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O'Brien, John "Jack" oral history interview

Greg Beam

Interview with John "Jack" O'Brien by Greg Beam

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
O'Brien, John "Jack"

Interviewer
Beam, Greg

Date
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Place
Portland, Maine

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Biographical Note

John "Jack" O'Brien was born in Boston, Massachusetts on June 9, 1930 to Helen (Reilly) and Frances J. O'Brien. His mother worked in a factory during the World War II, and his father was a postal worker. He grew up in South Boston, and then Mattapan in Dorchester, graduating from Hyde Park High School. He then enlisted in the Marines, in which he served for five years. After his service, he moved back to the Boston area, married Jadine (Raines) O'Brien, and worked for a few years in a Cambridge factory. While working at that factory, he met and became impressed with a young Senate candidate, John F. Kennedy. O'Brien and his wife moved to Maine in 1957, and got involved with the Maine Democratic Party. O'Brien went to work for the United States Postal Service, while his wife went to school, and eventually became a leader in the Maine Democratic Party. O'Brien served in the Maine State Legislature in 1970. Both he and his wife were active supporters of Kennedy, Muskie, as well as other Democratic candidates.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: growing up during World War II; Boston area politics; meeting John F. "Jack" Kennedy; Portland, Maine in the late 1950s; 1960 Maine Convention; unionization of public positions, Hatch Act; 1962 Muskie fundraiser in Portland; first

impressions of Muskie; Milt and Millie Wheeler; Maine Legislature in the 1970s; lobbyists in Augusta in the 1970s; nominating Ed Muskie temporary chair as ‘United States Senator’ at the 1970 state convention; Muskie’s temper; Hathaway’s Vietnam dissent at the 1972 convention; Muskie’s reaction to Hathaway’s dissent; William Loeb and Manchester, New Hampshire incident; campaigning for Muskie; excitement over Muskie’s nomination for vice president; 1968 Chicago Convention; Casper Tevanian; Jim Oliver; Jadine O’Brien; losing Democratic seats in the 1960 election; Gerry Conley; Portland Model Cities program; racism in Maine; Dana Childs; changes in the Democratic Party; Maine Turnpike; and Muskie’s impact on the Democratic Party.

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Transcript

Greg Beam: . . . so now I’ve got to do some standard format, stuff, here. The date is August 8th, 2000. It’s just about a little after 9:00 A.M. This is Greg Beam, and I’m here at the Cumberland County Court House interviewing John O’Brien. To begin, could you please state your full name and spell it?

John O’Brien: Okay, my name is John B. O’Brien, and the O’Brien is spelled correctly O-B-R-I-E-N, rather than A-N.

GB: And when and where were you born?

JO: I was born and raised in South Boston, Massachusetts, and June 9th, 1930 is my birth date.

GB: And did you grow up in Boston?

JO: I grew up in, in Boston and in, with, my family eventually moved into a section called Mattapan which is part of Dorchester, and that’s where I attended high school. Hyde Park High School, and from there I left Hyde Park High School after graduation and joined the United States Marine Corps, spent almost five years there.

GB: And what were your parents’ names?

JO: My father’s name was Francis J. O’Brien, my mother’s name was Helen Reilly O’Brien. Reilly was her maiden name of course.

GB: I see. And what were their occupations?

JO: Oh, during the war my mother worked in an outfit called the United Carfest, which was a war effort type of factory making different things for the Army, rope materials and so forth, and hitches and belts. And my father was a post office letter carrier all his life.

GB: I see. And how were they involved in the community when you were growing up?

JO: Well, it was, actually, I was growing up mostly during the war years. The whole community was just involved with the, trying to assist in some way with the war effort. Probably the first time where families had two parents working at the same time, which was, which was something brand new at that time. Usually it was just the man working and the mother or the wife would be tak-, the home, take care of the home. Of course, that's all changed now, it's everybody works. The communities in those days, especially in the South Boston area, it was a neighborhood community.

My father enjoyed politics in South Boston and my mother, my father and mother were both political junkies. Very friendly with the, isn't that terrible, I can't recall his name at the moment, the mayor of Boston, and I thought I'd never forget it, Mayor Curley, James Michael Curley. They were very friendly with him, he was in South Boston. My father was a very good friend of, of, speaker, I'm pulling a blank here. He was speaker of the house for many, many years.

GB: In Massachusetts?

JO: In Massachusetts, yeah. Boy, oh boy, oh boy. McCormick, Jesus, I, I'm trying to think too hard here, that's my problem.

GB: It's too early in the morning.

JO: Yeah, my father, my father was one of nine brothers who, like I say, were political junkies, all of them. And when McCormick first ran for office, of course there was all these street corner rallies then, back of cars and corners and church steps and so forth, the rallies. He was one of nine brothers. And McCormick first ran for congress he got defeated, defeated very badly. But before the election his opponent passed away, so immediately. This is before TV and not much radio at the time, and, so immediately my father and his brothers were back on the streets again working for John McCormick, and this time he was successful.

He had a campaign group already established for his election and didn't have to make very many calls. No one had telephone calls, you just made personal communications with individuals. And McCormick became a congressman, and eventually became the Speaker of the House. That, so that was my first, even come close to being interested in politics was in those days.

GB: What were your parents' political affiliations, what party were they?

JO: They were both Democrats, both Democrats.

GB: Strong Democrats?

JO: Well in South Boston you had to be a strong Democrat or else you had nothing else to do, that was the history. Yeah, they were very strong, very strong Democrats. In those days I remember my father, post office job was not civil service. It depended on who was in the party

of power and so he wanted his Democratic people to stay in power, and they were very fortunate in those days.

Those can, those are childhood memories, that's, it doesn't bring us to my own career in politics, which was sort of slanted. I got married to a young lady who was a very, very staunch Republican. And we were just children when we married. I come out of the Marine Corps after almost five years in the service and married a year or so later to a young lady from Whitman, Massachusetts. Jadine O'Brien, Jadine Raines, it's Jadine O'Brien now.

And I went to work in a factory in Cambridge, and I worked nights. This was, had to be 1950, late '50 or early '51, sometime in that area. And I worked nights and about three o'clock in the morning a young man came through the factory shaking hands and wanting us to support him. And he caught me in the, I was very excited about him and he made me really, really think again about politics.

I went home that night, or early next morning and spoke to my wife about meeting this gentleman and how excited I was about him and how were we going to help him. My wife was a little more political savvy than I was and she said, well, we're not even in his district, we can't help him run for congress. It was John Kennedy.

And later on, of course, he became the Senator, and he beat the Bramhall crowd of Beacon Hill and became the Senator. It was, we watched his career very closely and we felt very good about him, as all the people in Massachusetts did at that time too. And we watched the convention when he rejected the nomination for the vice presidency in favor of Estes Kefauver. This had to be 19-, 1956 I'd say, sometime in the area, '56, maybe '57 at the national convention. And the manner in which he rejected it was like, it almost like said, "Not at this time but don't count me out."

We wrote to Kennedy after that, and we said that we felt that he was going to make a run for the presidency, and we wanted to know what we could do to help. Unfortunately, we were just getting ready to move to Maine, so we'd no longer be in Massachusetts. It was 1958 we moved to Maine, 1957, '58. He wrote us back a nice letter saying that, "Get involved in the Democratic Party in the state of Maine, that's the best way you can help me." And we came to Maine, my wife changed her registration to Democrats so she could be involved in the Democratic process here in Portland. And we went to a couple of Democratic meetings where everybody spoke about how it used to be in the old days, how it was, how it was, and my wife was a little bit of a force. And she got (*unintelligible word*) and said, "Well I don't care what it was," she said, "this is what it's going to be, I'm here to work for John Kennedy, he's going to be our next nominee for the presidency of the United States." And they didn't even know who John Kennedy was.

