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Schuler, Karen oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with Karen Schuler by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Schuler, Karen

Interviewer

L'Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

August 5, 2004

Place

Augusta, Maine

ID Number

MOH 438

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Biographical Note

Karen Ann (Hawkins) Schuler was born June 7, 1946 in Fort Dix, New Jersey at McGuire Air Force Base. Her mother was from Louisiana, and met her father while he was training for the Air Force. When Karen was nine months old, the family moved to Farmington, Maine. There, her father worked as president of a bank. She grew up in Farmington, and then attended the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF). There, she received her B.A. She received an M.A. in Public Administration at the University of Maine at Orono in 1993. Her first brush with politics was early in her college career. She threatened to picket the president of UMF, Einar Olsen, for not providing adequate child care services for the older, married students. Her skills led to the creation of the Sweatt-Winter Day Care Center at the university. She has been active in many campaigns for the Maine legislature.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family history (Hawkins, Schuler); Democratic Party in Maine; meeting Ed Muskie and Bill Hathaway as a National Student Lobbyist; early political training with Violet Pease; year spent in Africa with family; legislative redistricting with Tony Buxton; Pam Scarcelli campaign; Mary Flint campaign; Jim Elias Senate district 4 campaign; Bill Hathaway campaign; George Mitchell Senate campaign; Brennan campaign; Neil Rolde

campaign; Susan Farnsworth House district 91 campaign; Tom Andrews campaign; Bud Bustin campaign; Chris Krauss campaign; Beverly Bustin-Hatheway campaign; and the 2004 Presidential election.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with Karen Schuler on August 5th, 2004, and we're in Augusta, Maine, in the Ray Building. And I'd like to start just by asking you to give me your full name, including maiden name, and where and when you were born.

Karen Schuler: All right. My full name is Karen Ann Schuler, and my maiden name was Hawkins, and I was actually born at Fort Dix, New Jersey at McGuire Air Base. My father was mustering out of the Air Force after World War II, and then we came back to Maine. My father was from Maine, my mother was actually from Louisiana, they met when he was in training

down there, and we came back to Maine when I was about nine months old and so I'm almost a native. But, I've been here pretty much ever since except for a year I spent in Africa.

AL: And what took you to Africa?

KS: My ex-husband had a Fulbright Fellowship to teach economics in West Africa, so we were there for a year.

AL: What was that experience like? What part of Africa?

KS: We were in, well, when we went there the country was called Dahomey, and while we were there they changed the name to Benin. It's a little tiny country just north of Nigeria. It was very different, it was very different. I mean, I'm glad I went, I enjoyed the experience, but it's certainly nothing that I was used to and probably not even very well prepared for. First of all, it was a French speaking country, and, I didn't speak French, and there were no English speaking schools so all of my kids had to go into a French speaking school, which wasn't so bad for my youngest one, he was only four and he picked it up, you know, really quickly; it was a little harder for the older kids. But it was very, very different.

AL: And did you tell me your birth date? I missed it.

KS: No, I didn't. June 7th, 1946.

AL: And what part of Maine did you grow up in?

KS: I grew up in Farmington. My father started out working as a teller at the bank, and ended up, when he retired was president of the bank. And so we lived there pretty much, all my life. I moved away, I lived in Hallowell for several years but I still owned property up there and we ended up finally going back up there. Actually right now I live in Industry, in Allens Mills which is a little town about five miles east of Farmington, although it's a Farmington post office box, but, mailing address I should say.

AL: And where did you go to school, college?

KS: I went, I got my bachelors degree at the University of Maine at Farmington, and then a few years later I got my masters degree at Orono.

AL: And what was your masters in?

KS: Public administration. So, I think it was '93 that I finished that.

AL: Were your parents politically aware or active, or...

KS: I think they were politically aware. They weren't really politically active in any way. The only thing I ever remember them doing was once my father ran for the school board because someone talked him into it and convinced him that it was, you know, his civic duty, and he lost

and he was very glad he did. But they were, I mean they were certainly not, they were certainly aware of what was going on but they were not involved in, and they were both registered Republicans although I'm obviously not, and they voted but they were not involved in Republican politics locally. And the only thing I, the only political thing I ever remembered doing with them was back in, it must have been I'm going to say '53 or '54, I don't remember the exact year, Dwight D. Eisenhower came through Farmington and there was a big parade and we all trooped down to the parade. And, actually, I still have some pictures somewhere of Eisenhower in those days, in an open convertible waving to the crowd and shaking hands and stuff. But that was, about as political as I remember them being.

AL: And when did you become interested in politics, was it at a young age or was it in college?

KS: No, probably when I went to college. I had to go back after you called and pulled out some of my old resumes. I was kind of looking to try to remember when I got interested. I guess the, I guess - tell me if I'm getting too far afield here - I was just thinking that probably the first blatantly political thing that I did was, when I started college of course, you know, everyone has to pay into the student activity fee but I was married and had children and so I really didn't participate in, nor would I have chosen to participate, in most of the things that the student activity fee paid for. But what I did need and what a lot of other women who had gone back to school as adults and had children needed was day care, and the university didn't provide anything in the way of day care.

So, we, kind of organized, it started out there were just a couple of us, and we got Allen Flint as our advisor, and Allen was a friend, my ex-husband was also on the faculty, so it sort of gave me an inside edge I guess. But, so we got Allen Flint to be our advisor anyway and we went to, Einar Olsen was president at the time, and we went to him and we said we needed money to start a day care center, and he wasn't particularly interested, but we didn't go away and we made the case that we should get something for our student activity fees as well, and he finally gave us a second floor, a couple of rooms on the second floor of a building that I think they now use as the arts building, arts center or something. And so we scrounged together some, and it was going to be all volunteer, you know, when you weren't in class then you came in and took care of the kids that were there, and then when somebody else had a free period they came in. It was pretty loosey-goosey. And we scrounged up a couple of cribs and playpens and stuff, and really were totally unprepared because we figured maybe there'd be a half a dozen women that would be interested. And the word got out and all of a sudden there were like thirty, thirty-five kids there and we were just going nuts. I mean, we couldn't, we just couldn't deal with it.

