon." So we'd go up and sit around, and those guys would start talking and start arguing and laughing at each other, Battle and Hesperin. And they went fishing together, I mean, it was interesting to see. It always made me think, you know, people can be different but you don't have to kill each other. They respected each other's point of view, they were very good.

And there was another one that was interesting, there's a lot of them, I won't go into them all because I don't know how relative they are, but they have a factor in your life. We went down to Louisiana, we did a lot of stuff in Mississippi, too, but I can't get into all that, it's a book's worth.

But we were down in Louisiana and we met with Jack P.F. (*name*), the attorney general of Louisiana, and we wanted to meet with him because we were federal and what we wanted were the voting lists from all the parishes. So we went over to meet with him in this hotel, and it was right out of the South. He had this big suite, and this black guy with a, you know, jacket on and everything was waiting on us. And this is about ten o'clock in the morning when Berl and I went over there. And he said, "Would you have a drink?" You know, they're all hitting the drink, because he had a couple people sitting there, and no, we didn't want a drink, not at ten o'clock in the morning, we weren't at that stage yet.

What we did was, we went in and we're going down through this list of all the different parishes, and we came to Plaquemine's Parish, which is famous as being, you know, real segregationist. It's run by a guy named Leander Perez, who's now dead. They even had a PBS story on this guy, he was, Judge Perez, he ran it. And he says, "Can't do Plaquemine's Parish, I can give you everything else in Louisiana but, you know, that's Judge Perez's territory, I can't get into that, I mean, that's political suicide, I'm not gonna . . ." So anyway, I said, "Well, we're going to go down there anyway." So the next day, not that trip, but the next trip down Berl says, "Go down, go down and see what's going on down there on the side," I had another guy with me, a close friend, and we went down there and we went to Plaquemine's Parish. And when we went there, we went to the court house and Judge Perez was no longer at the court house, he'd retired as a judge, but he's running Plaquemine's Parish, and his son was the judge.

And so we went in and we talked to his son, he says, "No, I can't give you that, can't give you that." And he said, "By the way, my father would like you to come to lunch." I said, "Well, okay," and we went up to this lunch and we, for this little drive and this beautiful white house up on a, it was really quite lovely, went in, you know, right out of a movie picture. And he comes in; this guy was almost the spitting image of an old movie star, you've probably seen him at some

point in your life, by the name of Claude Rains, he looked just like Claude Rains. You ever see Claude Rains, he played in *Casablanca* as the cop there, the police lieutenant.

Anyway, he, we went in and we sat down and we had this lovely lunch. And he was asking, you know, questions about, you know, you want this, yeah, well, we'll have to see about it, I don't know, I don't know. But we talked, but he talked a lot about just, "Where did you go to school?" you know, he talked to me and he talked to my buddy, said the same thing and all this. We get done this lunch and we're having dessert and coffee and, you know, he said, "Well, there's just one thing I want to know. Why are two nice men like you Communists?" All I could say is, "We're not Communist." "You have to be a Communist to think like you do, you know." But he was, (*unintelligible phrase*), then you say goodbye, and we're gone. I mean, it's very fascinating, some of these strange things that happen, they do.

But anyway, that was five years and it was a very interesting five years. And what had happened is, I was going to go, Gordon Tiffany wanted me to come back to New Hampshire in his law firm. Well, by that time Kennedy had won and I was struck, you know, and I'd done great at the commission but I thought I would like to do something else. Berl was going to go start the law firm with Jim Bruno and he asked me to come, and I said, "No, I don't think so, at this time I don't want to do that." I said, "You know, I'd really like to go into the Foreign Service," I mean, I said, "try it." And there was a thing called the Whitten Rider (?) which allowed, to get into the Foreign Service is very hard. At least it used to be, it may not be so hard today, people putting themselves at risk. But this Whitten Rider (?) allowed for something like five people a year that had reached, you know, done extremely well in the federal government were allowed to transfer directly into the Foreign Service at a comparable grade, which is very interesting because I was not sixteen, I was a fifteen, not a six-, I said sixteen before, I was a fifteen, the top before you get to SES. And of course I was pretty young, I was only, what, about thirty, early thirties, very early thirties, to have that level of, and so I went in at an FSO-3, Foreign Service officers start, they tend to go up this way so it would be a department head within a place. And so I said, "Well I'm going to try that," and I went over and first went in as a special assistant to the head of the African Bureau, State Department.

Then Brazil, Brazil was having problems, and Goulart who was a real left issue, he said he wasn't a Communist but a lot of people thought he was, and they were having very serious problems down there and it was a coup, coup d'etat, and the army took over. And the mission down there was, I mean, they were broke, the country was broke, so I got pulled out of that, I was scheduled to go to Africa as the executive officer at the Nigerian mission in Nairobi, and I'd been over there on a trip and I came back. My wife was not too excited about going over there, but was ready to go. But then I got pulled off into the Aide Bureau, they were going to send a team down to Rio, to the embassy, to take a look and decide what we were going to do about rebuilding that mission down there. So I went on that, and I was down there for about six weeks.

Then I came back, and then they offered me a job as the program secretary at the mission, which runs all the loan programs, so I said, "Gee, I can't turn this down," so I did it. We were there two years, we moved down there and, it was in June when we moved down there. But I decided I didn't want to spend my life in the Foreign Service. One of the problems, it's very interesting because you can see how this would happen, one of the problems was I was much younger, for

the most part, than the people who were at my rank. And I don't know if you know anything about the Foreign Service, but they have these rules, like, you know, at the embassy you're, everything's, they're very protocol conscious, terribly protocol conscious, but that's the diplomatic corps. And so my wife just was blown away by it, because there she was, this young little thing, she says, you know, I'd come in, when I came in and got introduced they all stood up, the other wives, you know, she was, you get in the car first, you don't sit down, it's very strange. And that's what they call a high protocol post, it really was a high protocol post, it would be like being in Paris or London, or one of the highest protocol posts.

And I, so I get, my wife was asked to be the chairman, the chairperson of the women's wife's club for the area. And we had really built the mission up by now, this is a year later, there were all kinds of people falling in. And that year, that year Vietnam, India and, it was India, Vietnam had not really started to get all that much yet, it was India and Brazil were the two highest paid missions in the world, they were both getting five hundred million a year, which was a lot of money in 1964. So we had all kinds of money pouring into the mission, and we were doing all kinds of projects. Well, Betty Main, who was the wife of Dr. John Gordon Main, who at that time was the deputy chief of mission there, which is like deputy ambassador, called her up, and she asked her to be secretary and the chairperson of the women's club, and she said, "No, I don't want to do that." She didn't even tell me, but I get this call on the telephone from Gordon Main, who's upstairs, and Gordon says to me, "I need to see you." So I went upstairs. He says, "My wife just called me," he says, "She called your wife and asked her to be chairman, she turned her down." And I said, "Well, she's a very independent woman, Gordon, that's her thing." And he says, "Well, you know, you can, (*unintelligible phrase*), you've got a good career in the Foreign Service, you know," he says, "but this is, you don't turn down something like this." I said, "I'll talk to her." I went down to call her, she says, "No, I'm not going to do that. I'm going over to the Polyclinic and volunteer." So I go back and I tell him, "No, she's volunteering at the Polyclinic." He says, "She can't do that, she can't go over there and volunteer without permission from the ambassador's wife, who's got another project." Well, this went on and on and, but I met some good people there.