And so she got very active in politics and became a local chairperson in the local county, and then she also ran for the state chairwoman. In those days you picked one man and one woman, and so she ran for the state committee and was very successful. She ran against a very, very popular politician who, it was not an easy race. It was the first time that there was a real challenge dealing with, you know, the party was always looking for someone to be the chairperson or the national committeeman or the county, or the state committee person. It was a

job that went by default, no one ever really wanted it, just they did it because someone asked them to. But she really wanted the job, so she worked very hard at it and she won.

That convention, because of the length of time in the combat, in the campaign, that convention went well into the night. We were never getting to Ed Muskie. When Ed Muskie finally was getting frustrated because it was his turn to speak and the largest convention body was still in caucus, that was Cumberland County, they were still in caucus and it was going into the night. Well into the night, and she was holding, she was holding her own on the floor, working delegates and so forth.

We always joke about a friend of ours, Casper Tevanian who was a neighbor and a friend. He helped her and he was in charge at that particular convention of the loudspeaker system. She gave her cheering speech for Kennedy and herself and so forth and so on and the convention stayed right with her, the crowd didn't wander away. And then her opponent would get a chance to speak and suddenly the, (we always accuse Casper of doing it be we know he really didn't do it), suddenly all the speakers went dead and you couldn't hear anybody speaking, you couldn't hear the opponent speak. It was just something that happened, someone pulled a plug someplace, we don't know. It was, I think the state convention itself was trying to continue on. They were just putting their own stuff together, and they just disconnected all of Cumberland County's microphones and so forth. So we always accuse Casper of being the.

In fact, that just recently come up, that story just recently come up. That's getting way ahead of myself at but, Poulos' funeral. But one of our, one of our politicians in that Democratic Party that eventually we didn't hold in very high esteem was speaking at Poulos' funeral. And saying, talking about Dick and Dick's life and so forth, and suddenly the microphone went dead and my wife looked at me and said, "Casper's still at work," so so. But that was said just recently. That's just another whole story.

And then I, you know, I went on and I worked in the post office. And I got involved in politics, probably borderline violation of the Hatch Act probably, at the time. They organized a union, the Portland post office and Kennedy was now the president, 19-, must have been 1962 because Kennedy was the president. And he recognized for the first time unions of government employees, where before there was always the Hatch Act that prevented union, any kind of union activities within the post office. They could have associations and so forth, but they really couldn't get involved in politics as such.

And the first time ever in the state of Maine there was a hundred dollars a head fund raiser being held at Vallee's for the benefit of Ed Muskie. And it was a hundred dollars a head, and it was absolutely unheard of that anybody ever could go to a fund raiser for a hundred dollars. Because up to that point it was like ten dollars, maybe fifteen dollars at every party, but to ask somebody to contribute a hundred dollars to go have a scorched chicken with a politician.

Remember the union, because we were recognized now by President Kennedy, the union felt that they should send someone to that meeting, and they sent me. It was at Vallee's, and that was probably the first real personal contact I had with Ed Muskie. Although I had some contact with his office through the union with a fellow by the name of John Jabar who was one of Muskie's

representatives from the State of Maine, one of his field coordinators I guess you call them.

So I talked to John quite often on postal problems involving politics and so forth. So, and that's how I… But the first time I really got, you know, actively involved with Muskie was 1962, that hundred dollar a head fund raiser, just. I mean, the newspapers, banner headlines thinking, uh, how could anybody want to spend a hundred dollars for a dinner? You could take the whole family out for a week for a hundred dollars, you know. It was fun.

GB: Was there a pretty good turnout at that fund raiser?

JO: It was a good turnout. As I remember they had the whole back room at the, Vallee's Steak House had, the room was separated. And I'm going to say there was at least a hundred, maybe a hundred and fifty people there. And Muskie was there, of course, and he spoke his usual forty-five minutes, on the button.

GB: And so what were your first impressions of him when you met him at this fund raiser?

JO: Oh, it was very, I, you know, I knew of his reputation. I knew, I'd heard him, I remember when he ran. When I first came in to Maine he was running for governor, in fact he was the governor, and he was running against, if my memory serves me right. Now, boy, you're going back a number of years. He was running against Fred Payne, I believe, for United States Senate, I think that was who he was running against. And I knew then I was going to, you know, I worked for the local Democrats, and we were working for Ed Muskie. And that's when I first met Milt Wheeler, I first met Milt Wheeler.

GB: And tell me about Milt Wheeler actually, now that you mention him.

JO: Well, Milt was a political activist and jovial type man. He had a real political instinct for how things were going to go politically. And he's, he and his wife Millie, and he was traveling the state with Muskie for the senate campaign. He was always on the go and always had the right thing to say. And he was a big man, he was a big heavy man, big, and he was very impressive when you saw him. He had a booming voice, and I guess his voice was every bit as loud as Muskie's. He could, without a microphone he'd talk to a crowd with no problems.

But I remember one time Millie complaining about, he kept bringing Muskie home to have his clothes pressed because he, Muskie, would wear the same suit all day long but it needed pressing. So he'd bring him to his house and Millie would press his suit and send him back out on the road again. And so that's how it went.

But then I, of course later on I left the post office and went to work for myself in business, with the automobile business for years. But then I got more active in politics then, because I didn't have to worry about the Hatch Act and I could say what I felt, and, you know, both my wife and I both got involved in politics, heavily I mean. I ran for the house in 19-, (*unintelligible word*) it was 1969 so I took office in 1970. In January of 1970 I took office as a state representative.

That was interesting. In those days you didn't make any money. You'd be, the salary was three

thousand dollars for two years and then of course you had some expenses of travel, hotel expenses and so forth. You certainly didn't make any money. In fact I, it made my business, automobile business which I had, I put that on hold while I played politics. But it was fun. It suddenly gets into your blood and you just go with it, you know.

GB: So do you have, do you recall from your time in the legislature who were some of the major figures in the legislature when you were there? Who were your friends that, who you remember working with?

JO: Well, of course Millie Wheeler was there and (*unintelligible phrase*) who's now President of (*unintelligible phrase*). She was there my second term. There were many, many, that was, one of my best friends was a lobbyist at that time. He was no longer involved in the actual politics of the house but he was a lobbyist and he was a former speaker, Dana Childs. And he was a very good friend, and a political mentor for myself. We got along very good, and I think we had some fun with politics. And in those days politics could be fun. We, I've always joked about the, all the legislation I helped pass in those days they're still trying to undo.

But politics was a, there was integrity. We had a, you gave your word to someone and that's, we didn't have any staff members to do our research for us and so forth. We depended a great deal on lobbyists, and I would have a lobbyist tell me why I would vote for something, or why I should vote for something, even though they were on the opposite side of the deposition. And then other times they'd tell me why I should not vote for something because of my political leaning towards the Democratic Party, and I shouldn't get involved and everything. But they'd do the research for us. I never had a lobbyist lie to me in those days. They would tell me why I should be against something or why I should be for something, and they'd give you the argument on both sides. And the house members and the senate in those days depended on those lobbyists. You used your own instincts and you used your own knowledge, but you had to rely on somebody to give you the facts because you didn't have any research organizations. You had no committees that you could go back to and say "Research this for me", or "check on this for me". You couldn't do it. You didn't have the time to do it yourself.

And quite often you'd go to dinner with five or six people. Some of them on your party and some of them the opposite party, but you were all friends, but, and you would resolve it at dinner time. Over dinner or over a drink, you would resolve what the program was going to be for the next day, and you stuck to that. You gave someone your word on something and that's how you, that's how you got by. If they couldn't depend on you for your, what, your word wasn't any good, then you weren't of much help to anybody, not even yourself.

Talk about political junkies, I was thinking, I think it was 1970 or maybe '71, the Democratic had their convention here in Portland. And of course, as always they were going to have, Senator Muskie was going to be nominated as the temporary chair of the convention. It was the honorary, it was given to Senator Muskie to give him a chance to be introduced and so forth. And then, of course, he would give his speech and then nominate a permanent chair for the convention.

