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Interview with Robert Piccone by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Piccone, Robert

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

November 25, 2002

Place

South Portland, Maine

ID Number

MOH 377

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Biographical Note

Robert Louis Piccone was born in Louisville, Colorado on August 5, 1938 to Joseph and Lucille Piccone. His father was a coal miner and vegetable farmer, and his mother was a homemaker. At the age of eighteen, Robert joined the Coast Guard in Denver, and served in various locations before being stationed in Portland, Maine. In March of 1960 he began working for UPS in Portland, and became active in Teamsters Local 340, as a union contact person, when UPS unionized in April 1960. He became an officer of the Local in 1967 and became its president in 1982, serving in that capacity until 2002. He wrote extensively about David Hastings, and those biographical sketches are included with Mr. Piccone's interview materials.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Louisville/Denver Colorado; coal mining industry; early coal mining unions; Coast Guard in the 1950s; organizing UPS; Al Page; Maine Teamsters Local 314 in the 1960s; diversity in the Teamsters in 2002; David Hastings; Fred's Motors organization in 1936; Teamsters 314 after Hastings and Page; Lucien Boutin; Local 48 in Bangor history; international hierarchy of the Teamsters; Teamsters logo; right-to-work laws and Senator Muskie; Muskie as a leader; and the 1958 election.

Indexed Names

Carey, Ron
Clauson, Clinton Amos, 1895-1959
Dewey, Thomas
Hastings, Dave
Lewis, John L.
McCarthy, William "Bill"
Monkhouse, William A.
Page, Al
Piccone, Joseph
Piccone, Lucille
Piccone, Robert Louis
Reed, John H. (John Hathaway), 1921-
Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945
Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972

Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Robert Piccone on November the 25th, the year 2002, at his office in South Portland, Maine. This is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start just by giving me your full name and spelling it?

Robert Piccone: My name is Robert Louis Piccone, P-I-C-C-O-N-E.

AL: And where and when were you born?

RP: I was born in Louisville, Colorado on August 5th, 1938.

AL: And is that where you grew up?

RP: I grew up in Denver. Well, I grew up in Louisville and Denver, Denver, Colorado.

AL: What kind of a community was it that you grew up in?

RP: It was a Sicilian coal mining, coal miners. It was a coal mining town right outside of Denver, Colorado. And my family was from Italy, Sicily, and my grandfather was from Greece, and they were coal miners.

AL: And politically speaking, what type of a community was it?

RP: Politically, well politically I would know it to have been a Democrat, you know, from a Democratic Party base, if there was any party that had any control there. In a Republican state, too, I might add. They were United Mine Workers Union members, they were all union

members and they were big, the president, you know, in those days was [Franklin D.] Roosevelt but in their minds it should have been probably John Melrose.

AL: And what were your parents' names and what were their occupations?

RP: My dad's name was Joseph Piccone, my mother was Lucille. And my dad's occupation was, he had a vegetables and fruits with his father and they had a farm, and they supplied produce to the City of Denver, in that surrounding area. And he was, and his family was coal miners. And my mother was a housewife. In that town that's all you dared to be.

AL: So there was, so coal mining was part of the family tradition, although your father was a farmer, he pretty much understood the coal miners.

RP: He knew the mines, and he probably worked in the mines, too, but that wasn't what he primarily did. Everybody worked in the mines, but he wasn't primarily a miner. His brothers were miners, his brothers had mules and had animals in the mine, but that's what they did. When my dad worked in the mines, he probably did from time to time when they needed help or when he didn't have a job or whatever, you know.

AL: Do you have recollections of the coal miners, your uncles?

RP: Yes, I sure do, yeah.

AL: What can you -?

RP: Oh, they were tough guys. They were unlike, I mean they didn't look for things to come their way, and they were, it was a dangerous job. They were all injured, I don't know, you know, you look back and of course when you try to say, you ask somebody what do they recall, you recall what you have first hand of knowledge of and then what people tell you over the years, then you put it back and look back on it. But at the time it didn't strike me that they were all in some way injured. But they were all in some way injured, you know. And some of them didn't, no longer worked the mines because they couldn't any more, because they couldn't go down the mines. So they all had in some way or another injuries, a lot of consumption, you know, my grandfather died of consumption, but he died at seventy eight years old, or eighty years old. But he didn't work the mines because of consumption from a period forward, they just all, they just did. I mean they didn't have strip mining then, it was all underground and it was dangerous and unhealthy.

And they would, there was a lot of little things that happened, like when I lived in Wyoming for a while with my grandfather, who was a coal miner in Kemmerer, Wyoming, where they just had a strike a couple of years ago. They would ride up to Kemmerer on a train, I mean through Kemmerer on a train up to Big Piney, Wyoming to where the coal mine was, Frontier mines and the Ace Mine. And then the kids would meet the trains when the train came back to drop them off, it was a train car, and the miners would bring a piece of log that, the beams that support the roof in a mine, where they cut them off to fit, there would be a stump maybe eighteen inches big and big around as the log, and they would take, nail a piece of wire to put a handle on it. And so

when the miners came back the kids would go up and take the lunch pails and carry that stuff back, and the logs were then split up and that was kindling wood, so that's why they would bring them back, because every had two, three, depending on where their status was in the mines.

And my grandfather would come back and he had his clothes taped closed, like his sleeves would be taped closed and his neck piece would be taped closed, and they'd be coal, you know, be completely black except where they wore their masks and their helmets. And they'd come in, and before you come in the house there was a shower in the back of the house, and all the old houses had those, it was like old cement floored showers with the drain built into them. And that's the first thing they did, they'd get home, take their clothes off, go in the shower, and shower off all the coal off, you wash the coal off before you go in the house, except they couldn't wash it out of their lungs. They got it off their bodies, but they couldn't get it off their lungs.

And they all had stories of somebody being hurt in the mines, you know, there was people in the town, one old guy that had one arm that he'd lost his arm in a mine. There was another guy that had, it was old Joe Zerrinni that had, he couldn't use his right arm any more because he had done damage to it in the mines. There was a lot of, they were all, there was a lot of injuries in the mines. That's what I remember now that I think, you have brought to my conscious and still think about that kind of thing. There was a lot of people hurt.

And they had a good union, I mean, as unions went in those days, so they had, but safety was always a thing they just could never seem to get on top of. But as far as their seniority rights and different rights in their jobs, they felt pretty comfortable with that, they liked their union. At least in my day I didn't know anybody that didn't like their union, and my grandfather loved it. Every time there'd be a dispute between John L. Lewis and Truman and they'd shut the mines down, my grandfather would go fishing and I loved it because he'd be gone for days fishing in Wyoming.

AL: What brought you to Maine, and at what age?

RP: I was in the Coast Guard. In Denver, Colorado all the teenage boys, that was during the draft, and so when you hit that, started to get close to eighteen you'd make a decision whether you wanted to be drafted into the Army or, you knew you had to go in the service. So the Air Force was in Denver, Colorado and so nobody wanted to join the Air Force (*unintelligible phrase*). And so in Denver it was you'd, everybody joined either the Navy or the Coast Guard it seems to me, or everyone I knew did, and so I joined the Coast Guard and I ended up in California, and then I ended up on the rivers in Mississippi and Ohio, and then I ended up in Maine. I transferred up here from Boston, that's how I ended up here.