Sam Lewis, Sam Lewis was later ambassador to Israel when I was assistant secretary to the Army, I mean, he's a very Woodrow Wilson fellow, a great guy, you know, these, all these different people that you meet when you go to these places. They're very interesting, and a lot of them do very interesting things, so you get to know a lot of people who do very interesting things, and that's always fun.

But we decided we weren't going to stay there, and Berl had written me and said, "Look, can you come back," I'm, he was, at the same time the firm was growing, but he was part time the executive director of the lawyer's committee from Civil Rights, which had started up. He said, "Will you come back, I'm going to, you can take over for me and I can spend more time at the thing," so I said, well, there's a good, so I did it, I came back and took that over. And I did that for a couple years, and that was interesting because we had a lot of money from the Ford Foundation, and our board consisted of people like Christopher, Warren Christopher, what's his name who was secretary of state just before Ed was, and his daughter worked for us on the Muskie campaign, too. Elsie.

AL: Cy Vance?

RN: Cy Vance, I got to know all these guys, I mean it was really fascinating. And then, after about two or three years there, they, Berl came to me one day and says, "We're setting up this thing, we're going to call it the Muskie Election Committee, it's going to be separate, just a, start to set up, get ready for the campaign." And he said, "I've talked to the senator and I've talked to Don Nicoll, he says, 'Why don't you come over and do that?'" And I said, "Gee, there's a great opportunity." See, right place, right time, right? And so I did, and that's how that started out. So these things kind of keep piecing themselves together, and that's how I got started. So I started by setting it all up, and basically I reported to Don Nicoll who at that time was Muskie's AA, and Berl.

AL: Had you known Don Nicoll prior to that?

RN: No, no, I hadn't known Don prior to that. I hadn't known any of the Muskie staff prior to that, really, but I got to know them all.

AL: Can you jump backwards in your thinking and tell me what your, when you first met Berl Bernhard, what were your impressions of him?

RN: Oh, we became very close friends. And he's, you know, a very bright guy, very bright, very personable. He's not a lawyer's lawyer. He would get mad at me for saying that, he's not. But I mean, he, when it comes to the legal business, you know, he's the big kahuna, he can get the business because he knows everybody. I mean, Berl, I watched him operate, and I operated with him, I was his right hand for several years. And so it's, he, he's a guy who frankly I thought would probably go into the government at some point, I always thought he'd be a great attorney general or something, but he never did. Once he got into that business I think he decided he wanted to make money.

But of course I went, later on into the firm with him, I brought, when he was, after he got established and was the managing partner there for about eight years. But he and Harry, he had a lot of close, really powerful friends like Harry McPherson who was, and of course Harry was Lyndon Johnson's lawyer, and in the legal field he knew a lot of people. That's what he liked about setting up the lawyer's committee, and Berl really set that up, he had it all set up by the time I got back, he had done the work getting the, going up and getting the funds out of the Ford Foundation and working with people like Whitney North Seymour, who was the president of the ABA at the time, and all the other different people, Jerry Shestack who's been the president also, and the people like, and what's his name, Ted, you know, wrote all of Kennedy's speeches. Ted, that's the trouble with you get to be seventy-one, you know who I mean.

AL: I know who you mean.

RN: Yeah, he was on the board, too. I mean, that board was full of powerful people, and we got what we wanted at the lawyer's committee for Civil Rights.

AL: Sorenson?

RN: Ted Sorenson.

AL: Okay.

RN: (*Name*) should always remember, Norwegian name, though I always do it.

AL: I'm going to stop right here real quick and flip the tape over.

End of Side A, Tape One

Side B, Tape One

AL: We are now on Side B of the interview with Mr. Bob Nelson. And I interrupted the thought you were finishing.

RN: I can't remember what it was. We'll start over again.

AL: We were talking about (*unintelligible word*), and we had mentioned Ted -

RN: At least I mentioned Berl.

AL: Ted Sorenson and sort of a characterization of Berl Bernhard and your first impressions of him.

RN: Well, my first impressions were, of him was, he was like a big brother to me. I never had a big brother, and this is what it was, when I met him at the Civil Rights Commission. We did an awful lot together, we go and play basketball at the Y together when things were slow at the commission. Wouldn't tell anybody where we were going, we're going to lunch, you know, and then come back. And, you know, he was very close to Bobby, quite close to Bobby Kennedy, he knew Bobby really well. And of course one of the problems there is that Bobby Kennedy used to give us orders, which we didn't like, even though he had no jurisdiction over us.

And I remember one time, this actually happened, he and I were down in Louisiana, and he and I were down, and we always stayed at Royal Orleans because Royal Orleans is a great hotel, and it had a government rate there, that's in the French quarter, and the swimming pool was up on the roof. And we used to go down there like in April, and of course the weather was hot and steamy down there in April, which is really nice after you've been freezing in Washington for all that time.

And we were getting ready for a hearing down there, and the hearing was going to include a friend from Plaquemine's Parish, would be subpoenaed, a judge down there, and we'd gone around and the newspapers knew about it, they got it (*unintelligible phrase*). I was up on the roof, and he'd gone over at this time to do, he Berl, had gone over to do an interview for a radio station or television station, I forget what it was, so I was waiting around, I said I'd be up on the roof by the pool, I've got nothing to do until you get back. So I'm up there and I get this call. And the call is, it's Angie, what's her name? It's Bobby Kennedy's secretary. "The attorney

general wants to talk to," I mean she said "Bobby," that's what she used to call him, "wants to talk to Berl right away." And I said, "Well, he's not here right now." She says, "Wait a minute." So, and then Bobby Kennedy got on the phone and says, "Who's this," to me, and I said, "I work with Berl, he's not here, he's gone down to the television station." "Well, you go get him and you get him back there and you tell him to call me right away, it's very important." So, Christ, you know, (*unintelligible phrase*), so I go tearing out, I knew where he was, found him, I said, "Get back, Bobby's looking for you." So he went up to the room and he called him up, and Bobby Kennedy is, I was just, Berl was kind of (*unintelligible phrase*). "Okay, okay, I don't know how I'm going to handle this, but okay. Yeah, I'll tell them, I'll tell them all, yeah." He put the phone down, he hung up, he says, Bobby Kennedy says, "Cancel the hearings, cancel the hearings, politically not wise to do it right now." So we had to deal with all of that.

And he could, he was masterful at those things, Berl was. I mean, he was very, very good at doing these things, but of course he was annoyed. And I'd been with him over to see Bobby Kennedy in his office, with his great dog over there, so, you know, I got to do a lot of these things that the ordinary person doesn't get to do and, you know, you're only maybe a sideline in it, but it's still, you remember, these things pop out in your memory. Berl was very good. Berl was, Berl was good at policy making, he was good at handling people, excellent. I mean, I owe him an awful lot because, you know, a lot of these things wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for him, hadn't been for the commission. And as I said, these things all kind of fit together, you're in the right place at the right time and you know the right people. And of course (*unintelligible phrase*) might take a liking to you, or whatever. He wasn't an administrator, he did not want to be an administrator. And I thought he was a manager, but he really wasn't a manager. But that's okay, because he had all these other stripes.

