

9-16-2002

Podesta, Anthony "Tony" oral history interview

Don Nicoll

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

Recommended Citation

Nicoll, Don, "Podesta, Anthony "Tony" oral history interview" (2002). *Edmund S. Muskie Oral History Collection*. 328.
http://scarab.bates.edu/muskie_oh/328

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

Interview with Anthony “Tony” Podesta by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Podesta, Anthony “Tony”

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

September 16, 18, 2002

Place

Washington, D.C.

ID Number

MOH 374

Use Restrictions

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

Biographical Note

Anthony “Tony” Podesta was born on October 24, 1943 in Chicago, Illinois to Mary and John D. Podesta, Sr. He grew up in Chicago, along with his brother, John D. Podesta, Jr. He attended the University of Illinois at Chicago, and graduate school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). During the 1968 presidential campaign, he left school to work for Eugene McCarthy. After the 1968 campaign, Podesta worked for a short time in admissions offices before becoming active in Edmund S. Muskie's 1972 presidential campaign. Podesta has continued his work as a political consultant in Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: graduate studies at MIT; 1968 McCarthy campaign; 1968 convention and student response; Joe Duffey Senate campaign; 1972 Muskie campaign; Manchester, New Hampshire incident and William Loeb; David Broder; New Hampshire Primary; Chris Spirou; Dunfey family; organizing candidates in 1968; running a general election campaign instead of a primary campaign; hiring of Rose Economu as the first fulltime female advance person; Muskie's interaction with the voters; recollections of Richard Daley in Chicago; family political interest; and Muskie's legacy.

Indexed Names

Aspen, Les
Bernhard, Berl
Broder, David
Carrier, Maria
Carter, Jimmy, 1924-
Casey, Mike
Clinton, Bill, 1946-
Cutler, Eliot
Daley, Richard J., 1902-1976
D'Amours, Norman E.
Duffey, Joseph
Dukakis, Michael S. (Michael Stanley), 1933-
Economou, Rose
Gallen, Hugh J.
Hoff, Philip Henderson
Humphrey, Hubert H. (Hubert Horatio), 1911-1978
Ickes, Harold
Johnson, James "Jim"
Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968
Loeb, William
McCarthy, Eugene J., 1916-2005
McGovern, George S. (George Stanley), 1922-
McIntyre, Thomas
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Muskie, Jane Gray
Naughton, James
Navarro, Anna
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994
Podesta, Anthony "Tony"
Podesta, John
Podesta, John, Sr.
Podesta, Mary
Pool, Ithiel de Sola, 1917-
Spirou, Chris
Squier, Bob
Weicker, Lowell P., Jr.
Wexler, Ann
Wood, Bob
Zablocki, Clement John, 1912-1983

Transcript

Tony Podesta: I was born October 24, 1943 in Chicago, Illinois, and my parents are John D. Podesta, Sr. and Mary Podesta. I have a brother, John D. Podesta, Jr., and that was the family. And John and I worked for Senator Muskie in his presidential campaign in 1972 in Illinois, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and many other places.

Don Nicoll: The interviewer today is Don Nicoll. And Tony, were you always interested in politics?

TP: I was. Well, I was, I grew up in Chicago and so we grew up with Mayor [Richard] Daley as the dominant force in our community, and got interested in politics as a college student, studied political science and worked, was in graduate school at MIT in 1968 when the 1968 campaign occurred and got carried away by it and ran off to New Hampshire for a couple of months, and then traveled around the country with Eugene McCarthy and then later worked in the general election in that campaign, which was my first connection with Ed. I never really met him, but it was my first sort of association with Senator Muskie, who of course did so well.

DN: What were you studying at MIT?

TP: I was working on my Ph.D. in political science and urban social policy at MIT, which is what I had studied in college at the University of Illinois in Chicago.

DN: Was Bob Wood there then?

TP: Yes, he was, and Ithiel de Sola Pool [Chair of the Department], the whole collection of very distinguished faculty members, interesting group of people, and I loved it there but sort of failed. I guess I got bit by the political bug more than by the academic bug.

DN: And where had you done your undergraduate work?

TP: University of Illinois in Chicago.

DN: Now, in the 1968 campaign you said you worked in the general campaign. What were you doing?

TP: We were trying to, a bunch of us who worked, had worked in the McCarthy campaign ran around trying to organize students to be for Humphrey-Muskie, and that was my job. In the McCarthy campaign I was a, did field work in the early days and then ended up running the scheduling advance operation in California and later states.

DN: Now, were you, after the nominations and your working in the general campaign with college students, were you going all around the country?

TP: Yeah, traveling around the country. But never, but sort of, I was organizing rather than traveling with the, anywhere, so I never bumped into either of the candidates. So I never saw

Vice President [Hubert] Humphrey or Senator Muskie but had some connection to, some very small connection to their effort. And I was trying also to go back to school, so I was doing it part time because I had disappeared during the spring semester of my second year in graduate school, so I wanted to try to get the professors in that school to remember who I was, so I tried to spend a little more time at Cambridge.