AL: And so when you left the Coast Guard what did you do?

RP: When I was in Portland in the Coast Guard, they had the weather ships here, (*names of ships*) and those ships that were here, and they used to do the weather patrols and search and rescue. They don't do those so much any more, it's all done with computers. But they, when I got out of the Coast Guard I didn't have a job and I was going to stay in Maine because I married a Maine girl and she was, by then she was pregnant, so I looked for work.

And UPS had just, they hadn't opened in Maine but they were looking to open in Maine and they were taking interviews at the, at the Maine Employment Security Commission they were taking, they were doing interviews. And I had gone down there to sign up, you know, because I was out of work and I thought I was entitled to unemployment, I might collect it and look for, and that's how you found jobs then. I mean, I didn't know how you signed up down there. And they lined me up for an interview with UPS and UPS hadn't opened in Maine yet, and so I interviewed for the job with others and I, there were seven people who started in Maine in UPS when they opened up in the state. They opened in Portland and Lewiston because they didn't have rights statewide, because of different laws in those days, you had to buy rights and you had to acquire rights, you couldn't just go where you wanted to go. And they had rights from Portland, Route 202, and then in Auburn, a little bit north of Auburn. So when they opened in Maine there were seven people of which I was one.

And it was a, at that day, that was March in 1960 and it wasn't a union job that day, it was a union job but they didn't have a contract with the Teamsters in Maine. So it was in, I started March 15th and the contract that the Teamsters did have with them expired April the 1st, and so then they negotiated, and they negotiated Local 340 into the New England supplemental agreement, and that's how that came out.

I went to work at UPS it was a, I think it was buck fifty-five an hour, and then I was thrilled because that was like about thirty cents more than you could get, or twenty cents. And then April the 1st, then when they negotiated the contract we went to a buck eighty five, that was absolutely wonderful. And then we went to two ten, it was like you were really in heaven making two dollars and ten cents an hour, that was a lot of money, it really was.

AL: And so did that reaffirm your belief in the unions that you knew about from being a young boy?

RP: Yeah, I always, I think back about like why did I get so involved, am so involved, and I think it was probably because my grandfather and all my uncles and everybody were in the union, and they were always. . . They didn't talk like, they didn't talk union in a sense of like in organizer's terms and all that, like the, you know, the advantages and whatever, but it was so important to them, you know, and it was a dignity thing with them I think. And it was something they had that nobody better try to take away. They had rights and they would refer to their rights in the union. So I knew that was a special thing, you know, it was a little bit different than joining, say, a neighborhood group or something like that. I knew there was some significance in being a member of a union.

And then, I was never one, and it was maybe just like ingrained from them, but I was never one that would just take something, you know, because somebody said I had to do something. I was just never good at that, by somebody telling me something. I did good in the service, you know, because I could salute and say 'yessir' and what have you because that's what you were expected to do in the service. But when, but I didn't, I was just never good at blind following, you know. And when I went to work for UPS, Al Page was signing everyone up and he told me that I'd be good at helping him out, be a contact guy. And so that's what I did and every time I had a

complaint I'd call Al, and I had a lot of them because when I was a real young guy you couldn't tell me anything. So I just sort of like worked into it.

AL: So how early was it, do you remember what year, about what year you met Al Page?

RP: Yeah, it was, I met him, I met Al the first week of March in 1960.

AL: Oh, so it was right, that early, just as you started?

RP: Yeah, because what happened is UPS came in and hired, went to the interviews and hired people. And in those days to get, after you got hired by UPS you had to go have a physical, just like you still do. And they had Dr. Monkhouse in Portland and Monkhouse was down by, I think it was on State Street. Everybody remembers Monkhouse because everybody kidded around about Monkhouse, he was the Department of Trans-, he was an examiner. He was a doctor but he had, how do you say it, he's a doctor, a regular doctor, but he also was certified to examine people for what's called Department of Transportation certification for your health, for driving trucks. So he was, we called him "DOT examiner" even though he was just a regular doctor. And so when, every year you had to have a, you know, renew your examination and you get a certificate for it showing that you are qualified to do this business, physically. And Monkhouse, (*unintelligible phrase*) going to Monkhouse because, you know, we used to have a joke, he was on like the third floor or the second floor. And he was real liberal, and we used to say, if you can get upstairs you can pass the DOT.

But that's where you met Page because Page used his office to sign us all up into the union, because he knew we were all going to be there that day, the seven of us having physicals. So Al went down there to make sure that you signed up because he wouldn't, you know, he was, didn't let that go by. He took (*unintelligible phrase*) advantage to sign everybody up, and that's how I met Al Page. He's a good guy.

AL: And when did you become actively involved in the union yourself?

RP: Pretty quick, because it was like March, like I said, it was March the 1st, March 15th, there was a meeting in April, the contract hadn't been ratified yet. In May it had, by May it had been and I went to the first union meeting on the second Sunday of May, 1960 and that was my first meeting. And I can tell you this now, too, and this I know know one else can say, and I've never missed a general membership meeting since, and that's forty-two years, on the second Sunday of every month. I know no one can say that.

AL: Wow, congratulations.

RP: I don't think nation wide, maybe there's somebody that did it, but I doubt it. But I went to that meeting and they had, there was really a great meeting, I thought it was just, it was marvelous. There was a great old history of this local meeting, it was on Exchange Street. And there was a lot of commotion when I went in there. You had the book then, what they called "the book." People in the Teamsters, they referred to people being "book people." I don't know if other unions do it, but either you have a book or you don't have a book, even though they don't

use the books any more they still, that means you're a union member paid up, which is a book man, that means you got your book. It's a little book, it was about three inches by two inches, and they had stamps like postage stamps for paying your dues. And you had to have your book with you when you went in. If you're delivering crates, you couldn't go into a warehouse. If somebody asked for your book they wouldn't let you unload the freight if you weren't in the union, you know what I mean? So it was a little different back then.

So I went in, got my book and got my stamp, and there was a lot of commotion in there, and there was this guy, his name was, what was his name, Phil Coughlin, and he had a dispute with Dave Hastings, and he grabbed Dave Hastings and was trying to stuff him out the window up on the second floor. And they kicked him out of the union for that, but that's my first Teamsters Union meeting. It was a real brawl, it was really rowdy.

AL: Do they still get rowdy sometimes?

RP: No, no.

AL: A lot different now.

RP: Never, not, no, in those days it was a lot different, for whatever reason. Well, I think what it was, was their leadership came from that background, too. And that was how people settled issues, you know. They would try to go through the process but usually they'll (*unintelligible phrase*) somewhere on the way and end up to be kind of rowdy. But at that meeting Page needed somebody to contact at UPS, it was a new unit for the Teamsters, it was in Maine, it was a small unit, only seven people so he certainly wasn't going to spend time going down there. And he asked me to do that. And I went down in May of that year, at the end of that meeting went down to, on, below the union hall on Exchange Street, it was called the Labor (*unintelligible word*), it's still there, was this little deli, it's a Chinese restaurant now, but it was, then it was called Federal Spa. And Dave Hastings and I went down there and had lunch and he told me what was expected of me, and so I was a Teamsters for, what, that day. So yeah, that's pretty, that's getting involved pretty quick, isn't it?

