

Bates College

SCARAB

Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection

Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library

10-30-2000

Newsom, David oral history interview

Don Nicoll

Follow this and additional works at: https://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh

Recommended Citation

Nicoll, Don, "Newsom, David oral history interview" (2000). *Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection*. 301.
https://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh/301

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library at SCARAB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of SCARAB. For more information, please contact batesscarab@bates.edu.

Interview with David Newsom by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Newsom, David

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

October 30, 2000

Place

Charlottesville, Virginia

ID Number

MOH 241

Use Restrictions

© Bates College. This transcript is provided for individual **Research Purposes Only**; for all other uses, including publication, reproduction and quotation beyond fair use, permission must be obtained in writing from: The Edmund S. Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library, Bates College, 70 Campus Avenue, Lewiston, Maine 04240-6018.

Biographical Note

David Newsom was born January 6, 1918 in Richmond, California. He attended Berkeley, graduating in 1938 with a B.A. in English, then on to Columbia for a graduate degree in journalism. He returned to San Francisco to work at the San Francisco Chronicle. He received Pulitzer Traveling Fellowship from Columbia (July 1940-May 1941) and traveled extensively in Japan, Indonesia, India, Africa and S. America, and met Gandhi while in India. Returning home in 1941 and entering the Navy, he became a Naval Intelligence Officer and spent time at Pearl Harbor. After the war, he returned home and ran small local newspaper in California. In 1947, he entered the Foreign Service, working in Pakistan, Norway, Iraq, England, Libya, Indonesia and the Philippines. David held various posts in Washington, D.C., including his last post as Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, which is where he worked with Muskie, who was Secretary of State at that time. He was U.S. Ambassador to Libya, Indonesia and the Philippines. He left the State Department in 1981 and became Director of the Institute for Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University. He is also the author of several books and a 2002 participant in an oral history project at the University of California, Berkely .

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: 1940-1941 travel to India; interviewing Gandhi; writing articles on South Africa for the San Francisco Chronicle; working for Naval Intelligence in 1941, being assigned to examine Japanese companies' files to determine intelligence on Japan; serving as Undersecretary of State when Muskie became Secretary of State; introducing Senator Muskie to issues at the time, including the Iran hostage crisis; Muskie's involvement in State Department affairs (April 1980-Jan. 1981) concerning the following issues: U.S. Relations with Soviet Union & Eastern Europe (Poland); defining U.S. position in NATO, Arms Control Negotiation; SALT Agreement; and Muskie as Chairman of the Board at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Institute for Study of Diplomacy.

Indexed Names

Billings, Leon
Brzezinski, Zbigniew, 1928-
Carter, William
Christopher, Warren
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969
Haig, Al, 1924-1982
Helms, Jesse
Muskie, Jane Gray
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994
Parmelee, Carole
Rogers, William P. (William Pierce), 1913-2001
Saunders, Harold "Hal"
Vance, Cyrus R. (Cyrus Roberts), 1917-2002

Transcript

Don Nicoll: . . . we're at 2409 Angus Road, Charlottesville, Virginia, interviewing Ambassador David Newsom. The interviewer is Don Nicoll and it is Monday morning, October 30th, 2000. Ambassador Newsom, would you state and spell your last name and give your date of birth and place of birth?

David Newsom: The last name is spelled N-, like Nancy, E-W-S-O-M, like Mary, Newsom. I was born January 6th, 1918 in Richmond, California.

DN: And you've come close to Richmond, Virginia.

AmN: That's right, yes.

DN: Where did you grow up?

AmN: I grew up in Richmond, which is a town on San Francisco Bay in California, went to, went all the way through high school there and then went to the University of California at Berkeley, graduated from there in 1938 with a bachelor's degree and major in English. Then, my father was the part owner of a daily newspaper in Richmond and I worked for a year on his newspaper, and then went back to the graduate school of journalism at Columbia University where I was for a year, got a master's degree, and then returned to the San Francisco area to work on the San Francisco *Chronicle*.

