A: Okay, this is interview with Niki Tsongas, February 11, 2003. And we’re here at Middlesex Community College in Kearney Square. And first Niki, a question, where and when were you born?

N: I was born in Chico, California (A: Okay) in 1946.

A: All right. And tell us about your parents’ occupations.

N: My father had been in the military during World War II, and retired, was sent to Chico, California to close down air base and became a contractor. And then when I was about five years old, returned to the military.

A: Oh really.

N: And was a career military officer. (A: Okay) And then, but within that context was a civil engineer.

A: Oh wow.

N: And my mother was a copyright editor for [Unclear] advertising in a department store.

A: Oh, all right. Great. So did you folks, you bounced around a lot as a child?

N: Yes. Yes I did. Yah.
A: Now where do you consider home?

N: Well I guess Chico, California, where I was born, but I left there when I was five and I spent three years in Germany. (A: Oh) And then moved to Dallas, Texas and spent two years there. Four years at Langley Air Force Base, which is where they were training the first astronauts. And then lived in Tokyo, Japan where I graduated from high school; and then went to Washington, D.C. but that’s where we lived while I was in college. (A: Okay) And while I was in college I met Paul. And I went to college in Massachusetts and I’ve spent the past thirty years here. So I really consider Massachusetts (A: Mass. home?) yah.

A: Yah, good. Schooling?

N: In terms of?

A: Talk about your graduate, your college.

N: I went to Smith College. Actually I went to Michigan State in East Lansing for one year, and then I transferred to Smith College, which I graduated from. And then I’m also a graduate of Boston University Law School.

A: Okay. And you said you met Paul in Washington.

N: The summer of 1967.

A: And what were you guys doing?

N: He had graduated from law school. He’d gone to college, gone into the Peace Corps, and then came back and went to law school. He had just graduated from law school. And he was an intern for Brad Morse, who was a then Congressman from here. (A: Yah) It was his second summer actually being an intern there. (A: Okay) He’d done that two summers. And I was in Washington. My parents lived nearby, but I was living in Washington with some friends. And I was working for an Investment Bankers Association. It was basically a lobbying organization. And we met. We were both there for our summers. I was between my junior and senior years of college, and we met at a party. I always say it’s the only party Paul ever really went to in his life.

A: And where was the party? Right in D.C., or?

N: It was in Georgetown. Actually it was a party we gave. In the nature of summer internships in those days was that lots of events were held for summer interns, on the hill especially.

A: Okay.
N: And because we, because Washington was flooded with college, young college students, there would be parties going on all the time, and you would really get invited word of mouth. So I had, the woman who lived next door to me in my dorm at the college at Smith was also interning for Brad Morse. And so we said (--)

A: Oh, and who was that?

N: Her name was Pat Cutler. (A: Okay) And we were giving this, the people that I was living we were giving a party and we told Pat about it, invited her to come, and she told Paul. And so that’s how Paul happened to come.

A: Okay. Great. Great. Tell us about Paul’s early career with the Peace Corps, what you know of it.

N: He went to the Peace Corps let me see. He graduated in; I think he graduated in ’61. I have to look at that, but he nevertheless, it was right after President Kennedy had been inaugurated and created the Peace Corps. And Paul who had never, had really virtually not traveled at all. He’d gone to New York to see relatives occasionally. And I think you know, maybe a few little trips right, well off to Dartmouth to go to college.

A: But really he didn’t leave (--)

N: But then virtually had never gone anywhere. And he was so intrigued by the Peace Corps. They signed up, and he was in the first group that went to Ethiopia. (A: Okay) And he was there for two years. And he always says it was, it was the most important year in his life. It really changed his whole world outlook. I think he learned a lot about himself and his leadership abilities, and he came back determined to go into politics.

A: Okay. So he came back that early interested in politics.

