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## Sando, Jack oral history interview

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## **Interview with Jack Sando by Don Nicoll**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

### **Interviewee**

Sando, Jack

### **Interviewer**

Nicoll, Don

### **Date**

September 17, 2002

### **Place**

Bethesda, Maryland

### **ID Number**

MOH 373

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### **Biographical Note**

Jack C. Sando was born on November 25, 1940 in Washington D.C. to David and Edith Sando, Austrian immigrants who were both survivors of the Holocaust. They escaped from Vienna in 1938 and fled to the United States in 1940. Jack attended Harvard University and then Harvard Law School, where he became involved with the Democratic Party. After law school he went into civil practice. He began to work for Edmund S. Muskie during the 1970 senatorial campaign writing speeches.

### **Scope and Content Note**

Interview includes discussions of: family background; escaping the Holocaust; educational background; becoming politically active; finding a job after law school; speechwriting; coming to work for Ed Muskie; writing speeches for Muskie; the process of speechwriting; difficulties of writing for Muskie; and Muskie's contributions as a politician.

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## **Transcript**

**Don Nicoll:** It is Tuesday, the 17th of September, 2002. We are in Bethesda, Maryland in the law offices of Jack Sando, 4922 St. Elmo Avenue in Bethesda.

**Jack Sando:** Forty-nine-twenty-two A.

**DN:** 'A', oh, excuse me, 4922A St. Elmo Avenue in Bethesda. And the interviewer is Don Nicoll. Jack, would you spell your name and give us your date and place of birth?

**JS:** It's Jack, middle initial C, Sando, S-A-N-D-O. I was born November 25th, 1940 in Washington, D.C.

**DN:** And what were your parents' names?

**JS:** David and Edith Sando.

**DN:** You grew up in the District?

**JS:** Yes, I did. I grew up, I was born nine months or so after my parents completed their escape from the Holocaust, as a matter of fact. They escaped from Vienna in August of 1938, and then made their way by the hair's breadth out of Europe into the United States in 19-, end of 1939, beginning of 1940.

**DN:** Were they married at the time?

**JS:** Yes, they had just been married for about five months before they left Vienna.

**DN:** What were your father and mother's occupations in Vienna?

**JS:** Well, my father played piano in a nightclub. He was studying to be a theater director. And my mother also had an interest in acting. They were quite young at the time, and never proceeded with those dreams once they fled, because they weren't able to pursue them here.

**DN:** Did you have any brothers or sisters?

**JS:** Yeah, I have a brother who is younger, seven and a half years younger.

**DN:** And what was your father's occupation here?

**JS:** Here he became a salesman of military uniforms and clothing in downtown Washington just so he could earn enough to support the family.

**DN:** And did your mother work outside the home?

**JS:** No, she was a stay-at-home mom, which was at that time the fashion. She helped him because he developed a sideline, sideline. At nighttime he would bring home ribbons and medals which he then made into sets for military personnel, and he developed that as a little speciality. And she worked with him late into the night when he did that.

**DN:** Was he able to maintain his musical involvement at all?

**JS:** He played for family and friends, and played very beautifully, but never did it

professionally or followed that up.

**DN:** And was your mother able to pursue her acting in amateur -?

**JS:** No, not at all. My father couldn't, when he came he said it was so difficult to, he played in order to make people happy when he was in Vienna. And he was so sad at what had happened, what he had left behind and leaving his own parents behind and then what happened to them, that he just couldn't make other people happy if he wasn't. And that's why he never really went back into it professionally.

**DN:** Did he talk much about Austria in the thirties?

**JS:** It came up pretty frequently, because my grandfather and my uncle also lived with us, my mother's father and her brother lived with us, as long as I was growing up here and before I went to college. So conversations about that period were always in the air.

**DN:** What had led them to decide to leave, was there a specific event?

**JS:** Well, specifically, there came a point after the Germans took over Austria that they started rounding up young males, young Jewish males. And my father got word that they were on the lookout for him and very quickly, they had already thought about leaving, but very quickly fled into Germany actually, because Austrian passports were no longer valid once the Germans took over. And there was no way out of Austria except through Germany for them, they thought, and they had heard of someone who would smuggle people across the border into France.

And they went to Cologne by train, with very little money in their pockets because they thought it would raise suspicions if they had too much. They didn't want people to think they were escaping. And when they got to Cologne they found that the person who was supposed to smuggle them seemed a little fishy to them. They went to his house and they found his wife a very strange person, apparently, and decided it might not be such a good idea to try to leave with him as their guide. It turns out later on that he was leading people to the border and they were being then swept up by the Germans. So they made a very wise decision at that point, but there was no way out from Cologne.