AL: Yes. So, because I'm not sure, you were still at UPS.

RP: Yeah, I worked at UPS.

AL: And then also did the union stuff. So it wasn't something you did the union full time.

RP: No, I worked for, what it is in the Teamsters Union, you have shop stewards and people like that. So I wasn't, it wasn't a shop steward because they didn't have a shop steward officially with a title for a couple years after that. So now they simply call it the contact person. So what I did is I did all the work for the union at UPS. In other words, notices posted, grievances sent in, phone calls, if the company wanted to discipline somebody they have a hearing, I attended the hearings. And I'd get the business agent involved. Actually it was, I was just doing the work of the shop steward, I just didn't have, there wasn't a title to that position then.

What happened over the years was that it was a freight local, this local, meaning that most of the members were in the freight division and there were thousands of them then. I think this local at one time had like eighteen hundred freight members, and UPS was only seven so you can imagine. And it was strictly a freight local. There was probably, there were others that weren't in freight, there was a couple warehouses, and there was the A&P, and there was some other unions, but, the Bangor Police Department back years ago, but basically it was freight. So in this local, if you were not from a freight organization, like if you don't work for Cole's or St. Johnsbury or something like that, well you were a second class citizen, you know, really.

And especially UPS, because when we started coming to the meetings, I started, I went, for years I was the only UPS guy there because we couldn't get anybody interested. You don't have any say, you know, I mean it was almost, really didn't, and when you did you'd usually be heckled in some way or another, you know what I mean, "Shut up." You know, you're not a Teamster, they say, real Teamsters and you're not a real Teamster, you know, because you didn't drive tractor trailers, you know, trucks, you know. And even the UPS drivers that drove tractor trailer, like I did at the time, still weren't considered real freight, you know, real Teamsters because you didn't work for a freight company.

AL: And what does the Teamsters include now? Northern Freight?

RP: Oh, everybody, yeah. And especially this local, this local's chartered to represent virtually everyone except for unions that are excluded by law, like armored guards. Armored guards can't belong to this union by law. But we have police and fire, you know, truck drivers, and Red Cross assistance, we have Public Works people and bus drivers, and just, you know, just about everybody. CNAs, or, so it's a generally chartered local. Back then it was generally chartered, too, but they didn't pursue other, they didn't pursue other units, they weren't interested. I mean, they maybe were interested but politically it wasn't, you know, it was a freight local.

And the meetings I used to go to in 1960 and '61, I may very well have been the only non-freight person there, except for maybe some people from A&P warehouse I may have been. I'm not, you know, there may have been from time to time others that were there, but primarily it was all freight people. And I did, like I said, I did that work for Page to keep the locals up, and then as time went on the local wasn't really interested in assigning a business agent that was going to go over there and do day-to-day, even as UPS began to grow, and it started to grow pretty fast, you know. Like there's around, what, about eight hundred people over there now at UPS. So I always did the job, even when I didn't work full time for the local. And then I became a trustee, I mean I became an officer of the local back in about 1967 I guess it was. But I always did the UPS stuff, even though there was business agents assigned to it. I mean, they pretty much let me do whatever I was doing. What I did as I did what I could legally do. And then where the company didn't have to deal with me because I wasn't, say, a business agent per se then, they'd have to have the business agent come in. But what we were fond of doing is we were fond of telling business agents to go have a cup of coffee and we'd take care of ourselves, and that's what he did.

AL: So Al Page was running the Teamsters Union when you started.

RP: And [Dave] Hastings.

AL: The two of them together, or did one -?

RP: Well, what it was, was the local has an executive board, it still does, that structure hasn't changed. It has a president and secretary-treasurer, it goes president, vice president, secretary treasurer, recording secretary, and three trustees, they make up the . . . the officers. The fulltime officers of the local in those days, the only full time officer in those days as far as the by-laws were concerned was the secretary treasurer, that was the full time person and that was Al Page. But the president was still the principle officer. And in those days, Dave Hastings was the president and he was a full time, it was called president and business agent, because he was the president. But he was also a business agent, so by virtue of the fact that he was a business agent he was a full time officer of the union. There are locals where the president is not a full time officer because he wasn't a business agent, he could have worked at UPS and been a president. But in this particular case Al Page was full time because that's what the secretary-treasurer is, is full time. And the president in this case was full time because he was also an elected business agent. So Dave Hastings, when I came on, he'd always been the president from day one, when the local was chartered. When you take that, I'll give you that thing on Hastings, it's about twenty five pages or so and it's thorough, it's very thorough, you know, it tells names, and dates, and times, and places. And how they chartered the local, and why they did, and Fred's Motors, and what happened when they tried to strike Fred's Motors. . . And they weren't Teamsters then, and how the Teamster's ran over them until they joined the Teamsters, and what they did to join.

And then the meeting in 1936 I think it was, February, when they joined the Teamsters Union, the big meeting in Maine, and the Teamsters sent down people from Boston to organize them into the Teamsters Union. And then Dave Hastings was elected president then, at that meeting. So at that meeting he was president that worked at Fred's Motors. And they ultimately, eventually elected him the business agent, so now he became a full time employee of the local, plus he was the president. And he stayed the president until he retired, I mean he was always president. Al Page was always the secretary-treasurer, and in the write up that I did you'll see that Al Page was a shop steward of a trucking company in Auburn. Then he was elected secretary treasurer and he remained in that position until he retired. Nobody, I don't, people ran against him from time to time, but (*unintelligible phrase*) that I recall. And so they both ran the local, and basically what it boils to is Dave Hastings was the president so as far as the by-laws and the constitution he was the boss. But really Al Page was, he ran the local and Dave didn't care. I mean, you know, Al was there all the time, was in the office all the time and Hastings was out negotiating contracts. It was perfectly normal that Hastings let Page be the boss, because they were friends and they got, you know, they worked together.

AL: And up until what time, do you know what year until they stopped being in the top spots?

RP: Until they retired, they stayed until they retired, both of them. Hastings was elected president in February of 1936, and there was a time I think when he wasn't president but it was more or less like political maneuverings. But he was still always there and he as always in charge. Al Page was always the secretary-treasurer from the time he became secretary-treasurer, and that would have been sometime right after they got organized into the Teamsters Union,

because he was part of the efforts. Dave Hastings actually led all the efforts, he's the one that got ticked off about Fred's Motors, he was the one that organized the, I forget what they called it, Maine Truck Drivers Association, something like that. It's in that report I have, I just don't remember the name of it. And so it was always Hastings that did that, and when he organized people in those days it was the Wagner Act, you could, you didn't have to have bargaining units to organize people into the union, you could sign them up. You know.