N: He did, but he’d also, before he’d gone off in the Peace Corps he applied to law school and had gotten into Yale. He just deferred it for a couple of years, and new that he, you know he needed a degree, second kind of degree. And so then he went, and went into law school for three years, while he was in law school, spent two summers with, well spent a summer anyway with Brad Morse. (A: Okay) Two summers. Between his second and third years, and then after his third year, (A: Okay) and, which is the summer I met him. That was the summer of ’67. (A: Okay) And, and I think all of those experiences just convinced him even more that he wanted to go into, you know, into politics.

A: Was his family active in politics?

N: I think they always took an interest in it, (A: Yah) um, but never active. I mean they were an immigrant family that were struggling very hard to, just to make ends meet. And even though his father had been, was three years old when they got here, but, and they were all very well educated, but it was just a struggle to live in Lowell in those days, and
kind of make things work. So, but there, I think there was always a passionate interest in politics. (A: Okay) And his father, but they were Republicans.

A: Right, right, right.

N: So Paul always said he grew up in a disadvantaged household; that he grew up with Republicans.

A: Yah. Now was Paul a Republican when he was younger?

N: At one point he, when he, I think during one of the presidential campaigns, when John Lindsey was running, who was then the Mayor of New York City, (A: Okay) Paul volunteered and helped in that campaign. He was at the time going to law school. So, but Lindsey was a Liberal (A: Republican) Republican, yah. In fact there was a group called (--) Brad Morse also was a Liberal Republican from here, and very much an internationalist. He cared a lot about international affairs. And there was a group called the “Wednesday Group” I think it was, on Capital Hill, that Brad Morse was a part of. And there was a group of Liberal Republican Congressmen who were part of it. So I think Paul was intrigued by them, but then he also really, not so much John Kennedy, but Bobby Kennedy really appealed to Paul. That sort of passion that Bobby Kennedy had that you didn’t see much in Republican leaders.

A: Right. Right.

N: Paul was drawn to that, and I think that, between that and his experience in the Peace Corps, and John kind of sent him off in the direction of being a Democrat.

A: Yah, yah. Now what did he do for Brad Morse while he was interning?

N: He actually wrote a paper. Actually, I think it was presented to the Wednesday Group.

A: Oh really. He went and spoke before the rest of the Congressmen?

N: I think. I’m not honest about that, but I think, I think he did. And what it, basically the focus of it was apartheid was such an issue in South Africa. And Paul sort of wrote a paper advocating that United States appoint a black ambassador just to force the issue of apartheid. And I think he went in and argued the case. And I’m sure it was a relatively complex paper. I’ve seen it somewhere. We probably have a copy somewhere.

A: Yah.

N: And he did other things. I couldn’t tell you what else he did, but that was the thing he was probably most proud of. He probably did the kinds of things interns do, which is sometimes not very glamorous.
A: Right. Errands and (--) 

N: Yah. 

A: Running around and doing whatever. Now he went back into the Peace Corps right, and went down to the Caribbean? (N: Right) And what did he do down there? 

N: Trained volunteers. 

A: Okay. 

N: Basically spent a year training volunteers. 

A: And how was that experience for him? 

N: Disappointing. I mean I think the Caribbean was, it was St. Thomas was kind of what it is today, still you know, not quite built up, but just not the intense cultural experience that he had had in Ethiopia. And I thought he was kind of, I think he was trying to recreate it, and just was disappointed. It was probably the transition he needed to come back and start to think about running for office, and (--) 

A: Yah. I mean why didn’t he, after he finished his internship in law school, why didn’t he come right back and run? Do you know? 

N: He just wasn’t ready. He also applied to get a job in Fiji if I recall. 

A: Oh really? With the Peace Corps, or? 

N: No, I think working for the government. (A: Wow) And I’m not sure whether or not he got it, but we had also met by then. (A: Yah) And so I think I had a year of college to go. I think he saw it as a good year to go somewhere, but I think Fiji was a little far away. (A: Yah, yah) And that may have (--) I don’t exactly remember the details of that, but that may have affected his thinking too. 

A: Okay. All right. 

N: He just really wasn’t quite ready to get back into that. 

A: Yah. Now when did you guys get married? 