At Columbia I received a Pulitzer traveling fellowship, which took me around the world in 1940 and '41 on, interestingly enough, on Japanese ships since that was the cheapest way to go. So I took leave from the *Chronicle* and left in July of 1940, got back in May of 1941, convinced that war was imminent and applied for a job in the Navy and then ultimately was commissioned as an ensign in the Navy, in Naval Intelligence. I spent the first part of the war in the United States, and the last year at the Joint Intelligence Center at Pearl Harbor.

When I returned from the war, my mother and I bought a small weekly newspaper in Walnut Creek, California. But I was, both as a result of the fellowship and as a result of the war time experience, more and more interested in the world beyond our shores and in 1947 took the Foreign Service examination and passed and went into the Foreign Service in late 1947. My first post was Karachi, Pakistan right after the partition of India, and then I had subsequent posts in Oslo, Norway, Baghdad, Iraq, London, England, Tripoli, Libya, Jakarta, Indonesia. My last overseas post was as ambassador of the Philippines. Interspersed between those assignments were Washington assignments, officer in charge of Arabian peninsula affairs, director of northern African affairs, assistant secretary of state for African affairs. And then finally my last job, which is where I came to know Senator Muskie, was as undersecretary of state for political affairs, the, at that time the number three position in the State Department.

DN: Had, your family was involved in the publication of weekly newspapers.

AmN: Well, the Richmond *Independent*, which was, which my father was part owner, was a daily newspaper. And it's no longer in existence, it was bought out and then folded in to a very dynamic East Bay newspaper chain. *Contra Costa Times* is the newspaper now. But the Walnut Creek *Courier Journal* which we bought after the war was a weekly, which we turned into a twice weekly and sold to the same chain that bought the *Independent*, the *Contra Costa Times* group.

DN: Was your family at all active politically, or did they stick pretty much to the -?

AmN: No, my father was active as a Republican in California, was a member of the, I think he was at one time a member of the Republican state, was it central committee?

DN: State committee or state central committee?

AmN: Yeah, state, yeah.

DN: Had your family been in California for some time, or were they relatively recent arrivals?

AmN: My father was born in California so I have the unique distinction of being a native son of a native son. My mother was born in England and came over when she was very young. Her father was in the Royal Navy and retired to the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas in California, a place called Placerville, and then -

DN: It sounds as if he wanted to get as far as possible away from the sea.

AmN: Well, he had two choices for places of retirement, one was Egypt and one was California, and he chose California, so. And my father had started life as a minister in the Christian church and that I guess didn't agree with his nervous system and he left that and went into the real estate business where he met my mother who was a secretary in the office. And then he left that to join a young man who was building up a newspaper in, Richmond was then a very, a growing city, and that became the leading newspaper for many years.

And I have to say that I grew up in a very political environment because that newspaper was sort of the center of politics of Contra Costa County, which at the time were rather flamboyant. And so I grew up with dinner table conversations about who were we going to support for supervisor this year, and the chances of Governor Merriam or Governor Olson getting reelected. And the, I could tell many stories about Contra Costa county politics but it's, suffice it to say that I got a certain infection of politics in my blood. And diplomacy, as Senator Muskie used to say, is just politics extended to an international level.

DN: So you felt at home when you entered the Foreign Service.

AmN: Yes.

DN: With your mother's background, was there much interest in foreign affairs in the family?

AmN: Not, well, my father and mother went back to, or went to Europe in 1938, they liked to travel, but I don't recall any more than normal interest in what was going on in the world.

DN: Now, when you graduated, or received your master's from Columbia and took the Pulitzer fellowship for travel, what was it that stimulated you to do that travel?

AmN: The requirement of the Pulitzer willed that you, if you're going to accept the fellowship, you stay out of the country for nine months. And many people, well there are three awarded every year, and two of my colleagues felt that the world outside the western hemisphere was a little too dangerous in 1940 so they went to Latin America, but I felt, why not see the rest of the world as long as it's still extant. I didn't, my path took me to Japan, to Indonesia, to India and then down the west coast of Africa to Capetown, and across to Buenos Aires and up, I went

across to Chile and then up to Panama and ultimately home. Europe was already at war, so -

DN: On your trip, did you spend much time on shore in the various countries that you visited?