And Hastings went out and signed up a ton of people and that's how the local grew, and that's how he got to be a leader in there. He says in, when I interviewed him and put the, doing pretty much what you're doing, he said that he just had an innate ability to do that, to lead people. And he never knew that he did, he had a sort of strange background. He grew up in a religious cult in Maine, Milo, Maine I think it was. And there's a story and I've got newspaper clippings there of that, where that cult got in big trouble because of the way they tried to go to Israel in a boat and the boat wasn't fit to go, and people starved, not starved but sick and died, and Hastings was, Hastings's father was prosecuted I guess for some activities in that church. And so at some point Dave left town and came to Maine, and that was, back into Portland, that was his background, you know, he had no background in anything. I don't know that he ever finished school.

I don't think Al Page ever did, because Al would, but he, here's the ironic part about Al, Al I don't think ever finished school to any extent, but he was one of the best, he could write anything. He could impress people that, you know, with the written word. He couldn't spell anything, I mean, and his grammar was all over the place, but I mean he got his point across with people when he used to run a little newspaper called, it was a local union newsletter called *Rolling Along With Al Page*. And he printed it, put it together himself, and he did that up until the day he died, and that kind of thing. And he's always, he typed, he'd write me letters and he'd end them by saying, he'd type them, and he'd end them by saying, "This typewriter still hasn't learned how to spell." Of course now they do, right?

AL: What was Dave Hastings like when you met him, what sort of, how did, what impressions did you get of him, the way he related to people?

RP: Well, my first impression of him was, he looked just Thomas E. Dewey. When I was a kid I, you know who Dewey is? Okay, so he looked like Thomas Dewey, that was my first impression of Dave. And Dave was a small person, and you have to say that because Al was a huge person and his nickname was "Moose," Al Page, because he was a great big guy, and Dave Hastings was not a big guy. Al was large in speech and size and manner, and Dave was just the opposite. Dave was not big and not loud and not gregarious and outgoing, he was quieter and more reserved and, he was very reserved, and Al was just absolutely the opposite. Hastings was, you know, a detail person; he was organized, kept himself organized. Always a certain tie, always, he wasn't a back slapping kind of guy; there was nothing political, he didn't have a political demeanor.

If he, he would get in trouble from time to time with members because he just didn't try to cater to them, you know, I mean, not cater to them, he didn't try to cater to their vote, you know. He did his job and if they liked it, okay, and if they didn't like it that was okay, too. Not okay, it wasn't okay, but he didn't do anything about it, he didn't work to impress somebody that he was,

that they should be buying his line. He would say it and if they agreed or they didn't, if they liked what he did that was fine, if they didn't like what he did there's nothing he could do about it, and he didn't worry about it. He did that forever, he was a state mediator until he died and that was only a couple years ago, he was in his eighties, he was working every day, literally. I've never known him to be sick, never known him to be tired.

He was a guy that, because of his background, because of how he grew up, he really did, and when you say it it's like there's others who don't, but he really did believe in the labor movement. He really did believe that, you know, that the employer needed to be controlled because if left to their own devices they weren't going to do the right thing. You know, sad to say, times are changing, you know. And that's why I got onto it because I believe that with all my heart, and I'm sad to see when I look around and I see people who don't believe that anymore and they're in leadership positions, you know, a lot of people, it's just become a job, because it's got good pension, good health and welfare, and they look at it just like any other job. Try it out, see how you like it and, you know. When I ran this place for years I hired a lot of business agents back then, but (*unintelligible word*) right now I hired, every person in this building that works here I hired. And I always, would always note to myself when I interviewed them that, anybody can interview well. I mean you could hire, for instance, you can hire contract negotiators a dime a dozen, you can hire mechanics all over the place, people who are really good at negotiating a contract, or organizing. But if they don't have their gut into it, that's all they are are mechanics and their interests are going to go someplace else and they're not going to help be creative to keep the employers in line, they're not going to have an interest in that. There's a lot of people that that's all they, it's a job, it's a job.

And you can, you know, you can almost tell a union man when they do that. You walk in and you meet with the first people in the door, the office staff, you know. And I'm going to tell you that's the same thing as, in employers, too. You walk into a police department and you meet the dispatcher, and from talking to the dispatcher you can get a good idea what kind of guy the chief is, because if they're professional and they're entrusted and dignified in what they're doing; so's the chief. If they're flip and arrogant, you know; so's the chief. And that's in police departments and fire departments and UPS management.

Walk into a UPS terminal, meet the low grunt supervisor and he's busting his butt at night in a cold building trying to get packages in one door and out another; if you're a business agent and stop and talk to the person about what's happening, what they're doing, because they're handling packages, or you're going to confront them about something. If they come at you like, you know, they're snotty and they're arrogant, well that's exactly what the center manager is, but if they stop, listen to what you have to say, answer your questions and go about their business, that's nine out of ten times that the -.

Same thing in the union, somebody come in here, that's what I like about this local so much, if you come in here people are professional, doing it professionally, they know their job, and that goes through this whole place. People have their own separate ideas and everything, but they don't demonstrate them, you know, here. So I think I did that, I'm real proud of that.

And that's what Al Page, that was to answer your question about Dave Hastings. He took the

job, always he took the job seriously, always took it seriously, I never knew him to be flip about the job, he took members seriously. And the idea that, because he used to tell me, he said, you know, "If somebody isn't watching the employer they're going to take everything that they can have. It don't belong to them, it belongs to us." You know, "We did it, we created it, they can't do anything without us." They, they can work without us, you know, anybody thinks they're irreplaceable, you know, General Macarthur, he thought he was irreplaceable, too. Nobody's irreplaceable, but his point was that the money that's made is made by the people that come and report to work and do the work, and so we want a piece of the, we want that, we want what's ours. And he was right about that, he used to impress me with that. But he did it in a quiet way.

Al Page was just the opposite. Al Page wanted something, he would bang the desk and bang his way in, and he was loud. And when he wanted something from an employer, like if Dave Hastings wanted an employer to leave the room because he was angry at the guy, he needed to talk to the people, he would be, he would probably tell the employer, look, we need to take a caucus here, do you mind if we, you know, we discuss this issue on our own. And Al Page would tell them to get the hell out of here, we're through talking to you, you're full of scrap metal. So, it was two different guys.

AL: Very different styles. Did they complement each other in making this local successful?

RP: Oh, sure they did, yeah, they did. Because, you know, there was, I think like I've had problems in the local, political problems and I've had to deal with them from the, stand up in front of all the members and deal with people who question something that you did or didn't do, or what they thought should have been done or wasn't done and whatever. But in those days it used to be, you know. I was there in those days, and I've had it here from time to time, and I was vice president (*unintelligible phrase*) council in Boston where, that's where your peers, or the people you have to deal with is your peers, or the business agents, so I've been there, you know. But they, that was where it was almost all the time. Every monthly meeting in those days was like a brawl, I mean it was always anger, it was always questions, it was always recriminations and, you know. And it wasn't really like people thought that Al Page or Dave Hastings weren't doing the job, because they elected them time after time after time. Nobody ever ran against Al Page. No, that's probably not true, but to my memory nobody ran against Page. I'm sure somebody did at some point.

AL: But it wasn't close or memorable.