So we went back to Einar and said we needed, this is obviously a need that you have overlooked and, I mean, the response has just been overwhelming and we have other mothers that want to bring their kids here and we just have no more room, we've got these two small rooms, and we need to formalize this and we need a bigger space, and we need some more support from the university, and ya-ya-ya. And he was even less interested at that point because I guess he saw, you know, the money pit.

So, we went back to Allen and by then there were probably a couple of dozen of us, and we said,

you know, we really don't want to do this but you need to go and tell Einar that if we don't get some help, that we are going to organize a picket and we're going to get signs and we're going to pack all of our kids in wagons and baby carriages and backpacks and everything else and we're going to picket his office, and we're going to call the press before we do it. And, you know, the signs are going to say, you know, Einar Olsen doesn't care about babies, and stuff like that, and it's not going to be pretty, it's not going to be pretty at all. And trust me, we will do it, we're not just kidding around here, we're deadly serious. So Allen went back to talk to him. I don't know what he ever said, but all of a sudden there was some money that came floating down, and so we were able to get a couple of work-study students in there and get a little more organized. And eventually that whole effort grew into what's now the Sweatt-Winter Day Care Center.

AL: I was going to ask you, I can remember that, I can remember Mrs. Sweatt.

KS: Yeah, once we got Dot involved then it gave the whole thing some credibility, it wasn't just a bunch of militant moms at that point, you know. So I guess that was the first time I really got just blatantly political. And it was just so clear to us that, you know, we needed, I mean I was lucky in that I was married and had children, but a lot of the moms were single moms and had no support systems and they were trying to raise kids and go to school and work and, you know, it was hard, it was really hard. So we got our money.

AL: That's a wonderful story. And it gives a nice history or that center which is a very integral part of the community now. I think it's expanded.

KS: I'm sure it probably has. They have a big place down south of the Mill Pond there the last time I knew, and I really haven't been down there in a long time. I should go down at some point and just see what it's become. But it was, I think it was the first time that I realized, you know, I figured it was going to be a major battle and that we were really going to have to go through with our, with what we said we were going to do, and I mean we were prepared to do it. And I guess I was amazed at how quickly the administration capitulated, it was like, wow, is that all it takes? This is cool. Wow, we can move mountains, this is great, all we got to do is, you know, threaten to picket, call the papers and voila! How easy is this? But, anyway

And then I decided to major in political science and Jack Quinn of course was my advisor, and I loved his classes and I really enjoyed government, political science. And he's the one that sent me up to do a semester internship with Vi actually, with Vi Pease, which was a trip. That was great. And I was looking, that was in, that was September through December of '73 that I was, that I commuted to Augusta every day and worked for the party. So that was my first real "insider" experience I guess.

AL: So that was while you were a college student.

KS: Yeah, and I got a semester's credit for it, yup, it was great.

AL: What was it like?

KS: It was great. Vi and Allen are still very close friends of mine, and they live down in

Hollis so I don't see them often but I try to see them at least once or twice a year. And I just love Vi, well both of them, they're just great people. And she was, Allen at the time was Ken Curtis's chief of staff and they lived in the little house behind the Blaine House. And there was an official Democratic Party headquarters over on State Street, just before, or just after you go by what used to be Pomerleau's, the furniture store, and you go up State Street and it was like the second or third house beyond the corner there. A huge old mansion, that they had the first floor, and I don't think, I don't remember if there was anybody upstairs or not but we had the whole first floor. But we went over there for meetings and if we had to do mailings and stuff, but most of the action was in Vi's kitchen.

AL: Oh really.

KS: Oh yeah, she held court in her kitchen and that's where the really good stuff took place. And her kitchen was just, well she didn't do much cooking but, there wasn't room. There were papers everywhere and files everywhere, and she always amazed me that she could find anything, and sometimes she couldn't. And of course I'm a neat freak so that used to just drive me ballistic and I was always sorting and organizing and stacking and collating, and I'd come back two days later and it was all right back the way it had been before I ever did anything. So we had to come to some accommodations about our work styles.

But she was just a great organizer, and although she wasn't physically organized she was mentally organized and she just, she was just a warm person and she could just get people to do stuff for her. You know, she'd call them up at the last minute, say, you know, such and such is happening the day after tomorrow and I completely forgot X, could you handle it? No problem. And that's the way people responded to her, and I don't think it was just because of her position and I don't think it was just because of Allen's position because I've known her ever since and people still do that. So, and she doesn't have any particular position now that, you know, someone's, nobody's trying to curry favor. They just, oh Vi wants this, well go do it. Well, of course. Of course that's what's going to happen. She asks and, but she would do the same for you, too, so you knew that. But it was, she was, it was quite a learning experience. And she involved me in pretty much everything that was going on. I was -

AL: So she really let you get right in on -

KS: Oh, she sure did. I was just looking, this is an ancient resume and I dragged it out after you called. Oh, where is it, oh, what did I do? Organized campaigns, prepared for the party convention, we edited a newspaper, I worked on legislative redistricting with Tony Buxton - that was interesting - did fund raising, and I did a lot of voter analysis, analysis of voter records and stuff like that for legislators. So yeah, I pretty much did, whatever she was working on I pretty much just jumped in and helped. Paul Chretien was the executive director at the time, from Bangor, and I don't know what Paul's involved, he may be retired, I'm not sure, but after that he's been very involved in union, the AFL I think, union activities up in the Bangor area.

AL: In the Bangor, Maine area?

KS: Yeah, and he was great, Paul was great. Again, he was just, you know, was very helpful

and it wasn't, I mean I was older as a student but I was still quite a bit younger than they were but I never felt like they were kind of looking down on me as this, you know, ditsy college kid. They just assumed that I would, jump in and do what needed to be done, and I did, I think I did a pretty good job, to the best of my ability at the time, anyway.