AmN: Yes. I spent, I guess, about three weeks in Japan and two weeks in north China. We weren't, American citizens weren't supposed to travel in occupied north China but I wasn't an official at that time. And I was, I'd met on the ship going over a fascinating man by the name of Carl Koop, who was the curator of the Oriental exhibit at the New York Public Library. And he was going to China to buy manuscripts and invited me to go along, and that was not an invitation I could turn down. So I spent two weeks in Beijing and then came back through Manchuria on the south Manchurian railroad, and then went, I spent about I guess ten days in Indonesia and then six weeks in India, which awakened my interest in that land and continent. And then two weeks in South Africa, I guess about a month in Latin America at one place or another.

DN: Did you write articles while you were on the journey?

AmN: Yes, I sent some things back to the *Chronicle*. I had an interview with Gandhi when I was in India, and there was great interest in South Africa, in what was happening in India, and in Gandhi who had started his career in South Africa. So I made a little money writing for the South African newspapers on India. So, no, I was not, not without my typewriter.

DN: When you came back and after the war, you joined the Navy and you were in Naval Intelligence. Was your focus the Pacific?

AmN: Well the first focus was examination of the Japanese companies that had been taken over after the war started, going through their files to determine what intelligence might be gathered from them on Japan. The files were more full of intelligence that the companies had gathered on the United States than on what they told about Japan. And then, then when I went to Pearl Harbor, the Joint Intelligence command in, at the Pacific Ocean area, published a, I guess it was a weekly Joint Intelligence bulletin which went to the fleet and to submarines. And our job was to digest combat reports and prisoner of war reports and diaries, for intelligence to disseminate to the fleet.

DN: And during that period you were relying, I assume, on some Japanese language experts.

AmN: Yes. We had some very good Japanese language experts. I picked up a little Japanese so that I could at least read, tell what documents were, but yes.

DN: After the war you, and your joining the Foreign Service, your first posting was to Karachi.

AmN: Yes.

DN: Was that because of your interest in that part of the world, or was it the luck of the draw?

AmN: No, it was because of my interest in that part of the world. I had, after taking the exam, I had a fortuitous meeting with a man, who at that time was our consul general in Calcutta and then who later came back to be the director of South Asian affairs in the State Department, and told him of my interest in that part of the world. And so he asked for me when I, after I passed the exam. And I had every intention of being a South Asian expert, but things don't always work that way.

We, I went to Karachi as a regular officer, but arrived there just as the U.S. Information Service was organized, which was our overseas propaganda service. And they were looking for someone with journalistic experience to start the program in Pakistan, so I was seconded to the Information Service. We were sent to Norway for a kind of rest cure because Karachi was not the healthiest place in the world at that time, but because of my information officer experience I was then, after fifteen months in Oslo, asked to take on the job of public affairs officer in the embassy in Baghdad. So I was there for three and a half years, and then, but then came back into the department as a political officer dealing with Iraq and the Arabian peninsula and have remained in the political field since.

DN: From then on. Had you encountered Senator Muskie during those years before he became Secretary of State?

AmN: No, I don't think so. I'd encountered a number of other members of the Congress, but not Senator Muskie as I can recall.

DN: And you had not been involved in testimony before the Senate after he joined the Foreign Relations Committee?

AmN: I may have been but I don't remember him distinctly. I remember some others very distinctly.

DN: Now, when was the first time you met him that you can recall?

AmN: I guess it was when he came on board in the State Department in, let's see, it would have been in, it was March of -

DN: Nineteen eighty.

AmN: Nineteen eighty, and since I was the, sort of the ranking Foreign Service officer and Warren Christopher was the deputy, was heavily involved with the Iran hostage crisis.

DN: When had you been appointed undersecretary?

AmN: In April of '78, so I'd worked with Cyrus Vance, and so I was, it was my job really to introduce the senator to the department and to the issues, and so I worked very closely with him from then on.