N: We got married (--) Well I graduated in ’68, and then I spent a year in New York City working as a social worker. 

A: Oh really? Tell us about hat experience.
N: It was 1968-69. It was, John Lindsey was still the mayor of New York, and aggressively expanded the welfare program in New York City. And it served as a magnet for a lot of; a lot of people came in from Puerto Rico. (A: Ah huh) And also, and also drugs were beginning to become a real issue. And there were a lot of young people who were having real issues with drugs that (--) I had clients who were taking; welfare was taking care of them. It was primarily aid to women with dependent children, and people who are drug or alcohol problems. I also had a lot of clients as we called them who were on the, who were alcoholics and lived in the bowery. And then some mentally disabled people. But it was under Lindsey that that thing just grew crazily. And they were hiring college graduates left and right. So I came in with (--) I mean I came with, I thought of it as thousands of new social workers. We were not trained by any means. We just came in and handed out money. Essentially that’s what we did. But it was very, very eye-opening experience for me. So I did that for a year, from ’68 to ’69. And then that year Paul was campaigning for the, to become a city councilor. And then he went door to door and I think almost as many households as he could in Lowell. He knew that his name was familiar, because his father had a dry cleaning business. And the truck drove all over town, and it has Tsongas Cleaners. And so he knew he had some name recognition. And he just built on that, and his you know, his campaigning and his um, just you know, ardent desire to win. (A: Yah) And so I would come up most weekends and help out. (A: Really) And go door-to-door myself and do handout brochures.

A: Wow. Did he have a committee?

N: He did. In fact Bill Lipchitz was his first campaign manager. You know Bill. (A: Yah) Bill could fill you in a little bit I think. Yah, he was his first campaign manager.

A: I see. Okay.

N: And so he was successful. He was successful. And then we (--) so he was elected in November and we were married in December. (A: Okay) And then he was sworn in January. And that was his first campaign.

A: Great. How would you describe the political situation back then when he first went on to the council?

N: I moved. That’s when I moved to Lowell. So I really came in not knowing the territory particularly well. And I know that the issue that Paul went in determined to address was the issue of a professional city manager. The city had never really had a professional. Or it might have, but it tended to be more you know, who, somebody that had the most friends on the city council. (A: Sure) And he just felt that it needed to be elevated to a different level. And that was the issue that drove him. There were some great city councilors on that city council with him. Dick Howe was there. Armand Lemay was there. There was someone named John Mahoney, who was a social worker, who was a very progressive city councilor.
A: Oh, is that guy still around?

N: John I think may live in, he lives nearby, but he doesn’t live in Lowell.

A: Okay. And Gail Dunfey.

N: Gail Dunfey came later. (A: Oh. Okay, on the second) She was not in that one.

A: Paul’s second election.

N: I guess so. (A: Yah) And then there were some people who represent (--) Sam Pollard, Mary Ellen’s father. (A: Sure. Sure) Leo Farley who’s since died. (A: Yah) I’m trying to think who else there would have been. Phil Shea, but that’s it. Oh, Ellen Sampson. (A: Okay) So you know it kind of evolved into the more progressive, change oriented, towards people who were kind of comfortable with the way things were. And but they put together a coalition that did end up firing, or I don’t know if Charlie Gallagher retired, or was fired, and then they brought in a professional city manager. So that was the thing that Paul really focused on.

A: Yah, yah. Tell me about Paul’s relationship with some of these people. We’ll take the allies first. You know, guys like Armand Lemay. How did he initially hook up with Armand and get him. Because Armand necessarily wasn’t a real liberal, or progressive guy, but Paul was able to kind of ally himself with Armand.