DN: Did you get a sense in that campaign of how well the students were responding to the two candidates after the miserable time around the convention?

TP: Well, the convention was terrible. I was in fact, was at the convention, and I was running the scheduling advance operation for McCarthy. And it was the scheduling advance suite which was the suite that the police raided, I guess it was Thursday night, or Wednesday night, sort of after it was all over, and broke a couple of billy clubs on people's heads. It was kind of an awful experience, not just for the people who were demonstrating in the streets, but even for the people who were involved in the convention.

So it took everybody a while to recover from that and get back to work on what was important, and what was important was electing two good guys to those two important offices and making sure that Richard Nixon didn't arrive there. But we ended up running a, it was a difficult task for the vice president to sort of thread the needle with President Johnson and try to both build on his service and also kind of suggest that he wanted to do something different, but we ended up coming a little bit short. Which was bad, but it also gave me a chance to then sign up for the Muskie for president campaign in '72, or in '71 actually.

DN: Now, what did you do after the campaign of '68?

TP: I went back to MIT and did some, finished my course work on my Ph.D. And then I ended up becoming a, at the time there were graduate student deferments and, which I enjoyed for a while, and then they announced that they were ending those. So I was faced with a choice of either being drafted or finding a different way to, a different deferment, so I took a job as a teacher and taught political science and was the director of admissions of a small Catholic women's college outside Chicago called Barat College, B-A-R-A-T, and did that for a year until I was no longer eligible for the draft, and then started heading back to MIT to work on my dissertation but got waylaid by Anne Wexler and Joe Duffey.

Anne was the campaign chairman and Joe was the candidate for the Senate in Connecticut, there were two other candidates in the primary, and they were, and Ann convinced me to sort of work the primary. It was August 19th, classes started on September 7th, so I figured I could, you know, earn a few dollars, have some fun, work for a good guy. He was going to lose and I was going back to school, but it turned out that he won the primary and we all started measuring our offices for, you know, where we were going to sit in the Senate office. And I decided to postpone going back to school for another semester. And then we ended up losing the general election to Lowell Weicker, and I ended up never really going up to school.

I ended up coming to Washington at that point, came here to work for Common Cause. It was one of the first, in the very early days, the very beginning of Common Cause, worked there for,

sort of the end of, from the end of 1970 through the middle of 1971 when, which is when the presidential campaigns were heating up and people were picking sides. And I picked, you know, I picked Ed Muskie and so had conversations with George Mitchell and Berl Bernhard and some of the other folks over there and ended up signing on to leave, ended up quitting Common Cause and going to work in the Muskie for president campaign.

DN: Why did you decide to get involved in the Muskie campaign? What in those conversations convinced you?

TP: Well, it wasn't the conversations, I was for, I mean, it was the conversations with those people that convinced me. I was, I felt Muskie was incredibly impressive and was the, you know, would be both a very fine president and a very fine candidate. I was, I think I was more right about his being a fine president than I may have been about his being a fine candidate, but I thought both. And some of my friends were going to work for McGovern and other candidates, but I thought Muskie was the best, was the class of the field. And so it was really only a question of whether or not they needed me to work in the campaign, or I'd go back to school, not a question of whether or not I'd be for Muskie, whether or not if I couldn't get a job with Muskie I'd go to work for McGovern. I actually was planning to go back to school but then got sort of recruited into working on the Muskie campaign, and was very happy to do that.

DN: And when did you go to work on the campaign?

TP: Right around the middle of '71, June, July, somewhere in there, and I started traveling. My initial assignment was to worry about the six New England states and Illinois. I didn't really have to worry about Maine, I mean, that was sort of five New England states. The notion that I would have to worry about Maine was, of course, preposterous. But I was sort of, so I was a little bit spending my time between Manchester, Boston and Chicago trying to organize the early part of the campaign, trying to get people signed on, trying to get elected officials signed on, trying to get volunteers organized, trying to get the delegate slates put together, the sorts of things that one does at the very beginning stages, and trying to lay the groundwork for what would be a hard fought race.

And I ended up taking up residency in New Hampshire, sort of living in, you know, after organizing in a number of places I ended up. As New Hampshire became, as it became clearer and clearer that New Hampshire would be a big test, we, you know, I sort of spent the winter in New Hampshire. And we ended up, I guess we, you know, I guess there sort of two pivotal events in the campaign occurred there. One was when Senator Muskie did his speech about Bill Loeb and Jane Muskie and he cried, and the other was when he beat McGovern but then let the, but then seemed so, McGovern seemed so exultant and he seemed so disappointed that we sort of allowed McGovern to walk away with the, you know, snatch a victory from the jaws of defeat, which sort of turned, which gave McGovern an enormous amount of momentum.