AL: Tell me about redistricting with Tony Buxton. I had the pleasure of interviewing him a couple of times for this project, and he's -

KS: Well, that was when I first actually, really understood what the term wheeling and dealing meant. Because I don't know if you've ever been involved with a redistricting, but, everybody on both sides knows exactly which towns go Democratic historically and which towns go Republican, and which ones are up for grabs, and the whole theory behind it is to set up the districts, the house and senate districts, to benefit your party. I mean, I don't know what they tell you but that's what it's all about. And there were some pretty interesting party, contiguous lines be damned, I mean it didn't matter how weird the district was shaped, as long as when you counted the votes it looked like this was going to be a Democratic district, or a Republican district. I mean, they were equally intent on finding a way to either keep their majority or increase their minority position. So, and of course, there were sacred districts, you know, depending on who was currently serving.

So there was a lot of wheeling and dealing that went on and the Republicans had certain districts that you knew they weren't going to budge on, and we did too. And then And so you had to negotiate on the ones that could possibly go either way and hope that they'd go your way. And it went on, I don't remember how long it took, it seemed like months. I'm sure it wasn't, but, and we had maps and we had like, you know, this town vote, you know, the number of Democrats and Republicans and independents and how they had voted in the last fifteen elections, and you had to put all, I mean it isn't a difficult, it isn't an easy thing because you had to put all that together and then put it in some kind of an order. I mean, you can't have a district with, you know, with three towns here and two towns here, they have to touch at some point. And then, you know, try to figure out what would work to your best advantage and then go in there and battle it out. And I don't think things have changed. I suspect that it's pretty much the same deal today except that recently, more recently the courts have gotten involved in it and I don't remember that happening.

I think, I don't know, maybe I'm just being nostalgic but, it seems to me that even with all of the, even with all the rivalry, that the people involved were better able to come to some kind of a consensus then, that it was, over all it was friendlier, it wasn't so contentious and nasty as it's become recently. That when it was all, you know, when it was all over, and I think part of that is due to leadership, but when it was all over and you had fought it out and kicked and screamed then, you know, you could still go out with the people from the other side and have a beer. And I'm not sure that happens any more, or at least not to the extent that it did. But it was take no prisoners, it really was.

AL: What was Tony Buxton like in those negotiations?

KS: Pretty much like he is now. He hasn't changed very much; he hasn't changed very much

in the way he looks. I mean, he's tough. You know, he's right there in your face and he doesn't budge, and he knows his stuff, he's very bright and, you know, you just, you're not going to push him and you're not going to buffalo him so you've got to find a way to work with him. And he's a master card player, you know, he's going to block you right down to the last two, and so it's, it was quite an experience working with him, it really was. I learned a lot. I didn't, I don't know that I would ever be as good at that kind of thing as he is, nor would I necessarily want to, but I certainly appreciated his skill.

AL: And did you get to know Allen Pease at all during that time?

KS: Oh sure, oh sure, yeah.

AL: What was he like?

KS: The same as he is now, extremely bright, extremely understated. He's very quiet, well, at least compared to Vi, I mean, you know, she was the outgoing one and Allen's sort of, a typical understated Yankee, you know. He might not say too much but you could see his brain was working just fine and he was just, well, he's just kind of a "salt of the earth" guy, he really is. He was always, he was always very nice to me and, you know, at the time he was sort of a very important person and he didn't, you know, a lot of people get in those positions and they get pretty much full of themselves but that was not Allen at all, I mean he was just the opposite, he was just, you know, like the guy down the street. And so as I said, we're, what was that, thirty, thirty-one years ago and we're still very good friends. I went to their fiftieth wedding anniversary party, and as I said, I try to see them at least once or twice a year. And they're just great people. I just have nothing but an utmost respect for both of them.

AL: Did they ever talk about the '54 election?

KS: Not that I remember. That was before, you're talking about with Muskie?

AL: Yes, his first.

KS: They probably did, but I don't remember, I don't remember. And that was a little before I got there, so. But, I mean, you know, Vi was on the phone with Muskie all the time and, I mean I met him a few times just in passing, but you know, she'd pick up the phone and, "All right, Ed, we've got a problem here, what are we going to do about this?" "I don't know, what do you want to do?" "Well, this is what I think we should do." "Oh, okay." So it was a very, and again, I know that that closeness between the state party and particularly the federal, Washington people, is not that way any more, it's much more removed. Which is too bad.

AL: From your husband's experience?

KS: Well, that and I've been involved in politics over the years and, you know, I mean I hate to say it but I think that the state party has become less and less relevant as time has gone on, unfortunately, for a lot of reasons. I think one of the biggest, I think one of the biggest things that hurt the party, if not the biggest thing, was when the house and senate decided to have their

own PACs. And so it used to be that the party found the candidates to run for the legislature, and they helped raise money and they helped fund them, and they helped them with their campaign. And, I don't know exactly what happened, maybe there were some years of poor leadership in the party and people in the legislature didn't feel like they were getting what they needed from them, or what happened, or maybe it was just a blatant power grab, but you know, they started the senate PAC and the house has a PAC, and they started recruiting candidates and funding them and helping them with their campaigns, and at that point it almost made the party irrelevant.

And when my husband was there, I mean there were still certain things that we could do to help candidates and we tried to work with, usually the president of the senate would hire someone and speaker of the house would hire one or two people to work for them as part of their PAC. And we tried to work with those folks and with some greater or lesser success depending on who it was and depending on the situation. But the person that holds the purse strings, you know, really calls the shots and so the party was relegated to doing printing and, you know, a lot of that kind of stuff, ancillary activities to help the candidates. And now with the Clean Elections and some of this other stuff, they can't even do that. So I honestly don't know, and I haven't been involved since Greg stepped down, I honestly don't know other than the things that they have to legally do, like holding the convention and all of this stuff that the law requires, I don't know what role they have left to play, in finding and funding and helping Democrats get elected to the legislature which is, at least when I was involved, was the whole basis and foundation of what the party was there for. So it's changed a lot, and I'm not necessarily sure it's changed for the better. But . . .

AL: Do you think that term limits have played a role, maybe not necessarily in the state party but in Maine politics in general?

KS: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

AL: In positive or negative?