I don't know whether it was, I don't know whether it was, someone from Muskie's office, and I don't know whether it Don Nicoll or Johnny Jabar, come to me in the floor of the convention,

the program in Portland, and they wanted me to nominate United States Senator Edmund S. Muskie to the convention honorary chair, or temporary chair, whatever you want to call it. And I said, "Oh sure, I'll be glad to do that." And they said, "Well be sure," and, whoever was instructing me said, "be sure now you say United States Senator because the conference room here is full of state senators and house representatives and so forth." And Muskie had an ego, you know, he didn't want that to be confused. And he said, "You be very sure now that you say you're placing a nomination to, or move that United States Senator Edmund S. Muskie. And be sure you say United States senator." I said, "I certainly will, I certainly will." Then the time approached to have this go on. Again I get another meeting from one of Muskie's aides telling me, "Don't forget, don't forget now, it's the United States Senator." And I said, "I certainly will."

And then just before I was to nominate him, one of his people come beside me, and he said, "Now be sure you address the senator properly." And I looked at whoever it was, I forgot who it was now, and I said, "You mean United States senator?" So here's his aide calling him "the Senator", but I wasn't allowed to call him the Senator. But his aide, so the aide finally caught on what I was sort of giving him the business. Here you are telling me a half dozen times be sure and say United States Senator and the first time you get a chance to use the United States Senator word you just call him "the Senator." So the guy sort of smiled and walked away a little sheepishly. But I did, I picked Muskie's name for the chair, the United States Senator Edmund Muskie for the, and it was. He had an ego trip.

And he had a right to be, have an ego trip. With a career like he had up to that point, what he had done up to that point. You know, a Democrat getting elected to governor and Democrat being elected to the United States senate, he should have had an ego. I know I would have one. I'd be right out of sight with my ego. But he was good. He had an awful temper, too, as you probably know. He could blast you in to New York second, he'd take you apart in no uncertain terms. But at the same time, a half hour later he'd be your friend again. So he blew up fast, but he also cooled off very quickly, too. But he was good.

GB: Did you ever see him blow up at you or someone you knew?

JO: Sure, sure.

GB: Can you tell me about one or two of those times?

JO: Well, it's nothing. I shouldn't say he blew up in a, you know. At another conven-, at another, here again at another convention, it had to be during the Vietnam war, so I'm going to say it had to be maybe 1971, maybe '72. And Bill Hathaway was also the state, yeah, Bill Hathaway was also the state senator at that time. He had defeated Margaret Chase Smith. And they were both on the platform, and Muskie was sort of the hawk and Bill Hathaway was very, very moderate. He was very, very liberal, but on the Vietnam War he was starting to feel that, let's get out of here. Let's not waste any more time in Vietnam. It bothered him to see that, we'd see pictures of these Vietnamese young men riding bicycles with pure white shirts and so forth going to school, while our troops are over there fighting in the sloppy, messy mud. That started to bother Bill and so he spoke at the, at this convention indicating that we should get out of

Vietnam, and we're just being bogged down in this quagmire and that it's always going to be this problem. That the French couldn't resolve it, and we ain't going to resolve it just by throwing troops in there either. Although Johnson was at that time still a hawk, President Johnson was still a hawk, and Muskie was sort of supporting the president's ideas and the president's agenda. Hathaway was starting to withdraw from it and this was not setting too well with Muskie.

And Bill Hathaway that night gave me a political lesson, because he always gave me the same political lesson. He always said to me, "If you can't win don't call for a vote, you know, just have the debate and move on. If you win it, then you ask for a vote." But that night at the convention Hathaway asked for a vote and of course his position got clobbered. Muskie took him apart. I remember going to Bill afterwards and saying, "Bill, you know, you taught me years ago that if you don't have the votes don't call for a vote, and yet you did." He just said, "Well I feel so strong about this," he said, "and I just feel that we, I got to take a stand and this is it," he said, "we should be out of there." And he said, "I know the Senior Senator," meaning Muskie," is not going to be very happy with me, in fact I'll probably have some trouble with him, but that's okay." Not a big deal, you know, he was, you could see Muskie's hairs on his back of his neck starting to rise as Bill was talking. Trying to get this position that we didn't belong in Vietnam and get out as best we could, and save face and get out.

Another time at another convention, I always carried, because the conventions, either it was a J.J. dinner or a convention or one of those things. I always had a little suitcase that held three bottles, held three bottles. I always had a bottle of scotch and a bottle of rye. And they were up on the stage all lined up, and Bill Hathaway was on the far end. We had these runners on the floor and so forth, so I took a plastic cup and I poured Bill a little whiskey and water and sent it up to him. He waved back to me from the podium, it was fine. Next thing I knew a little fellow standing in front of me, a little page I guess you want to call them, and he said, "Senator Muskie wants to know if you have any scotch." And I said, "Well, matter of fact I do." So I poured him a scotch and sent that up to him and he waved back. I thought, you know, there's a thousand people in the hall and Muskie sees me pouring a drink for Hathaway and didn't pour one for him so he wasn't a bit bashful about sending this page down and saying, "That guy has some scotch down there, tell him I want one." So I did, I poured him a good scotch. In fact he drank most of the bottle. He enjoyed a glass of scotch once in a while. He was good, he'd have a drink. I just always got a kick out of that that there's a thousand people in that room and he knew what everybody was doing, (*unintelligible phrase*). Nothing was getting by him, nothing, absolutely nothing.

GB: Let me ask you, I'm not sure if you know, if you got a sense. But back to the first story that you told about the debate between Hathaway and Muskie and Vietnam, with Muskie appearing to get a little bit upset. Do you think he was more upset because he felt strongly about his position, or possibly because Hathaway was challenging him in such an audacious way?

JO: I don't, no, I never really felt, although Muskie took the, President Johnson's line, he took the agenda from President Johnson, I never really felt that Muskie's heart was really in it. I never really, he said the right things that Johnson wanted to hear and so forth but he never, I just never had the feeling. I think with his little debate with Bill Hathaway, I think the very fact that somebody was, somebody was being critical of him. Someone was challenging him. Someone

was, within his own party that he was the titular head of, the Democratic Party of the State of Maine, and that somebody in that whole party was sort of questioning his authority. Not, you know, not hard, not being abrasive about it, but even suggesting, you know.

One thing, you go to a meeting with Muskie, the whole gang, and he would say to people, "I want your ideas," and "I want you here." "If you've got some criticism, my positions, if you got some criticism you don't be scared to say it. I want, I want to hear your criticism if you have any of me," you know. God forbid you ever did criticize him. If you'd say, "Well Muskie, I don't think you should do bah-bah-bah," you know, you'd be dead. You're history, you might as well forget about the next party. He'd ask for your criticism, but then he couldn't take it. Not that it, whoever's criticizing him or offering some criticism was right or wrong, but they just. He just did not, he just did not want to be challenged in any manner, any way at all, any manner at all.

And you know, that, and that, that temper. That temper and, not that anybody would challenge him, or not wanting anybody to challenge him, is what cost him I believe, the presidency. The nomination of the presidency, the presidency that he ran, he lost the nomination. Because he hit New Hampshire angry at the, I think the guy's name was Loeb that ran the *Union*, *Manchester Union* down there in New Hampshire.

GB: Leopold Loeb?

JO: [William Loeb] Leopold Loeb, you're right. He was critical of Muskie's wife. And I know Muskie had the flu. He wasn't feeling well, and it was a cold, miserable, rainy, damp day. I don't know why politicians think even because it's cold that they have to go without their coat to show how tough they are. So he's in his suit rather than, everybody else is bundled up in an overcoat, and he's in a suit, and it's just starting to snow. And he's angry. And some of his closest advisors were saying, you know, "Let's pass this by, let's pass this by." He insisted upon getting a flatbed truck outside the newspaper office and standing up on the flatbed. And it's just starting to snow and Muskie's hair was wet with heavy, wet snowflakes and these snowflakes was falling.