Those two events, I think, made a huge difference with people's perceptions of Senator Muskie. This is funny now that sort of like everybody cries in politics, you know, this president cries, the last president cries. But, you know, it's not very long ago, it's thirty years ago, the notion that a man would shed a tear about something he cared about was just sort of like disqualifying to some

people. But now it's become sort of a necessary qualification; if you don't cry now you can't be president. Then it was if you did cry you can't be president. Amazing how time changes.

DN: Can you recall the circumstances of that event when he made the speech at Manchester Union Leader?

TP: Sure, he came in the night before, and it was I think the day before that Loeb had written this really nasty editorial about Jane Muskie which had gotten under the senator's skin. And he came in with a, you know, said, "I want to get a, I want a flatbed truck, I want a sound system, I want to go stand out in front of that newspaper and I want to tell that guy what I think of him."

He was, you know, he was, he had a, his, I'm probably not the first person to say he had a bit of a temper. And he was sort of pounding on the table and raising his voice and was really furious with Loeb, and furious with what he had said about Jane, and furious with the fact that he had attacked, you know, brought his family into it and it was sort of really a low blow.

And so we all, you know, he got in at like, I don't know, it was ten o'clock at night and we were all scurrying around to do an open air speech at nine o'clock the next morning, which was not the easiest advance assignment we had but we managed to sort of get it all together. And I don't think he, you know, I think he just planned to speak his mind and ended up, his voice cracked and he stopped for a moment, and he, you know, he finished what he was doing, he got back in the car, we went on to the next stop.

I was actually in the car with him and he said to me, when we got in the car, he said, "I wish," he said, "I shouldn't have broken down like that." And I said, "Oh, you know, it's a human, you're a human being, it's a human situation. People want to, you know, it's not, I don't think people will . . ." Shows you how smart I was. You know, I kind of tried to say, you know, that it all seemed authentic and real, this was not a canned political speech, this was not something your speech writer wrote for you, you know, you're speaking from the gut, that's what people want to hear from you. You know, what is it, what do you have in your gut that says you should be the next president. So I said, "Don't worry about it, it's a good thing."

So we went on to the next stop, another one, and then he flew off to another state. And I got a call from Bob Squier I remember, saying, Bob called and we had this conver-, he probably had the same conversation that I had with Senator Muskie, you know, was it a good thing or a bad thing, was it a terrible thing and so forth and so on. And Bob said, "Oh no, it's a great thing. It humanizes him; it's fabulous." But it turned out that, it turned out I guess a little bit otherwise.

Saturday, it was a Saturday morning when this happened. Saturday night, the evening news ran, didn't mention it. Sunday the New Hampshire papers didn't mention it, *Boston Globe* didn't mention it. On Sunday morning the *Washington Post*, though, David Broder, did a story in which he almost suggested that for someone to break down and, you know, someone to cry in public was evidence of mental stability and therefore how could you be president if you were so, if you were, if you couldn't control your emotions like that, which was on the front page of the *Washington Post*. And the *Washington Post* news service then circulated and it was, on Monday morning it was on the front page of the *Boston Globe* and front page of the *Chicago Sun Times*,

and the front page of the *Milwaukee Journal*. And the next several primaries they had this Broder story which kind of made it all into a very different thing. And it was, you know, and the networks all by Monday night all had, you know, sort of big stories on, you know, is Muskie out of it. Saturday night it was sort of like it was fine, but you know.

So one of my, you know, one of the things about the whole experience was if David Broder had not been there, no one would ever have remembered this. It was only because of David Broder that this, that Ed Muskie crying became a kind of, you know, history changing political event. The rest of the journalists, you know, Jim Naughton who was covering the campaign for the *New York Times*, had a story in the Sunday *New York Times* on page A27, and it was in the sixteenth paragraph that Muskie's voice cracked with emotion when he attacked Bill Loeb. So it was clearly, you know, *New York Times* thought it was nothing, the networks all thought it was nothing. But Broder just drove the story, and then we sort of reeled for a while after that.

DN: Who were some of the other people involved in that campaign in New Hampshire that you remember most vividly?

TP: Well, the person I talked with the most about it was, at headquarters, was George Mitchell, who was sort of the guy I dealt with the most. Eliot Cutler I talked, in headquarters, I got with a lot because Muskie was spending a bunch of time there, although we were always fighting about him spending, they always wanted him to go, you know, do ten markets, do three markets a day and travel all over the country. And I was always saying, don't take this for granted, you know, this is retail politics, you got to come and ask for their votes. And they were all saying, no, we'll get there in a couple weeks. So we sort of had all that, the standard arguments that one has when one is in the field versus the ones in the headquarters.