KS: Well, both. I mean, you know just, when term limits came in, I mean just as, this is very superficial, but there were some people that I was horrified that we were going to lose and there were other people that I was delighted that we were going to lose, so just on that level, you know, it played out, to be both positive and negative. But I was not in favor of term limits, and if I had to vote today I would probably vote to get rid of them. I would at least vote, to go to more than four terms because you essentially get, somebody just gets to the point where they know what they're doing and they're helpful, and maybe they get to serve one term in leadership, and they're gone. And maybe they go, some of them, a few, go to the senate, but the rest of them, you know, we lose so much talent and so much institutional memory when these people depart after four terms.

And then the ones that are the, say the professional politicians, I mean, they just sit out a term and then they come back. So, or they run for the house, then they run for the senate, then they run for the house. And there's, I'm not saying there's necessarily anything wrong with that, they obviously like what they're doing, but if the intent of the law is to have someone serve four terms and then move on and make way for someone new, it's fairly easy to circumvent that intent.

And, you know, we see it happening all the time.

And my other concern is that, well, my concern is that we're losing a tremendous amount of talent and institutional memory. And as a bureaucrat, I suppose I should say well, that's good, but because, you know, knowledge is power and most legislators have to ask someone about the issues that they have to deal with. And it used to be that you could ask a colleague that had been there for, you know, four or five terms before you and whose opinion and judgment you trusted. You can't, that's very hard to do now. So, you know, they have to rely on people who have been in the state government, they have to rely on lobbyists; they have to rely on a lot of different people who maybe they shouldn't be relying on. And it's too bad; I guess I just have to say that I think it's too bad. And it was all a backlash, you know, on the John Martin thing and I think it was just a huge overreaction.

AL: And then, there he is.

KS: And there he is, he's back. And he's been in the house and now he's in the senate. And, you know, he'll be there as long as he wants to be there because the people in his district love him, and they have good reason to love him. And, you know, John can be an arrogant pain in the neck, but John is also the person who went in there, and when he was elected speaker the lobbyists used to go on to the floor of the house and stand there beside a legislator and whisper in their ear and tell them how to vote. I mean, they were like, attached at the hip. And he's the person that kicked them all out of the house chamber and doesn't allow them in there when they're in session. And he's the one that imposed some kind of a dress code that, so that people came in in a suit and tie, and you can think that's good or not good, I mean, but, I mean he did a lot of good things for the legislature that people forget.

And yeah, maybe he did some things wrong, and maybe he, you can't be there for twenty years and not, you know, make some enemies. But what happened as a result of his staff problems was just an outrageous over reaction, and I don't think it was a good thing, I really don't, overall. Even though there were some people that I was delighted to get rid of.

AL: After your time with Vi Pease during college, did you continue to be politically active in Maine?

KS: Yeah, I did, and again, I was looking at this old resume that was sort of, was really a political resume. Let's see, and I had a whole list of candidates that I campaigned for. I don't have dates on these, but Pam Scarcelli when she ran for house district fifty four, maybe you remember that, and Mary Flint, she ran for the senate district four, and Jim Elias when he ran for senate district four, I worked for Bill Hathaway, and I worked for George Mitchell. I was the county coordinator when he ran for governor and worked for him when he ran for the Senate, I worked for Brennan, worked for Neil Rolde. I was a co-chair of Susan Farnsworth's house district ninety-one campaign when she won that. I worked for Tom Andrews, Bud Bustin.

AL: Can you go through, can you have that, you know, start at the beginning and just sort of give me your, what sticks out in your mind about those different campaigns that you worked on and how, you know, sort of compare and contrast how they were different?

KS: Well, let's see.

AL: I know that's a mouth full, but, you know, briefly.

KS: Yeah, I was just trying to remember how many of them won. I think more, well, half and half I guess, I don't know. Well, I remember when I worked on, worked for Pam Scarcelli, it was house district fifty four, very rural, very staunchly Maine and, you know, even if they weren't registered Republicans they were Republicans at heart. And of course Pam had come to the university with her husband who was the art teacher, and she was very, she had a degree in art as well, and a couple of small kids, and so she traipsed around the district with Rosa and Luigi in tow. And I'm sure, Pam is extremely bright, but I'm sure that, when she left a house in Dixfield or wherever it was that it was pretty clear that she was an "out-of-stater," and I don't even remember, I don't remember how well she did. Yeah, but she didn't win. But it was fun. I didn't do a lot of campaigning with her because I was in school at the time, too, but we had a lot of strategy sessions and a lot of planning sessions, and it was a pretty organized campaign. I wish I could remember who was running against her. Whoever it was won, I don't remember who it was.

AL: A Republican.

KS: Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah. And then when Mary Flint ran for the senate, again it was the same thing. And it's such a Republican area, and the, I remember I was so amazed when my husband and I moved to Hallowell and we were involved in Susan Farnsworth's campaign and it was like, my God, we were suddenly in this Democratic district, you know, with all of these, you know, people who felt like we did and that we could relate to and it was like, wow, there really are Democrats in the state of Maine, this is so cool, you know. And then when we moved back to Franklin County of course, we knew that, you know, we were, what we were going back to at that point. And it's not quite as Republican hide bound as it used to be, but it's still a pretty conservative area.

AL: Do you think it's because of the farming, the farming background? Because I always found it interesting that we had this very nice liberal arts college sitting smack in the middle of Franklin County, and that it still remains so conservative, surrounding it.

KS: It's true, it does. And like I said, I don't think it's anywhere near as bad. I mean, change happens slowly and when you're there all the time you don't notice it. And, you know, part of it is that you selectively select who you're going to, you know, hang out with, and associate with, so that sort of slants your perspective to some extent. And then we had a lot of, you know, the hippie, "back-to-the-land-ers" that came in and some who stayed and settled who have become very politically active. And then you've got little groups. I noticed, because I've been involved at the county level, well, since the seventies, and I went to a meeting last month because I'm the treasurer, county treasurer, and we met in the north dining hall at the university, and I'm going to say there must have been maybe fifty people there. It was amazing.

AL: That's what I was told, about fifty. A big turnout.

