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Wilfong, James oral history interview

Andrea L'Hommedieu

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Interview with James Wilfong by Andrea L’Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Wilfong, James

Interviewer

L’Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

August 11, 2003

Place

Stowe, Maine

ID Number

MOH 406

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Biographical Note

James “Jim” Wilfong was born on May 8, 1947 in South Weymouth, Massachusetts. As a child, the family moved to Stowe, Maine to farm. His parents were Finley and Ida Susan (Hosmer) Wilfong. After a one-room, eight-grade school, he skipped seventh through ninth grades and went to Fryeburg Academy. He attended the University of New Hampshire for one year, studying forestry, then joined the Army. He was elected to the Maine legislature in 1974. Intermittently working for the legislature and the Atomic Ski Company at the same time, he decided to devote himself to politics and the economy. As a Maine legislator, he fought hard for environmental issues surrounding the state. He would later work on Ed Muskie’s Senate campaign and also a number of other projects related to the Democratic Party. His political career took him to Washington, D.C. working for the Clinton Administration within the State Department. He was influential in the success of numerous bi-national commissions between the United States and countries such as Russia, and worked with the World Trade Organization.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: early childhood memories and family background; academics; military training; ski businesses and the global economy; stories of Maine politics; campaigning in Maine in the 1970s; Bill Cohen and campaign fundraiser; environmental issues; public

reaction to the Democratic Party and “clean up” laws; Senator Muskie’s temper; New Hampshire incident; Aida Alvarez and bi-national commissions; work in Russia during Kosovo; World Trade Organization in Seattle; Muskie and his final campaign; and reactions to Muskie and his “hometown”.

Indexed Names

Albright, Madeleine Korbel
Beliveau, Cynthia Murray
Beliveau, Severin
Bradley, Tom
Broder, David
Case, Jim
Churchill, Winston
Cianchette, Carl
Clifford, Clark
Clinton, Bill, 1946-
Cohen, William S.
Cory, Gayle
Day, John
Gates, Bill, 1955-
Hathaway, Bill
Hobbins, Barry
Hobbins, J. Clifford
Jacobs, Charlie
Kennedy, Edward Moore, 1932-
Kennedy, Robert F., 1925-1968
Kerry, John, 1943-
King, Angus
Longley, James, Sr.
Martin, John
McAleney, Mary
McCloskey, Pete
Merrill, Phil
Micoleau, Charlie
Mitchell, George J. (George John), 1933-
Mitchell, Libby
Mondale, Walter F., 1928-
Monks, Bob
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Muskie, Jane Gray
Nash, Bobby
Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994
Palmer, Linwood E.
Reagan, Ronald

Scarcelli, Pam
Smith, Margaret Chase, 1897-1995
Spencer, Dick
Stennis, John C. (John Cornelius), 1901-1995
Tierney, James
Trafton, Barbara McKnight
Wellstone, Paul
Wilfong, James

Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview with James Wilfong at his home in Stowe, Maine on August the 11th, the year 2003 around 10:00 AM, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Would you just start by giving me your full name and spelling it?

Jim Wilfong: My name is James Finley Wilfong, W-I-L-F-O-N-G.

AL: And where and when were you born?

JW: I was born in South Weymouth, Massachusetts in 1947.

AL: And the birth date?

JW: May 8th, 1947 to be exact.

AL: Did you grow up in that area?

JW: Only for a very short time. And then my father, my father was from Iowa, he met my mother in South Weymouth, Massachusetts at a USO dance, just before he went overseas. He was stationed at a naval airbase as part of the Marine Guard, and he went overseas for about three years, went to Guadalcanal and Pelau and a number of other places in the South Pacific, and then came back and married my mother who, all during the war, worked as "Rosie the Riveter" in the Quincy shipyard building ships. And I remember, she has a great statement that she was an art, she was in art school, in art college in Boston, and she dropped out of college to go to work in the shipyard because she didn't think she was doing enough for the war effort.

And so, anyway they came back, I'm the oldest of six kids, five boys and a girl, and we moved to Iowa when I was only about a year or a year and a half years old, and my brother Gary was born in Iowa. And then we moved, we stayed there, we were tenant farmers and we stayed there for a couple of years. We moved back to South Weymouth, my mother had been raised on a dairy farm and so she wanted to be on a farm, and so then we moved to Stowe, Maine and I grew up here. Went to a one room eight grade school with an old potbellied stove and outhouses and no running water. And books that came from the turn of the twentieth century, so that when I got married to my wife she would say, "The songs that you know are unbelievable!" I'd say, yeah, they're WWI songs, these were in our songbook. So effectively I was raised here in Stowe and

have lived here for almost fifty years now.

AL: And what were your parents' names?

JW: My father's name was Finley Wilfong, and my mother's name was Ida Susan Wilfong.

AL: And what was her maiden name?

JW: Hosmer, H-O-S-M-E-R, which is really, they were an interesting group because they came to New England in the 1630s and Abner Hosmer was the first person killed at Concord Bridge, he was one of our ancestors. And so they were involved in everything from the King Phillips War to the French and Indian War, to Revolution and so forth, so they, a long time here in New England.

AL: And how do you feel your education was in the one-room schoolhouse, do you think you got a good education? How did it set you up for college?

JW: Well, I had really, there were only about, there were nine grades. The kindergarten was not called kindergarten at that time, it was called sub-primary, that's the old term in a one-room schoolhouse for kindergarten. And so there really, the idea it was an eight grade school was not really true because it was a nine grade school, with the kindergarten. There were twenty-one or two kids in the Stowe school. And, but we had a great teacher, Gladys Littlefield and Mary Harmon were two of the teachers that I had, and they were really terrific. And Gladys Littlefield lived in Lovell, and Mary Harmon lives down in Brownfield. Actually they're both still alive; Gladys is in her late nineties. And so they were very good. It taught you to be very independent, I would say. There were, there was just another person in my class, Miriam Butters, who lives in Fryeburg Harbor now, Miriam Eastman is her name now, and we were the two kids in this particular grade level and so we did a lot of work together.

But we taught the younger kids. That was part of our responsibility was to go in what were known as the cloakrooms, the girls cloakroom and the boys cloakroom, and we would take younger kids in there and listen to them read or help them with their math or English composition or whatever, and so we were, you know, it's hard to sort of compare it to today's education in many ways. I mean, if we got done our work early we could go fishing, there was a river in back of the schoolhouse, which of course they'd never let you do today for safety reasons more than anything, but that was commonplace. And I remember on May Day we would hang a May basket on the teacher, and then we'd spend the entire day running and chasing one another through the fields and out through the woods. You know, it was a totally different type of an atmosphere.

But as a young person I would, I got paid two dollars a week to start the fire in the school every morning and get up and walk a mile and a half to the school and start the fire, so I had a lot of, you know, kids had more responsibilities than they, I think than they do today, a lot more responsibility at a very young age. And I think that the greatest thing that came out of the Stowe and Chatham, New Hampshire which is also where I went to a one-room school, that the greatest thing that came out of that was probably the, it taught me to be resourceful and independent and

to be self motivated. And I think that's probably been the most important thing.

AL: So then as you grew up, you went to college?

JW: I went to Fryeburg Academy which is a local high school, and Fryeburg Academy is an academy that was started in 1792. And in those days they, I lived, we moved to a farm just up the road that was literally split by the state line, so the front part of our house was in New Hampshire and the back part of our house was in Maine. And all of our, almost all of our fields were in Maine. But my father and mother's bedroom was in New Hampshire, so we were New Hampshire residents as a result of that. I know, it's really sort of funny.

AL: And for tax purposes?

JW: Yeah, well tax purposes, they just, the two groups of selectmen would get together and then agree on a valuation for the whole property and then agree on just the percentage of the property that was in Maine and New Hampshire, and so we got two tax bills but it wasn't being overtaxed, that was fine. And it was common, because all the way up through this valley where we lived, the farms were all split by the state line. For some unexplainable reason people back in the mid nineteenth century decided to build right on the state line. I don't understand it, but they did.

And so at that time they didn't pay bus transportation, and there was, and this is probably one of the, you know, my dad was a trade labor union guy, so my mother was the farmer but my dad was a trade labor union guy, and my great grandfather on my dad's side's name was Andrew Jackson Wilfong and so, they were Democrats. There's probably no disputing that, but it's probably the reason that I became a Democrat because there was a group that, in town, that were hoping that kids who didn't have very much money and couldn't afford the bus transportation wouldn't go to high school and then they would save on the tuition to Fryeburg Academy.

So I lived seventeen miles from Fryeburg Academy and as a thirteen-year-old I had, I got a double promotion from the seventh to the ninth grade, and so I started school as the youngest member of the class of '64. And as a thirteen year old I had to figure out how to get to Fryeburg Academy every day, seventeen miles each way, which was very daunting for four years. We had, my neighbor Carl Perry, who was my age, we both worked together getting there. So anyway, we were successful and we got there and back. So I went to Fryeburg Academy, graduated in '64, I went to the University of New Hampshire for a year studying forestry and decided, well maybe that wasn't what I wanted to do. So at that point, as I tell people, Bill Gates and I have one thing in common and it's not the billion dollars, it's that we're both college drop outs.

And I wound up going into the Marine Corps and then into the Army through an interservice transfer to fly helicopters, because I had passed all my flight exams in the Marine Corps but you had to have two years of college education in order to go to jet pilot school, and so I didn't have that. But the Army, if you were nineteen, and you, you were nineteen and could pass the exams; you could go to flight school. So anyways, that's what I wound up doing. But I apprenticed as an engineer and wound up being a civil engineer, I apprenticed for a guy who was a graduate of

Cornell, and I wound up, he had two engineering crews and he trained me to take over the third engineering crew. And I did a lot of construction work, that type of thing.

And then I, because in the winter time I would work on the ski patrol in New Hampshire, which is just out that way a short distance, I really got involved in skiing, and through a fluke wound up becoming a ski representative for a major French company and some major U.S. companies, and I wound up in business covering a territory that was New York City all the way down to Florida and out to Memphis. And I liked it, and I found I was good at it, and I really, really liked it a lot. So I did that until I was elected to the legislature in 1974.

AL: What were your basic job responsibilities with that?

JW: My job responsibilities were to solicit business from ski shops and sporting goods stores who sold ski equipment, and to promote the product at the local levels through ski area promotions and those types of things, but to build a market share in all of those different markets where there was ski business. And so I quickly become pretty good at that, and I didn't, there was no sort of road map so it took that self reliance that, it's the sort of thing, well, I don't know much about this but I can figure it out. And that's been kind of how I've been able to sort of find my way in the world, has been to not sort of say, well, I haven't really been trained for that so I really don't know if I can do that, but to sort of look at it and say, hmmm, I think I might be able to do that.

And so that's how I've gone about things is sort of thinking, well, if I work hard at this and I think about it and I'm smart about it, then I can figure out how to do it, whether it was sort of starting to be an engineer or learning the ski business. So I learned it from the grass roots, and it was as a result of that that when I left the Maine legislature that a person I had met who is the general manager of the French company here in the United States asked me to become a partner in setting up Atomic Ski with him. And so I did. I don't know how you want to go about, do you want me to talk about my legislative or do you want to talk about the other stuff in this and then go back to the political.

AL: Sure, yes, do it that way.**JW:** Do you want to do that, is that okay? So we started Atomic Ski, and it started actually in the year before I was out of the legislature in the last six months of 1977, and I just had kind of a little hand in figuring it out because I was pretty sure I was going to join the company in 1978 when I was done with my legislative responsibilities and I wouldn't run for reelection. And so, we started the company with zero market share, and capitalized the company and about fifty thousand dollars, and we built it over a period of time to second place market share. And my responsibility was being the director of marketing and the director of promotions and advertising and so forth. And so I was responsible not only for the sales but for all of the marketing and the advertising in the U.S. Ski Team promotion. And so we had a big program with the U.S. Ski Team, as we did all around the world. And so we hired, we were the, you know, I was the person who actually signed Bill Johnson who won the gold medal at Sarajevo, and we had a big professional pro team that won four or five pro championships in a row. And so we built this to second place market share, and I did that until 1992.