My father said he decided to go to the local police station, out of desperation, and see if he could get their passports, which were no longer valid, changed into German passports, even though those German passports would still show that they were Jewish which was the norm. They couldn't do anything without a German passport. So he said, he went into the station, he was very nervous, they asked who did he want to see and he looked up at the board and asked just for the name of the person who was at the top of the board, who turned out to be the chief of the station. And he said the person, when he went in there, he thought that the chief either thought he was very gutsy or crazy, but took their Austrian passports, ripped them up, and told him that he'd have new passports issued for them.

So he didn't know what was behind his thinking, but that was the next part of the trip which was a saving grace for them. With the German passports, they got onto a train for Switzerland and

there were German police that came on the train before they went across the border. They asked him what he was going to do in Switzerland, and he said he was going there because of his profession as a musician, and they asked him, "Well, where's your instrument?" Fortunately he could tell them that he played the piano.

So they got across into Switzerland. They found that when they crossed into Switzerland they were told by the Jewish Social Service people that they had a limited period of time that they could stay in Switzerland, that they could only pass through and it was, I think it was thirty days that they had. If they didn't leave on their own, they'd be sent back to Germany. So, they wrote to a cousin of my mother's who was in Paris and who happened to be a smuggler. As, I don't know that it was just a sideline or his real profession, but he came across the border in a taxi cab and was able to smuggle them out of Switzerland into France and past whatever border guard needed to be taken care of.

They got into France, and then made their way down Lyon and were there for, I guess, close to a year. But during that year the French started rounding up everybody who came in from Germany and Austria, even though many of them were Jewish, and put them into French concentration camps on the basis that these were potential spies. So my father, grandfather and uncle were put into concentration camps in France. My mother wasn't, and she worked diligently with the U.S. consul and tried to get them visas to come to the United States.

There were some people in the United States, especially for my father. There was somebody in New York who had visited his parents years before when he was a teenager (*pause in tape*). The person in New York that my mother, well, what happened was the people from New York had given my father a business card and said, "If you're ever in the United States, look us up." And my father had kept that in his wallet, and he had found it when he was in the camp and he told my mother to write to them. They in turn sent the kind of affidavit which was needed for a visa to say that these people would not be public charges. And the consul, who my mother always remembered as really their savior, issued the visa. And my father was taken by the police in a police van from the concentration camp to the port at Le Havre in order to board a ship bound for the United States. They thought he was a dangerous criminal from the fact that he was in the camp.

And my mother stayed behind to get visas for her father and brother, and she was able to get the same kind of affidavits from some family members who were in the United States on her side of the family. They crossed during a time where there were certainly U-boats operating, and there were a lot of ships that didn't make it across. They were very lucky again, at that point, in getting across. My mother's voyage on I think it was called the DeGrasse was, I believe, the last ship that left. So they all made it out by the skin of their teeth. And that's when my father, he always said when he arrived in New York and walked around, it was such an amazing place for him to see and he couldn't believe how people were leading normal lives when he knew what was going on back home. And that's, that became, I guess started the problems that he felt mentally, he couldn't do anything musical.

**DN:** What led them to Washington?

**JS:** I think they were in New York a few months. And my uncle, who had an accounting background, found a job working for a radio station in Washington. And having the first regular job in the family, they moved as well down to Washington. And then he [Jack's father] was able to work for a clothier, it was primarily military and civilian clothing I think, there was a company called Kass and Stein. Then there were several others that he worked with over the years.

But never, he was very, very conservative, and having come here with nothing. He grew up as the only child in a family which did very well, he had a governess when he was young, and so it was such a sudden change for him that he wasn't able to really take risks here. He just never felt being a risk taker, and was just happy with what he could accomplish at the level that he was at.

**DN:** Were his parents still living when they left Austria?

**JS:** They were still living. They also had passage out, but his mother cut her finger. It sounds very silly, but she felt that that was superstitious. She had a superstition that that was bad luck and they should not take the particular ship that they were scheduled on until that healed. And a few days later when my grandfather tried to book passage on another ship, the office was closed and there were no more ships to leave. So it was very difficult for him [Jack's father]. He got letters which I didn't even know about until he died, my father died last September. And he had kept the letters that his parents had written to him from the time that he left Vienna until just before they were taken up in the final rounding up of the Jews of Vienna. And all those letters are censored. I can read enough German to understand what was going on in those letters, so they couldn't very pointedly say what was happening to them, but there was real desperation in those letters about not being able to get out and how they were hoping to see them again one day.