There are a lot of people who are not managers. Jimmy Carter wasn't a manager. Great guy, but not a manager. I mean, you know, he was part of (*unintelligible phrase*), and neither was Ronald Reagan. I mean, you can look at presidents and say the same thing, they're not managers, but what they are, they're good leaders, yeah, Berl was a great leader. People loved him, they did, you know, they would give their life for him, he was that kind of a person. And so, and so he commanded great loyalty. But he was loyal back, I mean, you know, that's the good thing. A person that commands loyalty needs to be, the good ones are always loyal back. So, you know, he was, he was really like a brother to me, like a brother I, an older brother which I'd never had. I had a younger brother, but not an older one. I guess I don't know what else to say about him other than that.

AL: That's great. Now, talking about the presidential campaign and the committee, what was the committee called again?

RN: Muskie Election Committee, I believe. It's in the books, in the records in there somewhere, there's memos to that effect. I know that I gave them (*unintelligible word*). I think it was Muskie Election Committee.

AL: And you joined that with Berl?

RN: Yeah, Berl, Berl was on, he was, this is really an administrative type set up that gets ready

for the campaign itself. The campaign had not been announced. This did appear I think in the *New York Times* at that time, or the *Washington Post*, one of the papers, that Muskie had set up this kind of election committee. That's when he first gave a real indication, "Yeah, I'm going to run." And that's, it becomes a structure within which you start to put, you put things together. Don Nicoll was very involved in that as well, and Don was very good, he really was. And of course, and he was the tie in with the senator, because he was, at that time he was the senator's top staff person.

AL: Was he sort of the liaison between Muskie's office and the committee?

RN: Oh yeah, oh yes, no question about it, yeah, he was the guy. He would talk to Berl or to me, and a lot of times he'd talk to Berl and then talk to me, I mean that's the way those things go. We were set up in the law firm with separate offices, but we had not gone over to, at that particular time, when it first started, I don't believe we'd gone over to the L Street office in the 1900 block yet. That came later when we had to expand, when we really got into the campaign and we got that whole, part of that whole building.

AL: At that beginning there, when you first started to set that committee up, was it a lot of talk about strategy, or was it more organizing and delegating things?

RN: Well, it was in a sense both. There were strategy conferences, of course, up on the Hill and that's when I got to know (*unintelligible word*) staff, we used to go up there a lot. The meetings up there would usually be down in the senator's Capital office, a secret, one of the secret offices those guys keep over at the Capital. And, you know, you might have somebody in, a couple other senators would show up and talk, so they were interesting. Those were more or less strategy sessions when they happened, and I got to go to a lot of them.

The other part of it was what I would call the administrative side, you know, you got to put together a team of advance people, you've got to do all of these things, you've got to set it up for the money raising, you've got to, there's all kinds of things that come into that, and begin, you know. And the money part of it isn't an important thing, because I remember prior to April 1 of the year in which the convention was, you didn't have to report cash donations or anything like that, and once April 1 came, you had to have a real clean record. And of course, so before, we used to get cash in and we did not have to report that. We did keep a record of it, however, made a record of it.

And one of the things that happened, and this isn't really skipping ahead, but afterwards when they came around and audited, in that sense, audited the different campaigns, we came out with a clean bill of health, totally clean. And I think we were the only one that did, which was good. But we, yeah, we had cash. I can remember going and picking up cash, I mean that's the way the thing worked in those days and it was rather frightening in some ways. But at the same time, I mean, you walk around with a, literally a briefcase full of cash, it might be twenty-five, thirty thousand dollars, you get looking around to see who's going to grab it off you. But that's the way it worked, mostly. Not all of it, I mean, this was from people who did not want their names known. And there was a very important one there, and you may or may not have heard of him, his name was Ed Pizek. I got to know Ed really well.

AL: What did you think of Ed?

RN: I tell you, Ed was right off the street. He was an Army sergeant in WWII, came back, got into business with this other guy freezing fish, and starting Mrs. Paul's Frozen Fish, and ended up a multimillionaire. He didn't have any further education. But he used to call me up a lot. "I love Ed Muskie, I'm a conservative Republican, I've never voted for a Democrat in my life and I'm going to stay a Republican, but I want to see a Polish American be president." That was his (*unintelligible word*). But he did, and he loved Muskie, but he drove me crazy, too. He'd call me, he said, "Come on, I've got a package for you, come on up, get in the train and come on up here," and I'd go up to Philadelphia and pick up fifteen, twenty thousand dollars.

But those are the things that are interesting, too, but that's the way it was then. And he did it right up until, he had to be, he did not want to do it after the April 1 date, because, you know, he was a Republican and he contributed to Republicans as well. But he really contributed a lot to Muskie. And people like this, it's very interesting, came out and got this relation. Another one, but not on the money at that time, but now I got to know really well and really liked was Sumner Redstone in Massachusetts. I don't know if he's on your list, but he ought to be talked to.

AL: No, now who is he?

RN: Well, you know who he is? Viacom, he owns, geez, he's one of the richest men in the United States, he's the richest man in Massachusetts. Now this later on, but we hired his son at the, he hired my daughter when she was, when he was, when she was at BU, and I hired his kid into our law firms. But he's a great guy. And I don't know if he'll talk to you, he may not, but Sumner is brilliant, he's a real mind, he's a brilliant, brilliant man. And he's, go read up on him, because he's worth it. He was one of the guys that was behind that scene, but he was a very strong supporter of Muskie at that, you know, at that time. Of course that was when I got to know him. I got to know people like that.

I don't want to divert here, but that's, the election, a lot of the people, people would call me because I was kind of a central point down there, being, getting called executive director, or may have called it staff director, I forget. There's stuff in the book in there that, Chris has got a lot of my memos, and there's stuff in there that would kind of put that together. I'd have to look at some of that stuff and I could probably be more coherent on it. And maybe if we go another time, what I'll do is come back and look through that book and all those things. It might kick off other things in my mind that I hadn't said.

But basically it was very busy, a very busy time, I mean, you know, you had, we were building a staff, we were hiring things like research analysts, and political analysts and things like that that you need to get ready for that campaign. I know guys like Bob Shrum, who we hired, Bob was a speechwriter, and a good one. And Mark Shields. I mean, these were all people that, you know, you see now, still around. A lot of them, Tony Lake, I don't know if you've talked to Tony Lake or not.

AL: Don has.

RN: Oh, Don talked to Tony? Yeah, yeah, I'm not surprised. And we'd do advance stuff. For example, I went, I advanced the trip for him when he went to Moscow and to Egypt and to Israel, when the senator went. I went up two weeks ahead of time, we left the day after Christmas, and Tony Lake hooked up with me and I was, because I'd been in the Foreign Service, and because I knew, from my Foreign Service days, I was often control officer for any senator who came to Brazil when I was there, that was another part of my job, the congressmen and senators, I mean, believe me, they liked to come down there, particularly in the winter, you know, our winter, their summer. So I advanced that trip, I advanced a couple trips, and they were the big trips, and I'd go. Usually I stayed at the office, during the early part of that when the election committee was set up, they wanted it set up. And he wanted to go over and talk to Brezhnev and (*unintelligible phrase*), and then to Israel to talk to Golda Meir, and then finally to talk to Sadat. And it's what I, that was fun, doing those things, too, very interesting.