I at one point for a year was vice president of a venture capital company from Boston, and I did a

lot of really interesting work, I was the deal maker for them. They have two vice presidents, and a woman by the name of Bernice Braden was the other vice president and she was the Harvard M.B.A. who had managed Harvard's endowments and so forth, and I was the deal maker. And so she would figure out what range I could negotiate in and then I would negotiate deals, and then I would take them down to Wall Street and sell them to bigger investment banking houses like L.F. Rothschild or A.G. Becker or something like that.

And then I, when I left, really left the ski business, the U.S. part of it, during that time I was, I chaired for Atomic Ski the international marketing and product development committee and so, for thirteen out of the fourteen years that I worked with them, and so I got to know people in about thirty different countries. And so I started a business that represented small American companies that wanted to find distribution overseas and set up their marketing for them, found the right distribution.

And Velonski's, which was a company that was started by Jean Claude Kiley and Hank (*name*), of course two famous Olympians and pro skiers, and a guy named Mike Macula who was chairman of the board of Apple and one of the founders of Apple. And so he hired me not only to do, to be an advisor to the board of directors and to him, because he, you know, he was worth several billion dollars, this was just one of his investments, but he also hired me to set them up internationally. And I did that for three years, and this was kind of a reinvention period for myself and during that period, I authored a book that was published in 1997 by Career Press called Taking Your Business Global, and it was a small business guide to international trade. And that was a really great thing, because it organized my thinking about international trade.

And it was during this whole period that I became chair of the SBA Advisory Council for the state of Maine, I did that for five years, and it was during a little earlier period that I was on the Commission for Maine's Future. There have been two such commissions; I was on the second Commission for Maine's Future where we were looking at what Maine might look twenty years later. And I was on the kind of out there, what types of future things should we be looking at, and the international side of that. And so I really began to change my focus a lot from U.S. to a global perspective. And also I began to think about how communities are developed and what is it that really propels communities forward successfully. And one of the things that obviously is the foundation of any successful community development is strong economic development, and before you can have economic development you really need to have entrepreneurial thinking and education.

And I really understood how small businesses work, and so, I began to work with the University of Southern Maine, I helped them create a center for, the Center for Entrepreneurship which has a state-wide mandate because I was asked by Angus King to put together the small business development plan for his administration, which I did as a volunteer. And so I really began to see how all that worked, and I began to work with what I call a model that I've developed now, that I call the integrated economic opportunity model which works with entrepreneurial thinking and entrepreneurial education as the first step in community development. And I'm working with, you know, with a Cabinet member for the president of Brazil at the moment on some of these ideas. So anyway, as a result of that I developed a relationship with the Kaufman Foundation, which is a two billion dollar foundation from Missouri that's committed to entrepreneurial

development. And when I left the Clinton administration I wound up becoming an entrepreneur in residence with them, and I still am an entrepreneur in residence.

But when I left the Clinton administration, I go back to the political side of this, I became, I did three things: one, I began to do work for the Brazilian government under president Cardozza, and two, the working with the Kaufman Foundation and setting up national programs for them to promote entrepreneurship, and then thirdly and importantly, I became senior vice president for an e-commerce company, a dot com called e-Scout which is now known as Perfect Commerce because of the merger, and I started with them when they were, they had about a hundred and fifty million dollars going through their application service provider, an ASP, and now it's going to be this year about four billion dollars, so I've seen this tremendous growth and I've had a chance to look into what the future, you know, what will happen in the future in terms of commerce, global commerce, and I've been doing that for over two and a half years, so that's been pretty interesting. So those are the types of things that I've been working with, you know, kind of outside the realm of politics. I'm sorry if I went on too much.

AL: No, that's wonderful, that really gives me a great idea of your career and the focus you've taken with it. Now let's jump back to '74 and talk about your initiation into Maine politics.**JW:**

Yeah, well actually it might be interesting to jump back to '72 when I was still a, even though I grew up half in, half out of Maine and New Hampshire, I was a New Hampshire resident in 1972. And I was in North Conway, New Hampshire. There was a guy running on the Republican side for president against Richard Nixon, and quite frankly, anybody who would run against Richard Nixon had my immediate support. His name was Paul [Norton] McCloskey [Jr.], and Paul McCloskey was a former Marine, so I was sort of interested in him. He was a Congressman who was running against Nixon. And Paul Newman came to town with Pete McCloskey promoting his candidacy, and so I went to this function that they had for him just to sort of see what he was like. I liked him, I thought he was a good guy, but you know, I was a Democrat but I still liked him.

And so I was talking to him and he said, "Do you live in this area, in this district before the New Hampshire house?" And I said, yes, I do. And he said, "Well, you know, representative Dinelda Howard, I gave a speech before the New Hampshire legislature two days ago," and she was the legislator who was representing this area and Pete McCloskey was against the, he was a WWII and Korean War veteran, and was against the war and she came up to him afterwards and she said to him, "Representative McCloskey, what would you have us do about . . ." Excuse me, I'm getting ahead of myself. She started giving him a real tongue lashing about the, his position on the Vietnam War and he finally, after listening to her for quite some time said, "Representative Howard, what would you have us do about the situation in Vietnam?" And she took her finger and poked him on the chest and she said, "I'd kill those yellow bastards," quote, unquote. So he said, "What are you doing?" And I said, "Well, what do you mean? I'm in business, I'm a ski rep and I'm selling . . ." He said, "Well, you know, somebody ought to run against her."

So I thought, well, maybe he's right, so I decided to run for the New Hampshire legislature on the spur of the moment, one of those quick things. But at that time it had to be a write-in because it was too late and so I had to run a write-in campaign, and in a year, with Meldren

Thompson on the head of the New Hampshire side running for reelection for governor, and Richard Nixon running at the top of the ticket with a straight party box at the top, I ran. But, I can't remember exactly, but it seems to me that I lost by about five percentage points, which was a huge deal, you know, and it scared the life out Dinelda Howard. And, you know, and I never really thought that I could run a campaign where I could win, but that said something to me, you know. And I had been living kind of part time with my grandparents who lived here in Stowe, their house was fully in Stowe, and I would sort of shuttle back and forth. And then I had a great spot on Cold River and I lived in a tent part of the time when I would be off the road; that was in Maine and so forth.

So at any rate, I decided to, and I bought in 1973 this piece of land that we sit, the house sits on. And so I became a Maine resident. But the word had been around that I was interested in politics all of a sudden, you know, because they, the people on the Maine side of this border had seen what I had done on the Chatham-New Hampshire-Conway-Bartlett-Jackson side. They, I was at a Ski Industry America convention; it was our annual trade show in Las Vegas, Nevada. And I, my grandparents, I called in to see how they were every couple of days, and they said Ed Mills, who was an old time Democrat in Fryeburg, Maine, and a big character, and a big Ed Muskie supporter, I mean he used to hold pancakes breakfasts, he was involved in Ed Muskie's ascent in Maine politics to the governorship and would hold pancake breakfasts for him in Fryeburg and was really just a big time character.

And he had called my grandparents and said, would you tell Jim that we, you know, we don't have a candidate to run here in the Fryeburg area, southwestern Oxford county - - there were nine towns involved from Waterford, Waterford, Lovell, Sweden, Stowe, Fryeburg, Brownfield, Denmark, Hiram, Porter - - and we would really be interested if he would be interested in running. So my grandparents said, "Gee, but you would, you know, they would have to do some things to get this done and signed, but they'll do it, they'll collect the signatures necessary and get it in before the first of April."

So I thought about it and I thought about it, and I thought well, all right, I'll do it. And so Ed Mills and Leslie Russell, she was a friend of mine, and they ran around and they got the signatures and they got it taken care of and they got it submitted literally hours before the end of the deadline to the secretary of state's office. And so I became a candidate. And I remember running into a guy by the name of Phil Andrews, who was, who had been on the Republican state committee, and you have to remember Fryeburg was really a powerful area politically in the 19th century, and Fryeburg supplied speakers of the house, they supplied a governor, they supplied presidents of the senate, they were, you know, members of Congress, they were really a powerful place. And John Weston was a powerful Republican, he chaired the Republican state committee and he was from Fryeburg. Phil Andrews was a protégé of his and a big farmer.

And so Phil Andrews saw me, and he had originally sold our original house to us here in Stowe, to my parents, for a thousand dollars when we moved here. And it had porcupines living in it. And so I'm sure that he was really cursing himself for having made that mistake of, now that I was up and running as a Democrat. And so he said, "Jim, you know, you should have come to us. We would have run you if you had run as a Republican." And I thought, boy, you're not kidding, they'd have run me all right! And then he followed it up by saying, "If you win by one

vote it will be a landslide, this I promise you.” So I thought, oh, really? So all of a sudden, you know, this wasn't just sort of something I was mildly interested in.

And of course Watergate was going on, and this became something that I was intensely interested in. I really wasn't spurred on by the Vietnam War as much as other people in my generation, I wouldn't say. I was confused a little bit by it, you know, so it didn't really, it really wasn't a motivator for me to become engaged politically. I am a person who is engaged because of economic fairness, really, for the average person, that they are treated fairly. And I didn't see Richard Nixon doing any of that. And then, when I saw what he was up to, you know, it really was infuriating. And I would say that also when I was, I was twenty one years of age in 1968, and '68 was a year that it seemed like the whole place was coming apart. And Bobby Kennedy, who I was a supporter of, had been assassinated, and Martin Luther had been assassinated, you had the TET Offensive going on and it looked like, you know, it looked disastrous for the U.S. side.

You had the riots going on, the race riots that were going on in the country, and there were Weathermen and, you know, all of these different things that were splitting it up and it just seemed to me like the country was coming unglued. And I was horrified by it because I had been raised here; very provincial setting here in western Maine, with a third of the people that we even have today it was very isolated. My mother would go to Fryeburg once every three weeks, I mean not three times a day but once every three weeks.

And so, to me this looked very horrifying, and that was sort of the beginning of my being politicized. And so by the time we got to 1974 and Phil Andrews said that to me, I was becoming very politicized. And of course I was interested in Ed Muskie's campaign in '72 and I, you know, I thought, his run for the presidency in '72, and I was very interested in what he had been doing in the state and there was kind of this feeling that the Democratic party was not the majority party but there was a lot of energy around it, although there had never been in the history of the state a Democrat elected to the Fryeburg area. And so I knew that this was sort of an uphill task, but I knew from my experience just over on the other side of the border where it was similar in terms of Republican enrollment, and maybe a little heavier over there, although it's hard to discern, I thought, that I had done reasonably well. And I thought, gosh, if I can do that maybe I can do this. And so I worked up a plan in my, I'd never been involved really other than these couple of little brief soirees, really involved in politics that much, and I worked out a plan.

Fryeburg was the 800-pound gorilla. You really had to do well in Fryeburg or you stood no chance. I was running against a nice guy, by the name of Charlie Hapworth, and he owned a Main Street business and his wife was the principal of the Fryeburg school system. Thelma Hapworth, and they were nice folks. And, but it was like an entitlement. In Fryeburg they just handed it around. It's your turn now to be in the legislature, and if the powers to be said it's your turn to be in the legislature it was a fait accompli. And what I didn't really realize, was that not only had no Democrats been elected, people outside of Fryeburg, if the Fryeburg folks didn't anoint someone, the Republicans, then they weren't elected. So there was a growing resentment out in the other towns that Fryeburg always kept it for themselves, and for many years they would go down and say to somebody in Denmark, it's your turn, we'll support you, if they were

the right people. But they had kind of hogged it, and they didn't realize this. And I began to pick up this drumbeat among Republicans as I was out campaigning.

And I was one of those first groups of Democrats that, really, it never had happened before 1974 and I'm not really sure how it became so widespread because we didn't know one another, we didn't talk to one another. But I began to go door to door to door, because I had learned if I did that over in New Hampshire, and I had to hand them something so that they could see my name. And I decided I wouldn't let Fryeburg know what I was up to until it was too late. So I went in all the little surrounding towns going door to door to door. And I would run, in some places you had to drive, obviously, it's very rural. But if I went into a little village section I would run from door to door, that was one of the things. And people would say, "You see that kid? He's, I was twenty-seven, do you see that kid, he's running everywhere, every time we see him he's running." Of course, I wasn't running everywhere, I was just running in the villages but they thought I was running everywhere. And my campaign slogan was "get involved with Wilfong," which was meant, "get involved in politics, get back into it, take charge of what you are doing." And I remember knocking on this door and there's this very sultry thirty-five year old woman who came to the door and she said, "Just what does it take to get involved with Wilfong?" I went ohhhhhh.