RP: No, they would just do it because they were angry or ticked off or whatever, cause an election, you know. But I mean it wasn't like everybody loved them, because they didn't. There were factions, there were people who didn't like Al Page, people that I've dealt with in this local didn't like him. And they didn't like Al Page because he would be very blunt to them. So whenever someone, whenever, I've discovered, when I go through this local history of forty-two years, whenever I run into somebody who didn't like Al Page, because they're all older now so the young people don't even know him. But when you run into the older guys, the retirees, when they meet out here, if they didn't like Al Page, if you scratch that surface enough you'll find that he said something to them, you know, maybe in front of somebody else or something, you know, because that's the way he was. I mean, they couldn't say they didn't like him because he didn't do his job, because he did his job. Or didn't like him because he didn't represent them properly,

because he did. But he was also, could be pretty blunt, you know, so if somebody said something dumb, you know, he wasn't too kind. And they didn't like him.

Same with Hastings, people that didn't like Hastings I find that usually their reason was, their reasons turn out to be more, they didn't like their agreement, or they didn't like the way a contract, you know, sometimes just, out of this whole, you know, articles, twenties, thirty, forty articles maybe didn't like something that happened over here that impacted on them. And Dave probably would have given them the impression that, well, you know, that isn't what we're talking about, and leave it at that. See, where Al would have probably challenged them to explain why they're right and he's wrong, you know, and Dave would just dismiss it, I mean, to not being important, you know. But Hastings had, towards the end he had a, there was a group who was taking him on constantly, and they were an embarrassment to the local, they really were, those guys. They had some following because they were loud and because they could raise hell, and they would be loud and they would raise hell and, as you know, a certain amount of people like that in life. And especially if contracts aren't going well, you know, somebody can capitalize on that. But that was only like towards the end when Dave Hastings was getting ready to retire. And most people had no, today they wouldn't, nobody would even listen to them, a word they said. So they carried it pretty good.

AL: Was it in the eighties that Al Page and Dave Hastings retired?

RP: No, Dave Hastings retired in about, I'm going to say it was about 1968, maybe a little later, but '68, somewhere in there. And Al Page retired probably right after that, '72, something like that.

AL: And who headed the Teamsters Union after Al Page?

RP: Well, right after Page, keeping in mind Page was secretary-treasurer and Hastings was president, when Hastings retired a guy got elected and he died in office just maybe a month later. What was his name? Jack Ramsey, elected president. He was one of Hastings, he was opposition to Hastings; he didn't like Dave. He ended up getting elected president when David retired, and he died in office. And then they, the executive board appointed one of the officers, his name was Roland Gorman and Gorman was a college graduate, a stiff kind of a, no personality kind of guy. And he served as president then right after, then right after Hastings. Then right after Al Page retired, secretary-treasurer became a guy named Lou Boutin, Lucien Boutin, whose name is important to the local because his father was a charter member of the local.

AL: What was his father's first name, do you recall?

RP: It's on the charter, Philippe, French -

AL: Philippe?

RP: No, it was Filipino or something like that. But it's on the charter, when you go out we can look and see. But his father was one of the charter members. In fact, all the charter members'

names is on the charter, and that's something you can look at.

But Boutin, he then became secretary-treasurer. But he was a lightning rod, Boutin, he was an absolute lightning rod. I mean, if ever a guy, he was probably as capable as, more capable than anybody's ever been in here, you know, virtually. I would like to say excluding myself, but I don't know that I would do that. He was the most capable person and he was very, very intelligent. He was very prolific, he could write well, he could do things, but he just annoyed the hell out of everybody. I mean he would just, he had a way, I mean it was incredible that he would do that because he had supporters, but for the most part he would just tick everybody off. And he would just, it would be like if you didn't agree with him you were a joke; if you didn't agree with him you weren't even worth talking to. I mean he would, he was insulting.

And I think what happened to him, it was in, you know, all of us come on to the scene at specific times, and some of us are fortunate to come in at the right time, and Lou wasn't. Lou came in when times were changing, and he had the old tough guy Teamster take-it-or-leave-it, I'll knock you on your butt attitude, but he had it. First of all he didn't impress you that he was able to do any of that, number one, and secondly that he was also, he was also, new people were coming in, myself and a lot of people who weren't from that older school where that worked, it didn't work, you know. I think that was what happened to him, because he tried but he would just, at every meeting he would just, there'd be a new army of people, we called them dissidents, if you want to talk about dissidents, and the Teamsters had their army of them. . . There's a, dissident organizations, and I would say to him, you just signed up more, you know, TDU was basically one of the big dissident groups, you just signed up more guys. Because he would call them out of order, shut them down and gavel them down, tell them to sit down. And they would get up and go out and say the hell with that and he'd have, you know, more foes.

And then he got run against by a guy named Adelaide LeCompte, (*unintelligible word*) Porky, and Porky ran against him and beat him, and he was a good friend of Billy McCarthy who was president of Local 25 in Boston, and ultimately the international president for the Teamsters Union before Ron Carey. And he ran against him and beat him, Porky beat Boutin, and Porky became the secretary-treasurer and Bill McCarthy gave Boutin the job at the Joint Council. And he told him, he says, you got a job, because Bill told me, he says, Bill McCarthy was the toughest guy around, it means nasty and, you know, tough kind of guy I ever knew, and he said, he gave him a job and said, I told Lou, he said, my friend, you've got a job, but take my advice, don't go back and try to run a local union because you don't know how to deal with people. So he recognized that, he says, you just don't know how to deal with people. Not that you're not capable, you're great, but you need to not be the boss, you're perfect at doing what you need to do and what you have to do and what you're told to do, you're really good at that. But you're lousy at running the show.

And so what Lou did is, three years later he ran, he come back to run against the guys who ran against him, he ran for president this time, though. And the guy that ran for president with Porky as secretary-treasurer. And Boutin knocked him out office because the guy didn't have any business being there from the start. And he knocked him out. And then I was a trustee who could get no time of day from Boutin, none, virtually none. But I was a UPS guy, not a freight guy, I mean, you know, and he wouldn't, he just literally wouldn't give me the time of day, and

he was our business agent at UPS and I was a trustee in the local, but I was a steward over there and he and I couldn't agree on anything. I mean, and he would, as far as, I would accuse him of not, to handle my grievances properly and not, you know, to listen to what we had to say and listen to what the management has to say and, you know, rightly or wrongly I was accusing him of being in their pocket and this that and the other. And we'd go to meetings and he would try to gavel me down and try to shut me down, and on the executive board he would just be insulting to me and he wouldn't do a thing that I -

End of Side A

Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

RP: I ran against Boutin, and we had a group of guys, some of them are here now, and we took him on and we ran and got elected. And Boutin went back to Fox & Gamlin, he worked at Fox & Gamlin, he went back there and then he retired and went to Florida, where he is now.

AL: What year was that?

RP: Nineteen eighty-two.

AL: And you've been president since until just recently?

RP: Yeah, I just retired, yeah. But I've been an officer of the local since 1967 I believe, it's been a long time. So I've seen who was here, you know.

AL: So it's changed a lot over the years.