But in the headquarters the staff was, you know, was relatively small. It was myself, there was a guy named Ron Rosenblath who was from Boston and who was, had run for office in, run for the state senate in Massachusetts and had been involved in politics. There was my brother, John Podesta, who later went on to a little more glorious career with a different president. And the local person who was in charge was a woman named Maria Carrier, she was like the local coordinator, she was the one who famously said, "If Muskie doesn't get fifty percent, I'll shoot myself." So when he got forty-eight point nine [48.9] percent, we got her a gun and she refused to keep her word.

She was the one who sort of, was sort of, helped to set the bar high. That winning wasn't enough, we needed to win by an absolute majority against the field, and indeed the press sort of held us to that. And I think Muskie didn't help that, with that, he kind of gave a concession speech instead of a victory speech, and McGovern gave a victory speech instead of a concession speech. And then we had Maria Carrier saying we lost, so. The other person I remember pretty well is Hugh Gallen who later went on to, was one of our, was one of the co-chairs of the campaign. He was a terrific guy, went on to be governor, later passed away, but was very active with us. And Chris Fiero -

DN: What kind of a fellow was -?

TP: The other person I remember most vividly is Chris Spirou. He [Hugh Gallen] was a, you know, he was from northern New Hampshire. He was kind of taciturn, quiet, a bit more like Muskie than almost like anybody else, you know. Kind of a, a good guy, smart, decent, hard working, a little bit frustrated with the people from Washington not kind of, not listening to, you know, not listening to him any more than they listened to me about what they needed to do in New Hampshire. I don't think there's ever been a campaign in which that doesn't happen. *(Telephone interruption)*.

DN: - Chris Spirou.

TP: Chris Spirou was a character, he was sort of, he was a state legislator, just arrived, spoke with a thick Greek accent. Was just, had sort of, you know, recently naturalized U.S. citizen, was sort of the boss of Manchester, was the guy who was running around, you know, trying to organize precincts and organizing people everywhere. I've actually seen him recently; he's running the American Center in Athens. You should, if you want somebody to go over and interview him, I'd be happy to take the assignment. But he's doing very well, and we still talk about the Muskie campaign. I had dinner with him last year in Athens and we were trading stories.

So he went on to be the state, he went on later to be the state chairman and to run himself, and then sort of retired from New Hampshire politics, though he still leapt his finger in a little bit. Was involved in Clinton's successful campaign in 1992, which, and I think was also involved with Carter in '76, so he went on to sort of be the, you know, one of those New Hampshire king makers after being this kind of back bencher in state legislature.

The state legislature, it's important to understand, in New Hampshire is as large as the Congress. It's sort of three hundred members of the lower house, so it's like every other person in New Hampshire is a state legislator. So it was not a, is not a high honor to be a state legislator, kind of anybody who wanted to could sort of get elected. And so Chris was, you know, but Chris built that into a real base. And we used to have fun together, he'd take us out to the, take us out for Greek food, take the whole campaign staff out for Greek food every Friday night. Another of the people we worked with most closely. Probably Chris and Hugh and Maria of the New Hampshire types were the people we worked with the most.

DN: Now is Maria Carrier from Manchester?

TP: From Manchester, yeah.

DN: What was it like working with the Manchester and the New Hampshire politicians?

TP: Well, most of them were for Muskie, but most of them don't deliver very much, and so we had most of the public officials, Senator [Thomas James] McIntyre was the senator then I think, and there was a congressman there who served briefly

DN: D'Amours?

TP: [Norman Edward] Norm D'Amours and there was another congressman who served in the other district, was elected in '64 and defeated in '66. I can't remember his name. French Canadian American, I can't remember his name. But so the whole public officialdom in New Hampshire was largely for, either Republican, mostly they were Republicans, and the small number who were Democrats were mostly for Muskie. But -

DN: What about the Dunfey family?

TP: Oh, they were, I think they were for Muskie. They were not, they were sort of more, they were more national players, or more, you know, they raise money and were in Boston and Maine and so forth and so on. They were less involved, you know, they provided us with some, we got some free hotel rooms in the local Dunfey, not the good Dunfey Hotel, but the run-down Dunfey Hotel which is where we sort of, where some of us slept for a couple of months. But they were not, you know, sort of, like active, they were not in the headquarters and actively involved in the same way that some of the others were.

DN: Now, was there a great debate around the reaction that you'd come at the end of the New Hampshire campaign, or was this something that just evolved into Senator Muskie's "concession speech", as you put it?

TP: No, I think, I don't think, I think unfortunately there was no, there were, you know, it would have been smarter if we had had a meeting and figured out what to say, but it sort of just happened. And I think he was clearly disappointed, and said so, and that helped to solidify the results.

DN: What did you do after the New Hampshire campaign?

TP: I went off, you know, I sort of called in to headquarters and said, "What do I do now?" and we were, we sort of went off. I was sent off to Wisconsin and arrived in Milwaukee a couple of days, you know, on Thursday or something, it was like two weeks later was the Wisconsin primary. The Illinois primary was in between, I had handed that off to Jim Johnson in the meantime. And so I went to Wisconsin and Harold Ickes was in charge of Wisconsin, who later went on to be deputy chief of staff to President Clinton.