I mean, that was one of the first times, I'm still sort of tongue tied by it, but that was one of the first times I didn't know what to say. So at any rate, that was kind of the slogan. And Leslie Russell and her daughters would make, and her husband was a good friend of mine, and they would make these beautiful posters that they would draw and color on, and I would put these posters up that were hand made by she and her kids. And they had, I remember one of them, it had some racial overtones but it's not meant that way, but one of them was a big basket of laundry and it said, you know, "Keep it clean with Willy Fong," because of my last name. So there would be a poster like that up, you know, that the kids had drawn, this basket. And so we had all kinds of different posters, you know, get involved with Wilfong and so forth. And I think I spent, I don't know, a hundred and fifty bucks maybe, you know, of my own money.

And nobody believed that I could get elected except for a very, very small few who were just supporting me. But then came the first of October and I showed up in Fryeburg, and I had been out there, and I don't know if anybody had, you know, maybe there had been some calling and saying, "Hey, we've seen this kid out here campaigning," but it didn't bother them. And Thelma and Charlie Hapworth had already rented their apartment down in Augusta.

AL: Pretty confident, huh?

JW: Pretty confident. And they had rented their apartment, but then I started through the whole month of October campaigning absolutely furiously in Fryeburg. But meanwhile, in September, I had to go out and do my ski representative work, so I went out in September but then I, for the whole month of October I was going like crazy. And I literally was running everywhere. And all of a sudden, more people started to show up and help me. And a guy named Jim Pittman who was, is my age but he was a year behind me in school, he showed up to help. And I never will forget, he said, "You know, Jim, you've been going to all these houses all over in, you know, in little subdivisions that they have and so forth, but you need to go to other

places that will turn out the vote for you.” And I said, really? And he said, “Yes, and I will take you.” I said, okay.

And he was a big character, this guy, really, you have to really sort of know him. He was a really old Mainer, he was a Republican, his parents were Republicans, but he was an old Mainer who was my age, young, twenty-seven at the time. And so he showed and picked me, he said, “I’ll pick you up,” and he took me to places that were sort of, I mean they were really the dark side of poverty in the mid seventies, with a case of beer in his trunk. I know this is probably not what we need on this tape, but anyway it’s the truth. And there would be a case of beer in the trunk and he would say to them, I’m coming back to pick you up on Election Day and I need you to really vote for Jim Wilfong.

And so it began to be played out, when they found out that I was against the powers to be, and you have to understand the powers to be had really, for a lot of people, ground them up in this whole process, you know, had taken, bought their farms for taxes, had, if you were, you know, you weren’t from the right family they used to have a little kangaroo court in Fryeburg that would, you know, that would, from the stories I was told by people from this campaign, you know, if you were from the right family and you sped through town there was no, nothing that happened. But if you were from a different family and you sped through town, it was a fine, a big one. So this pent up kind of anger and frustration began to surface, which was very interesting because I, you know, I really hadn’t thought about all of these different things, these factors, the disgust with what happened in Washington with Watergate.

And then, in the month of October a very unusual thing happened. And I don’t really fully understand to this day why it happened, but Bill Cohen’s office contacted me and they wanted to, they contacted me through a guy by the name of Clifford Hobbins who was a Democrat, and they said, “We understand that you like Congressman Cohen.” Because I did, I liked him because he was the first Republican to vote on the Judiciary Committee to impeach Nixon. And I mean everybody in Maine was really sort of, they were disgusted by what was going on, they were proud of the fact that Bill Cohen had stood up and said I’m going to vote to impeach, because that’s what everybody in Maine thought ought to happen. I mean, except for the really dyed in the wool. And so I said, yes, and they said, “Well, we would be willing to come to a coffee if you organized one in Fryeburg.”

I was shocked, because I thought what’s in it for Bill, I mean what is in it for Bill Cohen, I don’t understand what’s in it for him. This is heavily Republican, it’s not like it’s marginal, and, you know, Jim Wilfong. So anyway, we said, gladly. Mark Gartley was running as the Democrat, had no chance, but you know, personally I wasn’t going to vote for him, I was going to vote for Bill Cohen, I thought he needed to be supported for what he did. So we said, yeah, that would be great. And he came to a little FHA ranch house in Fryeburg, flew in, I went and picked him up at the airport, flew in, did this thing, we had a lot of folks there, and this was explosive in many different ways because the Republicans went absolutely crazy on Bill Cohen. And never, I mean never liked him from that day on. It was amazing. But all of the real partisan Republicans went crazy. They had asked him, I was told by a partisan Republican, to come to a fund raiser with them that they were going to do for him three different times, and he didn’t come, and that year, and yet he came to this coffee for me.

AL: For a Democrat!

JW: For a Democrat. And, I mean it was sort of amazing. And so on election night I got a phone call from Cohen's staff asking how I had done, and I had won, and I won by eighty seven, I think it was eighty-seven votes. And they, I could hear them saying, "He won by eighty-seven votes," and there was this big cheer going on with Cohen's people. I never have gotten it, you know.

AL: You've never gotten the full story?

JW: I never have gotten the full story; I still don't know to this day why that happened. But it did, and I am absolutely sure that Bill Cohen coming and doing that for me was the reason I got the eighty-seven votes that I needed. I won only three towns out of the nine: Fryeburg two to one, which was the big Republican; Stowe I got all but five votes, out of a hundred and two votes I got all but five votes; and the second time I ran I got all but five votes and, I mean, don't ask me; and I won Brownfield. And then the second time that I ran, I won all the towns. And I won them all by a healthy margin; I won two to one and so forth. But that first one was really tough. And I have, are you running out of tape?

AL: Yeah, why don't I stop and flip over.

End of Side A, Tape One of Two
Side B, Tape One of Two

AL: We are now on Side B.

JW: Okay, so we're back out at the Fryeburg election. One of the things that I did was, I thought if I'm going to win this, when somebody tells me they're going to vote for me I have to write down absolutely every single name. Not if they tell me they might vote for me, but if they say, "Jim, I'm going to vote for you." So come Election Day I had more than five hundred names of people who absolutely told me they would vote for me. So my job was to turn out all of those people, and I had a group of people made up of Democrats and Republicans and independents who said they were going to vote for me, and so we turned them all out. And we had a poll watcher and we counted the votes, and there were really interesting things that took place at the polling place on that day. A friend of mine who was a Republican, heard a very prominent Republican say, It was pouring rain in November of 1974, and I stood outside in the pouring rain, not asking people to vote for me, just shaking their hands and saying 'hi, I'm Jim Wilfong'. And I was drenched.

But the word began to get around, you know, that there was a chance that I could win. And so they, there was a record turnout. It seems to me, and you know, I'd have to check it, but there were more than eighty five percent of the registered voters in the district that turned out to vote, which is a huge turnout. And so this person was overheard saying to another Republican, he was observing the people who were standing in line to vote and he said, "I've never seen such trash in all my life." It just was really, you know, the poor people were turning out to vote as well as,

people who never -

AL: That's amazing.

JW: And they were, it's amazing. And they were registering right there at the polls when they went. And they would see me outside in the rain and, (*pauses*), it's emotional.

AL: The one thing I wanted to ask you about was the friend who helped you.

JW: Yes, Jimmy Pittman?

AL: I mean, he had a lot to do with motivating that group of people initially?

JW: He had, with a portion of them. But that word began to get out, and they were such strong supporters and it was so touching for me, that they would come.

AL: When did you feel like, what point during that campaign did you really feel like, hey, I -

JW: The last two weeks.

AL: The last two weeks?

JW: Yes, there were two things that I noticed: one was that I felt momentum in my own candidacy; the other was that I knew George Mitchell might lose the run for governor, that Jim Longley was really coming on strong. That people would say to me, "I'm going to vote for Jim Longley." It was really interesting. But in the last two weeks I began to notice that there was this kind of momentum, that the guy who was the police officer, the only police officer Fryeburg had, Freddie Gould who was a Republican as well, would call me over and say, "Jim, there are a lot of people who are going to vote for you," he said, "I'm hearing it every day." And he was a supporter of mine. There was this, just this revolution that was kind of going on under the surface. So I won by eighty seven votes, and it was, I have to say it was one of, outside of my wedding day, it was one of the most thrilling days that, or the birth of my children, the most thrilling day I've ever had in my life.

And I went home and I went to bed at my grandparents' house, and about maybe two o'clock in the morning I got a phone, the phone rang and my grandmother answered the phone and I heard her say, "Jimmy, it's for you," and - - my grandparents were great old Yankee New Englanders - - and I said, what? And so anyway, I took the phone downstairs and it was the town clerk of Fryeburg who was an older gentleman and a Republican gentleman and a nice gentleman, and he said, "I just want you to know that I won't tell you who they are but a group of three people just came and they wanted the keys to the safe where the ballot box is stored." And I said, what? And he said, "Yes." I said, you're kidding. He said, "No, I'm not kidding, but I wanted you to know this, and I refused to give them the keys and they said, quote, you know, according to this gent, they said, we've always had the right to have the keys to get in the safe whenever we wanted." And he said, "I told them that ballot box has been sealed and it will not be opened unless there is an officer of the secretary of state's office present, and that's the way it is." And

they said, "Well, we know where to get a key, and they climbed into their cars."

And he, he was all in his pajamas, I mean he was probably a man in his late sixties or early seventies or something, and maybe it's just my mind seeing him as that old, but anyway, and he said to his wife as he put on his bathrobe, he said, "I'm not letting them steal that election from that kid." And he went out, he lived in the village and the selectmen's office was just around the corner really from his house. He got in his car, he drove over there, went in the, opened up the office, opened up the safe, took the ballot box, put it in his car, and drove back home and pulled into his yard, he said, just as he saw the lights pull into the selectmen's office. And he took the ballot box in and he put it in his bedroom closet, and he said, "This is where this ballot box is and it's going to stay. And I have called you to tell you this so that you will know that maybe they're trying to do this in other towns, and so you need to know about this. But this ballot box is safe."

I was astounded, quite frankly, you know, it was astounding. I didn't know, you know, and I didn't know what to say. And I thought, well, I'm not going to say anything because maybe what he's done, you know, the right thing wasn't the, wasn't a right, you know, the legal thing, and so I just, I mean there were only three or four people I've ever told that story to, but that's a true story. And so, but it wasn't over at that point because my parents owned, they still lived half in, half out of Maine, and because I was an unmarried twenty seven year old who owned a piece of property and was cutting logs, this house that were in, I cut the logs for this house on this property, they thought I still should, I shouldn't be a Maine resident, that I should be a New Hampshire resident because that's where my parents were.

And so they were going to sue to prevent me from taking the seat as a legislator, which was not successful and John Martin, who was reelected as the new speaker of the house because we swooped in with a lot of young Democrats, and he said, "Well that isn't going to happen." But Linwood Palmer, who was the floor leader for the Republicans and later a candidate, a Republican candidate for governor against Joe Brennan, also would not go along with it, and so they were kind of thwarted. And the Democrats then, you know, appointed Severin, the state committee appointed Severin Beliveau to be my attorney, and so they were, that wasn't going to happen. But they tried to make it happen. And that story got out, and then that infuriated a whole nother [*sic*] group of people who hadn't even voted for me. And so it was very interesting.

Shortly after I was elected, I went to the Maine legislature, we had the organization meetings that took place in December, and we elected John Martin and the floor leaders and all of the Constitutional officers and it was there I for the first time laid eyes on Valerie Cayton [Wilfong], who was at that time nineteen, soon to be twenty, and she was the first woman page in the Maine legislature and then became the first woman sergeant at arms. She was going to be here today but unfortunately something came up and she had to go off with my son, but at any rate, I didn't know at that time but six months later we'd be married, on July 4th, 1977, 1975.

And at any rate, we organized the Maine legislature and then in January, before I was sworn in, no, maybe just after I was sworn in, was really the first time I got a phone call from Ed Muskie, from Ed Muskie's staff, and it seems to me it was probably Gayle Cory who was his scheduler. She is a very nice person. And they said "Senator Muskie would like to help you, and if there is

something that he can do to help you he is more than willing.” And I said, well, what if we had some sort of a public meeting in Fryeburg, and so they said, “Yes, we'd be glad to have him come.” So Senator Muskie came, we had dinner over in Bridgton, he stayed over in Bridgton in a motel there, and we had dinner and then we went, we had an early dinner, and then we had this meeting at like seven o'clock at the Fryeburg Academy gym, and it was one of the biggest political meetings to ever take, I mean non Republican meeting perhaps, to ever take place in Fryeburg. And there were like two hundred, two hundred and fifty people showed up for this meeting, it was a huge turnout.