They said he cried, I'm not sure that he was crying so much. I'm not sure that it wasn't just the snowflakes falling over his head and on his cheeks and so forth, but he was just angry and it showed. And he lost it right there, he just lost.

Two things: he had the flu, he wasn't feeling well and I remember two other people that were there. One of them, an old political adversary of Muskie, was Louis Jalbert. And Louis was saying, "Don't go on the, you don't feel good, stay in bed, take the morning off, go someplace, get warm, don't get involved with that nitwit." Muskie didn't, and that day, of course, the newspapers played that picture of him over and over again raising his fist, and I think. You know, Muskie won New Hampshire but he should have won it ten to one. He only won it like three to one. He should have won it overwhelming, and that's where it all started downhill. And I think, I think that was his temper, I think that was his, yeah.

GB: It wasn't even three to one. Actually, he didn't even poll fifty percent of the vote.

JO: I was being kind.

GB: Yeah.

JO: You can bet that I don't want to criticize him.

GB: So had you been campaigning for him hard in the primaries? Or actually the primaries hadn't started, but.

JO: I was in the House of Representatives at the time, yes, I was campaigning for him. I remember, I remember sitting with Dana Childs up in Augusta and it was before New Hampshire, it was, well, that had to be when he was nominated for the vice presidency under Humphrey. I remember Muskie looked like a shoo-in for the next time around for the presidency. And he, because it was, he'd just lost with Humphrey and it looked like he was going to be the golden boy of the Democratic party next time around, because he did such a marvelous job as candidate of the vice presidency. But George Mitchell had come in and talked to Dana and said, "Boy, is he looking good, is he looking good right now." This was, you know, long before New Hampshire, long before New Hampshire, and we were talking about the next race for the presidency.

GB: So people in Maine were pretty excited about it, by the prospect?

JO: Oh very excited, oh yes, very excited about it, very excited about it. I'm jumping from year to year here. I remember my wife went to the Chicago convention where he received the nomination for vice president. Of course the whole world was worrying about who was Humphrey going to pick. In those days they didn't pick them a week or two in advance of the convention, they picked them right at the convention and sometimes there was a floor fight for the vice presidency, different people wanting to put different names in. Quite often they wanted to put in favored son names in, (*unintelligible word*), but then they'd switch on the second ballot. Or later on they would pass on their vote after making a speech for their favorite son, and then they'd pass and come back to vote later on for the nominee, whoever the president wanted and so forth.

But as I recall it was like a day or two into the convention and Humphrey still hadn't picked anybody and there was all kinds of speculation going on. And my wife, I was down to Cape Cod at that time with my children and her family. And I remember she called about, oh, about ten o'clock in the morning and said, "It's going to be Muskie." I said, "You got to be kidding me." And she said, "No, it's going to be Muskie." And about three o'clock that afternoon Humphrey went to the convention floor and brought Muskie to the platform and nominated him the vice presidential candidate. It was a little exciting.

GB: Must have been quite exciting.

JO: It was very exciting, yeah. But I talked to my wife about that after the convention. We on home watching the convention saw all this trouble in the streets and so forth, and all kinds of protesters, and it was the first time you ever heard the word hippie convention, you know. But,

yet the delegates at the convention didn't see that. My wife told me how clean the city was. How pretty it was, along the lake, how the waterfront was, how beautiful it was, how Mayor Daley couldn't be a better host to the delegates and so forth. She didn't see all that crap we saw on television until she come home and was seeing the news back as it was, you know.

I wonder how it's going to be next week when we go to convention, will it be the same stage show we saw last week, or will it be something a little different?

GB: Who knows, who knows.

JO: I've never seen a convention, Democratic convention, where they didn't have at least some sort of, at least the opportunity for give and take. To have somebody else's views presented at least, you know, at least spoken to whether it be the, some plank in the platform or some position of the government. I've never seen any Democratic convention where dissent wasn't accepted. That they would, that if you had something that you wanted to dissent to, you were allowed to speak and they didn't try to force you off the floor no matter what it was.

I think back to, boy, it was Julian Bond, I think in the South, and he wanted to. He was threatened, the Southern Democratic (*unintelligible phrase*) one of the conventions there, but he was allowed to speak, even though they booed him he was allowed to speak, but you know. But that didn't happen last week. There's a great article in today's paper about the show that was put on last week, and I had to agree so much with it. I'm not sure I can give you much insight into what people, or Muskie's -

GB: Well, I have some more things to ask you actually.

JO: Sure.

GB: Okay, yeah, I've got a few more minutes on this side. Okay, so was the, were the conventions kind of televised and reported on as they are now back like in '68 and around that time?

JO: Back in the '68 and, it was on all day long, all night long. They were, they didn't just pick prime time for two hours, they showed the convention right through. You'd have a recess sometime during the day when the convention delegation either went off for lunch or something but they, God, I can remember many times up at midnight, one o'clock in the morning, you know, watching TV, watching the convention, watching the floor fights, watching the people on the floor working the floor to get their votes for the nominee that they wanted.

Even when John Kennedy, they never expected him to win it on the first ballot, but he did. They worked that floor and you could see them on television, you could see his people on the floor twisting arms and making all kinds of promises and deals and so forth to get him nominated on the first ballot. And he was, of course.

GB: That's so interesting because, you know, today they show you the keynote speakers at night and -

JO: And somebody else wrote their speech for them, you know. I enjoyed it more when you saw some chairman of some local committee be recognized from the floor and he walked to a microphone and, without notes and so forth, he'd either ask questions or gave his opinion or made a statement and so forth. It was just much more exciting, you didn't know what was going to, you know.

That convention last week (*unintelligible word*) was not a convention god. And I don't know, no idea what their political affiliations are and I could care less, but (*unintelligible word*), you know, it was so obvious, you know. Every time there was a chairman from any delegation that was in a minority, minority chairman from any delegation, New York, the TV showed him casting the votes. Although he didn't cast the votes, he gave a lovely speech about the fact that he was black and all that kind of stuff and then he turned down, he passed. And then the next speaker was North Carolina, another black delegate had chaired, and they spoke about what a great guy Bush was and so forth, and how much he'd done for the minorities and blah-blah-blah, and then they passed. But they kept showing these special minority spots, you know, that really meant nothing, it just, you know, it didn't do. You know, you can't, you'll never make me believe the Republican Party's a friend of minorities, you know. They vote against every assistance they ever get and they vote against any fund raising, or any funds that they allotted to them, or, you know, I don't know. I just, we shouldn't get involved in local politics when we're trying to remind what we think about Ed Muskie, but if you've got some more questions please ask them. Don't let me go off, okay, you get me excited about the Democratic Party and what we're gonna do, you know.

GB: Oh no, that's fine, whatever we can get out of here. So, let me see if I can get this time line straight. You came to Maine in the late fifties.

JO: Yeah, I came in 1957.

GB: And you lived in Portland this whole time since then?

JO: Right, right.

GB: Right. Tell me about the, if you, however much you could about the development of the Portland community since then. You know um, who were the community leaders who were big in politics, I mean, and you've given me a couple names, Casper Tevanian and Milt Wheeler. Um, I guess, what was the political climate in Portland when you first came, was there a strong Democratic Party, or?

JO: No, there wasn't, you could hold a Democratic meeting in a phone booth, there were so few. The first meeting we went to, I think there was five or six people there. One of them was a guy by the name of Earl Brandt who always spoke about things twenty years before, how the Democrats worked, though they never accomplished anything, they never had any real candidates. The Democratic structure didn't really grow in the City of Portland. Boy, it had to be, it had to be really, the Democratic Party really came forth in the city of Portland when Johnson swept everybody into office. President Johnson, in 19-, it had to be 19- what, 1964?

GB: Sixty-four, yeah.

JO: And we won, for the first time we won the house of representatives and we didn't know what the hell to do with it, how to (*unintelligible word*) representatives. Ken Curtis had run for congress and lost to Stan Tupper. Ken was an assistant to big Jim Oliver, and I guess that was the Democratic Party at that time in Portland. Jim Oliver and, big Jim Oliver, a congressman.