And Harold said, you know, a bunch of people started funneling in from various places around the country because we were doing poorly and we, you know, it made no sense to have people working in California for the June primary, kind of like everybody started trying to build a firewall in Wisconsin. Wisconsin was heavily Polish, heavily Catholic and moderate and, you know, Clem Zablocki was the congressman. And it was sort of, people thought it was the kind of place we should be able to do okay in. And so I went off to Kenosha and Racine, the first congressional district where Les Aspen, who was the sort of, about to be running for, I think it was, I don't know if he was running the first time or running for, or was a freshman congressman running for reelection. It was right around the time he ran the first time; we worked a lot with him.

But I got a list of the people who were for Muskie from Harold at the headquarters in Milwaukee

and went down and started calling them up in Kenosha and Racine. And it turned out that half of them were McGovern delegates, and indeed they were on the list, they were on the Muskie list. Some of them wrote to Senator Muskie after he gave his famous speech in 1968 saying, "I want to help you if you want to run." And then the next person who called them was me. So, you know, McGovern had stayed at their house in the meantime three times. And so it turned out that we again had like all the public officials who didn't, you know, who sort of thought they were entitled to go to the convention as our delegates, but they didn't want to work at this. And so we ended up doing credibly well in the first congressional district, but McGovern winning the primary and that was sort of, that was kind of, you know, we weren't. I ran back to Boston to sort of do, to do the Massachusetts primary and had the same experience.

All the politicians who were for us, you know, all the politicians who were insisting on being, on standing next to the candidate and being, and having the most exalted title, wouldn't return our phone calls then. One exception I should say that's important to point out for history's sake is Mike Dukakis, who was one of the seven co-chairs of the "Muskie for President" campaign in Massachusetts, and was the only one who kept working after Wisconsin. So he kept coming in to the office, kept giving speeches, kept doing radio interviews. Everybody else was, the other six co-chairs were all on vacation for the last two weeks before the primary. But Michael, you know, I always admired him for keeping his commitments. It's the kind of thing I always thought that Ed Muskie would do, too, so it was a good thing.

But then, you know, it sort of turned out that he dropped out and decided not to pursue his active candidacy, or I don't remember how he said it, but he was on his way to the Ohio primary, I remember that, and sort of kept postponing his departure from Washington to Ohio by one city or one event, and then eventually just said, "I'm not coming at all," and pulled out here.

DN: What was your sense about the reasons why Ed Muskie, whom you felt would make a great president, wasn't an effective candidate in the primaries, or not for the nomination?

TP: Well, I think he, I think in part he tried to run a general election campaign in the primaries. You know, he's a unifier, he's run in a state that's not heavily, that was not when he started very heavily Democratic. And the Democratic primary electorate is, you know, is sort the base enthusiasts of the party. And he's the guy who's ideal to get you from forty percent to fifty-one percent or fifty-five percent. But the people who made the blood surge in the veins were George McGovern, who, and that was, you know, George McGovern had his twenty-five percent, but his twenty-five percent all turned out to vote. And Muskie's supporters were, you know, were for him but not for him hard enough.

And I think he, I don't think he was quite prepared for the rough and tumble of it or for what it was like, or for how simple, you know, I think he's a complicated thinker, he worked hard on complicated issues from foreign policy to environmental policy. And you know, presidential campaigns are more about bumper stickers and sound bites than they are about things like balancing the equity interests of the Clean Air Act.

So, I think he would have been a marvelous president, but I think he, the skills that made him a very fine senator sort of made him talk in policy terms, made him talk in complicated terms.

And you know, for McGovern, for the other candidates, and other candidates who have run subsequently made it, you know, "it's the economy stupid," is not something that Muskie could ever say, you know, whenever he was running. So he, I think his, I think he, I think, you know, I think he did a credible job, I think he served the country well, I think he, I was proud, I still am proud to have worked for him. But his approach to public service was not as simplistic as it needed to be, or as emotional as it needed to be.

And so, I also think he was, partly it was an ideological question, he was sort of a centrist candidate, not just stylistically but philosophically. And the centrists have a harder time, you know, the extremes tend to nominate the parties' candidates and don't always nominate the strong general election candidate, and that's certainly what happened in 1972, you know. He carried Massachusetts and the District of Columbia as I recall?

So, but the base, the party was really enthusiastic. I mean, George McGovern was flying around the country thinking he was going to win because he got twenty-five thousand people would greet him every time he got off the plane. But it was, you know, it was the, he got his twenty, the twenty-five percent were really, really enthusiastic about him but he never, he could barely get to forty. Whereas Ed Muskie had the opposite problem, so I don't know. It was the nature of the way these things work.

DN: Unfortunately, we're out of time for this morning, Tony. Thank you very much.

TP: Pleasure.