DN: And you've indicated you played an active role in the negotiations for the release of the hostages. Was that in direct negotiations or principally as an advisor?

AmN: Well, no, I, Warren Christopher, the deputy secretary, the number two, was really, after Mr. Vance left, Warren sort of assumed the seventh floor responsibility while I took care of a few other issues that were on our plate at the time, and -

DN: What were those issues?

AmN: Well, there was what to do with Samosa and Nicaragua, there was, let's see . . . There was a whole series of questions with the Europeans, arms control questions. Poland was getting a lot of our attention at the time because of changes in that country. The, but Central America was taking quite a bit of our time. Libya, because of the, not only because of [Muammar] Kaddafi but because the president's brother got mixed up in trying to deal with Libya.

And I discovered that the undersecretary for political affairs, one function of that position is to be awarded the issues that no one else wants to take on. And one of the issues was to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Billy Carter, and I've forgotten whether this was after Muskie came on board or, I think it was, but I was designated the point man to go up on that.

DN: Had you had similar assignments under Secretary Vance? Not Billy Carter necessarily, but -

AmN: Not quite like that. I had done quite a lot of testifying on the, way back in Mr. Dulles' time I was director of North African Affairs in the Eisenhower administration. And Dulles, or after, well, no, it was during Dulles' time, Senator [James William "Bill"] Fulbright wanted to go after what he called some of Mr. Dulles' routine commitments that had been made without senatorial confirmation. And several of these were in my area, dealing with Morocco and Ethiopia and maybe Libya, too, so I was asked to go up and explain Mr. Dulles' routine commitments. That was one of my early introductions to fire on the Hill. Maybe some of the other issues that I was dealing with and introducing the senator to, will come to me, but he was of course interested in the Polish problems and he had a counterpart in the NSE of Polish origin, we used to say poles apart.

DN: Were the, was the division or the separation between [Zbigniew] Brzezinski and Muskie any greater than the separation between Brzezinski and Vance?

AmN: There was an incident that occurred very soon after Muskie came into the department that I think drew a line in the sand, in a sense. Muskie was going to make his first major address as secretary of state on east-west relations. And this had been a, and the attitude to take toward the Soviet Union had been a bone of contention between the NSE and the State Department all through Vance's time, and still was. But the speech that Muskie was going to give was largely

drafted in the State Department and I'm sure it was, the White House had seen it and may not have liked all parts of it.

So we were seated in a staff meeting on the morning that Muskie was going to give this speech and one of his staff people brought in an AP ticker as I remember it. And Muskie looked at it, got kind of red in the face, got up and went out and I guess telephoned. Later we discovered that what the ticker had said was that Brzezinski had given a backgrounder on how the press should interpret Muskie's speech. And I wish I'd heard that telephone conversation, and I have the feeling that after that there wasn't much doubt about who was in charge on foreign policy issues.

I'm sure that Mr. Vance left in part because he had been cut out of the loop on the military planning for the rescue mission, and because he was suffering from a kind of very painful gout at the time. But I'm sure also because his relations, not only with Brzezinski but with Carter, had been very difficult through the last year or so of his time. And, but I think Muskie established the fact that he was going to be in charge. And I didn't ever get a sense of what his relations were with Carter, but I had the sense that he had more persuasiveness if you will, with Carter, than Vance had.

DN: How did the two men, that is Muskie and Vance, differ in their styles within the department?

AmN: Vance worked to a very large extent through aides around him and sort of through the delegation and communication down through the organization. Muskie started something when he came in which was unique in my experience in the State Department. He, well I should say that Vance had staff meetings with assistant secretaries and others, but they were sort of reporting meetings and show and tell and with the secretary bringing them up to date on what was going on.