And we, Democrats were swept into office. For the first time we had a complete Democratic delegation from the city of Portland. We had what they called a big box, you voted for the entire Democratic platform with one swipe at the top of the ticket. All of a sudden we had offices to fill, Speaker of the House, Secretary of the State, all those offices had to be filled. And I remember Dana Childs, he had experience as a former house member as a Republican but he was now a Democrat. He saw the light. And he became speaker of the house and he had a great deal of influence on the City of Portland Democratic politics. He brought in Ken Curtis as the Secretary of State and, of course, Ken went on later on to beat him for the nomination for governor. That was a fun campaign, too.

GB: Let me stop you for a second, let me - . . .

End of Side A
Side B

GB: All right, so who was big Jim Oliver?

JO: Well, big Jim Oliver, isn't that funny, I thought you knew his name. He was a congressman. He was a, as I recall he was a former Republican and became a Democrat and ran as a Democrat and he won. Although the year, he retired and I think his, Ken, Ken Curtis was his, was his aide of some sort, or ran his office. And Ken ran for congress and he ran against a congressman by the name of Stan Tupper, and Ken lost the race but he lost it so very, very close that we so sure that Ken was going to go back two years from that and win that race. Although he decided to come back and he, as Secretary of State, and he come back and he ran for governor, was successful in running for governor.

The names, and it was that, 1964 that all of a sudden good Democrats emerged and good names emerged in politics. That's Joe Brennan, Joe Brennan was a house member at that time, later on ran for the senate. Ronnie Kellam was a house member and ran, later on ran for the senate. Jerry Conley, who later on became the President of the Senate for the State of Maine, he ran, he ran those years. Those, we, we filled a ticket, in those years, a ticket of people who I think went on in politics. Like I say, Joe went on to be the governor, although he lost the race to George Mitchell, but he went on to be the governor. And then John Reed was Secretary of State, then the governor and congress.

GB: Now, this is interesting, you've mentioned three people now, big Jim Oliver, Dana Childs, and your wife, actually, who converted from the Republican Party to the Democratic party all around the fifties and the sixties. Was there, was there a big changeover around that time, did

you know a lot of people who switched?

JO: No, there was, yeah, there was a big changeover at that time, it was the first time the Democrats, because suddenly they, suddenly they had volunteers organize people, workers to get involved in the party. I remember, I remember my wife and George Mitchell, and my wife was a notary public. You had to be a notary (*unintelligible phrase*) registration and so forth, or even record them, to have them, put them on the register. George Mitchell and my wife were down in the lower end of Congress Street and all those big tall apartments there, going door-to-door, changing people's registration and so forth. And George would always say, "Now Jadine, you know, I'll be on the second floor, if you need any help you just yell." You know, he was always afraid, he felt that you're going to, here's some of those apartments down there that were not, maybe not the best people to be, to be, you know, going in the dark at night to get their registration for registering in the Democratic Party. Down in Frederick's Street and lower Congress Street and down in that area, which is a very nice section today, but in those days it was a pretty tough end of town for-. And they would do that, they would, and it would work and (*unintelligible word*), you know.

In those days we didn't know what George Mitchell was going to rise to in his political career. In those days he was just a Democratic volunteer working to get people elected, get the Democratic party moving, and it did. I guess that's what the (*Unintelligible phrase*).

You know, my wife is Republican because that's, her family was Republican in a Republican town, Whitman. And so she never, she never thought much about politics until we got involved with John Kennedy, and it was then that she, politics really grabbed at her, and she's still a political junkie. She, last couple of years lobbying for Blue Cross and Blue Shield and she'd done a damn good job at it, although she's retired now, she retired this last month. But we're still, we're still, we still think Democrat, you know, we still (*unintelligible word*). And you never heard of big Jim Oliver, huh, that's funny.

GB: I've heard of the name, I didn't know exactly what he did. So was a lot of the rallying for the Democratic Party done like that, kind of going door to door talking to people?

JO: Yeah, at that time, in those days it was, in those days it was. I remember, John Kennedy came to town, he stayed at the old Lafayette Hotel and the police had, hopefully had opened a stretch of the sidewalk. He was going to walk down from the Lafayette Hotel to the top of High and Congress Street where at that time was a little glass front store, which was a radio station. I think it was Channel Six was in there, or it might have been Thirteen, oh, it was Channel Six in there. And by the time he left the hotel, Lafayette Hotel, to come down that block to the corner to be interviewed on TV and radio, the streets were so mobbed. There were so many people jammed in that street that the police couldn't go down the sidewalk; they finally had to open up a path down the center of Congress Street to get him down the block.

It was just, just the massive crowds and the excitement, although they all didn't vote for Kennedy. Kennedy lost Maine and in fact Kennedy wiped out the Democratic Party at that time, the office holders, when he ran for the presidency. Whatever office holders he had, we lost with him. It wiped out, mostly the Catholic issue here in Maine but that's another story.

But to get him from that Lafayette Hotel down there was just a sea of masses, people right. And they had to force, the police had to force their way through the crowd to get him into the booth. And I remember being against, I, you know, with the group going down the street with him. I got stuck up against a glass window of a building, the news station, and the crowd was surging forward so much that I could feel the glass, you know, actually bending in the plate. I kept thinking, "My God, it's going to break and I'm right against it, you know. I'm going to push myself back from the window," and I just thought there was going to be just a mess.

Then we had a, that night we had a rally in to the field, the football stadium down there at, oh, it's Fitzpatrick's Field now, Fitzpatrick Stadium, but I'm not sure what it was called then. I think it was called Fitzpatrick Stadium, I can't be sure. Maybe it was called Portland Stadium, I'm not sure. We had a rally down there and this place was full, jam packed full, the bleachers were, had to be ten thousand people there. They were on the field standing, in the bleachers, all kinds of TV cameras and things set up there and so forth.

I remember one of the, one of the people who we were waiting for was big Jim Oliver. He stood about six-foot-four, he was a big, tall, strapping man. He reminded me somewhat in appearance, physical appearance, of Muskie. He had the same height and girth, the same shoulders, big shoulders and he stood up straight and the more he stood up straight the taller he looked. And we were waiting for him and it was Friday, and finally the announcer on the stage announced him. "Here comes big Jim Oliver" and so forth and so on, and big Jim saying, he had to finish his steak. Somebody in the audience yelled out, "Jim, it's Friday, you don't eat meat on Friday."

GB: Oh, that's funny.

JO: One of the highlights. But we did, we got wiped out. In fact, I often hear Gerry Conley speak about it. Has anybody interviewed Jerry Conley?

GB: I think so, I can't tell you for sure.

JO: (*Unintelligible phrase*), he, Gerry's a legend in himself. I mean he, he had some difference of opinion with Muskie. That's neither here nor there, he's a good man. But I remember he spoke to Kennedy when he was here in Maine, and he told Kennedy that we're going to vote for him, but we're all going to lose our jobs because of him, but we're still going to support him. He was, and Jerry has a real political instinct. He was right, Democrats got, we got wiped out in 1962, we got wiped out.

I just thought of something. (*Pause*). No, I thought I had one of Gerry Conley's campaign literature. Jerry ran for sheriff back in 1962 I think it was. That's the job he was running for at the time. And like I say, we all got clobbered. But it actually rejuvenated the Democratic Party, we had a Democratic president, you know, and we loved it.

And that's why I say, I was working in the post office in those days and, you know. The first thing as far as the government employee was concerned was the fact that he suddenly, he recognized that we had the right to organize as a union, so he was great for us. And he did such

a good job that. And of course his assassination, then when Johnson ran for himself, Johnson was, (*unintelligible word*) his program swept the Democratic Party in. The very national policy that swept us out was the same kind that swept us back in, and fortunately we're still there.