Continuation of Interview, September 18, 2002

DN: It is Wednesday, the 18th of September 2002. This is our second round of September 2002 interviews with Tony Podesta. Tony, were there any things that we missed the other day, from your point of view, in our conversation?

TP: Well, Senator Muskie, you know, I made it sound like the only two things that, the only two times he came to New Hampshire were one to cry and the other to concede, or the two times I saw him anyway. That was certainly not the case. He was, you know, he was there a lot, he interacted a lot. He was in Chicago when I was doing, when I was, in the early days, superintending the campaign in Illinois, helping us to put together a very widespread coalition of all the leading elected officials and people who helped raise money in campaigns and the like. You know, he's a, you know, was a sort of engaging, gregarious, charming, occasionally cantankerous, occasionally misanthropic guy, but. Another New Hampshire story that is worth telling is the story of Rose Economou. I don't know if you had that story from someone else, or know it somewhere else.

DN: No.

TP: She was the first, the Muskie campaign broke new ground in hiring the very first of all time woman advance person. It seems unthinkable sitting here in 2002, that thirty one years ago there wasn't such an animal. And Rose Economou was the first advance woman, and she went,

she worked in the Muskie campaign. Actually, I knew her from Chicago, we went to college together and I was involved in getting her into the campaign. And there was a sort of some controversy about whether, you know, whether a woman who, you know, can you go wake up the senator, could you, what if he wants, what if he's in his tub and he wants to talk to you, what if you're supposed to brief him and he's on the can?

And, you know, there were sort of all of these reasons that, looking back thirty years ago, seemed like totally preposterous. But these were all active conversations; I mean there was a sort of active discussion that went on in the campaign. Mike Casey was the head of advance, and Eliot Cutler was the director of scheduling, and I and others were sort of, you know, in this conversation about how it would really be a good thing if Ed Muskie were to, you know, who was such a ground breaker in so many other ways would break this barrier for women. It's a small barrier -

DN: And you three felt that way?

TP: Well yeah, I think, yeah, I think, and eventually everybody sort of went along with it. Some of the older folks in the campaign, you know, Berl Bernhard and George Mitchell and others were sort of, who had been through this a few times before couldn't imagine the idea of a, you know, of the senator listening to a woman, or following a woman through a crowd, or taking, having a woman take him out of his hotel room. But she did a marvelous job, she did a, she was one of our advance stars. And he became, I think, quite fond of her and enjoyed their encounters together. And she, there was actually, some, one magazine, I don't remember if it was *Harper's* or someone else, did actually a little blurb on this, as the first advance woman in the history of the world. And that happened in New Hampshire, too, so there are lots of, you know, there are lots of good memories as well.

And just, you know, he was, he had such integrity and was so much at home with, when he was sitting around with a group of, you know, twenty voters in Claremont or, you know, or, you know, this was a man who was completely at home with himself and there was no canned speech and there was no, there were no note cards. He just kind of felt like he was, he felt in New Hampshire like he was talking to his neighbors. That wasn't always true in some other parts of the country, but that was always true there.

DN: Did you observe him in Illinois, for example, with voters?

TP: Yes, but it was, you know, in the early days it was much more come in and raise money and come in and get, you know, this congressman or that alderman or this political factotum signed on to the campaign, and we were trying to put together the delegate slate, stuff like that. So it was much more, it wasn't, we were not doing retail campaigning in Illinois while I was there. And after I turned it over to, I turned the campaign over to Jim Johnson at some point toward the end of '70, toward the end of 1971 after having done it for the first five or six months. And then the senator went and campaigned there, you know, after he left New Hampshire.

DN: Did you see any difference in the way he reacted to the kind of sessions you had in Illinois and the sessions that you described in New Hampshire where he was talking to rank and

file voters?

TP: Well, I mean I saw him campaign more, actually I saw him more campaigning with rank and file voters in Wisconsin than I did in Illinois. You know, he was always, I was never able to tell whether, I think there are two theories, he seemed more comfortable in New Hampshire. He seemed more at home, more at ease. Now that could have been because he was the front runner and doing well, and it could be that when he came, by the time he came to Wisconsin he was sort of, you know, had three purple hearts and was walking on crutches.

But he always seemed to me to be, you know, the sort of Midwestern auto workers were always a little different from the people he met in New Hampshire. They sound a little different, they talk a little different, they had different concerns and ideas, and they So I think he, I think, I don't mean to say he was not at home there but I think he sort of felt a kind of comfort in New England that was very much part of his grounding, part of where he, you know, part of what he understood America to be like.

I think, you know, when he spoke from Maine to the rest of the country in that famous speech in '68, it was not, it was clear that he was speaking from Maine, he was clearly speaking as someone of Maine, but he was also, spoke well to the whole country. But in terms of his, in terms of the way he walked around, it was always much, it was always easier I think in New Hampshire.