Muskie started Saturday morning sessions with all of the principal officers of the department and said, "I'm not here to tell you what I'm going to do. I'm here to hear what you think we ought to do." And that was a hard concept for a lot of people in the department to get, and you had the feeling that a lot of them were sitting around waiting for Muskie to speak so that they could get some idea of what line they should take. But I think some others who welcomed the chance, and I think Muskie welcomed the chance, to say, "Well Mr. Secretary, on this, this is where we are but I'm not sure this is where we should be, and here are some of the issues that we face." And Muskie loved this, he loved the interchange, and it was the difference between the lawyer and the legislator. And I've said to many people that it's probably a number of disappointing aspects of Carter's loss, but I think the fact that Muskie would not have continued on as secretary was one of them, because I think he would have made a great secretary.

DN: You indicate that that style was something you hadn't observed in any prior secretary.

AmN: Not the 'tell me what you feel, what you believe, what you think we ought to do'. This isn't that other secretaries weren't open to, one man that did that in a way with a smaller group

was a man who was treated brutally by Richard Nixon, Bill Rogers. And he used to hold weekly lunches with the assistant secretaries with a real interchange, but Muskie broadened it. And having it on a Saturday morning where it wasn't formalized as a staff meeting brought kind of a different tone to it. I don't remember how long those lasted because Muskie, like every secretary got busy, but for several weeks these sessions were held.

DN: Did that have an effect from your perspective on how you and other senior people in the department interacted with him over time, even after the Saturday morning sessions ceased or became less frequent?

AmN: Well, in the sense that it was easy to interact with him, and he had a marvelous sense of humor and shared a fatal temptation to puns, so sometimes I used to go in and see him and would be greeted by his latest.

DN: The worse the better. That's something he persisted in from an early age. Now, you have described earlier the number of issues other than the Iran hostage issue that were on the department and the administration's plate. And I take it that you were actively engaged in trying to juggle those. You were, I take it, responsible for juggling a number of those issues and acting almost like a traffic cop, I suspect at times.

AmN: A traffic cop and a utility endfielder.

DN: How was it to deal with those issues and with Senator Muskie?

AmN: Well he, he was not a micro manager, he delegated things to you, or sometimes he didn't even delegate, I mean you just assumed that these were things that you could deal with, that he should perhaps be informed but didn't need to be much involved. He had two, and this is all recollection now, I haven't gone back through files, but I remember he was a relatively short time in the job and so he was heavily involved in our relations with the Soviet Union and with Eastern Europe, and connected with that, in relation to that, was defining the U.S. position in NATO. One of his first major tasks was to represent the United States at a NATO ministerial meeting in Ankara, Turkey. I've forgotten how soon it was, but it was fairly soon after he got in, so much of his early time there was spent in getting acquainted with all the nuances of our NATO relationship.

And then we had the arms control negotiation, the SALT agreement. My chronology is a little vague, I mean, this was something that Carter dealt with, but probably more in Vance's time than Muskie's, but there were still overlapping problems that So my job was to determine what other issues in the world I should bring to his attention or ask his guidance on, or make a decision on our own, with Warren Christopher and with the assistant secretary. So it was a busy time with, in which he dealt with really only the most critical issues, those that were on the president's desk and Brzezinski's desk.

DN: Was there anything that struck you about the way he reacted to or responded to new issues

or some of the nagging issues that he had to confront?

AmN: Well, other than that first incident that I mentioned, I never saw any indication of the temper that we were all dreading when he came up to the State Department. His approach to problems was, I would say a studied political approach, political in the, both in the legislative sense and in the broader sense. He had, as I said, he used to say that politics is just, or that diplomacy is just an extension of politics, and with him that was very true and very helpful because in a way that Mr. Vance to some extent could see, but in a much greater way because of his legislative experience Muskie could understand the political problems of others.

I remember his saying to me once, I think we were talking about some problem that the president of Turkey was having, "Well I can understand his problem because he's got this constituency and this constituency, and he's got to fit the two together." It was, and I've often felt that, I mean one of the problems that American diplomats have is explaining other societies to many in the Congress and elsewhere who are not open to recognizing that other societies have politics, too. And Muskie understood that, and so he looked at the men and women he was dealing with in their political context and I think it made for an understanding and it made for an effective dialogue with them, which was very helpful to American diplomacy.