KS: And I didn't know most of them. I didn't, I'm going to say that I didn't know seventy five percent of them. And it's like, where did all these people come from? Well, they came out of the woodwork because they hate George Bush, I mean, it's not as if they're life long Democrats or, you know, that they adhere to the principles of the Democratic party, whatever those are, and you know, depending on who you talk to, they may be this or they may be that. But they came together out of a common, just despising this administration and they want to see them gone. But I would have not, I mean I would have expected the usual, you know, the usual suspects would be there and a few of them were, people that have been involved for years and years. But I looked around, I said, "My God, where did all these people come from and who the heck are they?" So, and do they actually live in Franklin County, and it's like, wow!

But, you know, my sense is that once the election is over, that they'll fade back to wherever they live or, you know, wherever they came out, and I would be very surprised to see a lot of them stay active. It takes, you know, either really loving a candidate or really hating a candidate to get people off their fannies to get them to meetings and to get them active and to get them to doing stuff. And all the interim stuff that, you know, sort of keeps the party slogging along and, the housekeeping stuff, which is important but it's not very sexy, it's not very exciting, and so that tends to revert back to the, you know, the same- old, same-old group that kind of just are there day after day doing the grunt work. But it still was kind of, it was still kind of, heartening that they were there at all, it really was. I was pleasantly surprised. And hopefully some of them will stay involved. I don't know, I don't know, but it's certainly a very, campaigning in Franklin County is certainly a very different experience than campaigning in Kennebec County, like day and night, just amazing.

AL: And who was the next person?

KS: Oh, let's see, Jim Elias, he ran for the senate district two. He was from Madison, and he lost. I think that was when Charlie Webster got elected to the senate, good old Charlie. Charlie and I have a love-hate relationship. Charlie is an extremely conservative Republican, and when, I don't even have her on here but when Chris Krauss ran I helped Chris, and I had been out of town on vacation or something and I came back and Charlie had done this really nasty promotional on KTJ, WKTJ, attacking Chris for taking all this out of state money, which was an absolute total lie because in fact Chris had been offered money by this guy from out of state who was spending a lot of money in the area and she turned it down.

So Charlie was attacking her for something that she hadn't done, and I got really angry and I went over to KTJ and slapped down my own money and I made another commercial and really ripped Charlie to pieces, and so we didn't talk for about two years after that. And then one day I was in the diner and he came, actually he came over and started talking and so, I mean, that was fine, after two years I'm over being mad. And so he said something to somebody about, "Karen was kind of ticked at me after Chris's election," and I said, well, that probably is one of the biggest understatements you ever made, Charlie, but yeah, you're right, I was a little more than ticked.

But Charlie is a marvelous campaigner and he, I asked him one day, I said, are you going to run

again and he said, “No,” and I said why not, and he said, “Because I love running but I hate serving.” And it's true, because it's two totally different types of personalities and good campaigners, I know this is supposed to be historical, but good campaigners and people who are, I call them sort of, oh, I forgot the term, but anyway people like our president who love to campaign, sensation seeking personalities, you know, they love to campaign, they're very spontaneous, they really love the crowds, they are able to make people feel like, you know, you've known them for years, you met them five minutes ago. And they really get tremendous energy from being with people and back slapping and all of that. But they don't necessarily make good leaders or good administrators or good legislators once they get elected because they really, and Charlie's a perfect example, they're really not interested in the kind of hard work that it takes to be a good legislator which is, you know

I've been a legis-, I've been a clerk for the Utilities Committee and I've also been a legislative liaison for this department and the amount, just the amount of reading that is involved to understand the issues that come in front of your committee, forget about all of the other issues that the other committees are dealing with, just the stuff that you need to understand to make a good vote before it leaves committee, it's just unbelievable, I mean it's just unbelievable, the stacks of material that come in and, you know, sitting there listening to all this testimony and trying to weed through it, figure out what's real and what's nonsense and, you know, what's slanted and what's not. It's hard work, it's very, it's hard work and you have to have a, you have to really have a love of details and reading and learning and doing all that hard work. Or you've got to depend on somebody else to tell you how to vote.

End of Side A

Side B

AL: We are now on Side B.

KS: So anyway, so Charlie was telling me the truth, he loves campaigning, he loves going into people's houses and pontificating and, you know, interacting and giving them, and I tell him this, I'm not telling you a thing I haven't told him, you know, giving them easy answers to complex questions. But when it comes to sitting down and doing the hard tedious work that's involved to understand the bill, or understand the fifteen bills that you're going to be listening to in the next three weeks, he's not, he doesn't enjoy that. So he was honest, he said I love running but I hate serving, and I'm afraid I might win. And I was afraid he might, too, so I didn't encourage him, needless to say.

But, and then you've got the other type of person who, sort of the knowledge seeking personality who is in my, John Kerry typifies as far as I'm concerned, who is kind of stilted and you know, not really good at being spontaneous, and you don't listen to him speak and feel like he's the guy next door, and he's very emotionally independent. And, you know, I mean I'm like that so I tend to understand that people drain your energy and you need to go off and go away and be alone to recharge, you know, you're not getting recharged from the crowds, so you can learn to give a good speech and you can learn to stand up at the convention and say the right thing, as long as it's scripted. But it's work, and it's work as opposed to being fun and it shows, it shows because we're so used to being entertained by people who are entertainers that we expect all of our

politicians to be entertainers also and if they're not a good entertainer then, you know, we say, well, we didn't, we can't really relate to this person.

Well, I don't care if I can relate to him or not. What I care about is that they have a vision and that they're willing to do the hard work that it takes to administer a state or a country or whatever it may be. But we're all, this is the TV generation so we have all these expectations and people who are great candidates are not necessarily great leaders. The only exception that I can think of recently who was an absolute, total, complete, master of both was Bill Clinton. He was a master campaigner and he was a master policy wonk, and he loved doing both. And that's very weird, it really is very unusual. It's almost like he had a, you have a split personality because the, I mean, people are different places along the line, but to have someone who is so exceptionally good at both of those things is very unusual and very strange. Which is, I think which is why the Republicans were scared to death of him, and really hated him, particularly the conservative right wing. But, and I was looking, you know, you were talking about different people, and George Mitchell was definitely a knowledge seeking personality when I first worked for him, he was very stiff, very formal.

AL: Was that in the seventies?