But in Wisconsin, that was really sort of the last, that was kind of the last time that we interacted a lot after, I went back from Wisconsin to Massachusetts. And he spent a little time there, but that was again mostly sort of fund raising, politicians, press conference, and to the airport. In some ways I think the campaign sort of may well have kind of loosened him from his moorings, as he was trying to, you know, three media markets a day and riding around in the back seat of a limousine and, you know, kind of go from press conference to press conference and fund raiser to fund raiser. He never really, you know, after a point he never really had a chance to talk to anybody anymore. And I think, you know, I think he, you know, he was sort of an aficionado of New England town meetings, and of the legislative process in Washington, and that he was very good at both those things. But neither of them had much to do with what the campaign was like. So that went well.

DN: And as you looked at the campaign, did you get any sense of a strategy that was being pursued?

TP: Well, the strat-, I mean, yeah, the strategy I guess was a little bit related to inevitability, a little bit related to electability, but there wasn't much of an issue focus. There wasn't a, people weren't given a, you know, everyone was told who was for him, and everybody was told you have to be for him, but I don't think we did as good as we might have in telling people what a difference it would make if you were for him, and how being for him would help make the country better, help make the world better. And to some extent his, we got into, we got sort of, we got I think a little more into endorsements and fund raising and a little bit away from issues.

I mean, I think that he had such a good record in the Senate, and we tended to talk about that; he

was an accomplished senator but we didn't talk about what he'd really done. So I think that, you know, George McGovern came along and said vote for me and I'll end the war. People understood that, you know, cause-effect. And, you know, vote for, whereas our message was more, you know, vote for him because he's going to win, and I don't think, you know, people didn't care that much about that, especially New Hampshire. New Hampshire loves knocking down, loves to knock down people who are, you know, who think they're, who think they've got it made, and we had some of that.

DN: I know you'd gone to university in Massachusetts, but was it a culture shock at all for a young man from Chicago to come into New Hampshire and deal with politics there?

TP: Well, you couldn't understand what they were saying half the time, so there was a sort of, there was a kind of, it was a question of whether we spoke the same language. But I managed as a result of my brief time at MIT, much to the consternation of my friends in Chicago, to actually pick up something of a New England accent. When I went back home at the end of the first semester at graduate school, I found my family was making fun of the way I talked, as opposed to my making fun of the way everybody else talked when I first went to Boston. So it's, I guess it's contagious.

But politics is politics, I mean, it's, you know, I kind of grew up watching Mayor Daley stitch together an organization and provide service to people and provide an idea of what, you know, make a difference in people's lives and, you know, be sure to ask them for their vote. There was never, you know, never an election went by when the mayor didn't ask for your vote, and when the precinct captain didn't ask for your vote, and you know, those lessons are, you know, sometimes a little bit lost in the era of thirty second attack ads.

And especially when you go to places like Iowa and New Hampshire, which have a tradition of citizen activism and people expecting to actually, you know, people say, "Well I've only met three of the candidates so far, you know, I haven't made up my mind yet." Well, it's not an, you know, it's not an uncommon thing in New Hampshire. Or, "I only met him twice so far, I'm not really sure what I think." Whereas in much of the rest of the country it's, you know, politics is a spectator sport, not a participatory sport. So, but in Chicago it's a participatory sport, and in New England it's a little bit more like, in a funny way more like Chicago than, certainly than California or Florida or some of the, you know, some of the states that, the big states that tend to have big events happening in them these days.

DN: Was your family involved in politics directly?

TP: My father was, my father served admirably in the role of voter. He tended to vote all the time, that was as much as he ever did. And my mother got a patronage job as an election day worker, this was a, this was not, this was She was interested in public affairs and interested in politics, but this was also sort of a way for the machine to, you know, essentially provide a small reward for a couple dozen women who were free during the day. You know, give them, I don't know, probably it was ten bucks then, or maybe five bucks then, to sit and check off the names at the polling place. But we never, you know, we never went to political meetings, we never signed up things. My mother would talk a lot. She was a, she and I were both night owls

so we'd watch late night talk shows, which there was one in Chicago where people would talk about politics and public life a lot. So she and I were then sort of, were interested in that. My dad was never that interested in it. And eventually my brother and I ended up sort of living the life, so my mother must have affected us in some way.

DN: Did, what was her attitude toward Mayor Daley?

TP: I think we all felt Mayor Daley was a damn good mayor. I think that the convention was hard to swallow, I think the civil rights era was difficult. I mean, you know, I, I mean we lived in a completely white neighborhood, you know, sort of like, if some Black person walked on the street someone would call the police. And, but, you know, you go to college and you meet a diverse group of people and you have a different set of values. And Martin Luther King, when he came to Chicago to sort of try to organize, said he'd never seen hatred in Mississippi or Alabama like he saw in Chicago.