DN: How did he apply that in the negotiations with Iran, which must have been particularly troublesome?

AmN: Well he was, he came in late on the Iran hostage crisis and pretty well left that to Warren Christopher. Warren, who is a consummate lawyer and negotiator and, you see, after, Muskie came in in March, no, he must have been, he came in right after the rescue mission and the rescue mission was in early April.

DN: So it was later than I thought.

AmN: It was later, yeah, so he came in in the end of April maybe. By the end of April, and the failure of the rescue mission, things were pretty much at a standstill on the hostage crisis until about August, I guess. As you said earlier, chronology gets a little mixed up, but we got a message to the Germans about an Iranian envoy who seemed to have a conduit to the Ayatollah. We'd had so many false leads of people promoting themselves as envoys that we were suspicious, but this one looked genuine. And I guess Hal Saunders, who was the assistant secretary for NEA, who worked with Warren Christopher and maybe Warren, too, went to Germany and they met this man and that opened the way to a series of secret negotiations which ultimately resulted in the adoption by the Iranian (*modus?*) of a set of principles, and then the extended negotiations in Algiers, which resulted in the hostage release. So Muskie was not much involved because it was all proceeding and very much in Warren's hands.

DN: I'm going to change the tape.

End of Side A

Side B

DN: This is the second side of the first tape, the interview with Ambassador David Newsom, October 30, 2000. We were talking, Ambassador, about the Iran hostage negotiations and you had pointed out that Warren Christopher was carrying on those negotiations prior to and during Senator Muskie's tenure as secretary of state. How much involved was the secretary in at least guiding through advice and response those negotiations, or were they so much on a track that they didn't require major adjustments?

AmN: I'm sure that Warren Christopher briefed the secretary and, but as I say, I was only tangentially involved in the, in those negotiations. But at the very end Muskie got involved, and the hostages were released just on the eve of the inauguration and Muskie retired for reasons that had something to do with his Senate pension. He resigned as secretary on the 18th of January. And he, I remember seeing him off into the elevator, the secretary's elevator, he and Jane as they went out, but he was still, I, was the acting secretary,

Warren was still in Algiers. And we felt that it was, and again these are distant recollections that may need correction, but we felt that it was important that the outgoing administration brief the press on the details of the Algiers agreement, because there was a lot of misunderstanding. And misinformation was in the new administration that what Warren Christopher had been doing in Algiers was negotiating a ransom, when what he in fact had been doing was negotiating the use of frozen Iranian assets to pay American claims.

And we felt it was important to get this out, and we wanted to use the State Department auditorium on the afternoon of the 20th, after the inauguration, to brief the press. And Dick Allen, who was the point man of the new administration, and Al Haig who was the secretary designate, said, "No, we're in charge now. You can't use that auditorium." And Muskie's last rebuff in his time as secretary was that, and he had to, I think he was leaving by plane to go back to Maine, and he briefed the press out at Andrews Air Force Base. He was really angry about that, but it was, and it was so petty on the part of the outgoing [*sic* incoming] administration. I, then I was the transition to the new administration, and that was an experience.

DN: You have seen a number of administrations.

AmN: I have. Never quite seen a transition at that level before, but -

DN: During the period between the election and January 20th, were you actively involved in briefing representatives of the new administration?

AmN: The Republicans appointed a, right after the election the Republicans appointed a group of about forty people as a transition team, and they were given offices down in the bowels of the State Department. They had on that team a number of people whose main interest was not transitioning to a new administration but in digging for dirt in the files of the State Department that they had been long eager to get their hands on. There was a man named Carbol, who used to

work for Jesse Helms for example, who wanted to get in to all the files on Rhodesia. So much of that period I was involved in trying to defend, or let's say follow what we considered appropriate procedures in briefing the incoming administration.