And so I, you know, and I had some things to talk about and Senator Muskie talked about federal issues and so forth, and it was really great and I liked, I really, this was a real, this was really a high point because I thought, wow, you know, here I am, I'm just this twenty seven year old kid who really doesn't know much about what's going on and, wow, Senator Muskie is here helping me out, this is great. In August of that year, I had formed an alliance with Phil Merrill who was a state senator who became the political director for Senator Muskie's reelection in '76.

AL: For Maine.

JW: For Maine, to the U.S. Senate. And we had a whole plan, now, my benefactor Bill Cohen who had come to help me, our plan was to keep him out of the race against Senator Muskie in '76. Which looked likely because at that point Senator Muskie, it looked as though he was out of touch with Maine, that he had been down in Washington too long, he'd run as vice presidential candidate and for the presidency, and it was kind of a frustrating, a very frustrating period for Senator Muskie. And so they, Charlie Micoleau I believe was Muskie's AA, and he hired Phil Merrill to run the campaign, and then I was the first person that Phil Merrill hired to be a coordinator of all of central Maine.

I went up, including Kennebec County and Waldo County. Not Hancock, I went to that side of the river. And then Charlie Jacobs subsequently, he was a governor's council member at the time, he took the northern part with another legislator that sat in front of me. Dick Davies, who is now Baldacci's special assistant, and Dick Davies was a legislator from Orono. And so he was an assistant to Charlie Jacobs. My assistant was, not only Valerie who worked for nothing but she was a person I really counted on, was a guy named Steve Bither. Steve Bither has the, he's the guy who is the head of, started and founder of the Wicked Good Band, if you know the Wicked Good Band, and he's a big character and he kept us in stitches most of the time. And we ran the office out of lower Lisbon. And then southern Maine eventually was Mary McAleney, and she was hired to do that.

Now Mary McAleney was a constituent of mine. She was a school teacher in South Hiram, Maine and when I was running for the legislature she called me up and said, “Jim, I don't know you but I see you're running for the legislature and I'm a teacher down here at Sacopee Valley School and I'd be willing to help you.” And she held a coffee, and so actually I met her in August or so, August or early September in '74, and we became very fast friends. And so she helped me do some things down there, although she was from Portland, it was still helpful for her to, you know, to really try to give me a hand. And I'm sorry I forgot about that little important piece of information.

So Phil Merrill came to me and said, "You know, there's a woman by the name of Mary Perry," she was married at the time, and she's really been a great Democrat, blah-blah-blah, and I said, yeah, I know her, she lives in Hiram, and he said, "Yeah, and you know, she told me that she had helped you and that she knew you," and I said yeah, she'd be great. So anyway, she became the one in the southern part of Maine that worked for him.

But our real experience with Ed Muskie began a little earlier than that because there were several of us, Dick Spencer, my seat mate was Jim Tierney who sat to the left of me, to the right of me sat Barry Hobbins and Harley Goodwin, and in front Libby Mitchell and, just in the front, Libby Mitchell, Barbara, well, in the second, in the 108th Barbara Trafton, she wasn't there in the 107th, and Bonnie Post for both the 107th and 108th who was a great Democratic legislator from Owl's Head. And so, and Barbara Trafton, who in the 108th we would all fan because she was pregnant with her first child, so we'd keep her cool in the June and July sessions. But, and so we had, and Dick Spencer and Tom Peterson, who was from Cumberland, and there had been some environmental laws passed in the 106th legislature that were very important, that now the lobby was beginning to organize to repeal them. And so, you know, I can remember Spencer and I talking about what could we do that would, what types of things can we do that would be important to do, and twenty-five years from now we could say there was a real difference. And so we decided they were environmental laws, and Ed Muskie was of course a real hero for us because he was involved in the environmental movement in the United States Congress and the U.S. Senate.

So we decided that's what we were going to focus, we were going to focus a big part of our energy on was defending the laws that were already enacted in the 106th and putting a bunch more on in the 107th and the 108th. And we were going to really make a difference. We thought in terms of economic development that environmentalism would be a boon to Maine if we cleaned up the Androscoggin River, which was one of the ten dirtiest rivers in 1972 in the world. And so we went after these things, we defended the Great Ponds Act, we defended Clean Air, Clean Water, having more stringent than the federal's minimums. We enacted the billboard law, which bought out all the private property ownership rights of all billboards in Maine. We strengthened the oil spill clean-up law, we, you know, coastal wetland, shoreline zoning, oh gosh, we put in--- Spencer and I sponsored the farm and open space legislation which helped to create green areas through property tax breaks.

And the bottle law, Tom Peterson and I were, actually we had a much better bottle law than was finally enacted, because we actually, it was put out to study with out committee and Tom chaired the house side, and Howard Trotsky was a Republican who chaired the senate side and he was an environmentalist, and so we developed a really great solid waste management bill. And the lobby was so afraid it was going to get passed because that's what, the people were really behind us and it was going to go out to referendum and it was going to pass, that they wanted to have a convoluted law that maybe they could campaign against. And so instead of sending the bill back to the Natural Resources Committee, they sent it instead to the Taxation Committee for one of the first times in the history of the Maine legislature. The bill that we had studied and written the legislation for didn't go back to the committee, it went to another committee where they chopped it all up and made it a worse, it made it, it was not anywhere near as innovative and it

was far more troublesome for the business people, and they tried to campaign against it but the people of Maine voted it in. Then they tried to use it to get rid of it and they voted back again, so then they were stuck with this law that was a lot more inadequate, but that's the way it goes, you know, if you're going to play, you're going to live by the sword, sometimes you die by the sword.

So we did a lot of those things which Senator Muskie was involved in, you know, was involved with in big concepts, and we took them down and made Maine one of the environmental states, maybe with Oregon and Vermont, and Maine was right up front with this. And we, I led the movement against nuclear power in the Maine legislature, I was the person who was sponsoring the legislation. And as a result of what we did in the Maine legislature, we stopped another power plant from being built at Sears Island, in Searsport, along with the help of local people who were working very hard, we completed that part of the team and, you know, were successful.

AL: In regards to the nuclear power issue, did you work at all with the Maine Clamshell Alliance, which was a very grass roots . . . ?

JW: Yeah, at the time though we worked with Safe Power for Maine which preceded the Clamshell Alliance, and the Clamshell Alliance came later. We were, Safe Power for Maine was started by, oh gosh, I can't remember the gentleman, he was very important. Callie Hollander, whose husband Loren Hollander, the pianist lived, and she, they were very helpful. And so there was another whole different group, along with, oh gosh, he lived down in Wiscasset. If my wife were here, she knew him very well because she was from Damariscotta, Edgecomb, Wiscasset area; she was born in Damariscotta. But anyway, it'll come to me maybe, but we were working with Maine PIRG as well, which was a Nader group, and a guy named Mike Houston.

And what we sponsored was, what I sponsored was not a very different bill, a piece of legislation. It was a piece of legislation drawn up by Scott Skinner who was the head of Vermont PIRG and Vermont had enacted this law which essentially it was a very simple piece of kind of small-d democratic legislation which said that before another nuclear power plant was built it had to have a positive vote of the legislature. Very simple little bill. Well, this scared the life out of them, and they, I got, I went before this committee, the Public Utilities and Energy Committee, and it was hostile to me. Guys like Chuck Cianchette, Cimbro sells a lot of concrete to build these plants. But I was, I spent six months really understanding this whole thing and I put together, I've got a copy of the book I put together that I gave to every member. It's this thick, with all kinds of stuff, and my original speech to them and, everything is in this book. And it's pretty idealistic, because I look at it now, but I got a seven to six ought to pass report out of it.

And CMP was totally blown away by what I did, and they brought up Dr. Norman Rasmus in from MIT, who was a big proponent of nuclear power, big nuclear physicist. They brought up, I mean they brought up all these different guns. And I was up there sort of, you know, doing it. And so this was really a David and sort of Goliath thing. Well, the vote came in the house and they, the old timers in the Maine legislature said they'd never seen so many lobbyists in the place on one issue in their life. And they were pulling people out of the Maine legislature. Now,

before we went in to the Maine legislature, lobbyists could come right into the body of the legislature and could go down and tap somebody on the shoulder, a legislature, and bring them outside. We stopped that; you could not go in even behind the glass, you were not allowed. You had to have a note and pass to the door keeper who got a page, who then came. But they had a whole host of these people, and people were being yanked out.

I lost the vote by two or three votes; it was very, very close in the house. It never would have passed in the senate, more than likely, but in the house it got very, very close. And then there were people who were not on my side who were so offended by the lobbyists that, I remember Eddie (*name*) didn't believe the same as I believed on this, but he was a great guy. And he had been on the other side of it, he did not vote to send it out of the committee, he was on the committee. And he came over and tapped on the window and I came back, out back, and he gave me, he said, "Jim, do this, make this motion, make that motion, make this motion." He started giving me great motions to make to try and foil them, because he was so offended by what was taking place in the legislature. It was really interesting.

But I think, you know, if I look back on all of that part of it, which was inspired by Senator Muskie, and there were those of us who wanted to take up the charge, that I think that, you know, that you look back twenty-five, thirty years later and what we did was the right stuff, it was the right stuff. And I went to, I was up in Millinocket teaching a small business class in the middle to late nineties, and I thought, and we, and the coalition up there that put this together for the university got Great Northern in Millinocket to let us use their board room, which is a nice board room, and I thought, oh my God, if there are any people who remember me from the seventies I'm in trouble. So I would kind of go in and zoom right on in there, you know. I can just see, there would be a big, some enormous scene here.

But sure enough, I'm hauling my stuff in one night and here comes this guy, and I looked at him, he sees me and he says, "You're Jim Wilfong." Just like that. Yeah, I am. And he said, "I haven't seen you in twenty years," and I said, yeah, that's probably right, probably about twenty years, and I said, you know, here we go. "So what are you doing here?" And I told him, and he said, "You got a minute before you teach the class?" I said, yes. So anyway, we sat down and he said, "I just wanted to tell you that in the mid-seventies I thought you were one of the biggest enemies of the state of Maine and that what you were trying to do was trying to kill our industry. And I just wanted to say that I was wrong, that we couldn't be competitive today if we weren't doing the types of things that you and your other, your group of friends required us to do, because we couldn't afford to put the chemicals up the chimney and down the river, we need to reuse those chemicals and that's what gives us a competitive edge at this time, in this fellows opinion." I was really shocked, very pleased but shocked. And, but I do think that that was in important part of what we did up there if I sort of look back.

AL: Did anyone on Senator Muskie's national staff work with you (*unintelligible phrase*)?

JW: Well yeah, they always would do things, they were great. If we needed things, like information, they got us the information. If we needed statistics for Clean Air-Clean Water, they got, or anything else, they got it. I mean, they put the Library of Congress right to work on it. We would get reports that we needed from the Library of Congress' research team because

Senator Muskie would request the research. It was really terrific. We also did work on the budgetary process, and Dick Spencer and I did a lot of work on this, and so the program review and sunset laws were what we put together and put in. I did a little reorganization of government thing that I dreamed up when I was out running for the legislature, which was to license your car or your truck in your own hometown; you know how you can get the tags? Well, that was my idea, and we got that passed, and that actually saves the state about five million bucks a year. Yeah, it's a lot of money. But we were, you know, I was inspired to do things that were kind of, Senator Muskie was on the, one of the subcommittees he chaired was the Intergovernmental Relations, and so we were looking at things like that and the budget process that he sponsored which then became the Budget Committee that he chaired.

And all of that, Dick Spencer and I were running around doing those types of things that he was doing, and so then we would request information and we would get information. And so, then I started on my, you know, when I wasn't working on committee work and so forth, we got paid thirty-five hundred dollars one year and fifteen hundred dollars the next to be a legislator, I came, we got married, half the legislature showed up at the wedding, including a very Republican woman by the name of Joyce, oh, I hate getting old, it'll come to me, and she was from Auburn, she was a legislator from Auburn. And she and another Republican legislator, who had been the speaker of the house, Dick Hughes, came to this wedding.