And then, of course, the letters stopped at the end of 1941. The roundup was, I think, in January or February 1942. His parents were transported to Riga, Latvia, and were possibly or probably shot shortly after they got off the train, taken into the woods. I think that was, the large roundup of the Viennese Jews was at that point in time. So that is something that he learned. He got a letter at some point from, I forget which association, which gave him those details. And that was unfortunately the end of that.

It was a very small family, he had no other family, and all of his uncles and aunts were in Russia. And his father had left Russia years before and become very successful in Vienna, but there was very little contact between him and the rest of his family in Russia. So there was no one that we knew of except a cousin or two in Israel that ever remained on his side of the family. And most of my mother's family also didn't survive.

**DN:** Were you told a lot about this when you were growing up?

**JS:** I was told quite a bit about it when I was growing up. But my grandfather, when he arrived here he was about fifty years old already, maybe a little bit, let's see, no, he was in his late fifties when he came to the United States. And he never really learned English well, so we spoke German. And he lived until almost ninety years of age. And when I grew up, since he was living together with my parents, he lived with them until he died, we had a very close

relationship.

And the interesting thing in speaking with him was he taught me to look at history as it's in the books with a jaundiced eye, because he had different perspectives of what led to the rise of Hitler than the kind of things that we would read about in the United States. For example, he always thought that the biggest mistake that the United States made was to go into WWI. That Woodrow Wilson should never have done it, because at worst there would have been a draw between the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, the English and the French, and the conditions for Hitler's rise would never have come about because they wouldn't have had the kind of reparations requirements which completely drained the German and Austrian economies. And that people would not have felt compelled to vote for somebody who was as crazy as Hitler was. So that was very different, of course, than what we were learning at school and how heroic the United States was to have gone in, and how it was the United States that helped win the war, and winning the war may not have been the best thing.

**DN:** Were your parents and your grandfather religious Jews, or . . . ?

**JS:** They kept the holidays, they kept the traditions. I went to Hebrew school until I was thirteen. They didn't join as members of any congregation, partly because for them every penny counted. And I think that was probably more of a reason than anything else.

**DN:** You went to the public schools in Washington?

**JS:** Yes, I went to public schools through high school.

**DN:** And which schools?

**JS:** I went to Bryant and Barnard elementaries, McFarland Junior High, and Wilson High School.

**DN:** And where did you go to college?

**JS:** Harvard.

**DN:** And did you go to Harvard Law as well?

**JS:** Yes, right after.

**DN:** What was your major at Harvard?

**JS:** I majored in government, I got my degree in general studies.

**DN:** Had your interest in politics or government been whetted by your grandfather or your parents?

**JS:** Well, my grandfather was, yes, we always talked politics. Interestingly enough, though, it



was not because I sided with him; it was because I usually didn't. My grandfather was very proud of the fact that he was a registered Republican, and I was a Democrat as long as I can recall. At least I remember Adlai Stevenson being my first political hero, and I don't remember precisely, I think my parents were Democrats from an early point.

**DN:** What led your grandfather to be a Republican?

**JS:** That's a good question. I think he, I remember he liked Eisenhower a lot, and I don't know that he liked Roosevelt a lot, I just don't recall precisely. But he was, I guess, more conservative. Remember, his hero was the kaiser, so he was not, you know, in a democratic tradition that he, he thought the kaiser was the be all and end all. And he was always proud of the fact that he always remembered the kaiser's birthday, Kaiser Franz Josef, that is, not the German kaiser.

**DN:** And was your uncle at all involved in these discussions?

**JS:** I don't really remember him being involved in any of those discussions, no. My parents, though, were Democrats, clearly as far back as I can remember.

**DN:** And what led you to Harvard?

**JS:** It was, I just remember thinking that that was the best place to go to, and I started really getting interested as soon as I got into high school. And I think I was the only sophomore who would go when the Harvard representative came to talk about the college to the upperclassmen. And I just felt that, it had a reputation, I was just interested and everything that I read about it led me to think it was a great place to go. And fortunately that was true.

**DN:** And you graduated from high school in?

**JS:** Nineteen fifty-eight.

**DN:** Fifty-eight, and from Harvard in?

**JS:** Sixty-two.

**DN:** So you were there during the election of President Kennedy.

**JS:** Right.

**DN:** Were you at all involved in politics as an undergraduate?

**JS:** Well, I was the, when I got to Harvard, I think partly, I was very interested in politics growing up in Washington, and I was interested in the fact that the District didn't have representation. I had summer jobs in government agencies as a typist, because that was, I could, I was able to type so that was about the best paying kind of job you could get in those days in the summer time.