Well, I will say this for Secretary Haig: when he was finally, it was finally certain that he was going to be the secretary of state, he realized what was going on and he dismissed that whole team. And he appointed three people, three very good people, Paul Willetts, Rick Burt, and Ken Adelman to be the real transition. And so I spent much of the latter part of December and early January briefing those three on the key issues. But the, so the senator, Muskie was pretty well out of that.

DN: Did he have many dealings with Haig during that period?

AmN: Well they met. I'm not sure how, the Reagan group had a feeling that they didn't want to hear from the outgoing Democrats, they had all the answers that they wanted and so there was, there wasn't much direct contact. At one point, this is out of the Muskie story, but in mid-January we got an order from Dick Allen that no presidential appointee of the outgoing administration was to be at his or her desk on the morning of January 21st. So I went to Al Haig and said, "You know, sir, you're not going to be able to run the State Department because all of, there are many professional assistant secretaries who are presidential appointees but they are running the apparatus."

So he negotiated with the White House and boiled the list down to only three, and the three who, two of whom were involved in Central American policy which, where there was bitter division and they were blamed for giving Central America to the Sandanistas, and then one who had been the head of the executive secretariat but had been considered by the incoming administration to be too closely political. So it was, but Muskie was pretty much out of that, that was -

DN: Dropping back to his period as secretary of state and the issues other than the Iran hostage crisis that he was involved in, were, do you have any particular recollections of his engagement either with the Soviets or with the Polish issues?

AmN: No, I think he, I'm just trying to remember now whether there was an application of sanctions against Poland, but I think that occurred before Vance left. He was obviously very much interested in the Polish question. I don't, I don't recall that he either went to Poland or met with any Polish officials, although it's possible that he did, I just, I don't recall that.

DN: You alluded to his reported temper and said that you never encountered it. Had you ever observed it in any situation?

AmN: I think that it was beginning to flare in the first situation, but I was out of the room when it took off, I think. But, no, he was, he was remarkably good humored and kept people entertained with his Maine jokes.

DN: After he left the State Department and, you continued an association with him. Could you tell us about that?

AmN: Yes, after I left the State Department, I became, in 1981, I became the director of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy which was part of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, but it was a separate institute that had its own board. And the chairman of the board had been a distinguished American diplomat named Ellsworth Bunker. Bunker resigned or, and died shortly after in, I think '84, '84, '85, and so we were looking for a new chairman of the board. And I thought that Muskie would be, having been secretary of state and having, being interested in international affairs and diplomacy, would be an excellent choice so we, and he accepted that. So through the, let's see, he died in '94 was it?

DN: Ninety-six.

AmN: Ninety-six. I guess he remained chairman of the board until very shortly before his death. I left the institute in '91 to come down here, but I enjoyed that relationship very much. He made it clear that if we thought that the, or if we expected that the chairman of the board was going to be a fund raiser, this was not his cup of tea. And he would be glad to lend his presence to the institution, give his advice, but others would undertake the fund raising, and we were very happy with that arrangement. And so my wife and I got to know the Muskies very well, we used to have Chinese dinners together, which he enjoyed very much. And I would go and visit him in his law offices from time to time to bring him up to date and get his latest take on politics in Maine and surrounding territories.

DN: As you, during that period did you get any sense of his stronger feelings about what was going on in the current administration, or what he had been through in the State Department?

AmN: He was a fairly discreet man in many ways, but it was clear that he was very much disappointed that he hadn't been able to continue as secretary. And I guess one didn't need to ask him how he felt about the Republican administration. It was probably clear, but I don't recall his, my recollection of Muskie was that he liked to talk about, well particularly liked to talk about legislative affairs and what was going on in the Senate, appointments, who was vulnerable, what committees were powerful. That was his world. And I don't ever recall his sort of using strong language to denounce the administration in power. He always talked in terms of specific issues, individuals.

DN: As you think about his career and your own observations of him in the office of secretary of state, what qualities and what elements of his style impressed you the most?