And I, in later years I saw her at a welcome back day and she said, and she was very prim and proper, you know, I mean, she sponsored legislation like castration bills, you know, things like, it was all sort of unbelievable, for sex offenders and things like this. And, Joyce Lewis was her name, and so she came up, I saw her coming straight at me twenty years later and I thought, my gosh, is she coming actually to talk to me? And she came up and she said, "You know, Jim, I haven't seen you in awhile but I just wanted to tell you that I thought your wedding was the nicest wedding that I ever went to." And we had this big wedding out in the field, and it was a real hippie style wedding, I would call it. And everybody had to bring their own lunch because we had no money to offer anybody lunch. And Dick Davies, who was a member of the Maine house as I was telling you, he said that he, he was a JP and he said, "I'll perform the wedding." So he was the justice who married us, and it was a great wedding.

But after that we started building this house, and Senator Muskie always kept track of what was going on with this house, and so did Jane Muskie. Jane Muskie really liked Valerie and she sort of, she saw Charlie Jacobs and Dick Davies and me and Mary, but the legislators especially, she saw us as sort of her children's age, and here we were kind of out, you know, doing legislative work and also working for her husband. And Senator Muskie had this reputation of being just terrible on staff, he would chew them up and spit them out, but he never, ever did to us, you know, and he saw us as contemporaries, young contemporaries I think. And he never, ever, ever, even when we screwed up, he never, ever chewed us out. Which we were expecting, waiting for the wrath to come down. And so that was a very nice thing.

I don't remember just where I was going with that, but anyway, we started working on this campaign and I remember going down and meeting Madeleine Albright for the first time, who was his staffer for foreign policy issues on the Foreign Relations Committee, and she was just a really nice person. And we would come down to Washington to do research for the campaign

and to meet with Senator Muskie and so forth. And when we came down there she had, you know, she had tickets to the Kennedy Center for ballets, and my wife really likes all the arts and so forth. I mean, I'm a person who appreciates them and likes them but my wife really likes to go. And so here we were, Valerie was twenty and I was by then twenty eight, and she would give us her tickets to go so that we could go, which was really nice. And so then we would go and dine with Senator Muskie in the senator's-only dining room, and he would, we would go in there and Senator Kennedy would come over or whatever, you know.

I mean, it was really a lot of fun. And I started to drive, when I would organize these things, we organized bean suppers all the way across Maine. I had these labels that looked like, I still have them, that looked like, you know, B&M Baked Bean label, and it would say "Ed" in the middle. And so we had these bean suppers, and I can remember him saying things to me like, one time we were driving and we were talking about how people get into trouble politically, and he said, "Well Jim, you've got, you know, I think you're going to be a great young legislator, and remember one thing: never, ever, ever believe your own press releases, remember who writes them." I remember that, that's something I have lived my life by not only politically but, you know, you really need to keep in perspective and be humble, and keep in perspective, you know, when you're out there winding off about your great things, you know, it's you winding off about yourself, so remember that.

And another thing that I remembered, when I was trying to decide whether or not I was going to run for the state senate or not, Senator Muskie was trying to get me to run for the state senate, and I, you know, I was just sure that I could do that. I couldn't afford to do that anymore, you know, we lived in this house without running water or electricity for three and a half years that we were legislators because we had no money to do anything. Poor Valerie would lean up against, she would get up against that stove in an old bathrobe that my grandmother had given her, which was a polyester thing, and she caught on fire on day. But she was cold here, you know. She could actually cook meatloaf on a hibachi in the summer using tin foil. And she cooked, my grandmother taught her how to cook on that stove and she could make the most wonderful German stollen that you ever had using, figuring out, my grandmother showed her how to regulate the heat so that it wouldn't burn and it would cook all the way through without scorching the outside.

So we were, you know, we were really up against it. And so Senator Muskie told me this story about when he was, he had run, you know, he said, "I decided to run for the legislature just to kind of build up my law practice." And I was sort of familiar with that part of the story because he would always tell that part of the story. And then, you know, but it got to two terms in the Maine legislature and I thought, well, I've done all I can do for my Waterville law practice and I think I'm not going to run. And one day he ran into an old Republican friend of his on the streets of Waterville, and so he said to him, "Well, Muskie, what are you going to do, you going to run for the legislature again?" And he said, "Well, I don't know, you know," and he sort of laid out this and he said to the guy, "So, well, what do you think, so-and-so?" And the old guy said to him, "Well I'll tell you what I think, if you're going to live in this world you ought to be part of it, so I think you should run." And with that, Senator Muskie decided to run again and to stay involved in politics and not to start a law practice and just be, not just be a lawyer but to be a lawyer, and that, he said, he told me that that old guy was one of the principle reasons that, by

him saying that, that he decided to have a life in politics, and how different it would have been had he never run into that guy perhaps. So that was an interesting thing.

The other thing that, it was very frustrating for Senator Muskie because not only was he, did he have the Republicans chomping at his heels in '75, but he had Democrats who were giving him a hard time. He hadn't been pure enough on this issue; he hadn't been pure enough on that issue. And so here he was trying to get organized to run for reelection to the U.S. Senate and he was getting all of this grief. And we had a meeting in Winthrop, Maine, and if you know on Rte. 202 where the big steer is, you know, it's outside of an old restaurant, there's this huge steer right on, if you're heading towards Augusta it's on the left side, in Winthrop. I can't remember what the name of the restaurant was. But there were invited to this meeting a whole lot of influential Democrats, and so, it was a long table and I was sitting to the left of Senator Muskie, Phil Merrill was sitting to the right or maybe a couple seats over, I can't remember. There may have been a, this was in my area so I was the campaign staffer; there was probably a U.S. Senate staffer. And so people were, they were bitching, big time. Senator Muskie's trying to tell his story and people were pssst-pssst-pssst, just, they wouldn't, you know, they kept bitching about this.

Well, he hadn't done enough on environmental things, according to the people who were environmentalists who were there, and I remember, you know, unfortunately for two women who were there who were very involved in the women's movement, and of course, you know, and all of us had voted for the Equal Rights Amendment, Democratic legislators who happened to be around the table, and there were some other legislators besides Phil and myself. And so they started to carp about the fact that he wasn't strong enough on women's rights, and he had always been, you know, really fine on women's rights. But this was kind of the straw that broke the camel's back for Senator Muskie that night. He'd been listening to this for like an hour and a half. And they finally brought some soup, and I had this soup in this bowl in front of me, and I could feel the tension starting to rise and I thought, oh-oh. I just had this feeling, you know, it's one of those things, nothing I could ever lay my hands to.

And all of a sudden I saw Senator Muskie's hands come up like this. Mind you, I was sitting literally right here. And I had my bowl of soup and I was ready to get some soup, and his hands came up like this and he brought them down with an enormous crash. And this soup jumped right out of my soup bowl and out of his soup bowl, and at the same time his hands hit the table he said, "Horseshit!" Just like that! The place was as quiet as anything you've ever seen in your life. I didn't dare to move, you know. It was sort of an amazing thing. And that broke, I mean everybody was sort of like, "Holy cow, what's this about?" And he just then went on to not only pick apart all the stuff they said about women's rights, to pick apart all the other complaints which he had been dutifully listening to and had just had it right up to here, he wasn't going to listen to it any more. It was an amazing thing, it's one of my, you know, it's really one of my really, that and, well, I'll tell, that's another story.

AL: How did the people react to his, you know?

JW: The two women who had, you know, begun it from their side, I think they saw that as directed personally towards them. Well it was all personal, I would say, but it wasn't just towards them. They got up and left the table immediately.

AL: Was it Pam Scarcelli and another woman?

JW: Yes, how did you know this, had you heard this story before?

AL: I've heard a piece of that somewhere else.

JW: Yes, it was, it was Pam Scarcelli and it was Cynthia Beliveau.

AL: That's who the other -?

JW: It was. And it was, they were very upset, let's just put it that way, they were very upset. So that was a -

AL: Did that come off as a disaster for Senator Muskie, were the people sort of -?

JW: Well, it was from, you know, a practitioner's, a political practitioner's side, I saw that as, yes. I saw that as a real "oh-oh." And so did Phil Merrill, I'm sure of that. I mean, you know, I have to go from memory on what our chatter would have been, but I, that was not positive. It was fascinating, it was really fascinating, I mean, you know, especially in retrospect, I mean seeing, wow, one of the big political guys in the country, you know, slamming his hands down and bellowing horseshit. I mean, that's, being witness to that was pretty amazing. But we didn't see that as positive, we saw that as negative. And I, but you know, I don't, you really have to put it in its context. I mean, you know, it wasn't just a, it was about all the other carping that had gone on around that table, and all the other, wherever he went people were telling him what he should do, hadn't done, ought to do, you know. I mean, he was getting a lot of advice and I think from his perspective he did not feel that people fully appreciated what he had been accomplishing down in Washington.

And, you know, it had been a very difficult thing for him to go through the whole Canuck letters and all of that. And that reminds me of another really interesting story. That, when I was working for Senator Muskie I went to a, I was staying in a, and it was probably while I was in legislative session, and staying at the Senator, even though I was on his campaign staff. I went in there one night because I had been working late and I went to the bar to get a, probably to have a beer and, but to get a sandwich, and there was somebody else sitting at the bar. And actually, we were the only people in there. And of course you know the Senator is the place a lot of politics gets discussed, ever since the Augusta House burned or torn down or whatever happened to it.

At any rate, this guy turned out to be an Associated Press, a big Associated Press guy. And he was from New York and he was up doing a story. There was something big going on, I can't remember what it was, and he was up, just in town to do the story. Pat Sherlock was the bureau chief for AP at the time I believe, but this guy was a different guy. So we were talking, you know, and he asked what I did and I said I was a legislator and we were talking about that, and I said I worked for Senator Muskie on his campaign. He said, "Oh, you know, I was on the trailer in front of the *Manchester Union Leader* that day." And I said, "You were?" He said, "Yeah, I

was.” And he said, and I’ll tell you something, Senator Muskie never cried. I said, really? He said, “Yeah,” he said, “I was sitting not five feet away from him, and there were snowflakes coming down and hitting him on the cheeks. But he never, he got emotional, but he didn’t cry on this day.” I said, “Really?” And he said, “You know, I filed a story that told the story about what happened, but it made no mention of him crying.” And he said, “I got a phone call from the editor down in New York, his”

End of Side B, Tape One of Two
Side A, Tape Two of Two

AL: We are now on Side B.

JW: And so I’ll just back it up a little bit. And so the Associated Press reporter sent the story down, his editor in New York called him back and said, “I don’t see where you’ve talked about Muskie crying.” And he said, “He didn’t cry. What are you talking about?” And he said, “The *Washington Post* is running a story that says he cried.” And he said, “Well I’m here to tell you that I was sitting five feet away and he did not cry.” And his editor said, “Well I don’t care. They’re running that story, that’s the story we’ll be running as well.” And so they changed his story and that’s what they ran as well.

AL: Do you remember that reporter’s name?

JW: I have no idea, nope. But I ran into him at the Senator and he told me that story. Now, what is interesting is, fast forward I don’t know how far, and I find it interesting because David Broder, now I don’t know what he was doing at the time, but David Broder ran a column five years ago, six years ago, did you know about that column?

AL: Just after Muskie’s death?

JW: Yes, and I thought, holy cow, you know, this guy had told me this story, and here was a confirmation of it, which was a very interesting thing. And I had told a number of people, and I think, you know, beforehand, I came home, I told my wife, I told Phil Merrill, you know, I said, you won’t believe this story that this guy just told me. And so I, you know, all those years I thought, well, was it, maybe he missed something or maybe it was true, maybe it wasn’t true. And then when David Broder wrote the story I thought, wow, this is interesting. But that is a true story as well.

AL: When I interviewed John Day, who you probably know.

JW: Yes, oh, I know John Day, yeah.

AL: He told me that he is friends with David Broder and that David had said, or Mr. Broder had said that, that he had told John that that was one of his biggest regrets in his career, was having written that he cried when that isn’t

JW: You see, that’s why, now you just filled in something for me because I wasn’t able, you

know, I was thinking, he said, "*The Washington Post* is going to run this story, and that's the story we're going to run." And when I read the David Broder piece, I've thought about that since, well maybe, you know, was David Broder not working for them at the time, you know, what's the story here? Who was, was it James Reston, or who was it that wrote the story for the *Washington Post* about Senator Muskie crying? Because, and then when I saw the David Broder story, I mean, it just didn't, so that's interesting that John Day tells that, that's very interesting. Well this was a, he was like a regional editor or something like that for the Associated Press. And that's what he told me, he said, "*The Washington Post* is running this story and that's what we're going to run." That was an exact quote.