When I got to Harvard I went to the first meeting of Young Democrats freshman year when they decided to choose officers. And I was, I became a freshman, what they called “yard captain”, because the Harvard Yard was where all the freshman dormitories were. So I was elected, I guess, based on some few words that I spoke about why I was interested in it and how I had come from a place where we couldn't vote for anyone. And I guess got people to think, “Give this guy a chance.” So I was president of the freshman Young Democrats.

Interestingly enough, the secretary of the Harvard Young Democrats at the time was Barney Frank, so he was the first person of the upper classmen that I really got to know, and it was a very enjoyable year. Then there was internal politicking between several of the upper class officers, and I threw in my lot with the group that didn't prevail. And the next thing I did, though, was in 19-, which was just as well because I then became president of Students for Humphrey at Harvard before the 1960, well, for the 1960 campaign, because I thought he was the person who had the best ideas and expressed them the best, and for me he was the most liberal candidate.

**DN:** Was there a lot of pressure for Kennedy because of his associations with Harvard and the Boston area?

**JS:** Well, most of the people, yeah, there were more Kennedy people than Humphrey people. But interestingly enough we had, at Harvard there was a convention of Democrats from all over, Young Democrats for the 1960 campaign and the final balloting had the students balloting for Stevenson for president, and Humphrey for vice president. So that was my first electioneering. And we kept the ballots going long enough so that eventually we got enough people, everybody settled on Humphrey as a second choice. The Kennedy people I think didn't want to be, finally, a second choice.

**DN:** Only first.

**JS:** Right.

**DN:** Did you, did you and your colleagues at Harvard get involved in the general election campaigning, either in Cambridge or surrounding communities?

**JS:** Not for the presidential campaign. I think it was in that campaign that John Saltonstall was running for Congress if I recall, Lev Saltonstall's, I don't know if it was his son or his nephew, and I think I was involved in that campaign. But there wasn't much to do for Kennedy in Massachusetts.

**DN:** And you went on from Harvard, you graduated in '62 and went directly into law school?

**JS:** Yes.

**DN:** And finished your law school work in '65?

**JS:** Right.

**DN:** And was, what was your take on the law at that point?

**JS:** As far as practicing law? I went to law school I think because I thought it would open a lot of different doors. There were a lot of different avenues you could explore with a law degree, politics and government really was, I think, my first interest. And since so many people that I saw had made their way after law school in that direction, that's the reason that I went on to law school after college.

**DN:** And when you graduated in '65, did you head back to Washington?

**JS:** Yes, I headed back. At that time I took a job with the Atomic Energy Commission, which is what it was then called. I had worked in the summers before coming, before leaving law school, two summers at the Disarmament Agency which had several different names, and also one summer at the Agency for International Development. And those weren't typing jobs, at least, they were a little bit more substantive. And I came to the Atomic Energy Commission because I thought it would be an interesting place to start off.

It turned out, very quickly I found out when I got there, that they really didn't know what they wanted the new lawyers to do, even though the positions were supposed to be special positions. And it took me less than a week to pull out the law directory and start calling law firms in Washington. And I found a firm which was looking and decided, once they accept-, I decided that was a place I might like to work, and went to work for what was then called Amram, Hahn, & Sundlun, which had small, it was a small firm, about nine person firm. And each of the partners was a very interesting person with a different clientele, different personality, different strengths, and they were all terrific mentors. I learned something different from each of them.

**DN:** And what was your practice?

**JS:** It was a general civil practice, even though the first case I had there was a first degree murder case which was, at that time, the kind of case which the court would assign to attorneys because Hahn and Sundlun had worked at the Justice Department. And Bruce Sundlun got that assignment, so I was put on it as one of the first things I did. It was a pro bono, so that was how I got my feet wet with the firm.

**DN:** Did this include arguing the case in the court?

**JS:** It was preparing it. It was preparing it and then trying to give my ideas, based on what I was learning as I went along, as to how the case ought to be handled. And there was one seminar that they sent me to, the firm sent me to in New York, where I learned one very simple rule in a criminal case, which was that up until the time that the jury decides the case, if the defendant doesn't take the stand that the jury will really believe it's the prosecution's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. Once the defendant takes the stand, it's more likely the jury's going to be interested in, is he lying or is he telling the truth. And so it's a very different standard. So as a result, this defendant did not take the stand. I learned a lot of other things as a result of doing that case.