RP: Yeah, because it was a freight local and now it's, in fact in those days, during that period of time, the local did have, in public work, public sector employees, public sector units in this union. And the University of Maine wanted to become organized, and politically the local, they'll say otherwise, but the truth was politically the local was afraid then to be involved in organizing the University of Maine because there was hundreds of employees there. And they, you know, they saw that as a threat to their jobs, because if all of a sudden you bring in a unit of three or four hundred really vocal people, you know, who wants that? Freight runs the show, let's keep it that way. So they didn't want the University of Maine to come in. I was on the executive board at that time, and we argued whether or not we should take them over, whether we should take the University of Maine on and we wouldn't do it, the local wouldn't do it. And the International said, well then, you know, heck with you guys, we'll charter a local that'll be a public sector local. So they actually chartered Local 48. Local 48 then become the Teamsters Local 48 in the public sector employees. So the local had to turn over the Bangor Police Department, the Portland Water District and all the public sector we had to them. So it was a dumb thing but, you know, it was, I understand the political concern, but it was dumb.

So we had two locals in Maine for a number of years. Local 48. That local was just, you know, completely goofy. I mean, there was absolutely, they may have done some good stuff with the

University of Maine, they organized some, negotiated some contracts, and they did do that, they got that off to the right foot, off on the right foot. But as time went on, there was no control of that local, no one, you know, the Department of Labor didn't come in ever to look at it I guess, because they didn't come under, you know, they're a public sector so they didn't come under the LMRDA. And they had so many complaints and so many things happening, and nobody knew what was going on there, and the joint council asked me to go look at it because of some goofy complaints and stuff that had to do with fraudulent dealings with automobiles and this, that and the other. And then when we come in to it there wasn't, there was just absolutely virtually almost no one there. I mean, it was like there was one lady trying to run the place, and nobody was there, and it turned out they all had a, the business, the officers, the full time people that are being paid by the local had a, they had a security company of their own on the side and they were there doing the fairs and this, that and the other, and it was really quite a mess.

And so the International trustee that local and then shut it down, and they eventually merged everything into this local union. So now this local has what used to be ninety-nine percent freight, we don't have two hundred freight members any more, and it's half public sector. There's right around forty-four hundred members here, and about twenty-two hundred of them are public sector and the rest are private sector. And the biggest unit there is UPS and then followed by probably Philip Elmet, which is light bulb element workers in Lewiston, and the University of Maine and like that.

AL: So you cover the whole state?

RP: Yeah, we have an office, there's an office in Presque Isle that's manned, there's a Teamsters Local 340 office in Presque Isle, Maine. And there's an individual that lives up there that's the agent for all the units up in that area, and then this office goes up there, people in this office, goes up there from time to time and negotiates contracts along with him. The person that's up there in Presque Isle.

AL: And there are other unions in Maine as well, right?

RP: Oh, sure.

AL: Like, did the paper workers -?

RP: Oh, tons of them (*unintelligible phrase*).

AL: - have their own, have their own labor union?

RP: Yeah, there's fire fighters unions and there's police unions and there's paper makers, paper workers, there's carpenters unions and electrical workers unions, you know, there's tons of them because they work different than the Teamsters, you probably don't want to get into all that, but because they are structured differently. Like the paper workers, I don't know how many paper workers locals there are but there is a book around here if you, you might want to get a copy of that, you might want to make yourself a note of that. But there's a book from AFL-CIO that lists all the locals, all the locals. Paper workers have I don't know how many local unions, because

how they do it is totally different than the Teamsters.

The Teamsters are structured different than all of the unions and we've taken some criticism for it over the years, or at least people think it's not the way to be, Teamsters believe that's the only way to be, and how it would be is that if, the paper workers have different paper manufacturers in Maine in different locations. Each one of those becomes a local. So the Teamsters, like, for instance, the best way to explain would be to use UPS as an example. UPS is in Maine, there's eight hundred people and they have a facility in Wells, South Portland, Auburn, Bangor, Waterville, Island Falls, Calais, and Presque Isle, and Rockland. Those would all be local unions in other, if it weren't the Teamsters Union they'd be Local, Wells would be Local whatever, they'd have a Local president and treasurer and whatever. And then Portland would be a Local whatever with a so forth and so on. Teamsters, that's all one local, there's one president, he's right here in this place, it has one business agent, more than one but (*unintelligible phrase*) that handles that. So the Teamsters, that's how we do it.

The police departments, we have a ton of police departments in this local. There's one president, not When we took over the public sector, and I was president then, we took over Local 48, it was funny every once in a while to get a letter in here signed by police officer so-and-so, president of so-and-so Teamsters local. You know, it just kind of, because they just never were told any better, they didn't know any better. So it's a different, a wholly different structure, Teamsters structure is totally different.

AL: And how do you, how does the Teamsters Union relate to other Teamsters Unions in other states? Do you have a coordinating organization nationally?

RP: Yes, yeah.

AL: And that's what you call the International?

RP: Well, what it is is, well, I might not get this exactly correct, but the Teamsters, you know, the hierarchy is the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. It used to be called the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehouse, and Helpers. Before that it was called the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers, and that's where the horses come from, you know that, right? Do you know our, you know our union, you know, that's our logo, right, you've seen that, the horses.

AL: Oh, okay.

RP: Okay, wherever you go you see the horses you know, and here you'll see them, on everybody's jacket you'll see them. That's who we are, the Teamsters Union. You've seen this logo, right?

AL: Yeah, I have now.

RP: Well, it's been around a long time this union, the Teamsters. Anyway, the horses, what they are literally and virtually is, that logo's been that since the beginning of time. This is a

bastardization of the local, of the logo. I fought this. See how this looks like these spokes are? This is an original. Can you see that one there?

AL: Okay, I see it.

RP: That's a wheel, and these are the spokes in a wheel. And this is a horse's yoke, a steering wheel. So this logo tells you that the Teamsters were team drivers, horses, and the wheels because they were wagons they drove. And that wheel, because we ultimately did get trucks, but when it was originally done there was no wheel there, there was a yoke because the Teamsters was a horse, look at the name, Teamsters, they were team drivers, teams, Teamsters. In fact, it's a small, you know, it's a, in a lot of things you read Teamsters, you'll see that it's a low case teamster, being a person that's a teamster, he's a team driver. And then they organized the Teamsters Union, and it was, so when they first organized it it was called the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, because you know, team drivers, chauffeurs, people who drove carriages and things like that, and Stablemen because people had to take care of the horses, and Helpers. And then it changed, after trucks came in and horses went out they changed it, the name to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers.

And then in 1991 there was a big dispute about, women wanted it to be called International, they didn't like the Brotherhood. So at that convention which I was at, I was on the constitution committee, which is the number one committee, and they were trying to then change the name. And there was all kinds of goofy suggestions, I got all this stuff somewhere, there's all kinds, International Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Teamsters, International Sisterhood and Brotherhood of Teamsters, goofy names. And then some people, International Teamsters of North America, and the Canadians didn't like that because of, you know, and they wanted the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and Canadian and so forth. So I made (*unintelligible phrase*), what we did was I come back the next day with a proposal to call it International, just simply International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and Bill McCarthy was the president, he loved it, because it means no fighting, no women, he didn't want it to be called Brotherhood and Sisterhood, he was furious about that. So we ended up with that name.