And this was, you know, in the, like I say, it was either in '75 or '76, you know, it's murky for me but somewhere in there. So that was sort of an interesting thing. And so I continued to do a lot of things with Senator Muskie. I went to Washington one time when I was in business, this is after I was a legislator, in, I'll tell you, it was, I'll tell you exactly when it was, it was in like October of 1979. Senator Kennedy was thinking about running against President Carter at the time, hadn't gotten in it. I went to, I was on the way to Georgia and we had started Atomic Skis and I was doing that, and I stopped in D.C. because we have a lot of customers and my sales rep lived in that general area, and so I was going to stop on my way down and do some sales calls and visit with Senator Muskie. And we were going to have lunch, and Gayle Cory had set it up and Charlie Micoleau was still there. I'll tell you who else was there, too, was Jim, oh, Jim, Jim, he's a labor lawyer.

AL: Tierney?

JW: No, not Tierney, but he worked on the staff of Senator Muskie in Washington.

AL: Jim Case?

JW: Case. Oh, I hate this getting older! Jim Case, and Jim Case was there. And so I came in, and Micoleau and Case said to me, "What are you doing tonight?" I said, "Well I don't know, nothing." "Do you . . ." and said, "We want you to come in and talk to Senator Muskie." So I go in with Senator Muskie and Jim Case and I think Charlie Micoleau went in, too. So they wondered what I was up to and wanted to know whether or not I had brought a suit, because they sort of know me, and I said, Well yes, I did bring a suit, I brought a suit because I've got to see a big client in Atlanta. And so they said, "Well we would like you to go and to, the president is having a reception in the White House, in the Rose Garden and in one of the rooms." I can't remember which room it is in the White House; it's a pretty big room. "And we would like you to go tonight to be Senator Muskie's representative." Senator Muskie didn't want to go because it would be seen as support for the president, and he had dealings that he was doing with Senator Kennedy and didn't want to stir this up if Senator Kennedy wasn't in fact going to get into the race.

So, you know, I was sort of shocked to tell you the God's truth, I said, what? go to the White House? They said, "Yes, go to the cocktail party and then go to dinner." So I said, well okay, sure, why not. They said, "Do you have a, you know, can you get into your suit?" And I said, I need to take a shower, too, I've been working all day and I've been traveling. They said, "No

problem.” I said, yeah, there is a problem because every hotel room in the city is sold out and I was going to go and stay with one of my sales reps at their house, which is a long way out. So Micoeau said to Case, he said, “We can find him a place to stay, and let's get on it.” So they called around, and Senator Stennis was still alive, and Senator Stennis had a room that he kept permanently at the Hyatt I think, the Hyatt, way up top. And so they called over there and Senator Stennis was out of town, and he was of course chairman of the Armed Services Committee at the time, so he, but anyway, he was out of town and so his AA told them, “Yes, he can have the room.” So Jim Case drove me over to the hotel, and I got Senator Stennis' suite. It was something. And I went up, took a shower, got on my suit, my finest pinstripe that I had, and then Case came back and got me and took me over and deposited me at the White House.

Well, this was a big deal for me, I can tell you, you know. And so I had all my clearance passes and everything and I went in and through and they, no patch on me at this point, and there are, the who's-who of Washington was at this event, I can tell you. I mean, Cabinet secretaries and all kinds of folks. Clark Clifford I remember sort of having a little conversation with him. And so then, I was, you know, I'm just a Maine boy so I was feeling a little out of my league here. And I looked over in the corner and there was Charlie Daniels sitting with his big cowboy hat, and I thought, oh, that's Charlie Daniels from the Charlie Daniels Band. So I got a beer and I sashayed over and sat down next to him and said, I introduced myself and started talking to him, he's a real nice guy. Well this was actually hilarious, because I'm sitting over in the corner talking to Charlie Daniels, and all of a sudden I looked across this thing and who, there's a group coming in from Maine.

Believe it or not, of Severin Beliveau, Jim Tierney, somebody else, I don't know who else it was but somebody else. But Tierney of course is an old friend, and I can't forget Beliveau. And so anyway they're coming across and I can tell, you know, I know, Tierney and I are friends, you sit next to somebody in the legislature and you really get to be close to them - - whether they're Republicans or Democrats but especially, and he's two weeks older than I am, and his wife and my wife and the kids and all, we're all friends. So, but I know Jim Tierney and he's thinking he's a real big deal being at this thing, sashaying across the floor, you know, he was the majority leader of the Maine house at the time. And he almost has a heart attack when he sees me sitting there talking to Charlie Daniels, it was absolutely priceless. And Severin Beliveau is going, “Wilfong, what are you doing here?!” You know, I mean they can't believe it. I said, oh well, you know, Senator Muskie asked me to come as his representative, what can I say, you know? So they are beside themselves that here I am, not, I'm no longer a legislator, I'm out in the business world, and here I am sitting at the political event at least for the fall. So anyway, you meet the president and you do all this different stuff and I'm talking to people, and then we go to have dinner. So, I can't remember just where we had dinner, somewhere very close, and there were a lot of other people who then came just for the dinner.

So I'm with Tierney and Severin and I, we walk up to the, we walk up to get our name tags because you have to have some clearance with this thing, although it certainly is a lot less difficult today than it was when I was in Washington, the way it would be today. And so I went up and the, and when I got up I said to them, and Tierney and Beliveau are sitting there, I said, my name's Jim Wilfong. The person who's sitting there goes, oh yes, Mr. Wilfong, you'll be dining with the vice president and the president tonight, and he gave me this special thing with a

special sticker, and Jim Tierney is, he and Severin are like, "What!?" And they can't believe, they're sitting way back, in the way back, and I'm sashaying right up there and I'm sitting next to Coretta Scott King, Clark Clifford is now at the table, Tom Bradley, the mayor of Los Angeles is at the table. I mean, it is like, you know. And Mrs. King and I are talking about her family and my family, and she's very nice, and we're having this big conversation.

And then I had a long conversation with Vice President Mondale and Mrs. Mondale, and I spent the whole dinner there, talking back and forth. And I'm thinking, and they have told me, and I can't remember all of the things that they were, that Senator Muskie was concerned about for Maine, but one was, it seems to me it was continued fun-, it was something, always something about a ship, that we can be rest assured about, there was something about a ship at Bath Iron Works. There was something about another study for Dickey-Lincoln Dam, some study about that because you needed, at that time you needed, it had been on forever and you needed to have something that maybe something would happen up in Aroostook county. And so there were three or four little interesting things.

AL: Sugar beets?

JW: Sugar beets, maybe, but that was, I don't know, no, it was not sugar beets. Dickey-Lincoln was up there, and I am certain there was something about a ship. And so I am talking to actually a staffer after this dinner, with a staffer from the president's staff, and they assured me there would be no problems with any of those types of things. And then, it was shortly after that that Senator Muskie became Secretary of State Muskie. I mean, not shortly, you know, months, I don't remember exactly when he was appointed.

AL: In 1980, May.

JW: In May of 1980, all right, so six months later that he was appointed. And, yes, because he came to the Democratic convention that was I don't remember where in Maine, and he gave an impromptu speech about what it was like to be secretary of state that Dick Spencer and I witnessed that we think is one of the great off-the-cuff speeches we've ever seen. Just terrific, about how, you know, telegrams were coming in from this part of the world, and you know, faxes were coming in from this part of the world, and cables were coming in, and he just rode this wonderful speech, he had no, they asked him to come up and say a few words. It was a terrific speech, it was really terrific. But I remain close to all the Muskie people, and when I wrote a book, wrote this book, I was going to send it down to Senator Muskie to get his comments about the book, just to see whether or not I had some things right or not, and it was the last time I ever spoke to him when he was alive, and it was, you know, just before he died really, maybe four or five months or something like that, and we talked for half an hour.

He answered the phone down at Kennebunk, he answered the phone and we chatted for a long, I would say twenty minutes to a half an hour. And we just talked about the types of things that I was thinking about, and the types of issues and how I saw all of this fitting together, and then I talked to him about this kind of community stuff that I was interested in and how the international side worked, and you could work to build peace and prosperity doing this. And he said to me, "Jim, that's a book that must be written, you know," and I said, well I am writing it,

I'm working at it right now, you know. So that was nice.

But all of those things led me, you know, and of course Senator Mitchell was an AA for Senator Muskie. And I, you know, I wound up in Washington really quite by accident; it was really quite by accident. And it really was a combination of a couple of things: Senator Mitchell and Mary McAleney who had worked for Senator Mitchell, he was no longer senator because this was in January of '99, and Sam Spencer, Dick Spencer's son who now worked in the White House at this point. And so they, the word was out that they needed someone to be an assistant, an assistant secretary level which in the SBA is the assistant administrator, for international affairs, international trade and international affairs. And so, I can't remember exactly all the ins and outs of it, but Mary and Mitchell had read my, he read my book and wrote a piece, he and John Baldacci wrote actually back cover pieces for my book, and Angus King wrote the forward so I had a really sort of an interesting group of people looking at what I'd been up to.

And so they said, "Look, Jim would be great for this, and why don't we try to figure out how to get him appointed." Of course there are a lot of people who want those types of jobs, and I was not a person who had contributed twenty five cents to Bill Clinton. You know, I voted for him obviously, and helped him out but I wasn't a contributor and usually those, you have to be a pretty good size contributor to get those types of jobs. But, and so they had me come down and meet with other people in the White House, and I did that, I met with Bob Nash who was the special assistant for personnel, and his assistants, and then I also went to meet with Chris Wideen, who was chief of staff for the SBA and had been Daschle's chief of staff. And so I met with her, and then they wanted me to come back and meet with Aida Alvarez who is the administrator, and wound up being the longest serving administrator.

And so they said, "Now look, Jim, this will be a fifteen minute meeting and you're going to have to talk about what, you know, where you are, you have to give her your fifteen minute pitch." Well actually it wound up being a two hour meeting. Mary McAleney and Chris Wideen didn't believe it, they were sort of like, "Holy cow." And so, we just talked about everything, and we talked about these ideas that I had about building more peaceful, prosperous communities through small business development and international trade development for small business. And so it was really interesting because Aida, and I said directly to Aida, I said, you know, I need to, I liked her, she's a very good person. She was, some people found her high strung perhaps, in some areas. But here was a person who had grown up, her mother was sixteen when she was born, four kids, born, she was born in New York, a Puerto Rican American family, and she was the oldest, and she and two of her other siblings went to Harvard on academic scholarships. And she was, she was a no nonsense person, no nonsense, she did not suffer fools lightly.

And I could see this in her, you know, and I thought, boy, if she's looking for somebody who is a sort of typical bureaucrat, I'm not the guy. I just thought, I'm not, I'm a free-wheeling entrepreneurial type guy, I am not a guy who is going to be there shuffling papers back and forth. So I told her that, I thought, you know, I really, I'd really like to do this I think but I really need to tell her this. And this was in the middle of, the whole impeachment thing was going on and the place was, Jim Tierney called up when he found out that I was doing it, he said, "Gee Jim, be very careful down there, you know, those people are, they are taking no prisoners and don't get,

don't just sort of stumble into the wrong thing because they'll chew you up." I said, no, don't worry, I'll try to avoid that. Always giving me advice, but that's all, a two week older brother.

So at any rate, she finally said to me, when I said that to her, that I'm not your person for that, she said "Well, I'll tell you something, if it's not illegal, immoral or unethical, you can do it and I will back you up." So I said, really? She said, "Really," she said, "do you like the sound of that?" I said, yeah, that would be great. She said, "So when do you want to start?" There was no, you know, I figured this would be a, you know, my people will call your people, you know, one of those types of things, we'll talk to you in two weeks. Not right there, no. I knew it was sort of, you know, if she decided she wanted to do it, she's doing it. And so I said, okay, I mean what else can I say, I mean this is so.