GB: Was it because over the past four years people had been very happy with the Kennedy-Johnson presidency?

JO: I think there were two, I think they were happy with the Kennedy-Johnson party, I think, at that time, and also the sympathy that we lost our president from assassination. I think that bolstered Johnson's image. And also, you know, he spoke about continuing the great crusade, the, to get people involved in their government, and so he organized what they call model cities. In fact, (*unintelligible word*) my wife, she was director of model cities at that time. I think that, I think that rejuvenated the Democratic Party and really brought us back into power.

GB: Portland was a model city, right?

JO: Portland was a model city, yes.

GB: How did that program work basically, what are your recollections of it? I mean, you must have been pretty close to it.

JO: Yeah, well, I'd rather have you, you should ask that question of her, because to me it took up an awful lot of her time. Just, it was just grants that were given to, one of the things that started it off was called, I think it started with PROP, Portland Regional Opportunity Program. It was a grant given that and it was to train low-income people, or people who had no real job skills and get them involved. And get them involved in their government and so forth.

And, there was PROP, and there was a grant, one grant I found was funny was a, it was to bring people closer to their police force and so forth, you know. It was called model cities, and there were police officers hired and so forth and some officers that were trying to teach the school kids and so forth, you know, get (*unintelligible phrase*). They had some of these officers that had the police badge on the lapel of their, they had blue blazers on and so forth and it was just to get them involved in their community. One of the officers had five or six children in one of his squad cars up on Valley Street, was it Valley Street? No, I guess it was Cumberland Avenue going up, going across Cumberland and going up towards getting on the turnpike. We're on the expressway and my wife is driving the car, our car. And so she, there was five or six young fellows in the, young boys and girls in the squad car and the police officer was showing them how the radar guns work and so forth. All of a sudden my wife come along, bing, the (*unintelligible phrase*). Of course there's a little bit of a speed limit there you know. All the kids are in the car, "Oh, we're going to have an arrest, (*unintelligible phrase*), we're going to stop someone," you know. So the cop stops my wife, he's a model cities cop being paid by model cities grant and so forth and she's the director of it. And he tried to give her a warning, but my wife sees all the kids there and so forth and she's saying no, no, no. "I was speeding," she said, you, "in front of these children you got to give me a ticket." The guy says, "I don't want to give you a ticket (*unintelligible phrase*)." Well, he finally gave her one.

GB: That's irony for you. Oh boy, that's funny.

JO: But you question her about model cities. It was a good program, it was a good program.

GB: Do you think, have you seen that it caused any kind of lasting changes or effects in Portland since then?

JO: Yeah, I did, PROP is still available, is still in Portland, Portland Regional Opportunity. And they had, especially in the West End, there was a whole community in the West End. Larry Conley and Jim Oliver, a different Jim Oliver, not, a different Jim Oliver who was a state representative from the. And Larry was a state representative, a very liberal, two representatives very liberal and very people oriented. And they organized the whole west end under this model cities program. They got model cities, that whole area got involved in being part of the city and working with the city and organizing, just organizing the neighborhood, and they're still organized, they're still there.

Those people are no longer there but the foundation is there. They still have the People's Building up there, that's what, I think it was called the People's Building. And this, still have this community service oriented group. And that's where, that's where the Saxls come from and those people, they were all part of that, they grew up in that politic area, they were all involved in that. And they're still there.

Lewiston was also one of the model cities programs, too, and I didn't know what happened up there, but. I don't know when my wife's being interviewed, whether you'll do the interview, you ask about model cities and she'll tell you some funny stories about some of the protest. You know, no matter how much you gave, no matter how much you gave some people it was never enough. They would hold sit-ins in her office and so forth.

GB: Oh. All right, I'm going to jump around a little bit because there are a few things that you mentioned before that I wanted to follow up on, and it's kind of disjointed. But I think you mentioned something very briefly about Kennedy's religion possibly having something to do with his kind of lack of support in Maine?

JO: Yeah, I think, you know, Portland, not Portland itself, by itself, I think the State of Maine years ago, years ago, history. And not so far long ago that they had the Ku Klux Klan having marches right downtown in Portland, too.

GB: Did you see any of that?

JO: I didn't see any of it but some of the other politicians had. But white Anglo Saxon Protestant was dominant in the State of Maine. You know, and a lot of the clubs, the Cumberland Club, you know, and Portland Country Club, for a long time, for a long time they, you know, they were very fussy about who they let in. Franco-Americans, I know many Franco-Americans in the Portland Country Club, although I'm not a member and never care to be a member, were blackballed by one member. Because, not because they weren't good citizens or anything, just that they were Franco-Americans and they didn't want that in the club. And the Cumberland

Club on High Street, they were, they were adamantly opposed years ago, back in the early fifties, to the Jewish clientele, adamantly opposed to it.

One of the, one of the first people I remember of Jewish faith, was doctor, his wife was also a doctor, Gisella Davison, Dr. David Davison. He was one of the first members I remember there. And I remember Gisella Davison couldn't enter the club by the front door, she had to go in the side door because she was a woman, I remember that. I remember, my wife was a strong woman advocate, you know, and Gisella invited her to lunch at the Cumberland Club. And when Gisella went to the side door my wife said don't go in the side door, we'll go in the front door or we ain't going in. I don't know whatever happened and I don't care, I didn't ever care to find out.

But, no, it was, the State of Maine in those days was pretty much, no one used the word bigoted because it really wasn't bigoted, just they were very staunch in their, in their faith and their belief, and they, you know. They really thought, in that time, they really thought that the Pope would be ruling John Kennedy. That, it turned out not to be true and it turns out to be just a, such a ridiculous thought. But at the time, though, it was, at the time it really was. It's like, I can compare it today with Lieberman, Joe Lieberman, you know. Me, I am delighted he's on the ticket. But right away the paper's saying the very fact that he's, that he's-. Why, who cares what he is, the very fact that he's the first Jewish person of faith to be on a national ticket for the presidency, what difference does it make whether he was Jewish or Catholic or, you know, anything else. His qualifications are beautiful, you know? And I mean how can you fault something like that?

GB: Of course today it might be good publicity because people are trying to get that sort of thing.

JO: Yeah, it might very well be, but I mean, with the, it's the first thing the press come out in the paper, and I asked myself why is he bother-, who cares what he is, you know?

GB: Just that they mentioned it, right.

JO: Yeah, who cares what he is, I mean, I didn't. Do you have any idea what faith Cheney is from? They didn't say white Anglo Saxon Protestant Cheney, they didn't say that at all, they didn't say that. I just don't understand it. I don't know, I guess that's politics, but we're off the track.

I sort of jumped around in years and I, you know, trying to put together in my own mind what the years were that all these things happened. There's another prominent name that we didn't mention because I, I wish I could say this off the record, I didn't like him. Probably, probably I should say it off the record. Don't use that.

GB: Well you can tell me about him later if you'd like to. Okay, now I was curious about Dana Childs. You said he was a lobbyist in the legislature. What was he lobbying for?

JO: Well, he was a member of the House of Representatives as a Republican. He was a member of the senate as, Maine State Senate as a Republican. He then swapped and became a

Democrat, and then spent a couple years out of politics, out of elected office. He was, he was, he left, and I got this straight because he was a very good friend of mine

But he, back in the early fifties, no I'm sorry, early, middle forties, middle forties, he was a Republican, he left Portland with the Republicans in complete control thinking he was going to be president of the senate when he left Portland. And when he got there, an hour drive, the northern Republicans felt that they didn't want somebody from Portland to be there as a President of the Senate and so forth. And so they got together and so forth, and they nominated the, what they thought would be the weakest person they could nominate, that they could control. Not the weakest person as being a President of the Senate, that he knew the rules, someone that they could influence, and that was John Reed they nominated. Dana left here thinking he was going to be President of the Senate. When he got there he found out he lost the Presidency of the Senate to John Reed. Governor Clauson who was the governor died, oh, two or three months later, and John Reed became the Governor. And I think it was about that time that Dana became a Democrat, about that time.