AL: Were you with Berl on the trip to Israel?

RN: No.

AL: You just set it up.

RN: I set it up ahead of time, Berl went on the trip. But I did all the, I did the setting up for the trip myself, and I had with me, Tony Lake was there for part of it, I hooked up with him in Munich, and Peter Kyros was also with me. But I was, I did the, so I did those kind of things when, because they came and asked me, look, you've done this kind of stuff, do you want to do it, and I said yes. But that's the only part I did. I did, once we got into the campaign, I didn't do any more, any of the political advance work in this country. We had people hired who did that. So that's how that happened.

AL: So how did that campaign evolve, what is your perspective on how?

RN: Well, the perspective is it evolved, this, the election committee went on as a growing institution which would include some important pre-campaign things that I said before; hiring analysts, we got people who were going to be doing position papers, so on and so forth, getting the administration set up. For example, I'd handle all the money for the, what we used the cash for was great, we used it for when the guy, even right into the campaign, when people went out to advance the senator wherever he went, they would get, you know, you'd just give them cash and say, "Here, you can live on this." Which was usually enough for the, you know, following kind of a government standard of what you would have. So it evolved into at some point, I can't remember exactly when, when he went out and declared, and then it became a campaign thing, and Berl became the campaign chairman, so, at that particular time.

And then kind of the, I was the deputy campaign manager, I was a deputy campaign manager but it was for administration, finance, and those kinds of things. I had done some political things, some in Florida, and there's memos about that. But not much, that wasn't my bag. People know me as being a manager, and that's kind of what I did was be a manager, but not in the sense, a management's manager as opposed to a campaign manager which means the guy who's in charge of the campaign may not be able to manage anything. But they're the leader, and the leader is

very important. I mean, you've got to have somebody that takes all those administrative burdens off a leader, he doesn't need that kind of stuff, he or she, they don't need that.

So that meant, they changed my title at that time to deputy campaign manager, and then George Mitchell came in and he was like the political deputy campaign manager. That didn't happen right away, but it happened. We had people involved in that campaign like Jack English, who was a Democratic committee man from New York. You got a sense there of, you know, those of us, and even Berl to some degree, who were relative neophytes, but Berl had been involved with Ed when he ran on the vice presidency thing with Humphrey, he got involved in it back then. I wasn't involved at that time.

And you got the sense that the pros are taking over, and the rest of you basically, you do your job because that's very important for the pros, but the pros are going to do things, you know, they're going to be the people that make the big decisions on where you're going to put your efforts. And I remember there is a memo that I wrote that Berl, I wrote and Berl, because Berl and I talked about it, he asked me about Florida, I said, he shouldn't be in Florida, we're not going to win in Florida, (*unintelligible phrase*). The guy, Bob (*name*) who's now a senator from Florida, he's about to retire, well he was (*name*) nephew or something, anyway, I went to see him, he was in the state senate down there and we had a big talk, and he says, "Wallace going to come in here and walk away," and of course he was exactly right. And we, English kept saying, "No, no, Florida's important, Florida's important."

And for that reason, I still feel this strongly today, for that reason Ed was not paying as much attention to New Hampshire and New England as he should have been, because they kept telling him to go down there, saying, "No, you got to go down south, got to get to the southern (*unintelligible word*)."

And you weren't going to get it, I mean, you know, Wallace was going to walk away with it, and that's exactly what he did. And so it ended up being in essence not a smart move. But these other guys were bigger heads than I, I guess, nationally. I think, I don't know how George felt about that, he may not have been there when that decision was made, he may not have been there yet. He did come in a little bit later, as I recall, because Muskie wanted him there. And, you know, Muskie (*unintelligible word*) with a lot of these guys, and of course there was real, there was real differences of opinion within that campaign.

AL: Between Don Nicoll and George Mitchell and -?

RN: Oh, Don, no, I don't think there was any between Don and George. There was some, because at one point Don lost influence, and I can't recall why and when that happened. I mean, I remember it happened, and everything was so busy but he went more into the background, and some of these other guys were coming in and taking more of the burden. In other words, the people who weren't just from Maine, you know, the people like a Jack English, he's the one that always strikes me as one who was, seemed to be calling a lot of shots there for a while. But of course at the same time, you've got to remember that the senator was talking with his own colleagues who he was very close to, and they were, I was at some meetings up there where they were all arguing, too. So, you know, I don't know, it's tough, where the direction really ought to go sometimes, because what you are, you're in this situation where, you know, we may know what Jack English is thinking or somebody else down there, but we don't know what Ed was

thinking after he sat down with Fritz Mondale and talked to him. "So that kind of a thing, there were meetings up on the Hill, a lot of meetings up in the Hill which, because of what I was doing, I did not go to, I went to some, where I think this stuff was argued out and a decision made. But when it came right down to it, he had to make the final decisions, in my mind. Whether he always did or not, I can't really say because he did rely on a lot of people like, good people, like Hathaway and like here, but, what's his name from, oh, I read the book, he was a, I know it, too, not Mondale but. What really happened in that campaign was that, and this is important because I remember at the time it was important, we felt very strong going in. We felt strong going in because Humphrey said he wasn't going to run.

And then we went down, we fooled around in Florida for a while, found out that, we thought that, I thought certainly, I know Berl did, that, that's why I wrote that memo, that we shouldn't be fooling around in Florida much, we should be paying attention somewhere else. And, but you know, you had Wallace on the right, and you had Muskie in the middle, and you had what's his name, you know, finally got the nomination over here on the end.

AL: McGovern.

RN: McGovern, and had McGovern on the left. Wallace got into it, and he was a moderate, moderate to somewhat conservative for a Democrat, and then Humphrey came back in. Now once you split that middle up three ways, that's what did it. And what did it is I guess that Humphrey thought that Muskie was losing too much ground. I don't know why, I mean, you know, why did he come in? He said he wouldn't and then he did. And all it did was to split up, because people, if you look at politics and, if you look at politics you see one thing, it's, the pri-, very few people vote in primaries. I mean, primaries are won by, like, I think when you have six percent, that's what turned out in Rhode Island and McGovern won it, which was a blow. But I don't know how many, you know, I can't even remember if he ever went to Rhode Island. The point I'm making here is that, as I call them, the crazies on the right and the crazies on the left, the ones that really feel strongly, they'll run out and vote and vote in the primary. But it's going to be won by the people who vote, and the great majority of the people who vote are moderates in the middle. So if you've got three people dividing up the middle, you know, right and left, you know, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to feel like that's, that something here is not going to be very good. At least that's what I thought, and that was my own opinion.