And she was true to her word, and what they needed was not only somebody to manage that division of the SBA, but what they really needed, because of the coming election, was somebody to take over the international part of the binational commissions that the president had set up. The binational commission, the United States-Russia binational commission, the United States-South African binational commissions, etcetera. And so, because those had been poorly managed they were falling through the cracks, they needed to be resurrected, and I started meeting immediately in the Roosevelt room of the West Wing with people two or three times a week about the WTO, the World Trade Organization, which was coming up in November in Seattle. And I started meeting with the chief of staff and all of the, it was a whole group of us, there was a big group that was meeting to work with this.

And I have to tell you, I mean, I felt that half of the people there were incompetent and it turned out to be so when it, you know, it turned out to be kind of a disaster. And then I started meeting with Leon Firth who was Vice President Gore's National Security advisor about what was happening with the binational commissions, because the president had given the vice president the job to work with these, and they were not working well. And then I met a guy by the name of Ambassador Armstrong who was the, he was an ambassador for what were known as the NIS, the newly independent states of the Soviet Union, you know, and he was in charge of all AID that, for the State Department, he was in charge of all aid going to the newly independent states from Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan or whatever. And he now, actually he was not a, he was kind of, he came in under Bush but he was real comp-, Bush one, and then he stayed for all of Clinton and now he's in Bush two, he's the ambassador to Afghanistan now.

And so I began working with him, I have a bunch of pictures because we worked in Russia together, and I began working with the people who were responsible for Russia and resurrecting that. And I, I mean, I think it's honest to say that I was responsible for resurrecting that whole part, the economic development part and the small business part of the binational commission wound up being some of the most successful parts of what the binational commission was working on. And so then I began to see resources like Bill Armstrong coming to assist me in different things that I was doing. And I think I negotiated, I can't remember, it was three agreements anyway with one of Yeltsin's ministers who became one of Putin's ministers, a guy by the name of Ilya Yuganov. And I did, the first one was out in a place called Samara, Russia. It was hosted by a really strong governor who was, a guy who might have beaten Putin, was the, I can't remember exactly his name. But at any rate, we met out on the banks of the Volga, and

this was an area where all of the secret nuclear biological and chemical warfare developments were done.

And so I went down there, we negotiated this thing, it became a really big deal, and as a matter of fact we were going, we were having trouble over, it was set up just like you might imagine: I was heading the U.S. delegation, and Yuganov was heading the Russian delegation, and we were sitting across two tables that went on for about a mile. And we're back and forth and back and forth, and my attorney in the SBA was a former Naval officer, a retired Naval captain, who had been the head of the JAG for Naval Operations. And actually, what he did was, one of the things that he did which is really interesting is, he had a legal team that looked at every target in Kosovo, he came after, just after the Kosovo war, he came, and they looked at every target in Kosovo to see what the legal ramifications would be for hitting that target. And I can remember looking at him when he told me that. He sort of, you know, we were talking, at the time it was sort of, and I, you know, I'm not divulging anything that isn't widely known probably by now, but, and I looked at him and he said, "Don't ask me that question." And the question of course was, well, if you're picking all the targets, how did they hit the Chinese embassy? But I never asked him that question.

But at any rate, he was a very, very competent guy, and he said to me, "Look Jim, when you go there," because I had State Department attorneys and embassy people, he said, "when you go there remember one thing: you're the head of the delegation, you don't have to sign anything." I said, "What?" He said, "That's right, do not let State press you into signing anything that you don't fully understand and that you don't agree with, do not let them. Because they have, State Department has one agenda, we have another, and the embassy has a totally nother [sic] one, even though they're part of State. So don't let them push what is expedient to them, you just tell them you won't sign it." So they kept, you know, we kept working on this thing and there was parts that I didn't really understand that they, that the embassy people kept inserting. So the night before we were supposed to sign it I said to them, I'm not going to sign your document unless I understand fully every single solitary thing in there. Tomorrow, when we are supposed to sign this at ten o'clock in the morning, I will not sign it, period. They said, "You can't do that." I said, "Oh, I certainly can. I'm the leader of this delegation and if I don't think it's right I'm not signing it. I'm here to represent the president, and I'm not signing it, period. So let me know when you've got something that I can understand and I'll be happy to talk to you." And with that I sort of turned on my heel and went to bed.

And I thought, ohhhh, I hope I'm doing the right, you know, I could just feature a phone call from Madeleine Albright, you know, who, 'wait a minute, I know that guy'. So at any rate, they worked all night so that I could understand exactly what I was doing. And we, I only had one little tiny thing and so I said to Yuganov, I said, "I decided I'm going to," everything had been Mr. Yuganov, Minister, Assistant this, so I said, "Ilya, could I please talk to you?" He was surprised; you could hear the wind going out of the embassy people. And so he said, "Well of course, James." So, he picked right up on it, so we went down, now, by rights apparently, the way to protocol is that you both meet in the center of the table, you do not go one side or the other, you meet in the center of the table to discuss something if you do this, but you don't normally do this. I went on to his side of the table, which caused great gnashing of teeth, and I said to him, I said, look, I really think that we need to put this in here. And it was a piece that

needed to be in there for legislation which would have set asides of, fifteen percent of federal expenditures in the Russian federation would be set aside for small business and mid size businesses, and ten percent at the regional level, at what's known as the obelisk level. And I said, "You need to do this, and you need to, you know, see if we can't get this passed." So, anyway, he said "Okay, I agree to that." I said, "Good, then we're all set."

So we went back, I told them that they were going to put this in, he told his people, they put it in, we initialed it, and then we had, and then in the afternoon we, actually it turned out to be right after lunch we had a formal signing of this thing. After we do this very formal signing, you know, where we swap this and pens go in this direction, you know, and all this and that, he, you know, and we are going to a press conference which I didn't know about, that was supposed to be at best just some local briefing. And so he said, we're going out like this, and the delegation is all coming behind us and he is, he and I are walking like this, and then right behind us is the U.S. ambassador to Russia and there is one of his top deputies and so forth.

And so he says to me, "James, I'm very sorry I have to tell you this, and I could hear the State Department people all, you know, you could, there was something, when they hear somebody say I'm very sorry I have to tell you this." And so they said, "I'm very sorry that I have to tell you this, but there is going to be a very large press conference." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "All six of the major Russian television stations will be here, CNN will be here, you know, Pravda, I mean all of the big newspapers and so forth." And I said, and you could hear almost, you could hear the wind, the guys in the back going, oh my goodness. So he said, "Is that all right with you?" And I said, "Well sure, it's all right with me." You know, because I'm, again, you can hear the air going out. So then, actually the Kosovo war wasn't quite over because this was in September of '99, and so he, and so the State Department people said, "Jim, this is going to be horrendous. The Russians are setting you up so that they're going to ask you what's happening in Kosovo, and what are the president's intentions in Kosovo, that's what this is all about, this is what this is going to become. You know, all the rest of it because it's the binational commission that's of interest, but the real interest is going to be to ask you Kosovo questions." I said, no problem, this I can handle, you know. So they said, "Oh, I hope so."

So anyway, there was this huge press conference and so we start talking about it, we have joint statements that we each have something to say, and then the question comes from a Russian journalist from Pravda. And so the question comes, "What about this?" And so I answered it, I mean I just answered it very simply, I said, you know, I am an American entrepreneur who has been asked to serve our country in dealing with international interests with small and mid-size businesses, and I really don't know the answer to your question about Kosovo. That is a question that you need to ask Secretary Albright. Now, I'm happy to talk about this, and then I just went right on and started talking about that. They tried to bring it back one more time, I just went right back to that position and it all went through. So, at any rate, we had a wonderful time. We brought, I went back to do more deals, I went all the way down, I went down from Moscow, down the Moscow River on a big boat with a thousand entrepreneurs, and Ilya Yuganov who by this time worked for Putin, and went down the Moscow River, down through the locks that Stalin had built, on to the Volga, went across and down in these really old, old Russian communities, and we negotiated another agreement there.

And I was witness to another really interesting thing, because there were I can say, I don't know, somewhere between six, seven hundred to a thousand people, this was an enormous, enormous cruise boat that we were on to do this, and we had all kinds of workshops going on and so forth. And then we had an opportunity at the end of this, when we signed another agreement, to speak to this big crowd in this big giant room. And it was hot, oh, it was hot, I was sweltering. And Bill Armstrong, the ambassador, was there and we're all sweltering. He had also signed the agreement with me. And so I quoted in this, I gave, I didn't know this was coming, but I quoted Robert Kennedy from part of a speech that he gave in Cape Town, so-called "Day of Affirmation" speech, and I quoted Winston Churchill and I quoted Archimedes, in this speech that I gave sort of off the top of my head.

And so then Yuganov stood up to give his speech about this whole thing and he said, well since James, and you know, after that meeting in Samara he always called me James and I always called him Ilya, we never had any of the formalities left. And he said, "James has quoted Robert Kennedy and Winston Churchill and Archimedes, and so I would like to quote Bismarck." I thought, well this is interesting. And he said, "You know, and these were all entrepreneurs, mind you, and budding entrepreneurs," and he said, "and Russian delegation officials," he said, "you know, Bismarck, when he was asked what he thought of the works of Marx and Engels replied: 'I think we should give it to some country we don't give a damn about.'"

Well this was sort of amazing, and the response was immediate. Cheering went on like you cannot believe. I am waiting for the KGB or their replacement to come and take us all away, you know, a conspiracy. But to really sort of be there when a Russian minister, a full blown Russian minister says that, you know, makes that sort of statement was really sort of amazing.

He then came to the United States with a whole delegation, I set up a meeting that took place, we signed another agreement, that was signed in Washington, and Aida signed it and Yuganov signed it, and met with the chairman of the FTC, the head of anti trust policy for the Justice, we took him all around Washington. Then we came to Maine with the whole delegation, and we came to Maine to see small business and mid size businesses in Maine, and to meet with the governor and to meet with economic development people from all across the state. And it was a, and we came to Maine and in the day that we were, the two days we were involved, one day was very nice, the next day was a blizzard, it was in December of 2000, it was after the elections. And we went all out through West Paris and we saw, you know, I mean we saw all kinds of neat little small businesses.

And what I didn't realize is that two days before, something had been cancelled and so the staff called Valerie and asked Valerie if she could host dinner for thirty seven people that night here. And it's just before Christmas, and so she did an unbelievable job at hosting a traditional Maine dinner. And Yuganov sat and played the piano and sang Russian songs right there. They brought vodka and they drank the vodka dry, they, I mean, it was really, really something, I mean it was really beyond belief, to tell you the truth. And the place looked like a winter wonderland. We brought an enormous bus up the driveway which almost got stuck, the next day we saw more businesses and Yuganov came to speak at Fryeburg Academy with me and the international students, there were a number of Russian students there. But we really developed a very close relationship.

And I was able to develop close relationships in South Africa, in Nigeria, we did sort of wild stuff in Nigeria. And as a result of the work that we were doing in South Africa and Nigeria, for the first time the SBA got a seat on a committee of the National Security Council, so I was on this committee of the National Security Council, they had never even come close to that before. And that was interesting. We did things in Costa Rica, we did things in Mexico. We really took what we were doing up another whole level. And so that was a really great experience, it was a really interesting experience and a great experience.

AL: Did you have any interactions directly with President Clinton?

JW: Yes, well not anything that amounted to much, you know, I was, you know, somebody who's an assistant secretary would meet President Clinton, I went to the White House all the time. At the WTO meeting I was trapped in the building, in the hotel in downtown with Paul Wellstone, with Secretary Daley, with Senator Max Bacchus who became a friend and just supported me, along with Senator Muskie, Senator Mitchell for an appointment that Senator Daschle had to sign off on, and the president makes the appointment, the Senate confirmation to be on the board of directors of the Export-Import Bank of America, and literally in the last five days the former Senator/Secretary Max Cleland stepped up and said, "I'd like to do it." But Senator Bacchus, as a result of Senator Mitchell going to bat for me, Aida went to bat with Hillary and John Kerry, but you're not going to get by somebody who was a former United States senator and secretary, Cabinet secretary, and a legitimate American hero, so I mean that part of it's all fine.

But that just happened three weeks ago, I almost was appointed as a result of the relationship I built with Max Bacchus there. Congressman Manzulo, who's a House member, Dan Glickman who was secretary of agriculture, we were all trapped as they were burning things in Seattle in the streets. And then it was very interesting because Secretary Albright arrived, the U.S. Trade representative was a woman by the name of (*name*), she arrived, but things were still badly going on. But when the president was about to arrive was when the National Guard came and pushed, made what we would have called in the Marine Corps a perimeter, pushed everybody out about ten blocks and nobody got in, and then the SWAT teams arrived for the president, the Secret Service SWAT teams arrived, and they were a no nonsense bunch.