KS: When he ran for governor. Was very stiff, very formal, dark suits, tie, white shirts, and I remember saying to him, Why don't you like just, like, wear a golf sweater or something, you know, just loosen up. Well, he didn't and he couldn't and who was I to tell him how to dress, I mean I was, he probably thought I was a presumptuous little snot. But he just, you know, he was very formal and he was very stiff, and very brilliant. I mean, he's probably one of the most brilliant men I've ever met. And he's much better now, but he's learned, you know, he's learned how to do it. It didn't come naturally and I don't think it came easily, I think it came through sheer force of will. But left to his own devices he's still the knowledge seeking personality, he's still going to slip back into that, you know, he's never going to be the spontaneous, you know, he's not a backslapping, you know, have a beer with the boys kind of a guy, and he never will be and that's fine. And he managed to rise above the fact that he wasn't this glamorous media candidate, just because of his brilliance and sheer force of will that he had. But he was, definitely one of the smartest men I've ever known.

AL: Tell me about your campaigning for Beverly Bustin-Hatheway.

KS: Well, we were living down here at the time, and she was running against Sylvia Lund. And Sylvia was, I hate to dump on Sylvia because I, but basically there were a lot of really, well, they weren't bordering on lies, they were pretty much lies being spread around about Beverly by Sylvia's campaign. I don't know if it was Sylvia personally, but about her votes on different things and, I mean not personal stuff but, you know, her positions and her votes and stuff, and Sylvia was ahead in the polls even though Bev had been in the legislature for a long time. And we were working for Susan Farnsworth and Susan had no, I don't know if it was her second or third time that she ran, but she had, I think it was the second time, but she had no viable opposition, so we were meeting and talking and Susan said to Beverly, she said, You know, why don't you, Karen and Craig, why don't you take them and I'll, she said, "I'll give them to you, you know, I don't really need them, I'm not, I don't have a serious challenge and you're running

for your life and if they don't mind, I'd be perfectly happy if they would go over and help you.” And we said, Beverly said, “Thank you” and we said we would.

And I think, I honestly think that Beverly was a little intimidated by Sylvia. I mean, you know, they both grew up around here, and Sylvia comes from a lot of money and, you know, blue blood, right side of the tracks, and Beverly's upbringing was tough. And I think, you know, when you go to school and you're the poor kid they're the rich kid and they have all the advantages and all the money and all the power, and I honestly think that Beverly was feeling a little intimidated and really, she really didn't dare to attack Sylvia.

So we sat down one day and Craig and I and Darwin, her husband, and her and I don't know, a couple of other people I don't remember, and the polls were showing her losing. And we said, “Beverly, what is Sylvia saying, what is her campaign saying about you?” Well, they're saying this, and that's not true. Well, why isn't it true? Well, because this is what happened. And, okay, what else are they saying? Well, they're saying this and that's a damn lie because this is what really happened. And we went through this whole list of things and I said, and my husband said, “So, what you're telling us is that she's lying about you.” Well, yeah. He said, “Well then go tell people she's lying. Call her a liar, do it publicly, go out there and fight and say, ‘What Sylvia Lund is saying about me, or her campaign is saying about me, is a damn lie and I'm pissed’. And I'm out here to tell you the truth.” Well, she didn't know if she could do that, and I said, “If you don't do it, you're going to lose. And not only that, you're going to lose because people were telling things about you that aren't true, that you know aren't true, and you're going to kick yourself in the fanny forever.” So she thought about it overnight and she called the next day and she said, “You know what,” she said, “you're absolutely right.” She said, “I'm mad, and I'm going out there and kick ass.” And we said, “Go for it girl!” And she did. She did.

She went on the attack, and I mean big time, she went on the attack and she won. I mean, it turned around and her poll numbers started going up and she won. I don't remember what the final, but it wasn't close, it wasn't that close. And afterward, you know, we had a party afterward and she came over, she says, “Feels like you guys just saved me.” And we said, “No, we didn't, we just told you what you, we told you to do what you really knew you needed to do anyway. You just needed somebody to kick you in the fanny to get you to do it.” And I said, “You were great. I mean it worked, it was, and all you did was stand up for yourself and tell people that these half lies, you know, twisted stories, whatever it was, that they were hearing were not true so.” I said, “You have nothing to be ashamed of, absolutely nothing, and you did what you needed to do.” And she was just, I think that was probably, I don't know this and she's never told me this, but I'm guessing that that probably was one of the most satisfying races that she ever ran and won.

AL: Do you know what year that was?

KS: Oh, goodness, no, I have to stop and think. It was in the eighties but I don't remember. Because we moved to Hallowell in what, '84, yeah, it was in the mid to late eighties but I don't remember exactly which one it was. But it was great, it was great, and she was wonderful. I mean, Beverly's always been a fighter, but she just sort of lost her way there for a while and she just needed somebody to say, hey, they're lying about you, doesn't that make you mad? Well,

yes. Well, what are you going to do about it? Well, I'm going to fight back. Okay, good, good plan. But anyway, we had a good time with that one.

And Susan Farnsworth's campaign was a lot of fun, too. She had never, she had just moved to that district, she'd never run before, and Katie Perry was the Republican candidate, and Bill Cohen actually went around campaigning with Katie Perry so they figured she was a shoo-in. And, of course, Susan was gay, and I mean I assume, she didn't talk about it because she's a private person and she figures it's nobody's business, but I don't think it was a secret and I'm sure it was talked about. Not to us, obviously, as her campaign managers, but I'm sure it was a subject of some conversation and so everybody just assumed that, you know, Katie had it in the bag. And we worked, boy, we worked hard on that one, and so did she. And we won. And everybody was just, I remember we were at our house in Hallowell and people were calling in the results, you know, and Pittston and Chelsea came in fairly early and it was, I don't remember the exact numbers but at that point we realized we actually had a shot at it. And everybody trooped over to the Hallowell town hall and, you know, just waiting over there for the numbers and we finally realized that she pulled it out, and it was just like crazy, everybody was just shocked! Particularly the Republicans, they were in shock for a week, they just couldn't believe it! And it's just, it's a lot of fun to do that.