N: Yah, I think you’re better off asking them. I think, what I always thought was that Paul always lead with his mind. So you know, he would just have, he would have an idea and he’d stick to it, and then he’d just kind of slowly bring people around. He did not beat people over the head. (A: Okay) He just didn’t. In later years he’d kind of do that a little more, but he just didn’t. You know he just kind of slowly worked the issue, and had a quiet, unassuming manor. Just wasn’t deterred, but was reasonable. You know, I think he could modify his positions when necessary, but never too far off the mark of what he was aiming for. (A: Okay) And he had a wonderful sense of humor. So it just kind quietly you know, and he respected people’s minds and integrity. And if he didn’t feel you were honest, and if he didn’t, you know, intellectually honest, (A: Umhm. Umhm) um, he, he, what I always said was I thought was his great strength was that although he spent his life in Lowell, he was really an outsider. That the Greek community was more or less outsiders, there weren’t a lot of people in the political arena. And in high school he had to spend so much time helping in the family store, that he never had the time to develop the relationships that can be wonderful, but that can be very constraining when you’re in politics, because you don’t want to hurt people that you like and have been your friend. (A: Um. Um) And so he could go in without all of those attachments to people, and just speak his mind and be straightforward, and with that kind of freedom I think and determination that and sense of being so right, that just kind of slowly worked their magic.

A: Is there something to be said for the power of ideas?
N: Most definitely when ideas, when you’re free to think. (A: Yah) Yah, when you’re free to think. But I think what can happen is if you have these great ideas that [your friends may disagree], you start modifying yourself. Before you even know it you’ve done it. Because friendship is such a powerful force in this city, um, it’s for the good and the bad. And yet I think he just didn’t have that constraint. Bill Lipchitz was a wonderful friend. A good friend from high school, but he was on his side and it was just kind of, just um (--) So Paul really had to put it all together. I mean there probably were people who liked his family and admired, his grandfather had always been a leader in the church.

A: Okay. And they were with Trans, or Holy Trinity?

N: Holy Trinity. (A: Okay) Um, he’d always been a leader in the church and was also an outsider. His father was, his grandfather was also an outsider. He didn’t live in the Acre. (A: Oh okay) If you look at where they’re buried, they’re not buried where everybody else’s buried. I mean there was (--) that mentality must have been circulating around in the family, because they just lived a little differently from everybody else. But they still, you know, he still had this loyalty to the church and to the community, but he just didn’t live in the middle of everybody.

A: Hm. Hm. Interesting.

N: So that must have, maybe that carried over too. But Paul was just very independent, and that helped him a lot.

A: Any interesting stories about his grandfather, or father? I know his mother had some tough times. So.

N: I think his mother, well his mother died very young. Paul never, [virtually] never knew his mother. His mother was placed in team of (--) I forgot to put my other earring on see. His mother was placed (--) A: Hey, you’re making a fashion statement.

N: I am. His mother was placed in a TB Sanitarium when he was two. So he has no real recollection of her. And his father, they were all very bright. They all came over and when they came over, the kids all graduated very high up in their classes. All the men went to MIT, and all of the daughters went to Simmons.

A: Okay.

N: Of Paul’s parents, father’s generation. Because Paul’s father went to Harvard, and commuted to Harvard. Didn’t graduate. The Depression just kind of took its toll. And came back and married a little later. I think he was probably in his late 20’s, early 30’s. And then his wife got ill after they had twins, and that just sort of changed his life.
A: Yah, yah, I imagine.

N: They came back and lived with the family, his mother and father, so they could take care of the kids while he worked in the store.

A: I see.

N: But Diah is probably, his sister, his twin sister is probably a good person to get some of those stories from.

A: Some of the family stuff, yah. Okay. Um, issues on the council. Accomplishments, challenges, I have a couple of themes. SHARE was a big issue.

N: [Unclear] (A: Yah) I don’t remember the details of that. (A: Okay) Um, there’s, what’s the name of the doctor? Paul Struddler, he was a doctor that had all, was all part of it. (A: Okay) And he is now somewhere in Washington. (Okay) You know who will know about this is Frank Phillips. (A: Okay) At the Globe.

A: At the Globe, yah. He lives down in Concord.

N: Frank covered all of that stuff.

A: Yah, okay. Um, how about Vietnam. Here’s Paul trying to get the city council to really think cleverly.