And then when Ron Carey got himself elected, that's a story in itself, I don't know if you ever knew that story, but Ron Carey, he changed this logo because he, see where it says in there AFL-CIO? Well, we were kicked out of the AFL-CIO, so we, you couldn't do that because we weren't affiliated. And then so what we did was we changed that to say, of the divisions, like the northeast southwest divisions, and he didn't like that so he changed the logo. I think he screwed it up, and I've been after him ever since because now that's no longer a wheel, that's just a design. And I told him, I said, "What the hell are you doing? This is a wheel, you know, it's not a design." This thing has all sorts of significance, and the logo tells you the whole story of the Teamsters Union right there. And they started messing around with it. Why did I tell, why did I start telling you all that?

AL: Ummm, it doesn't matter.

RP: No, the hierarchy, the hierarchy. So the hierarchy is International Brotherhood of Teamsters, that's what, the International, that's, Hoffa's the president and they have the executive

board, and all of us are affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. We're Local 340, we have a name. Our name is Truck Drivers, Warehousemen, and Helpers Local No. 340, that's our real name. We have it on our checks, somewhere, we better have it. No, by golly, they don't. Teamsters Local 340. Well, we have it on our stationary because the IBT gets it. So what I did, I designed the stationary, we didn't want to call ourselves Truck Drivers, Warehousemen, and Helpers Local 340 because we have a lot of non-truck drivers and they all resent that always, when we're trying to organize they say, well why do we want to we want to drive a truck drivers union?

So anyways, I changed the stationary when I first got elected and then I just, so I call it Teamsters Local 340 because that's what everybody knows us by. So the auditors from the IBT come in one day and slam dunked me and says, you can't do that unless you change your name. Now if you go for a charter change for your name, your charter changes and you don't have the same general charter, so you don't want to do that. So what we did was, to satisfy the IBT, this is what we did, you know, Teamsters Local 340 but we squeezed this down in here, see.

AL: Ah-ha, Truck Drivers, Warehousemen and Helpers Union 340.

RP: Yeah, that's our name. So we're a local union, so here you got the International. And you used to have these conferences like the Eastern and Western, Central and Southern Conference, they're called regions now, but that's to tie the Teamster locals under those. . . Like the Eastern Conference tied the eastern locals together, and that was a source for the Teamsters, a legal source, educational source, you know, organizing source. You could go to those conferences for information, they had offices and agents and elected people. And then, so that was a *(unintelligible phrase)* because of political things and Ron Carey and all that mess then, and that changed to just, they kicked them all out and changed them and nobody's there any more. But they're called regions now, but it's not the same as, it's not even worth discussing.

But then you go down to what's called the Joint Councils. Now the Joint Councils, I don't know how many there are in the United States, I have a book that shows that, but the Joint Councils are, the constitution describes a Joint Council as being an area where there are so many members and so many locals. And in New England the Joint Council is the Joint Council Number 25, Joint Council Number 10. It has offices in Boston, and that's the group in this area that has jurisdiction over the local unions within its Joint Council. So Joint Council 10 has all of the New England states, that's what it does, including Connecticut. It has that, and what that, the Joint Council does, it has education things, it has seminars that keeps track of what's going on in New England, what do Teamsters need to know, what's organized labor need to know in New England, what's going on in New England, who needs help for organizing, who needs help for their contracts, who needs help on a strike. Because we own tractor trailers and *(unintelligible word)* equipment and effective equipment, and we have people that are hired in the Joint Council that work as research people and so forth and so on. And then the Joint Council also hears disputes among those locals, so all the local disputes are settled with Joint Council, and all the internal disputes like between officers and agents, the business agent and his president and all that, those are all heard at the Joint Council. So that's pretty much, I was vice president of the Joint Council for three years, but that's the hierarchy of how the Teamsters work. Different than any other, any other union.

AL: Now let's go to Senator Muskie, and what issues do you recall?

RP: Well, the biggest thing with Senator Muskie that I recall was in the early sixties when the, there was two different right-to-work laws attempted in this state, in two different times. And he was there almost like, you know, like a lawyer on that. And he worked with Al Page, Al Page, Dave Hastings and the people from then the Eastern Conference, because we had the Conference then, and people that came into the state of Maine to help off the right-to-work legislation that the legislature was considering. And that happened on two different occasions.

AL: What would that legislation have done?

RP: It's called right-to-work, and it's a misnomer for right to beg for, you know, your job. What it is is there's a group, there's an organization nationwide, and I don't know if they actually call themselves the National Right-to-Work Organization but I believe they do, and they champion legislation around the country to, I'm going to see if I can say this correctly, and the idea behind it is that they would pass legislation that would prohibit. I'm not going to say that, I can't say the words, that would prohibit union security clauses in a contract that says you have to be a member of the union. So in states that have right-to-work laws, you can't write agreements that say that if you come to work in this particular place, at some point you have to become a member of the union and you have to pay dues and whatever, whatever, whatever, because then a good collective. . . then a good union security clause.

Then it goes on also to say that failure to do that, failure to remain a member in good standing or pay fair share fee to the union, that you can, you know, the employer will, the union can inform the employer of your, you know, lack of good standing, and you can be terminated, you can, you know, be fired from your job.

So the last count I think there was like sixteen states that have right-to-work laws, they're mostly all in the South, down in Alabama, Arkansas. Here's what you want to, if ever you want to see what states have right-to-work laws and you're not sure, you don't have that source of information, look to see the minimum wages and poverty, and it's the same list, it's the same list.

The list of the most, the lowest minimum wage, the list of the states with the highest poverty levels, same list. Because if you -

AL: That have adopted those -

RP: Yeah, because basically what it does is it kills union activity, I mean unions have to fight like hell to get people into their unions. I mean, in Maine for instance, and Maine's not a right-to-work state, in Maine, if you go to work in a shop, in a company that has a union security clause, well you're going to join the union. Whereas in states with right-to-work, well you're going to have, somebody's going to have to beg you to join the union, you know what I mean, you don't have to join the union. So you're not going to join, you're not going to pay, you know, you're not going to pay a fair share fee. You're going to just not be, or be a free rider, you know, just let the union do all the work on your behalf, and you'll take what you can get and not support the union. And so there's less, those states would have, probably, I don't know if this is correct

or not, I believe it would be, probably if you looked at a list of states with the least percentage of union employees it would probably be the same thing, same list of the right-to-work.

So he, so Muskie was really involved in that, you know, with that, very helpful in that. And he seemed to be tireless to that extent. And I think the reason that he did it, it was always my opinion anyway, is that, was that he was, I always liked, I always sort of thought of him as an accidental senator, or accidental, he just always struck me as a Maine lawyer that was politically active in the state and because of his political activity, and he was a big man, he was tall and he was big, and he was a good speaker and he attracted attention. And there are a certain amount of people, I believe there are a certain amount of people that they get pulled into whatever it is that they've, that they become and what they do. There's certain people who sit back and look at all of these options in life and then, you know, pursue the one that looks most advantageous. There are people who actually look to see what there is to do and then pursue that, the best course. There's other people that they just sort of like get drawn into it, sucked into it, pulled into it. They're not seeking leadership, but it's there and they fill the void. And they know they're filling a void, and now they're in the void and there's no way really to get out. And if you want to get out, you still get pulled into it further because people need you, because people depend on you. And that's how I saw Muskie, I always saw him as a guy who, he was probably a political activist because he was a lawyer looking to increase his, you know, his, make rain for the firm, you know, to bring some business in, and so he joined this organization and that, and then surfaced as a good spokesperson for that.