**DN:** How long were you with Hahn & Sundlun?

**JS:** Well, I stayed and was with them from 1965 until 1970 when I left the firm to work for Ed Muskie. And I came back to the firm after I had worked -

**DN:** Afterwards. And in the intervening period, in 1968, did you get involved in that campaign?

**JS:** Yes, I did, I first was an advance man for Humphrey. I'd never done that before, but I figured why not. It was, and I, so I was in charge of putting together the motorcade when he came down to Fayetteville, Arkansas for a speech. And before he came down to deliver his speech, I remember that the speech was sent down so that we could read it beforehand. And when I read the speech I said that was pretty poor stuff, and I was surprised. And I said, you know, I'd be interested in doing that kind of thing. So that's what got me interested in (*unintelligible word*).

**DN:** That was your first speech writing?

**JS:** That was, well, that was my first self-editing of somebody else's speech, and I said, "I'd like to try my hand at doing some writing." So at that time Doug Bennett was the manager, if I recall correctly, and I think Ted Van Dyke was the speech writer even then, but there was a newspaper in Washington called the *Washington Daily News* in those days, and they had sent a series of questions for Humphrey for the campaign. And so I was given the task of answering those questions, and then that was published in the *News*. And I did some other writing, but it was, the campaign, it was late in the campaign and there wasn't that much opportunity for it. And I mourned in Minneapolis on the morning after.

**DN:** Did you work in that period with Ted Van Dyke?

**JS:** No, it was just Doug Bennett that I worked with. Because I was still very, I was an associate. I had a lot of work to do in the firm, and they gave me some time to do this type of work, but not a lot.

**DN:** Now after '68 you went back to full time practice.

**JS:** Oh sure, I was full time practice all the time. I didn't take any time off except, I mean I'd spend an evening working for the campaign instead of doing something for the office, but that was all that I was really able to do in '68. And I think it was the '68 campaign that really got me interested in Ed Muskie as well.

**DN:** And how did that interest develop in '69-'70, and how did you come to go to work for him?

**JS:** Well, I was really very interested in issues, in the Democrats coming back into power. I had been interested in Ed Muskie from what I had read about him in the press. And I remember

at one point calling the office and asking if I could be sent some of his speeches, just to read them, to see if it was, if his thinking was what I would really like to get involved in. Because I wasn't interested in simply getting into a campaign, period. I was interested in working for somebody only if I felt inspired to do that. And when I read several, the several pieces that I got in the mail I said, it's, the way he speaks apparently, the rhythm, the ideas that he has, I'd really be interested in exploring those and trying to help. So there was someone who was in our firm for about a year, a very nice fellow by the name of Roger Lewis, who I really nagged because that's one habit I do have, for good or ill, and, until he got me an appointment with Bob Nelson. And I said, "Let me try," you know, "I'd like to help." And the rest was history for me.

**DN:** And when did you go to work for Senator Muskie?

**JS:** Full time in May of 1970.

**DN:** And where was the campaign office at that point?

**JS:** At that point, I remember 1660 L Street NW, and I think, well that's right, that's where the campaign office was. I started out, I mean I did some writing beforehand, before I left the firm, and it was based on that that when I got offered the position I certainly was interested in it full blast, and told the firm that I was going to leave to do that. And they took it as a leave of absence, which was fine.

**DN:** Who did you work with at the Muskie headquarters?

**JS:** Well, fortunately I worked with you, Don. The person who I worked with most as far as getting ideas together and research was Sheppie Abramowitz. And I was lucky to work firsthand with some of the senator's top advisors, Arthur (*sounds like: Okin*) for economics, Paul Warnke and Les Gelb for foreign affairs. I'm trying to think, her name escapes me for the moment.

**DN:** Tony Lake?

**JS:** Well, Tony Lake, yes, but I was, she was with the D.C. Control Board, met recently, she was at Brookings.

**DN:** Oh, Alice [M.] Rivlin?

**JS:** Alice Rivlin, of course, right. Tony Lake, Ty Brown. There was Jim, I can't remember his name.

**DN:** Jim Campbell?

**JS:** Was it Campbell, yeah, he was at Wilmer, Cutler.

**DN:** Right.

**JS:** And other people, I mean I worked, Lanny Davis submitted some things, Mike Barnes

submitted ideas, a number of other people that I came in contact with, most important of which was the senator himself.