It's here, I mean it's sort of a, so, so I think, you know, I think that I'm, you know, in terms of the convention, in terms of issues of race, there's some stuff in Mayor Daley's career that the, that his son the current Mayor Daley would, well, I'm sure he's damn proud of his dad, I'm sure, you know, he would never, he wouldn't do the same things the same way. But, you know, I think the country's changed a lot, so I don't, you know, I don't bear him any ill will. I still think he was a terrifically talented public servant, if slightly tongue tied from time to time. But -

DN: At the time of coming out of the '68 convention and then getting into that campaign, did you, did that have a traumatic effect on you, or was it simply one of those things you live through?

TP: No, it wasn't traumatic. I mean it was, you know, it was very disturbing, it was very troubling, it was awful, it was terrible, you know. You'd see friends, you know, friends of yours walking down the hallway, you know, in the Conrad Hilton Hotel being hit over the head with a billy club is not a, you know, it's not an experience that you, you know, put aside or expect as an American. You know, you see that stuff on TV in Bolivia or, you know, or in Russia, but you don't see that kind of, that stuff doesn't happen in this country. So it was, you know, it was very troubling.

It was not, it didn't, you know, I don't think any of us who were involved in the campaign were, sort of said, well this is evidence of the, how terrible and corrupt the system is, we're dropping out. I think everyone, you know, two or, that may have happened to some volunteers here and there, but of all the people who had, who were sort of really working in the campaign. And a bunch of us met right afterwards in the, like right around, I think it was in late August, it was after the Democratic convention, maybe it was right around Labor Day at a sort of reunion of all the senior people in the McCarthy campaign in Martha's Vineyard, and if my memory serves me correctly, Governor [Philip H.] Hoff of Vermont came and talked to us and said, we need you guys in the campaign, you know, we can't, there's a real difference here.

And some, you know, a lot, I think a lot of people took, I think people didn't sort of go straight from Grant Park and the Conrad Hilton into the Humphrey headquarters without missing a beat.

So I think a lot of us needed to, you know, needed a week or two to recover from that experience. But, you know, come, by the time the, early September rolled around people were willing to work again, and understood that even though they had spent, you know, had spent six or eight months tangling with Hubert Humphrey, he was some, you know, he was a hell of a lot better than the other guy.

And, you know, you sort of, anytime in the primary you kind of, you get madder at the guy who, the guy who you agree with most of the time than you do with the guy who you don't agree with at all because you're not running against him at that point. So I think for me, and probably like, pretty much like everybody else, it kind of took a week or two or three to kind of, you know, sort of just say, I need some rest, I need to get over this, this is, how could this have happened, to say, in a, you know. You start, first you start thinking about yourself and then you start thinking about Nixon and the country and you say, I better get off my duff and do something, so that's sort of I think what a lot of us went through.

DN: As you look back on your experience of '68, '72 and beyond, what sticks in your mind as most important about Ed Muskie, his impact on you, and also his legacy?

TP: I think his strength of character, his integrity, his, the fact that he was not, you know, the fact that he had a core as a person and as a public servant, and a set of values that he didn't, you know, he didn't need to sort of go, you know, I mean, there must have been a pollster in the campaign but I can't remember who it was.

DN: Anna Navarro, a young woman, very able.

TP: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, okay. So, so, that, you know, that, I mean now it's sort of like, you know, the pollster is the one, the pollster is the person who wakes up the candidate in the morning and tells him what to say and, you know, rides in the car on the way to the debate. And, you know, and all the, you know, the speech lines are all polled and tested. So I mean I think that, I don't mean to denigrate polling, I'm just saying I think Ed Muskie had, you know, had a kind of strength of character and integrity that is, that we could use more of, that we could use more of now.

And I certainly, I certainly remember, I certainly remember fondly there were, he was not a person who suffered fools gladly, or who kept his disappointment to himself. So, you know, so being yelled at by him was not one of the things that, not one of the things that, you know, it never made you, it never made me want to kind of get discouraged or say, "Oh hell, I'm walking out on this." It always made me want to do better because he always held himself to a high standard, and he held all of us to a high standard.

So, you know, I feel that way about it, but I feel, I guess I look back on it a little bit like, I don't know, could we have found, you know, three thousand, two thousand extra votes in New Hampshire and gotten the fifty-one percent and, you know. Or maybe if I had said, "It's stupid to get up at nine o'clock in the morning and go attack Bill Loeb," or someone had said that. I wasn't the only one there, you know, there were like eight or ten of us there sitting with him on the night before he went to cry.

It wasn't, you know, I mean it's kind of like he, part of it was he was such a strong guy that he said, this is what I want to do, and it was, you know, most of the time people didn't talk back to him, people didn't say, 'now have you thought about this?' or 'does that really make sense?' or whatever. It's kind of like once he barked a command, there was a, everybody else just sort of fell in line, which is probably a weakness as well as a strength.

DN: Thank you very much, Tony.

TP: Pleasure.

End of Interview