I mean, I like Katie Perry and we're on committees, I mean we're both involved in alumni association at University of Maine Farmington, and you know, Katie went to school with my dad and they were friends, and I like Katie and I didn't hold her, you know, anything against her personally. It was, but it was a campaign and we wanted that seat. And they didn't give us a prayer of getting it and we did. And it was like, it's a rush. It's really a rush when you do something like that. It's a lot more fun that campaigning for someone that you know that it's in the bag and that there's no serious competition and you just sort of go through the steps. But to go in as the underdog and then to pull it out, I mean, it's just, it's a rush, there's no greater feeling I don't think, and we had quite a party, we really did.

AL: Now to give you a contrast with that feeling, what was it like when you came to the end of the Mitchell campaign for governor, because Longley won. Did you guys have the feeling, or when did you have the feeling that, oh-oh, there's a problem here, things are not going very well.

KS: We started getting calls the morning, election day morning, from polling places, people that we had at polling places, saying, "My God, there's this turnout like we've never seen." People who never vote, you know, little old ladies in tennis shoes coming out of the woodwork that haven't voted in twenty years, and they're all showing up in droves. And we said, "Oh-oh, you know, this is a protest vote," because we had just, oh, what had, was that Watergate, what had just happened in Wa-, anyway, everyone was anti-government and anti-politician at that point.

And, of course, Longley was, you know, promoted himself as something other than, you know, the run-of-the-mill politician. He was a businessman and he was going to turn state government around and run it like a business. I hate that! I hate that expression! It is not a business. I mean, you can run it in a fiscally responsible manner but a business, running a business and running a state or a local government have very little in common, they are not the same, and

anyone who tells me that they're going to run government like a business, they've lost my vote. They don't have to say another word because I figure they're stupid. But anyway, we, so we got, we started getting these calls and we said, "We got trouble, we got trouble, these people are coming out to vote for Longley. This is an anti-politician, and anti-government vote," and that's exactly what it was. And it was, you know, it was pretty disheartening. But, I mean I never assumed that that would be the last we would see of George Mitchell.

AL: Did Ed Muskie campaign for George Mitchell that year?

KS: I believe he did. I don't remember seeing him specifically, but I mean they were close friends. Of course Mitchell had worked for him, and I'm sure he must have. I just don't recall a specific incident.

AL: Well, do you recall the first time you met Senator Muskie?

KS: I think the first, I think, the first, I mean I saw him many times speaking and that was funny because we would take bets on how long he was going to talk. Because he went on at some length, and he was a good speaker but, you know, if you brought him in to do a speech and it was only an hour you were like, whew, thank goodness, because sometimes they frequently went on longer than that. So we'd sit and take bets on how long the speech was going to be.

I went to Washington when I was in college as a National Student lobbyist with a couple of other people from the university, and we actually went and met Muskie and sat in his office and talked to him about, you know, the need for more student aid and things like that. And I don't remember, I mean, it's funny the impressions you come away with. I mean, he was just bigger than life and, you know, sort of imposing, and he was very nice, very pleasant, he listened to us. I remember, what I remember about it most was his office and how plush it was, and just full of memorabilia and mementos, you know. And I mean, I realized that he got a zillion people like us a day coming through that office saying we need this or we need that, and that he was listening politely and probably he would help us, because he was obviously an advocate of higher education, but that it really didn't matter much what we were saying. So I was checking out his office and I was really impressed with his office.

But then we went to see Bill Hathaway, it was his first term, and he took us to lunch in the Senate dining room and they weren't going to, and so we went there for lunch and then we went to the legislature, and you have to show a pass and stuff, and so he walked up and there's this young page-type-guy standing there guarding the door, and so he said to this guy, he said, "These people are with me." And the kid looked at him and says, "Well who are you?" And he said, "Well, I'm Senator Hathaway." "Oh, yes, Sir, I didn't recognize you, pardon me, Sir." You know, somebody else would have been insulted and embarrassed that he wasn't recognized, being as important as he obviously was, you know, especially in front of us. He just thought it was funny, he just laughed. He says, "Well, I guess I ought to come here more often," or made some crack or something, but it didn't bother him in the least. So

AL: And you said you campaigned for Bill Hathaway?

KS: I did, yeah, I did. I don't even remember in what capacity, I think I was just one of the ground troops.

AL: You didn't really get to know him?

KS: Not terribly well, though. Putting out signs and, you know, all that kind of stuff, and I wasn't in the inner circles by any stretch of the imagination. The first time I really got to spend any time with him was when we went down there as National Student lobbyists. And that was fun, he was great, he was very friendly, very down to earth, very easy to approach. And who else did we see? Oh, Peter Kyros was there, he was in, we went to visit him, and I can't remember who the other person was. I don't know. But anyway, but it was fun, it was fun.

AL: And is the logical jump to go to Joe Brennan then?

KS: I guess. Joe Brennan is a very private person, extremely private person, and very friendly and very pleasant but very hard to get to know. I think. Of course he and Vi were friends and they were close. But I always, my interactions with Brennan, he was always very charming but very formal, and I don't, I know that he relaxed and kicked back with his close friends but he didn't do it with most people. So I would have to say that whatever interactions that I had with him were, were friendly but somewhat formal. And I never, I certainly couldn't say that we were, that we ever became very friendly, although I liked Brennan and I, you know, I admired a lot of the things that he did and the things that he believed in and he was, you know, he was very much a fighter for the common person. But I, I don't know, I've been somewhat disappointed that he has taken so little part in state politics in the last few years because I think that he has a lot to offer in terms of, you know, mentoring candidates and -

AL: And just energizing.

KS: And I think it's, I don't know this, I mean he's obviously never told me this but I just have a sense that after that, his last defeat, that he was pretty bitter and I don't know if he's ever gotten over it. I hope he has. But at that point, you know, he pretty much dropped out of politics and he doesn't do much; every once in a while you'll see him someplace. And I think that's too bad, I really wish he would do more because he has, just, so much experience and so much to offer. And, you know, it's not as, I guess it's not as if he "owes" it to the party, I wouldn't say that. Maybe I would say that. I mean, they, you know, the party, whatever that is, or at least the people that were involved in the party during the years that he was involved, a lot of people put a lot of time and a lot of money into him, and I guess I think maybe, you know, he should return some of that so I am disappointed that we don't see more of him. But, hey, it's his life, he can do what he wants, right?