**DN:** When did you first meet Senator Muskie?

**JS:** I first met the senator, if I recall correctly, after a speech that I did for him at the University of Kansas. It was a speech that I remember, I got the assignment and it didn't have a long lead time, and it was right after the Kent State shootings and I felt emotional about those. And I had enough in me to pretty much do an all-nighter getting this speech out, I recall, and it flowed pretty well. And it was apparently a success. And the first time I met the senator was I think after he got back from that speech, but just to say hello and to get his thanks. And then when I found out that I was doing well enough to be considered for a full time job, then I started seeing him more often.

**DN:** So you wrote your first major speech for him before you'd even met him.

**JS:** That's correct.

**DN:** How did you come to write a speech that fit his rhythms?

**JS:** I just had, I felt, I know it's hard to pinpoint, and it may be, you know, an emotional way of looking at it. I just felt instinctually that the way he approached things, or the way he said things, were the way that I liked to write things. And it worked. I think I was in sync with him, and partly I think because I thought as much of him as I did that I could write to fit his rhythms. And I guess it worked out that way. I was happy to have that happen, and I felt comfortable being able to write the way I did -

*End of Side A, Side B*

**DN:** This is the second side of the September 17, 2002 interview with Jack Sando. Jack, you were just talking about the first major speech you wrote for Senator Muskie, Kansas State, 1970, and your feelings about writing to his rhythms. And I take it from what you said that you were referring not only to the rhythms of speech and sentences, the rhetoric, but also the rhythms of thought.

**JS:** I think that's correct. The University of Kansas, yeah. He was always somebody who struck me as being very serious, very thoughtful, very reasonable. You couldn't write a speech for him just full of rhetoric, there had to be ideas and something new to say. And when I wrote, as I wrote more for him, one thing I remember him saying a lot was he wanted a speech to sing more. So interestingly, he had a musical feel for a speech and for its rhythms, and the content. And it didn't take much for him to impress upon me to do an extra good job. He didn't, he never yelled, although I know he had that reputation and I saw it happen, but it was the kind of relationship which I appreciated a lot and got a lot out of, and a lot of osmosis. It was as if I could tell what it was that he would like to say.

Of course he had the last word, and he changed words often enough, and he could write well

himself. So it wasn't as if I was doing something, which I once was told by a journalist he had done for another candidate, which was write for the candidate and always find that the candidate would just get up without ever having read the speech beforehand and just deliver it. That was not Ed Muskie. So I knew that whatever I wrote, he really would read ahead of time, and focus on, and that made me strive to make it as good as I could make it.

**DN:** Can you describe the process of gathering the ideas and of preparing the drafts of a speech? You mentioned earlier the different people you worked with, including people like Paul Warnke and Les Gelb and others who were experts in their own fields. How did that work in the campaign operation?

**JS:** Well, I would meet with them, or get memos. There was one time a memo that I had from Lloyd Cutler. He didn't send it to me, he sent it to the campaign, but I got that. And there was a nub of an idea or an outline of an idea about leadership, about, that a leader, a political leader is not somebody who just feels which way the wind is blowing, but how the leader really has to lead. And I took that idea and developed it, and Muskie delivered a speech on that subject at one point.

Other issues speeches, the way they got started, I guess there was a decision on where to speak, I had nothing to do with where he would speak or what the topic would be on. It was always something new for me, and a challenge, a different challenge each time. And I was told which people would be helpful with ideas, who I should discuss it with. I got the people who were doing research under Sheppie to give me as much background material on what the current state of the issue was before going into it, and learning what the senator's position was as to how to resolve the issue, or what direction to go on vis á vis the issue, and then spun those ideas out myself. But I tried to do them thinking as I thought Ed Muskie would, because I thought we were really eye-to-eye on those issues.

So for me, it was comfortable in the sense that I wasn't writing ever for something I didn't believe in. And I, it was a great learning experience for me as well, to be able to develop issues and try to do so given a limited period of time in which it takes to get the assignment and to come up with a speech.

**DN:** Were there any times when what you wrote was a source of major difficulty with the senator, or major changes?

**JS:** The only, well, the only times that happened that I can remember, I remember a couple of occasions where I was given a speech assignment one morning, for example, to be delivered that evening. It was a speech before the Milk Producer's Association, at least that's what I recall the name of it. And I really had no idea what to write about. I think I got the assignment mid-morning, and wrote something for him to deliver. It wasn't the most brilliant speech that he ever delivered. His presence, I think, is what was most important, to show support for the group that had invited him. And I think he was never satisfied with something which wasn't at its, first rate. And I just wasn't where I had to plead the inability to make it as first rate as I would have liked, but I could see he wasn't happy with that, and neither was I.