It might be simple, but, you know, it seemed pretty clear to me that we weren't going to win anything in the south. They thought Florida was winnable because there were a lot of people from the north who were in Florida, but that's never been true, you know, at least it wasn't at the time. And so I can understand why they thought that, but when I talked to people down there I said, "No, he's not going to win here. No, he's not going to win here, because George Wallace is going to come in here and he's going to walk away with it," and he did. Even Humphrey did not do very well against him, so. But anyway, that's I guess a little bit of a diversion, but I didn't want to forget that because I thought that was an important point.

Things went along really well; we moved over to the building on L Street, the other building on L Street, and of course we had to get that all set up. We picked up the FBI, not FBI, the Secret Service contingency. That was kind of funny, those guys. I'll never forget the guy, one of them

left his pistol in the men's room, God, it just created this whole thing. And then, always reminds me of stories.

Here's a story, we used to have some meetings up here, we'd meet at the Shawmut Inn, we'd all fly up and go to the Shawmut Inn which is just outside of Kennebunkport. It's now gone, somebody bought it and ripped it down. It was a great place. I had two daughters that got married there, it's a wonderful place. And I remember sitting around the bar, and it was April. Now, Ed liked to swim, he'd swim every day, he'd swim in this cold water and it never bothered him. No, he would. So he'd go out for a swim, and they're sitting there, the Secret Service guys are sitting at the bar saying, "All right, who's going in with the Senator tomorrow, that water is terribly cold." And they were, then they're flipping coins as to who got the duty. You know, these funny little things that seemed to happen.

But we had, we used to have, we must have had three or four meetings up there, (*unintelligible phrase*). And that was good because he got some of the Maine people involved who wanted, you know, we didn't see. I know that some of the guys, I know Shep Lee, he was a big supporter, but you know, there was stuff going on up here with Hathaway, and Peter Kyros who was then a congressman from there, Bill and others, but, that, you know, I knew them, met them, but we, what was going on up here didn't get really integrated into anything nationally until you had, some of them came down to the Shawmut Inn things, pretty much.

AL: Did you ever notice that Senator Muskie was any different in Maine than he was in Washington? Was there a distinction in his -?

RN: I don't, I didn't see any. I mean, he was very Maine oriented, I mean, that came out in Washington. I mean, that's why people that called him too liberal, I just used to laugh at, because economically he was quite conservative and he would really stick up for Maine, and that's where it came from. Maine and the shoe industry, I mean, anybody fool around with anything in Maine would have the wrath of hell visited upon them by Ed Muskie. And he had that loyalty, too, that, to people and he was very loyal to his state, and that impressed me. I didn't see any real difference. I think that maybe one or two times where he felt that he had to, may have been encouraging to vote on some of the votes that might have affected Maine somewhat negatively, but I don't recall that they were, and there may have been two or three.

But you know, at the same time he was trying to balance things. One thing I'll say about him, he's one of the brightest people I've ever met, I mean this guy was incredible. I mean, you could go tell him something and he already, he would read something and he could practically repeat it back to you the next day. That's why he was such a good chairman of committees on the Hill, I mean you couldn't fool him.

And yet he was very loyal to his friends on the Hill. I remember when Albert Gore, Senior lost. I had a call, and it was from Muskie and he wanted to know would I come over to the house that night because it was election night and he was going to have to make some, he knew he would have to, if he won he'd be calling some people that were running, and he had eight or ten of them he knew, you know, for the Senate election. This was two years before the '72 elections, '70. And he, I think that was the year, I can't recall. Anyway, he, I went over there and he had a list,

and he was watching and he said, well, "Albert's being beaten," and he says, he was practically in tears. He called him up and talked to him for about fifteen, twenty minutes. I would, you know, get the numbers for him, I sat there with him and watched, and we sat there and he called up several people, some to congratulate if they won and some that lost. He was very good at that kind of thing.

There really is a club in the Senate, and I mean it was a club in the sense that people, he used to have coffee quite often with John Stennis who, they were way apart probably ideologically, particularly things like civil rights, but he said John Stennis is a real gentleman. And, you know, you see things like that. I mean, you see it in other ways, too. I remember a few years later when I got, I had to go up for my hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee on my appointment as assistant secretary to the Army, and, on my nomination, and went in there and testified, and there were four or five senators there, the whole groups never come. One was Goldwater, one was Strom Thurmond, and one was what's his name from Georgia, Sam Nunn, Teddy Kennedy came at that time, and someone else. And what was really interesting is, after I got, after this got done, it wasn't a long question and answer, just some stuff on some policy issues, and then it got done, and my wife was there, and my daughter, the older one, and the two people who came down, wanted to meet my wife and congratulated me, were Goldwater and Thurmond. Sam Nunn left, who I got to know better later, and they were so gentlemanly. They said, "Now look, you know, if there's anything over there you need, if you need some help in something, you can call us." So it is an interesting place, I mean it's gotten much more vicious today. I don't think it ever was then. It really has been, it's a real shame. But that's just a little sidelight to say how people, how you react to people.

AL: Yeah, well that's very important, that observation.

RN: Yeah, yeah, it is. People there were, both Goldwater and Thurmond both struck me as real gentlemen, they really were, and they cared. I never called them because I didn't have to, but that's beside the point. Nunn I talked to a lot, yeah. So I think that Ed, I think he stood up for Maine, boy, he did not like people who were going to take anything away from Maine. Have you heard the story about when, later on when he was, when Carter won and he was called, and Carter had been there about two or three weeks in Washington and he put out this list in the paper of water projects he was going to cancel?

AL: No, no.

RN: That was Passamaquoddy?

AL: No.

RN: Oh yeah, well Passamaquoddy, I was over in the Pentagon, I get this call from Leon Billings and, you know, Leon's laughing, and he and I, he got a hold of me, he says, "God, you'll never believe what happened." He says well, "It went something," this is third hand, (*unintelligible phrase*), I think it was Leon that called me, not Don Nicoll, I think it was Leon. Anyway, he came into the office, ripping into the office mad as hell, as he can get, and he says, "Get me the president, I got to talk to the president right away. Get me the president on the

phone.” (*Unintelligible phrase*) says, “What's the matter?” He says, “He's going to cancel Passamaquoddy Project, I've been working on this for years!” So he gets, the story goes, he gets, his secretary gets him, buzzes him in there, and Leon was in there with him, and said that, the president isn't available right now, but Mr. Gerden, you know, who's his chief of staff there will talk to you. Ed says, “I didn't call Mr. Gerden, I don't know Mr. Gerden, I don't want to talk to Mr. Gerden.” Then he said, “Wait a minute, put him on.” So he puts on Mr. Gerden, he says, “Mr. Gerden, I don't know you,” and at the same time he said, “I don't want to talk to you, I want to talk to the president. Now let me tell you something, you tell the president that if he wants a budget, and I am chairman of the Budget Committee, he better call me back in the next fifteen minutes,” and slammed the phone down. And Carter called him. And you'd think they'd have a bad relationship over there, but it ended up he really started to talk to Ed a lot.