And of course those people are always the people that get done, get things done. If you have a meeting in a brand new organization, somebody's going to be back at the next meeting having done what everybody was supposed to do, and others are not. And that guy's always going to be the next step up, and then they'll rely on that person. And then other people rely on him and then that person knows, well, now next month I got to go back and, boy, I got to get done because people are counting on me being done and I've always done so I got to keep that up, and then that person eventually. I think that's what happened to me, eventually what happens is everybody depends on it, and not people are just strictly, simply depending on you. And you walk around in your life thinking, God, I don't want to do this but I got, you know, there's no way out of this, I'm doing it, and you get stuck in it, you know. I think that's what he was, I think, and then after a time of course when he became an elder statesman in Washington, then he was suited to the job and suited to the position, and he, but he had a lot of self confidence in that level of his life. But I think that's how he got there.

AL: Did Al Page or Dave Hastings ever talk to you about Senator Muskie and having known him prior to your coming?

RP: Well, they did, they knew him prior, oh yeah, they knew him prior to his, you know, ultimate growth because they were involved in local area politics and, you know, sheriffs' elections and state representative elections and this, that and the other. And then that stuff that I have for Al Page, you'll probably find some references to there about what Hastings and Page and Muskie did. Because there was a lot of, Al Page had a lot of relationship with Muskie, and so did Dave Hastings.

AL: I'm imagining that during the '54 election when Muskie was running for governor for the first time, that they must have supported and helped him with his win because we were so overwhelmingly Republican at that time, it would have needed people organizing and getting the vote out.

RP: Yeah, and they had, the only, they had a love-hate relationship here with Reed, you know, with Governor Reed, because some of the stuff that I've read, I came, when I came to Maine Reed was, I believe Reed was the governor. It may have Clauson, I came in 1958 so, '58, '59, somewhere in there, Reed was in there, Reed came in there. But in some of the stuff I read, Reed had been fairly helpful to the Teamsters from time to time. But that was through Al Page, just his own persuasiveness and his, you know, he could turn votes, I mean Al Page could get the vote out and that's what counted. And he had a lot of members; he had two thousand freight drivers, and always vote, freight people vote. It's like in the union election, we have, we're only down to, say, like two hundred twenty freight people, but I'll bet you two hundred and ten of them vote in our elections. So they always have done that, and that was probably the relationship that they had then. I think some of that material I have would be more specific as to that, but you asked what I remember, and I remember the right-to-work law, and I remember his activity, I remember him coming to the Local here and I remember him speaking at the Local. And I remember him promising to support that. And I remember when we had lunch one time, on that particular issue, and his commitment to that, that wasn't going to, that wasn't going to happen in Maine, and he was part of what was going to see to it that it didn't happen. And I know that there's records of him speaking about it at the Senate, you know, on right-to-work. I don't know if computers can do that, but you could go see right-to-work and Muskie and see what he had to say on that, because it happened in Maine twice within a short period of time.

AL: And so when he spoke to you, you really believed in him and you knew he was sincere.

RP: Yeah, because he was a real, I believe he was a real sincere guy. Like I said, he seemed to me like one of the people that didn't chart this course but just like got pulled along in it. And always, those are the best, people that get pulled in. If somebody seeks out something, like I said earlier, you know, anybody can be a business agent that has enough intelligence to know how to write and to think. But if you can, like if you get a grievance on a person that's terminated for some off the wall reason, if you can't get your gut into that, you know what I mean, if you can't find what. . . Like my job, I always felt my job was this: if a member got terminated or disciplined, I would always take their position regardless of how ridiculous it was, you know, and I would assume, I'm going to go find why that's not ridiculous. And then I would look at it from that perspective. And I have, if I tell you hundreds, it's not hundreds, it's probably thousands of people who I've done that for them, and there's hundreds literally that, whose job, that have a job today that didn't have a job because I was able to find somewhere where they're right, some place where they're correct, some little place to grab a hold of, some dot, the "i" that didn't dotted by the company or some "t" that didn't get crossed. And sometimes, you know, like, you used, I always tell an employer that would be mad, that would say, you know the guy's a bum and this, that and the other, why are you defending him? I would say, I'm not going to do your job, if you can't do your job right, if you're going to fire a person, do it right, don't expect me to do it for you. I'm going to look for why he didn't do it right, and I'm going to grab whatever it was that you didn't do right. Well, that's what I call gut into it, getting the gut into it,

and I think that Muskie was like that. Like I said, he wasn't a guy that sought, I don't think he sought anything like that, I don't think he. Like if somebody would ask him when he was just a, you know, upstart lawyer working for some, you know, to make his practice grow, I don't think that he would ever would have thought that he would be where he was. And I don't think he ever would find the kind of respect that he did have, because he had a lot of respect, he did, he was respected by everybody. That business in New Hampshire, you know, supposedly the tears, that was the goofiest thing. I mean, he got attacked and he shouldn't have walked away from it, he shouldn't have. But he did pull out of the race. But he was a guy that was pulled along.

AL: Do you have any final comments, things I haven't asked you, completely missed, that you think are important to talk about?

RP: No, I could talk about this all day.

AL: Me, too.

RP: I could take it where it needs to go, if you were going to do like the Teamsters Union, which you're not doing. But there's so much that's just not known about this union and there's so many, you know, so many ill, you know, mean spirited comments made about the Teamsters, misunderstood. There may be some, like some Teamsters are fond of saying, 'well I know that we deserve some of the reputation that we have'. Well, I think that's nonsense. Have there been people in the Teamsters who have done bad things? Absolutely, there are. But it's an organization of people that get elected to their position, and so because of that you get all kinds of goof balls in there. Doesn't have nothing to do with the Teamsters Union, it has to do with that goof ball, that guy that did his stunt.

Now, if you were to look for Teamsters getting together in a room, say there was a group of people in a room and they were plotting some evil scheme, that would, and they were Teamsters officials, yeah, then you could say there's something wrong with the Teamsters. I've been forty two years a Teamster, I've worked with Bill McCarthy in Boston, I worked with all of the general presidents from Hoffa, I've been in every division, I've been chairman of this, chairman of that, I've been in all, no one has, I've never been in a meeting with anyone who ever suggested anything to me that was untoward, never, not once. And so after all that you got to think well, yeah, are there guys out there? Yeah, there are. But you know what they do, that's their own private life, it's their own personal thing, it's what they do, it's nothing to do with us, you know. We have so much story, and nobody ever wants to do our story.

AL: I'd love to do your story.

RP: Because there's so much to do it with.

AL: Yes.

RP: There is, like this Carey thing and the logo and Bill McCarthy. There's some wonderful stories, just fun things that people have done. I can't do it because I don't have the, I can do it, I can do that but it's not something I have time to do. I will not do, and that's too bad.

AL: Well, I'm going to stop for today, and -

End of Interview