And I think there was one other occasion where somebody else who was supposed to write something for him, if I recall correctly, there were two other occasions where that happened, where somebody had an assignment to write a speech and didn't. And I learned about it at the last minute. One of them was a real success, which was the speech on the SST, because Muskie had been asked to deliver a speech. Senator Proxmire had asked him to deliver a speech against the supersonic transport, and it was a very critical vote coming up in the Senate. And I had remembered on that issue, reading about a report which had been made internally for the Nixon administration which was pretty uniformly against the development, but a report that nobody had taken very seriously or really picked up on. And I remember Sheppie got the information to me, and I did spend most of one night writing that speech and using the report. And I think it turned out that it was a very effective speech the next day and helped turn the vote against the SST. So I knew something about the issue and had it on that short notice.

The second one was about a subject which, some kind of property rights speech which was, I think the senator wasn't thrilled to have to go give that speech anyway because it wasn't something he was particularly up on, so. But for the most part, that didn't happen. And, sure, when you're campaigning it's bound to happen, you've got to take it as it comes.

**DN:** Now that campaign started out with high hopes and came on hard times. What was it like for you working in a campaign like that?

**JS:** Well, I, when I left the campaign, which I had hoped was going to be for a short period of time, Ed Muskie was double digits ahead of Richard Nixon in the polls, and (go off for a second) (*pause in tape*). There came a point where Ed Muskie was really leading in the polls, and everyone was thinking, "this is the next presidential nominee for the Democratic party", and that was in early 1971. As a result perhaps of that optimism, and as a result of what some people who were advising the senator I think told him, it was decided to shift resources from speech writing and research, as well as perhaps other areas, into delegate collecting, and that that was where the bulk of the resources should go, and to beef up people who would be able to get delegates from across the country in advance of the coming year.

As a result, there was a group that I was told, was that there were a group of people who were supporters of the senator's, who were willing to pay the salary for Bob Shrum, who had been John Lindsay's speech writer, to come on staff of the senator. And as a result, there was not going to be any money to pay my salary because of the shift in resources, but here is somebody who could come in and take over. At that point, I decided that, to step aside, I had no choice, and decided actually to then take a trip around the world. It was the summer of '71.

I said I'll go away for three months and then come back and see what happens. And as a result of, and I told the law firm that I was with, had been with, that I might be coming back in the fall. And as a result of that trip, fortuitously, I met the young lady who I then married, and decided that I needed to work at a job that I would be able to get a salary on, so I did go back to the firm. I had hoped to get more involved in the campaign, but that really never eventuated. And I think the real problem from my perspectives, was that the senator made the one misjudgment in my view, that I was sorry to see, which was to change his chief of staff. I think that the change from Don Nicoll to Berl Bernhard was a serious mistake. That was the way I saw it.



**DN:** Why did you think it was a mistake?

**JS:** I thought it was a mistake because as I viewed the senator and his interactions with people and the people who knew him best, I thought that Don Nicoll had a stability and a strength which was very important for the senator, and that he relied upon. I thought that Don best knew the senator's strengths, how to present them, and was aware of any weaknesses that he had and not hide them, but knew how to prevent the senator from tripping over himself. And that the senator listened and that Don provided very wise counsel. And the decision to downgrade the issues, the research, to change the writing, was made at the same time.

And the problem that the senator had, which is what I'm sure a lot of people in high office have, is that there are a lot of people elbowing to get in front of him, and elbowing to get positions of their own, and then sometimes changes get made which end up, in hindsight, being disastrous. And I think this was one of them. There was a wholesale shift in responsibilities that some other people in the staff had which, from my perspective, surprised me because I didn't think that they were the most qualified people to step into various positions in the campaign. And I was sorry to see that happen.

I guess nothing brought it home to me more than when David Broder wrote about Ed Muskie crying in the snow in New Hampshire. And what I thought about that incident was all of the decisions that were made in staffing and who was, who had the senator's ear at that point, which never got picked up in the press. And I guess it's hard for historians to know those things unless they hear it from enough different people (*unintelligible word*), because I'm looking at it just from the perspective of what I saw.

**DN:** Did the nature of the speeches, the message if you will, change with the shift?

**JS:** I thought they did a little bit. I thought that, I remember a speech, reading about a speech that was delivered down in Florida or somewhere south. I don't know, it was, I don't remember where, which, in which his, at least the stories that I read about the speech were that it was shrilly liberal, it was, it didn't sound like the senator to me. And to me it didn't fit. I was surprised by its tone, you know, some of the things it said. But again, it didn't totally surprise me because from what I knew of the person writing it, it was the kind of speech which I would have associated more with perhaps John Lindsay, more Kennedyesque. It didn't, to me it didn't fit the senator's real underlying, his center. Whether it's a sour grapes perception on my part, I don't know. It's just honestly what I felt at the time.