Carter made a big mistake when he came in and a lot of us saw it. He thought he was running the Georgia legislature or something, and you can't do that. He's such a good man, I mean a decent human being, you talk about, there's a guy who's a nitpicker when it comes, I remember going over with the budget, I mean the Army budget, and he's asking these questions that are unbelievable. I mean, what is he doing, you need lots of time to read all this stuff. But, I mean that's an aside, but that's a comment I would make about, but it also showed Muskie, what Muskie would do. But you don't, you don't come in, he said, you got to talk to us first before you decide to announce these things. That's what he was mad about, he was mad that he just went and put this in the newspaper, because he says, he's fooling around in my territory without even talking to me, and that's not the way things work in Washington.

So, and that's right. So that was an interesting little observation that did happen several years later, and then he became his secretary of state. And I understand as secretary of state thing was an interesting thing, too, which was that, now this is again the story I got, and the story I got was that Jim Brennan, I mean, what's his name, yeah, Brennan, not Jim Brennan, was governor of the state at that time. Joe Brennan, Joe Brennan wanted to appoint himself to Muskie's position. Have you heard this story?

AL: I've heard a version of it, but I want to hear yours.

RN: Well, my version of it, you don't know how many things it's been through by the time it got to me, you know, but my version of it which I got over the phone about it was that Ed said, “I'm not going to, no, I'm not going to come and do it unless George Mitchell gets appointed to this position.” And this meant that the pressure, the president had to put the pressure on Brennan, which he did, and said, George Mitchell, you've got to appoint George Mitchell. I guess Joe being a loyal Democrat did it, but he didn't want to do it, he wanted that job himself. And that's how Mitchell got the job. Which is fine, I mean, you know, because George went on, he is a clone of Ed Muskie, he is a clone of him, I mean he grew up at his feet and watched how he did everything, and look what it's made out of him, he's been great. And I'm sure glad he got off of this commission that they just appointed with Kissinger.

AL: Is that because of the Kissinger factor that you're glad?

RN: Oh, yeah. Well, I think I'm glad he's getting of it, yeah, for that reason. Well, they told

him he'd have to leave the law firm, and of course he didn't want to do that, he's chairman. They just merged, (name) just merged with another firm, and that's why. I know George, I mean George, I don't know George that well, as well as I know a lot of the other guys, but I know, met him of course on several occasions. But George is a guy who I see as a guy who knows himself, and he knows what he is capable of doing, and you've seen what he's been doing, he's learned the lessons very, very well. He's obviously very bright, as Ed was, but he also, he's been a very good legislator and he learned that from Ed Muskie, he learned that serving down there. Look at the different things he's done, be a federal judge, he got experiences in each one of those things, too. And he knows them all, and I think he's a terrific guy.

But, and I think he left, he says he's got a family to support, and it's true. Ed didn't come to our firm, (name), because of that reason. We made him a very good offer, but the New York firm made him a lot better, made him a better offer and did something that would take care of Jane for a long time, and that's why he went there. And he really wanted to come with us, and I know he did, he told me he did and we talked about an hour in my office over at the firm. I said, "Well, I hope you're coming over here," and he said, "Well, I don't know, Bob, it's a very hard choice." And I think he made the right choice for that reason.

But, so, Ed Muskie had gone through his life, there's a story that's a true story, on the airplane, when Jules Woodcover came up to Ed, Jules is a very friendly guy, he's a political columnist, he and Jack (name) together, and he came up to him on the plane, he says, "Ed, you can't be president," he says, "you'll never make a president, you can't get to be president." Ed says, "What do you mean, what do you mean I can't be president?" "You can't be president," he says, you know, he says, "you've been a governor of your state, you've been a senator all these years, and you still don't have a pot to piss in. Something's wrong with you." (*Unintelligible phrase*).

And Ed always struck me this way. He was really a man of ethics, if you've ever seen a man of ethics. And he was that way. And believe me, I know that he didn't have a lot, because my wife did a lot of their bookkeeping for them, because she's a money manager and it was her business and she did it. She went up there and she said -

AL: So this was his sort of last opportunity to make some money before retiring.

RN: Yes, it was, yes, make some money to take care of his family. And you know, he had some family problems with some of the kids. And I never really involved in that. Berl got involved in it quite a bit, trying to help out with the kids and some of the problems they got into. But, I don't know, somebody asked me the other day, was Martha still alive, and I said, I don't know. I think she is, I hadn't heard she died, I don't know why.

AL: Yeah, yup.

RN: But, you know, she, you know, it was tough. He had to keep a home in Washington, a home up here, and little things he liked to do which he ought to be able to do, like play golf once in a while. They were important things to him, and that was getting away. I mean, we had our instructions on the road when he was coming in, save time for swimming in the pool and maybe a round of golf. And he hated raising money, I know because I was involved in that, and he

hated raising money, and he hated asking anybody for money, and I think it's because he just felt that way. And I know how he feels, I hate to do it, too. I've done some (*unintelligible phrase*) either. It's, he had my sympathy for that, I'll tell you that. It was important. But he was a, he had to make money, this was his opportunity. He was in his sixties and never made real money. And I think we offered him three hundred, three hundred and fifty thousand, but he got a better deal at the other place so he had to take it, you know. And that was in the seventies, so it was good money in those days.

AL: This tape is about to end, so I'm going to stop right here.

End of Side B, Tape One

Side A, Tape Two

AL: We are now on Tape Two of the interview with Mr. Bob Nelson on December 13th, the year 2002. And we were talking about the presidential campaign, and how did you see things going? Was there a point when there was a lot of gray area as to whether you were making progress?

RN: Well, as I recall it there was. I mean, people were working very hard and I think getting very tired. And I think that the time when it really, got really worried, was of course somewhat to the fuss over the senator's supposedly crying in New Hampshire, but that did not strike me as what a lot of people called the turning point of the campaign. I don't think it was, I think the turning point of the campaign was when the middle, which he had co-opted, had to be shared with Jackson and, Jackson from Washington, Washington state, Harry Jackson, and then later of course Humphrey, because this just divided up that middle, the middle moderate part of the country among three people who were relative moderates. I mean, one being a little more left than the other or a little more right than the other if you want to call it that, but clearly in the mainstream, as I would call it, and their records were in the mainstream. Even Humphrey's record was to a great degree in the mainstream at that time. So I think when you see that, you begin to get concerned.

I can't pinpoint it really any better than that, except that those things happened and, again, I think they were much more important than the theoretical tears in the snow up in Manchester. Now Manchester, New Hampshire, the *Manchester Union Leader* was such a vicious paper, I mean my father would not allow it in the house. As I said earlier, we lived in New Hampshire, he did not like that man at all, and his rantings and his ravings, so he said, I don't want that newspaper in the house, and so it never was. Because his attacks were, you know, were like that guy that's on the radio now I never listen to.

AL: Rush Limbaugh?

RN: Rush Limbaugh, I mean he was like Rush Limbaugh, that's what he was, I mean he cared more about the, he didn't care about people, he cared about what his thoughts, and what they ought to be and that's no way to run anything. But that's beside the point, but I just don't think it was that important. He was, Muskie clearly was going to win New Hampshire, but unfortunately he didn't win it with as much, with as many, get as many votes as we thought he would have

gotten, and there was a little picking on it at that time, although I don't still think that was the turning point because that was happening with, that was the first primary. I think they did show that we didn't spend quite enough time over there, but they made a mistake. I mean, there's a lot of people have said, and I think it's true, that the people had persuaded Ed to spend more time elsewhere, they didn't realize that they were taking the risk of, you know, just shunning a neighbor a little bit, if you want to put it that way. And coming from New Hampshire myself, my dad at that time thought, as little politician as he is, I mean being in the state legislature, kind of thought that Muskie probably should have spent a little more time there.