And then he was out of politics for a couple of years, maybe, you know, I don't know, four or five years. Then he ran as a Democrat in 1994. And in fact it was, he became my friend because he was at the meeting my wife and I first attended, Democratic meeting. Just a very, very few small people there, like I say, maybe if there was ten there there was a lot. And like I say, my wife spoke in favor of John Kennedy but they didn't even know who John Kennedy was. But she was dramatic; she's a good speaker, and she (*unintelligible phrase*).

Dana went home that night and said to his wife, I met this couple tonight, meaning me, myself and my wife, to his wife Jean. And you know, he's telling his wife that her name was Jadine O'Brien, and she said, "Oh, I know her," she said, "we have a couple of classes together at the University of Maine." They were taking different courses, night courses and so forth. She says, "Oh I know her," so that's how we became friends, you know, Dana and his wife and my wife, we became very, very close friends. In fact I consider him one of my best friends, and I, his death a year ago really affected me.

And um, but he, you see, he be-, after he became the Speaker of the House, of course, you know, it takes up a lot of time, and you didn't make any great deal of money at that time. He had some children getting ready to go to college and so forth, so he had to, he had to, he ran for governor and lost it to Ken Curtis, but that was just a fun campaign, you know.

The lousiest campaigner I ever worked with was Dana Childs, I mean he was just a, the lousiest campaigner. We went to Bates factory in Lewiston, myself and my oldest daughter who is a political junkie. We were at the Bates Manufacturing plant and people going to work you can always stop, they take a few moments going, but people leaving work they were, you couldn't stop them to give them a-. Well we were at the, we kept both gates covered, you know, my daughter's at one, I'm at the other, we've got Dana Childs' brochures and so forth, hand them out.

And it's got to be like five-thirty in the morning. It's cold, and Dana said, "The hell with this," he says, "I'm going, I'll be at the coffee shop across the street." He went over and sat in the

coffee shop, and I'm at the gate handing out Dana Ch-. And they're thinking I'm Dana Childs, and they're, "I'll vote for you Dana," and all this crap. But they thought I was Dana Childs, and he's in the coffee shop. And they thought my daughter was Dana Childs' daughter, you know. Who would suffer at five-thirty, six o'clock on a cold, miserable morning handing out brochures for, and not be the candidate, you know?

That, we had, it was a, it was a fun election, a good time. And probably the two people who became very good friends during and after that campaign was Dana and Ken Curtis, you know, they became very good friends. Buddy Reed was the third candidate in that race, and Buddy took it bitterly. And Dana just joked about it and he, I remember that we were trying to unite the party back after Ken won and get Dana's people back in the fold and so forth. I remember that the, up at the Samoset Hotel Dana gave the best speech of his career about how thankful he was that Ken Curtis won and he wanted to thank his help, meaning myself and my wife and so forth. But he said, "God," he said, he didn't know what he would have done if he woke up that morning and found out he was going to be the governor. He said he had really no stomach for it. He was a good guy.

GB: Wow, all right. I have to ask you something very simple. Could you tell me, I've heard all this stuff about Casper Tevanian, could you tell me how to spell his last name? Do you, do you know yourself?

JO: That's terrible, I, I did know. I did know because his brother still runs, oh no, I guess he retired this year. His brother ran the Pride's Corner drive-in movie for years and years and years. (*Pause*). It was T-H or T-E to start with. Let's see if I can pick out his wife's name. Here it is, here's how it's spelled, T-E-V-A-N-I-A-N.

GB: All right, that's exactly how I had it spelled, I had no idea if I was right. I didn't know if there was an -R- in there or, I, I. So that's good, finally got that official.

JO: I'll tell you some stories about him, too, but -

GB: Please, please do.

JO: Well, I don't want it on the record, that's all. It's just, we can talk about another political friend of mine afterwards, and I'll tell you some stories about Casper.

GB: Okay. Is there anything you can tell me about him that you would want to put on the record, anything interesting?

JO: He, well yeah, he was, you know, back in the days when Democrats could not win anything, could not win. We couldn't win dog catcher, but we always honored Casper because of his loyalty to the Democratic Party. We always nominated him by putting his name for nomination for Attorney General of the State of Maine. And of course he never would get it, you know. Then the one year that we didn't put his name in nomination and so forth was the year that the Democrats were swept in.

But he didn't want to be, he was a lawyer, criminal lawyer. He was a criminal lawyer and he had a good criminal practice. He also was a partner with Joe Brennan, Joe Brennan and he were, shared an office here on Exchange Street and so, and Joe was always faithful to Casper and Casper vice versa. Casper was a, he was an awful good guy and he smoked an awful lot. And he went after, he died from cancer, he just kept on smoking, he didn't, you know, he wasn't.

They tell the story about he had one of his clients on trial for some felony. And the guy, Casper said, you know, "You got to have your family, show the judge. Have your family surround you and support you, and show the judge that you do come from a good family and so forth, and you might get off with a little easier sentence, or you may get probation," and so forth and so on. So he met his client in the courthouse, the old court house here, with his family, and he addressed his client and all of a sudden, "No, no, no, that's my brother, I'm his twin." And Casper said, "Both of you's come with me." Went to the trial and said, "Now okay, pick out the fellow who robbed you. Guy picked out the wrong one. Case dismissed. That's a true story.

GB: Oh, boy. Oh, wow. That is wild. I have never heard of that happening before.

JO: Yeah, that was a, I was not there, but Casper told me that it was true and other lawyers told me it was very true, too, that he hadn't realized the fellow had a twin brother. He just wanted to, you know, bring the family into court to. He was ready to, you know, plead the fellow guilty for a lesser crime or lesser charge and maybe get probation or something, or a fine or something, you know. But he was a good, he was a good trial lawyer.

I remember, probably I shouldn't tell this, but I come back. Casper enjoyed a drink, and we're coming back from Augusta because he did a little lobbying too up there once in a while, for, he also had friends, we had friends up there. We were coming back after, I was a member of the house and we were in a session. And he was driving and he had a few drinks but, you know, he, I thought he was all right or else I wouldn't have rode with him. But we get stopped in Brunswick, by an officer in Brunswick.

He rolled the window down about this far, he put his license out the window (*unintelligible phrase*). The officer said, "Roll the window down." He said, "No, didn't roll the window down." This is before they had the OUI blood test and so forth and so on. No, I'm not going to roll the window down. Took his card out and put it out through the window and said, "I'm a practicing lawyer and attorney in Portland" and so forth, "and I don't have to roll this window down. Do you have identification? You stop me for a violation of whatever it was, I'll take the violation and that's where our conversation's going to end." The cop said, "Well you ain't going to move this car." He said, "Fine." Shut the car off, leaned the seat back and went to sleep. Left me sitting in the car for about five hours. I couldn't leave the car, I couldn't open the door to get out of the car because the cop would have access to the automobile so I'm, stayed in the car for about five hours, and Casper, he (*unintelligible phrase*) sleep in the seat, didn't bother him a bit.

GB: And the cop just stayed there?

JO: (*Unintelligible phrase*) kept going back and forth, make sure we were still there, so. (*Unintelligible phrase*) this was before they, you know, before they had, Casper argued very

heavily against these blood tests and so forth, mandatory blood testing. He felt that, his position was you force somebody into giving you a blood test, you're forcing them to testify against themselves, that was his position. Of course, they've thrown that out as an argument, but that was his, that was his position.

And I'm talking now early seventies, before OUI was, it's bad. It's not a good thing, but I remember Casper telling me that he got stopped. Like I say he drank occasionally. He got stopped once and went to the station with the officer, and he wanted a doctor to take his blood. He didn't want some nitwit, you know, taking blood from him, he wanted a doctor to take his blood. And a doctor did, doctor came and Casper rolled his sleeve up and said, "Geez," he said, "I'm scared to death of needles," he said. "In fact, the last time I had someone taking blood from me," he said, "I fainted dead away and so I hope you're ready for shock if I go into shock, doctor." Doctor just folded his needle back up, put it back in the bag and left, wouldn't take his blood. And Casper told me that story. Wouldn't take his blood.