AL: You were interning I guess you'd call it with the state committee, with Vi Pease. During that period just following Muskie losing the nomination, that -

KS: Yeah, when did he -? I was there in the fall of '73.

AL: Yup, and he had lost the presidential nomination in it was probably the summer of '72.

KS: So a year, a little more than a year---earlier.

AL: Was there any remnants of that in the division between different groups of Democrats, was there any remnants of that left with the state committee that you sensed when you were there?

KS: No, no, not really. And maybe I was just not attuned to pick it up. I don't know, but no, I really didn't, I really didn't sense it.

AL: And let me ask the question this way, not in terms of Ed Muskie but in terms of the state committee and the members that you worked with, were they a very cohesive group or did you find that there were divisions of opinions and methods?

KS: Well, there were definitely divisions of opinion, but as I said earlier, you know, you could argue with someone until, you know, the cows came home and then go out and have a beer and still be friends. And Vi was a real force in bringing people together, not dividing people, because she didn't, I don't remember her ever saying, I mean there were people obviously that she liked better than others and there were, you know, people that annoyed her, but I don't remember Vi ever saying, you know, I just hate that person, I can't stand them and I don't want them in the party and I don't want to work with them and I don't want anything to do with them. That's just not the way she was, I mean she was inclusive and she would, you know, sometimes bite her tongue, you know, to find a way to work with somebody but she truly believed that it was, it took everybody regardless of their personal hang-ups or their personal feelings or differences of opinion, that it took everybody working together to make this thing work. And she was a master at getting people together, she really was. So I didn't, and she, I don't, she didn't do it by being a pushover because, I mean you didn't, you don't push Vi because she's push back, but she just had a way of getting people to work together and to be cooperative. And I didn't sense, I mean there were, I was trying to think of who was involved then. Well, of course, Severin was around, and Rod and Evie Scribner were very involved back then, and I've actually, I was trying to think of who -

AL: What were impressions of Severin?

KS: Sam Shapiro, Rodney Quinn, I was writing down some names the other day, Tony Buxton, Paul Chretien I already mentioned, they were all around a lot, so there was a group, you know, kind of an inner group that were involved and did a lot of stuff together. Oh, Severin? I like Severin much better now than I did then. Severin was pretty, he was pretty intimidating, and he still can be except that I'm older now and less easily intimidated. Severin is an incredibly bright man, and he is wonderful working in the background, I mean he can get things done, he can raise money, he has a tremendous amount of influence on the party and has for years and years and years. When he decided to run for office, did he run for governor? I guess, yeah.

AL: Yes, I think it was governor.

KS: Got clobbered. That's not his thing, I mean that's definitely not Severin.

AL: Not getting clobbered, you mean?

KS: No, not, being a candidate is not Severin's, is not Severin's thing. He's just the totally wrong personality to be out and be a candidate. But working in the background, you know, helping out, raising money, organizing, I mean he's done a lot for Democratic candidates in the state, probably much more than most people realize. At least, I mean I think individually, but collectively I think people would probably be astounded if you could ever go back and figure out how much money he's raised over the years for candidates. It's a lot, it's a lot. So I see Severin now and, you know, we're fine, we're fine. It just, it took a while to, he's very, you know, he's very brusque and he's very direct and you have to get used to him. But I like Severin and I think Severin's brought a lot to politics in the state; he definitely, definitely has done a lot for Democrats. He's probably done a lot for a few Republicans, too, but he's not talking about that and probably we'll never know, but mostly Democrats, mostly Democrats.

AL: Do you have a sense from all of your time being involved in Maine politics and working with a lot of people who went way back in Maine politics, do you have a sense of what they felt Muskie gave to the Maine Democratic Party?

KS: Oh, I mean, my sense is, I mean it's not a sense, I mean they'll tell you that they really consider Muskie the father of the Democratic party in Maine. I mean, there was no Democratic party to speak of before Muskie came along and started organizing. I mean, this was a Republican state, and he was the impetus for pretty much everything that's come since. And, you know, part of that probably would have happened anyway, just, you know, I mean geographically, you know, people move in from away and bring new ideas with them, but it certainly wouldn't have happened then, and it certainly wouldn't have happened with the speed that it did, and it certainly wouldn't have happened statewide. You know, he was, he's just a tremendously respected person. And I think he's respected by people other than just Democrats, you know, he did a lot of really good stuff for the state, a lot of environmental legislation, he was really a loved persona by people. And even though, you know, he lost, he didn't get to be president, I mean he had a tremendously distinguished career that certainly he had to be very proud of. And I've never, I mean other than joking about his longwindedness - and that was in fun and in humor - I don't remember anybody ever saying a bad word about Ed Muskie, I really don't, I really don't.

AL: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to add today before we end?

KS: I don't, nothing I can think of, I've now pretty much, when you called me and told me that this was an oral history I was thinking, history, I'm not old enough to give history, what in the heck is she talking about. But, you know, when I stop and think back, my God, you know, that was thirty some odd years ago and so much, there's been a lot of water under the bridge and you don't think about it, you know, while it's happening you don't even really think about it in a holistic way until somebody sits you down and says, you know, starts asking you questions. But it was, I mean I wouldn't have traded a minute of it for anything. It was a lot of hard work. I can't tell you how many political signs I've put up in my lifetime, it seems like millions. But I

just have made so many friendships and just met so many great people, some not so great, but you know, you pick out the ones that you want to have in your heart forever, and certainly Vi and Allen are two of the people that are in my heart forever. And Chris Hall, you know, I just love Chris. And we just made some really good friends over the years, and people that are, people who spend their life not talking about, you know, things and other people but talking about ideas and visions and problems and how to correct them and, you know, how to make everybody's life better. You know, that's the way I want to spend my time, is dealing with those kinds of things. And I have, and learned a lot along the way.

AL: Thank you very much.

KS: Oh, you're welcome.

End of Interview