And when the president arrived, things changed dramatically in terms of being, having access. But Mark Rosen, who was my attorney, was there and he was punched by somebody because he had a tag on. We had to be careful about how we went because there were people who were indiscriminately; there was a woman from Colombia, who was a trade representative from the South American country of Colombia, who was beaten up. So it was sort of a, but you know, so we had some interaction in, not directly with the president but with the president's people about what was and wasn't happening at this.

And then I wound up going to, I went to Bologna, Italy, and Aida and I went to a big OECD conference. I wound up being the vice chair, or the co-chair of the small and mid size enterprise working party, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and so we had a big conference which was, again, assaulted by kind of anti globalization forces. And this is dealing with small business which of course didn't ring true to me. But we also, I had a great

time with, Aida and I met with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we spent the 4th at the, with the ambassador to the Court of St. James at the American embassy in London, which was, of course anybody who is anything in British society and America were at the 4th of July celebration that the ambassador hosted.

But we met with Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we were given a great tour of Parliament by the secretary of the treasury of the U.K., I became friends with one of Tony Blair's cabinet members who ran the small business, the SBA of Great Britain, the small business service, a guy named David Irwin. I got a chance to sit on the floor of the House of Commons and listen to a debate, which was absolutely great.

So, I've met with, I got a, we did a project in Egypt which was part of the binational commission, and we did a thing with President Mubarak and with Suzanne Mubarak, his wife, who got involved in what we were doing, and we worked with a lot of women entrepreneurs in Cairo. And I met with the prime minister of Egypt who, you know, explained the problems that we see today. He said, look at, we have problems of 3.6 percent birth rate, a lot of women don't have jobs, they need to have jobs, we need to bring the birth rate down, that's one way to do is to have women involved in business and other economic opportunities. And what happens is that in order for us to absorb the people, with that sort of a birth rate, to absorb people into the workforce, the economy has to grow by eight percent a year but the best we've only got is to five, five and a half percent, we have a shortfall, these people don't have jobs, many of them are college educated, they get involved with radical Islam, and the rest as they say is history.

End of Side A, Tape Two of Two
Side B of Tape Two of Two

AL: We are now on Side B. I wanted to jump back to 1976 when you were working on Muskie's reelection campaign. And you were talking; you mentioned that part of what you were doing was to get Bill Cohen not to run.

JW: Yes.

AL: Could you talk to me a little bit more about the details of the strategy of that?

JW: Well, yeah, no, the strategy was actually very simple. It was to show Muskie not as an older and tiring member of the United States Senate, but to portray him as he really was. There was this image that was beginning to appear, especially since Bill Hathaway beat Margaret Chase Smith, took down one of the institutions of Maine, as a kind, in 1972, as kind of a person who had lost touch with Maine, was really getting to be elderly, wasn't a real force or a player any more. And it was Bob Monks who really had made that case for Bill Hathaway, so he didn't have to make the case by running against her in the primary. Which a lot of Republicans never forgave him for, which actually had a positive impact when Ed Muskie ran in '76 and Bob Monks became the person who ran against him. But at any rate, we wanted to show him as vigorous so we did, we came up with a lot of really wild ideas. We got him over at Pleasant Mountain cross country skiing. We had a full picture of him on the *Portland Press Herald*, or the *Sunday Telegram* cross country skiing across the lake.

We came up with this idea, with Rumford and Waterville I think were in basketball finals, this would have been in February or so in '76. In basketball finals, and they had a big basketball game up in Waterville, we knew that Muskie had been on the team. And when he had been a member of the basketball team, he wasn't a star member of the basketball team, he was a member. And so he shot, he was this member on the basketball team and we thought, okay, let's get him out there with some old team members. So we found who the old team members were way back when, and we had them all come to the basketball game. And we had Muskie there at the basketball game, who shuttled between both sides so he was not showing favoritism. And at the half time or the beginning, I can't remember just when, we had the old Rumford High team with Muskie on it come out and shoot a few baskets and we did some things, and once again, we had him involved with young people, shooting baskets, here was a guy who played basketball for Rumford. We had a strategy that was designed to show Muskie as energetic, you know, we ran into a lot of places. Bean Suppers one right after another, I mean we had him on the move, I mean really on the move.

And showing him in ways that could be seen in a broader perspective as vigorous and energetic, still in touch with Maine people. And sure enough, Bill Cohen didn't win against him, he won with running against Bill Hathaway. And what was interesting is that Bill Hathaway was always going like this to Muskie, in the Senate cloak rooms, about how Cohen was going to run against him in '76, was going to run against Muskie, and would needle him about this whole thing. Bill Hathaway's a funny guy, you know, and so it may not have been totally just one of those, but may just have been his sense of humor. But he was doing it, and it was irritating Muskie. And he was a very long faced guy when Cohen did not run against Muskie. And then turned out, because then he knew he'd be coming after him next.

AL: And Cohen had done that walk across Maine (*unintelligible word*).

JW: He'd done the walk across Maine, he was young, he was principled, he was a basketball player, you know, the whole nine yards, he was really.

AL: I think this was '76, and it must have been before Cohen decided not to continue running against Muskie, the Potato Blossom Festival in Aroostook County.

JW: Oh yes, in Aroostook County. But I can't tell you all that story. Charlie Jacobs could tell you more about that. That's one that I didn't go up to, and so that one is probably, no, but I remember there was a big thing. Well, let's see, that, but that might not have been in '76 because Cohen would have had to have made the decision. That was probably in '75, the Potato, if this was part of the keep Cohen from running strategy, it would have been, but I don't remember that, I mean I wasn't there, so.

AL: Yeah, I was wondering where it fit in the context of that, I'm not sure either.

JW: Yeah, no, I'm not sure. But Charlie would know for sure, Jacobs. But we did things like that, you know, we had him out and about. And, you know, he was great. I mean we used to take him, there were still a lot of chicken factories in Lewiston and we would take him through

Hillcrest Poultry and these chicken factories, and blood would be dripping down. And Valerie was going right along behind him, you know, and she didn't like any of that, you know, Valerie's not a person who wants to get blood on her or walk in it. But she was handing out stuff, I can remember her doing great jobs on that. But we did, you know, and there were some rather ugly things, too, that I saw.

There was some resentment about Muskie in Rumford. Now, Muskie took me on a little tour of where his father's tailor shop was and showed me where he used to hide under the stairwell when he was a kid, when he was just a small kid and he would hide, play hide-and-seek under there, and it was a very nice little tour that he gave to me. And he talked to me about different things that were in Rumford at the time that weren't there when we were campaigning. And he had, a lot of people had really, you know, very warm feelings about him. And then, but I remember being out at like four thirty in the morning shaking hands with mill workers going in and out, and everybody was happy to see him. And then this guy made a really rude comment to him, refused to shake his hand and made this really rude comment.

I remember over in, we went to, in Ward 6 in Lewiston, it was called Little Canada. Ward 5, Auburn, Ward 6, Lewiston, I think that kind of encompassed both sides of the river of what they called "Little Canada". And we went to a shoe shop there and the owner of the shoe shop was a really slimy guy, if you ask me, I mean he was a really slimy guy. And he, we had a meeting with him first. Boy, he was just awful to Senator Muskie, I mean he was just terrible. I wanted to smack him. And just jumping on him about his votes, and especially in worker safety and the areas of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, you know, just this whole area. He just thought that Muskie was just the worst guy. And it was deflating, it was, you know, deflating for me, too. And I, but we, then we were going on this tour and he had, there was a shop foreman, or I don't know if it was unionized, I don't think it was unionized; it was a shop foreman or somebody who was taking him. And so I'm there talking to Senator Muskie before the shop foreman, and I'm saying, look Senator Muskie, you know, I felt terrible, I said, don't listen to that jerk, you know, he's not the people you represent, just don't listen to him. Because I could see it was demoralizing.

And so we went through the door, and when we went through the door where all these nice, mostly French women, you know, of French Canadian ancestry, with their starched aprons on and they had signs that said, "Ed's our guy," and "Welcome Senator Muskie," and this big cheer went up and I said, those are your people. And we went and shook hands all the way around and it was great, I mean it was really nice. And they were all so nice to him and appreciative and, you know, and you could see that that was a comeback from that guy who was there, you know. He didn't even have the common courtesy or decency to escort him around. And the people he was talking about were these people who worked for him, provided him with, you know, income for his company.

AL: When you mentioned there was a feeling of resentment in Rumford, were you able to identify the cause of it?

JW: I think, yes, I think that, you know, it's one of those strange things that in order for you to be not just old Ed who grew up there, you got to be from five hundred miles away from home. I

mean, you know, you can't be an expert or an important person if you're not at least five hundred miles away from home. So there was sort of that type of thing where they knew him, you know, and what's he, he's not that big a deal, we know who he is. So there's always that, I don't care if it's George Mitchell, who it is. But the other thing was that Senator Muskie after the war relocated to Waterville and referred to Waterville as his home. That was a gnawing thing for him.

AL: I have to tell you, I'll put this on tape because it's happened to me since I've been doing this project. I went to my eye doctor to have an eye exam in Lewiston, and we were talking about what I did and I said I worked on a Muskie project and he goes, oh, Muskie. I said, "What?" He goes, "Well I'm from Rumford, you know, he totally disassociated himself with Rumford." I said, what do you mean? He said, "He told everybody he was from Waterville." I said, well, when he started the law practice he had the chance to buy this, it was a great opportunity to buy the law firm in Waterville, that's what brought him there. And so then when he ran for the house, that was his legal residence. That's why he said he was from Waterville, he had to. But I didn't convince this man that -

JW: Oh no, no, they were not to be convinced.

AL: (*Unintelligible phrase*) very, very sure that Ed Muskie had deserted his home town.

JW: Oh, absolutely. And it was, you know, that's really where a lot of the resentment was. I think some of the other resentment, like the guy who refused to shake his hand and any guys who were hesitant and you knew, oops, that's not a supporter, I think in many respects those people were, what you saw then was the emergence of the cultural conservative blue collar Democrat. They were economic liberals, cultural conservatives. And it was really the guy, Kevin Phillips who worked for Nixon, who identified these people and split them off. Wallace also had helped to identify them, but Nixon really split those people away from the Democratic Party, and Reagan and others since then have made a lot of it permanent. Where they, you know, they are just not social liberals.

And I think what you began to see was this feeling that Ed Muskie was a social liberal and was not one of them, really. That he was not, you know, he had sponsored environmental legislation which were making it hard on the paper mills. Those types of things began to surface. And even though he was standing up for worker rights and so forth, he had crossed the line that they were already uncomfortable with, that Nixon had been able to exaggerate to some degree, and they were really questioning any support of people who were liberal Democrats. And I think this is what you still see; you see a lot of it today in these towns. You look at the votes. Lewiston is not up, it's up for grabs.

AL: Yes, and a lot of that I think is that Franco-Americans are culturally conservative.

JW: Conservative, yes, I do, too. It all has to do with this whole thing from, you know, from the Vietnam War where, a lot of blue collar people go in the military and they saw it as not supporting the people in the military, to environmental legislation, to choice, women's rights, gay rights, you know, the whole thing that sort of defines the war between the social conserv-, or the

cultural wars between the cultural conservatives and liberals. And unfortunately, that is how American politics is being defined and really, for me, it needs to be defined on economic terms and individual right terms. But it needs to really, you know, if you don't have an, if you don't feel you have a piece of the economic franchise then you don't participate in politics, essentially.

AL: I could keep talking to you for a long time, but I know that I, in our letter we promised no more than two hours at a session, so I'll stop now.

JW: Not a problem, that's great.

AL: Is there anything that you definitely, I didn't ask that you want to add?

JW: No, no, I was trying to remember, you know, something else that, but I think, I mean, you know, it's one of those things where I probably will go, oh I should have told her that about Senator Muskie. But I don't remember, you know, I do remember at Fryeburg Fair Senator Muskie used to get a big kick out of the fact that when they lined the Democrats up, the Republicans would lead the parade at the fair, and the Democrats came after the cows. So we always had to step around, and Senator Muskie always thought this was somewhat humorous but not quite.

AL: That's a great story to end on, thank you very much.

JW: You're welcome.

End of Interview