GB: Oh boy, oh wow. Wow. So how did, the situation where you were left sitting there in the car, how did that resolve, when did you guys finally get out of there?

JO: Well, by the time, oh, five o'clock in the morning, getting daylight. By now Casper's had five or six hours of sleep. He didn't care what the cop thought then, he didn't care, he just got up. I wasn't driving, he just got up and moved the car and drove home. I was very late but he didn't care, you know. He must have slept there four or five hours.

GB: Oh wow, oh, that's funny. All right, I'll change veins here, let me ask you about the economic development of the City of Portland. Has the kind of business structure, economic structure changed in your estimation from what, from what you've observed? Are the types of businesses that you see in the city different from, you know, forty years ago?

JO: Well, I don't think the, I don't think the business structure has improved that much in the city of Portland itself. We do have, I tell you what has happened, we have a lot more professional people. By professional I mean lawyers' and doctors' offices and lab offices all up and down Portland Street there, down towards the (*unintelligible word*). We've had any number of eye clinics and speciality labs doing blood work and so forth. The hospitals expanded tremendously.

I think most of the businesses, what I call businesses, like the post office. That was one of the major employers here in the City of Portland and it probably still is, but it's not as, it's not the major any more with the South Portland technology buildings out there in South Portland and Scarborough. I think they're drawing, they're drawing away from the Portland structure of business. Of course, the mall has done that.

We try to rebuild Congress Street again, but it's coming back slightly, but not coming back with what I would call real businesses that employ lots of people and so forth. We used to have Union Mutual on Congress Street, right down there, down almost across from city hall. Union Mutual was a very large employer that's now in Scarborough, and she's even bigger now than it was in those days. I guess it was, I guess it started out being called Maine, it started, maybe I'm

wrong, maybe it started out being called Maine Insurance Company and then it became Union Mutual later on.

But I don't see any great structure of businesses in Portland. I see a lot of tax exempt property, you know, being available. Of course, down this area here all the office spaces are filled with lawyers, and consultants, and stock brokers and insurance people, insurance salesmen and so forth. But they're professional, all those are professions. But I don't see them as being a major influx of business.

GB: I see. What about the Democratic Party? How has the Democratic Party changed during the course of your involvement?

JO: Well, you know, you reach a point where you get tired, you know. I still attend day meetings, a few meetings. I don't attend as much as I used to attend them. The Democratic party has lost, not just Democratic, both parties have lost their muscle with the. You know, at one time, at one time if there was a position open, a politically appointed position open for a party, we'll say Republican or Democrat, that party had some say. It had some influence on who would take that job, or who would get that job. They would have a meeting, that party would nominate a certain individual to be, take the position and so forth. That doesn't happen any more.

Now the party official type, those who are in office today, they're Democrats. Democratic philosophy and so forth, but they were never active in the Democratic Party itself, they were never active really in the grass roots. They were, they became, when the position became open they went to work for that position, you know. They don't, they don't, and the Democratic structure itself, they no longer have a, they try to make recommendations to the, their leaders and so forth but they have, don't have the influence they had thirty years ago, twenty years ago.

You go to a Democratic meeting now and they talk about, you know, candidates. But right now it's pretty dull because (*unintelligible phrase*) you got an election coming up. And a lot of county offices on the ticket, a lot of local representatives are on the ticket, and so forth. In the past three or four years, at the meetings I've attended, I've seen very few of our elected officials there. They're all leaders now, they, the Democratic, to me. To their way of thinking that they, they're just, they're winners, they're going to get reelected, got the Democratic banner. Why waste a Sunday night going downtown and talking about Democratic ideas and philosophies and so forth.

In the Democratic Party, you know, they're getting involved in things that really shouldn't have a party label to them. They're getting involved in, you know, the widening of the turnpike and so forth. And that shouldn't have a party label to it, that, you know. Of course, myself personally, I'm, I was opposed to it, I still am opposed to it. If they want to clear the traffic jams up on the Maine Turnpike just take the tollbooths off, just remove them. The only thing we ever see it happening is at the tollbooth, or a very serious accident. Widening the turnpike is not going to flow any more cars through that turnpike, through those tollgates. Just can't do it. A certain number of cars is going to go through in a certain number of hours, and if each, every car has to stop for ten or fifteen seconds you're going to have a traffic jam. Get rid of the tollbooths.

Make the Maine Turnpike Authority, instead of being the quasi form of government that it is, make it part of the Dept. of Transportation. But they don't want to lose their revenue. Ronnie Kellam, he was a State Senator. He proved that the Turnpike had been paid for, the bond had been retired and the Turnpike should be opened. They weren't going to, they weren't going to give that revenue up.

A fellow from Biddeford, Peter Denton, Gerry Conley, a few more of them got arrested for using the new road, up 95, the state police, because the Maine Turnpike Authority was building that road. They built that rode up to Augusta, the Turnpike Authority never let know that road was open. In fact they kept it closed because they didn't want to lose their revenue, they didn't want people going off there and go to Augusta without paying a toll all the ways to Augusta, didn't want to lose. And Gerry Conley and Pete Denton, and a few more of those fellows too they used it for going back and forth to Augusta, and finally the state trooper arrested them for using that closed road, you know. I remember Jerry's argument was, "Well if the road is closed, why do you put a toll in it? If no one's going to use it, why we got three state troopers out here tolling the road, you know, if it's closed."

And of course (*unintelligible word*), Peter Denton's brother was a judge and he was saying to his brother pay the fine, don't get involved. But no, they insisted, they wanted to go to trial, and finally the Turnpike Authority opened that road and dismissed the charges against them. But they were responsible. They intentionally did it, they were response- to force the Turnpike Authority… They just didn't want to lose their revenue.

Even now, you know, coming up, you pay a dollar and a half getting on the Turnpike. And to get off that road to go up 95 you pay fifty cents more. You go another quarter of a mile, even less than a quarter of a mile, get off at Exit 7, come around and make the loop, you're right back on the road for nothing. So why do they have the tollgate there to start with?

GB: Well I don't have any more questions, so, do you have any final remarks you'd like to make? Anything you'd like to add or emphasize?

JO: Well, I don't think I've added much to thoughts of what Muskie did for the Democratic Party, really. I don't think I've added much to that. I enjoyed the guy and I enjoyed the people with him. I used to enjoy Don Nicoll. I mean he was, you talk about a sharp, sharp guy, now there's a guy that, any flies on him they were paying rent. I mean, he was sharp, sharp. He was politically astute, he knew where it was going, he knew what the issues were, and I think he was, bared a great deal of responsibility of the growth of Ed Muskie. I really do, I really think that. He was always right there and sort of letting Ed know which way to go, you know, and schooling him, you know.

I think one time, one convention Ed Muskie needed something, and a young lady worked for him for years. Her husband, I'm sorry, her father was an old time Democrat from up in Harrison, Sam Pitts, I think her name was Virginia Pitts. Well she worked for Muskie in his office for ten years. Anyway, Muskie at this political meeting kind of, he needed something, and he said, "Where's that girl, where's that girl that does that for me, where's that girl?" He didn't even know her name. It was Don Nicoll that said, "Well that's Virginia Pitts, I'll get her for you."

You know, just, I'm sure if Muskie was alive he'd hate that comment. But, you know, he was just, he was just busy.

But I think Don Nicoll, and George Mitchell, I think both of them worked right together. I think they were the, I think they were the strength of Muskie in the early days. They were his strength, they were his strength. I always, I always, I was quite surprised when Don Nicoll left Muskie's employment to do something else. He just, I suppose he had other things he wanted to do and try.

GB: Well, that sounds like a good place to stop.

JO: Yeah, you're right.

GB: Yes, so thank you very much.

End of Interview