And then I was surprised, given the fact that the resources supposedly were put into delegate selection, that people were assigned to various primary states which, to be in charge of them. And I didn't know that those, from my under-, recollection, were the strongest people that could have gone into those states on behalf of the senator. That was where I saw the seismic shift, it was in early '71, and it was too bad. And I guess if he hadn't been that far ahead at that point, then maybe that wouldn't have taken place.

**DN:** Did you get involved at all in the campaign after you came back?

**JS:** I, I guess I talked to people from time to time, but I, and I think I maybe even offered to be of help, but it wasn't anything that I was taken up on by the new group. So I basically cheered things on, but that was as much as I could do. I had hoped that if the campaign was going to really take off in the nomination, maybe that's when I, there'd be more that I could do. I did try I guess in 1984, was it '84? No, it was 1980, that's right, 1980, the question was the open convention, the committee to continue the open convention and there was talk about the possibility, maybe the Democrats would turn to Ed Muskie.

**DN:** Oh, this was '76.

**JS:** Seventy-six?

**DN:** Yeah, that would have been '76, yeah.

**JS:** Was it then?

**DN:** Yeah, '80 was the Carter re-election campaign.

**JS:** Yeah, I know, but that was when, no, it was '80.

**DN:** Oh, that's right, that's right, '80.

**JS:** Yeah, it was '80. So I was still, deep in my heart I still hoped that there was a possibility that the country would have Ed Muskie. So I worked on that committee to continue the open convention and I wrote a piece that appeared under Edward Bennett Williams' byline in the *Post*, which was the argument for continuing to have the open convention which would have allowed the delegates more of a choice. And that was the convention at which, I think, Carter convinced Ed Muskie before not to seek, to challenge him.

**DN:** After '72, and during this entire period, did you continue with any other involvements in politics, writing?

**JS:** In '84 I drafted the Democratic Party credo which was adopted as part of the charter at the '84 convention, but as those things go nothing much happened with those. I did, I remember writing a speech or two for Mondale. I was interested in Mario Cuomo's potential, but then he decided not to run. I think he was the only person after Ed Muskie that I really felt strongly enough about to really want to work for, on any serious basis. So, since then unfortunately, the party hasn't had the giants that it once had. Maybe it's just age and curmudgeonliness that make me say that, but that's the way I guess I perceive things. I tried to send some things in to the last election, the Gore campaign, some ideas, but they got buried somewhere or other.

**DN:** As you look back at Senator Muskie, you've described him and the reasons for your interest, but is there any way you'd encapsulate your feelings about his contributions as a political leader and as a legislator?

**JS:** Well, he was tremendously respected, and for good reason. He didn't do things in a mean way. He didn't do things in a calculating way for his own benefit or profit. He was sincerely interested, in all aspects that I saw, of the idea of progress, of improvement, of solving problems, of making the world a more peaceful place and bringing sustenance to people who needed it, and improving people's lives, and setting a great example. And to me actually, the most important job of a leader, which I thought Ed Muskie was and why I thought he would make such a great president, is because of the example that I thought he would set. People respected him. They knew he was honest, they knew he was intelligent, that he thought things through, that he wasn't in it for himself and wasn't in it for self aggrandizement, that he really believed in what he was speaking. And that's why I always felt sorry about the fact that we didn't have Ed Muskie as president.

I think the best place that you could see that idea supported was after Muskie died, and David Broder finally wrote an apology in the *Washington Post* for that crying in the snow speech. I had a real problem with the fact that he wrote that, notwithstanding whatever happened, because I remember once many years ago on a campaign trip with David Broder, when I was with the Muskie campaign, that he talked about what a negative thing it was for reporters to try to collect scalps. And he ended up being the person who got the most valuable scalp of all. So it was right for him to write the apology. It was late, but it was a, it was too bad. Actually I guess, I don't, I think that that speech just helped a slide which I recall happening before the New Hampshire primary.

But I remember there was one other issue I think, which got lost in the shuffle, which was the campaign disclosure. And I think there was that issue, that the people who were then in charge of the campaign were urging Ed Muskie not to disclose campaign contributors, which I think his instinct was to do so. But he was being pressed not to do so by several people. It wasn't required of anyone in those days to do so, but I think it gave George McGovern an issue which he didn't need to have.

**DN:** Thank you very much, Jack.

**JS:** You're welcome.

*End of Interview*