But that's about the best that I can put it. A lot of it's because I was, by this time I was spending an awful lot of time on traveling and doing all of the other things on the administrative end that had to be done, and so I, and the campaign had then taken on a life of its own, so to speak, and that's what was going on. And, you know, it took, the campaign's a very interesting thing, it took two years, two years and a little more, out of my life, but on the other hand I did get paid, except for the tail end of it and I survived through that.

But out of it grew an awful lot of other things, and it was an experience that I'm glad I had, but it's something that I said after it was done, I'm never going to do this again, this is very tough. It was tough on my family, it was tough on everybody. You're gone an awful lot of the time, I traveled, I had to travel a lot, except toward the end, I had to travel a lot because we'd be going out to California to tend things and do things and set things up. But overall, it was a very, very important experience in my life, perhaps the most important experience I had, I guess, other than being born, I don't know. But I met an awful lot of people, and I made a lot of fast friends and, I mean, my going on, instead of going to a law firm when I was done, which I expected to do, I went to work for Joe Albritton who was a big supporter of Ed Muskie's, and I've been, as the vice president of his holding company, and that turned into a lot more things. So those things are, it's the way life goes, I mean, you just, there's some kind of plan out there but most of the time you don't see it, you run into it and you have to take advantage of it when you do that.

But none of these things would have happened, as it shows the things that later on, getting to go back into the government at a very high level, coming out afterwards at the law firm and working at the law firm for a while until I got sick and tired of it, and then from that what I'm doing now. So it just, it all worked out very well for me, I'm a very lucky person, that's the way I look at it. But the campaign itself, I did have a call from Wallace's people when he ran four years later and they asked me would I be interested in a job and I told them no. I did say, however, "If you, I'm in town and if you ever want to talk or want me to come to a meeting I'd be glad to help in that sense," but I have no interest in going back in any political campaign as a full time person. Or even a part time person, really. It's okay being a little bit of a consultant and trying to help somebody out a little bit, but not a full time thing, it's just too demanding. And if I like my family and I'm afraid they'll leave. But they were very understanding.

So the campaign as I saw it was a counterpoint in my life, all these different things were counterpoints and I don't know how much weight you give to each one, but in terms of influencing my life I would say, you know, certainly Berl Bernhard, John Donovan, Berl Bernhard, it's hard to name them all, and Ed Muskie are at the top of the list, they are at the top of the list. I got a lot out of the years with Albritton, too, because being the senior vice president

of the *Washington Star* was at a time when I ended up really being to some degree, I was the senior person on it because Joe was never there and he didn't name a president, that was I think, along with being assistant secretary of the Army, both were really interesting and fun jobs. You could spend a lot of time working very hard on them, but you really liked it, and you get to know a lot of people.

That's what happened around Washington, I got very involved in Washington and very involved in many things in Washington, from the Federal City Council on down that, where I made lasting acquaintances and friends, and that's very important. And I miss them now that I'm up here in Maine. I do go back quite often to my office down there, but I haven't been back since June and this is the longest time that I haven't been back, I've been waiting for, I just got too busy this month, and January I'll go back down again. But, I'm working on boards of directors up here and having fun, too, so that's something to do. But being part time in Maine is kind of the best thing you can do. I can stay involved totally with my office in Washington, but at the same time I can do what I want and have a lot of time to myself and go on trips and all those wonderful things. And they're nice. But I do say, I miss Washington, and if it weren't for my three grandchildren up here, four actually, one's in Massachusetts, three of them are here in Maine with me, right close by, I probably would have just come up in the, just kept our first smaller house we bought for the summers, and kept that instead of getting a permanent house in Brunswick at the same time. So that's where I am right now, and it's been a, none of these things would have happened if way back there in the beginning somewhere the first thing didn't happen.

The smartest thing I did when I got out of Bates was decide to go to law school. I hadn't even thought about going to law school, I thought I'd get offered a better job than I got offered, and I didn't, so therefore I said, I got to do something else, I might as well go to law school. And that's been a good career, I mean law is an interesting thing because law school teaches you to analyze things, to, that's what they really teach you to do, and to take things apart and look at them, and this helps you. And I think it helped me very much as a manager, which I had more, and continue to have I think a stronger, it's my strong point, as my wife says, and other people have said.

And I think that shows up in the kind of jobs I've had. After the newspaper and getting those losses down from twelve million a year to two million a year, and when you take over, you're running the company, for all practical purposes running a company that's twenty-five hundred people in Washington, and it's also like one of the top ten newspapers in the country, you get to know a lot of people, they come to you, that's the interesting thing. They like you because they think you're going to do something for them, and of course that's always to be seen. But, and it certainly happened in Washington and it's, that was a very exciting time. But having been in the Army during the Korean war and being, going back as assistant secretary where two thirds of the Army budget was in my office, and having responsibility for the training force structure and manpower, you know, that's a lot of fun, that's an interesting thing, too. But that starts at 5:00 AM, I mean just because you're not out in the field you still get up and go for those early briefings. But all these things have affected me, and I hope I've learned a lot from them. But I've been a very lucky person, I really have. I can't think of doing anything else.

AL: I have one question about the campaign financing. You said that you really were in

charge of the financing?

RN: Well, I wasn't in charge of raising the money, but I was in charge of accounting for the money, yes. If you want to put it that way, yeah, (*unintelligible word*) the money, anybody wanted money they said, go see Bob. So that was it pretty much, yes.

AL: And you mentioned that Senator Muskie wasn't big on fund raising.

RN: Oh, no, he wasn't.

AL: He didn't like to do it.**RN:** Oh, he hated fund raising. And we heard about it every time we wanted him to do something. I remember the day before, it's really interesting, there is a little juxtaposition here. Berl and I were in the, we were with him in Florida and we had the schedule that morning, he had to go back for the Manchester appearance. And we wanted him to do some fund raising and I think he said something like, "I'm not doing goddamn fund raising, that's why I've got you guys." And so we stayed and made phone calls, and we actually left on a plane that afternoon to go back to Washington, and I had just gotten home and turned on the television when they had the thing about Muskie, Muskie was crying about his, about whatchamacallit attacking his wife up there at *Manchester Union Leader*. You know, sometimes I wonder, I don't think, as I said, I think that he wasn't crying, but I think at the same time he was mad, and justifiably so. And, you know, he may have tired, he was tired, Muskie did get tired.

But that's a very tiring thing to be a candidate, and you have to learn to pace yourself, and that's why we always tried to give him time. You know, he would, as I say, go for a swim no matter where we were, California, you know, Florida, it didn't matter, if he could in the morning. And sometimes play golf. But we used to kid around, Berl and I used to kid around saying, what are we going to be doing if Ed wins, and Berl says, "We're going to be running the country because Ed will want to be over to the Congressional Golf Club all the time." That was said in jest, but.