AmN: First of all he had the quality that I think very good both politicians and diplomats have of listening to what people were saying and being interested in, clearly interested, so that people could see that he was interested. And there was, there was an ego there, but it was not a Kissingerian ego, so he was not afraid to turn to others and ask for information or for advice. And my impression is that, particularly foreign representatives who went away from him, felt

that they'd had a good hearing, if not always a sympathetic hearing, but that he listened to them and he didn't start out right away by saying, "Well this is what our position is, well glad to see you, and now tell me how you feel about this." That was my recollection.

DN: And you indicated that he followed the same approach in working with members of the department.

AmN: Yes.

DN: And what about him and his staff, his immediate staff?

AmN: Well he had, his staff he brought from the Hill were great people who melded to some degree into the State Department, Leon [Billings] and Carole [Parmelee], and they were, they were clearly, I mean not to the exclusion of others, but they were clearly the people that he liked to hear from and listen to. But he never set them up. I've seen other political figures come in to the department who bring their staff with them and their staff, they see their staff as a kind of bulwark protecting them from the rest of the department. I never had that feeling with Muskie, that you had to go through Leon Billings before you could see the secretary, or Carole. They fitted in quite well, I think.

DN: What do you regard as his significant contributions to the department during that short tenure?

AmN: In terms of the organization of the department and the Foreign Service, he didn't really try to make any because he came in after a period of significant organizational change, and changes in the legislative basis for the Foreign Service. Vance had spent a lot of time putting through a new Foreign Service act, the Foreign Service Act of 1984, and, let's see, was it, let's see, Muskie came -

DN: April of '80.

AmN: The Foreign Service Act of 197-, '74, it was, anyway it was a new act -

DN: It would have been after '76 for Vance, or was this a prior act that -?

AmN: Now maybe, '76, '77, '78, well it happened during Vance's time so that the organizational problems that confronted the Carter administration when they came in had been more or less resolved. So I don't recall that Muskie was really caught up in, the short time, in much of the organizational format of the department. And I think, I mean it probably stands to reason that he had the idea that, I'm here now to deal with the foreign policy issues. If we get another term I can deal with those issues then, but -

DN: Did he spend much time on explaining the administration's positions to the Congress during that period, even though it was an election year?

AmN: Oh, I think he did. He understood and he, I think, followed faithfully the doctrine that Cabinet members do not get involved in political campaigns. But he had good relations on the Hill, although I remember once, I've forgotten what the subject was, he was trying, he was talking to somebody on the Hill and after he'd hung up he said, "You know, when you leave, you leave." The implication was he didn't have as much clout as when he was there. But he, no, he, and he always was conscious, very conscious of the need to keep the Congress informed.

DN: In your, you've mentioned in your comments that you went to the dedication of the Muskie Archives. Had you spent any other time in Maine with him?

AmN: No, that was the only time.

DN: Do you remember any of the puns that he pulled on you?

AmN: I should but I probably have gracefully forgotten them (*unintelligible word*). It was, but they were there.

DN: Are there any other observations or recollections that you'd like to make on Senator Muskie?

AmN: No, well I could say that after meeting, getting to know Jane and seeing that relationship and that family relationship, I could understand his anger at the attacks on Jane and his, in the 19-, what was it?

DN: Seventy-two campaign.

AmN: Seventy-two campaign, yeah. What I didn't fully appreciate, until I went up to the dedication of the memorial in Rumford, was the contribution he'd made through the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. I think I recall him saying once that they would be his legacy, but I didn't fully appreciate what that meant until I saw Rumford and heard so much of what he'd done.

DN: Yes, you have to see it today and contrast it with what it was in the 19-, well, from the time he was born and was growing up there.

AmN: Yeah, no, I, I just have very fond but perhaps at this distance imprecise recollections. My recollection is that in the, and I don't recall specific press conferences, but he was obviously very good at dealing with the press, and I think had a good press during the time that he was secretary. No, I -

DN: You could appreciate that as a former reporter.

AmN: Oh yes, yeah.

DN: Well, thank you very much, Ambassador.

AmN: Well, I'm sorry that I may not have, may not recall as much as I should, but maybe some of this will be helpful to you.

DN: It is, very helpful, thank you.

End of Interview