He asked me, I know, I was at a meeting and he asked me what I wanted to do. We were sitting around talking, and this was, I don't know, probably at mid-campaign still, when he was out front pretty well. He said, "Well, what do you think?" We were just talking and I think it was either at his house or it was up on the Hill in the Hill office, and we're sitting there, five or six of us were sitting around, Don may have been there for this. He said, "Well," he came to me and he said, "well what do you want to do, you going to come over to the White House staff?" And I said, "I don't think so." He said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I want to be ambassador to Portugal, I can speak Portuguese from being in Brazil and that's far enough away from Washington for me." He got a big kick out of it. But that was, I think truly I would be interested in doing something like that more than I think I would be in a White House office.

But, you know, I don't know, you know, you got to watch yourself in Washington from getting power mad, and I think you see this a lot of the time. And it's a really tough thing to do I think, in the White House where you have got to be, somebody's got to be the gatekeeper, the president's got to have a gatekeeper to a certain degree. Yet, he's got to be, he or she has got to be informed as well. But at the same time, you've got to be tough and that can be very annoying, because you're going to run into people who are going to be just as hard as you've got to be, and

it's a problem that you can't ever probably resolve.

But I think Ed, Ed's always had a very, I think he had a very good staff for the most part. When I think back of the people that were there at the time, and some didn't last in the campaign which, you know, may just be that a national campaign is so much bigger than a state campaign that you needed different experiences or different talents, and I suppose that's true. But the people I met there, like, I knew from the secretaries on up were I thought all first class people. And Bob Shepherd I thought was a good PR person, but you know, it came time to go national and they got somebody else. And, you know, I was in there, fighting as well as everybody else. So you look at it from the standpoint of the, that's the way things happen. And it's like a lot of things, I think sometimes mistakes are made.

It's just like in a law firm, when it comes to make a partner, you've got people like, young people who are in there and having worked hard and, you know, you want to get, you've got ten associates and you know out of that ten associates only three are ever going to make partner, that's probably the average. Does that mean the other seven are stupid? No, it just means that there's one thing or another thing they may be lacking, but they're very bright and they make it, instead of big law firm, make it into a small law firm, or they get teaching law or being in the government or being in business, there's all kinds of things to do. They can't be stupid or they wouldn't be at the law firm in the first place because, you know, you hire very, very good people.

And one thing that surprised about being at the Pentagon was, that was a fascinating place to be after my two years as a G.I. during the Korean war. When I left that place, the officers who worked for me, I had generals working for me, those people were so good it was unbelievable. If I needed something done, they'd stay all night to do it, they had discipline that the rest of the government doesn't have. They saw this. In fact a guy was a major in my staff then, in 1977, is now going to be the next chief of staff of the Army, four star general, Jack Keene. He's a terrific soldier, he's a terrific man. He and his wife couldn't have children, and they, what they have done is they have, you know, taken kids in, they've adopted several disability, children with disabilities.

There are some first rate people there, and Shiye Myer who was the chief of staff towards the end of my (*unintelligible word*), he was a great guy, and Shiye told me once, he says, "You know, Bob, he said, 06 is a colonel, and he says, Out of every ten colonels, probably two are going to make, get general officer." He says, "Probably seven of them are qualified, or eight of them are qualified, or maybe they're all qualified, he said, it makes it very tough to pick that general officer." And he said, and I said, "Well, when I see the excep-, I could see a couple of exceptions and those guys didn't do too well once they got to be generals and they didn't get any more commands.

"But what I did see were people who cared about their job, who thought about it deeply, I mean [Edward C.] "Shy" Meyer had been at Brookings Institute and (*unintelligible word*) a couple years to go over there while he was a, was colonel I think." I said, "These people are bright, they're able, they're not warmongers at all." In fact, Jack Vessey, who was the, when Shy Meyer became chief he picked Jack Vessey, who was his mentor really, who had been a deputy chief of staff operations before which, and brought Shy in as a major general. When Jack Vessey was the

vice chief of staff, he was jumped from, I mean when Jack Vessey was going to retire as a four star field commander, commander over in Europe, in the Far East, this guy was a tanker, a sergeant during WWII, he was one of the few that came up through the ranks, didn't go to ROTC, didn't go to West Point, and he was known as kind of a soldier's soldier, like Bradley, you know. He walked around with his tunic unbuttoned, he wasn't a spit and polish guy, and everybody loved him.

And I got to know him really well because I sat next to him, I had Redskins tickets for twenty-five years, and he sat, I had eight seats there, for the captain, some for friends, and Berl would, had bought them for a while off me, and others, and I took Jack to some games, and he loved football, so I got to know him really well. He was a wonderful person, and when Shy Meyer became chief of staff, you know, he was young, he and MacArthur were the youngest, both were, he'd just turned fifty when he made chief of staff in the Army, youngest chiefs in the history of the Army, and Shy was a surprise pick, jumped over several other generals. He immediately asked Jack Vessey to stay as his vice chief to do the running part of the Army, which he did. Getting to know people like that, I remember Jack, going places with Jack Vessey where he would say, and he says, "If I see an officer's not taking care of his men and his people and their families, he's out of here."

But we, none of who are warmongers, I mean, those guys, they said, you know, "I've been through Vietnam, this is not fun." They said, "What our system is our system is, and we're going to go if we're told to." But I do know, and this is the fact that he came over, Jack Vessey was chairman of the joint chiefs during the Nicaragua problem, I got him to come over to the law firm and talk to the partnerships, they'd never seen a four star general before. And he came in, he sat there. So Harry McPherson, being the guy he is, said, "Well what are we going to do in Nicaragua?" to which Jack Vessey said, "Well I've told the president, (*unintelligible phrase*), I've told the president, we're not going into Nicaragua, we're not getting ourselves on another Vietnam where we don't have the support of the American people, we're not going to do it, as far as I'm concerned." And that was a very strong statement. About two weeks later it was in *Time* magazine that Vessey had told the president that he was opposed to going into Nicaragua. And so, you know, these guys are really top-flight people. "You don't get to be a general officer if you're, for the most part, he said, we make some mistakes," Jack said, "but if you're stupid or if you can't do your job. It's a tough discipline, and if you come up through, all the way up through there you've got to be pretty good." And I found that out.

And I said afterwards, when I left, "I'd hire any one of these guys if I could ever get one to come to work for me, if I had a job open." Because they are good. And you learn a lot. And I said at my departing speech at the parade they had for me, I said, "I wish every American could have three years in, you know, three years over in a job like mine. They'd really understand a lot more about our country and our military, you know, the people. It really would be a good thing." But of course you can't. So, I wanted to tell that little bit because that's important to say that. And I'm still friends with them now.

I go over there in the general officer's mess number one, which I'm a member of in the Pentagon, and I can over there now for the rest of my life. Once you're part of the Army family, you're there. We have briefings, when they called us over to brief us, Colin Powell did on the Desert

Storm war. And I said, "I went to a seminar down there for general officers on changes that are now being made in the Army, which are considerable, and was asked to come down and put my two cents worth in for a week, and I did that last June. So I stay connected to these different things, and that's kind of nice, it's kind of nice to know that.

AL: Thank you very much.

RN: Well, you're very welcome.

End of Interview