N: Yah. I don’t remember. I think by the time that was an issue, I don’t know, I think, I remember we went off to Washington and we marched a few times. I don’t remember the politics of it all, and how the city council received (--) I think I’m sure there are very sharp opinions, but on the other hand there were so many young people doing, feeling the way he felt at that time, [unclear] they think they probably forgave him for it without a lot of, I don’t remember a lot of carry over from that at all. (A: Okay) The issue I remember is there was some young man, Dick Howe’s protégé, or somebody who was appointed to something and people, the council was very divided and just wouldn’t do it. And I don’t know if he was gay, or what, but I remember Paul walking out of the city council over it.

A: Oh really. Yah.

N: So Paul was dramatic. (A: Yah) He was dramatic too. Yah, he was very dramatic. And I’m sure there are some people who never, never forgave him for it, you know, but (--) Because I remember when he walked out of that city council and it was like look, you look back on it, good grief, but. [Laughs]

A: You got to do those things though sometimes. How about the Lowell Connector. That was (--)
A: Who was supporting the Connector in the city?

N: I couldn’t even tell you. All I know is that people saw it as a saving road. You know the access was a major issue, and that the Connector would just save the city. And he, I mean at the time again he was thinking of how to, how to save the city. But he always later thought it was a wrong vote. He was very grateful that didn’t pass. (A: Interesting) The Connector extension you mean?

A: Connector extension, right.

N: Yes. Yah, yah.

A: What was Paul’s relationship with some of these older, predominantly Irish politicians like Sam Pollard, George O’Meara, those guys?

N: Well George ended up becoming kind of a, George ended up becoming a supporter I think, when Paul ran for Congress, (A: Oh really) and helped raise some money. (A: Okay) And was a conduit to Ted Kennedy. (A: Sure) And helped develop a relationship there, because George was seen as Ted Kennedy’s person, you know what I mean, (A: Right, right) and was helpful there. And the one thing Paul always did is that he, he always knew who was important to just sort of go and at least talk to an acquaintance. Let them know who he was, what he was doing, and why he was doing it, and especially older people. You know he had a nice way with older people who had been around a long time. On the other hand he wasn’t willing to take those on if he disagreed with them. And so, on the city council he and Sam Pollard had many disagreements for example, (A: Yah) and um, as well as for some of the other politicians had been around a long time. And so I it, it was almost a kind of case-by-case basis, you know. If he could go and be reasonable and talk, they can be reasonable and talk, he would find a way to develop a relationship. I think if people disagree with him and took it personally, then it was harder. Then it became harder. Um, so someone like George, who probably didn’t agree with a lot of what Paul did, could develop a personal relationship. But there were probably other who were more offended by just Paul sort of being young, and having gone off to the Peace Corps, and having been educated the way he was, and they just saw him as just being kind of a whatever.

A: A non-Lowell person really, in some regards, right?

N: A non-Lowell in some regards, who were never at ease with him. And so he could never just have that kind of conversation with.
A: Yah, yah. Interesting.

N: But the more successful he was, I mean as he moved out of (--) A lot of those relationships I think were repaired once he moved out of Lowell and on to other things, because they didn’t have to engaged with him, you know, in the day to day of politics.

A: Or he also proved himself that he was a success.

N: Right. Then he started to bring honor to the city in other ways, yah. But some people never got over, never forgave him.

A: Who was his chief kind of nemesis during those times? Phil Shea, he obviously had back and forth dealings.

N: Back and forth, but they worked with (--) Sometimes they worked with each other, and sometimes they wouldn’t. I don’t know, I think the person who just drove him nuts the most was probably Ellen Sampson.

A: [Laughs] Well did you ever put two Greeks in a room?

N: Right, but, but never, I don’t think he ever really disliked her, but just kind of drove, her style drove him nuts. It’s hard to remember a lot of it.

A: And visa versa?

N: Probably, I’d say so. I’d say so because she probably didn’t like that he, you know, that he had his own, thought his own thoughts and had his own ideas. And they were very different politically, I mean in terms of what they wanted they were very different. Well, and she, he ran against her for Mayor didn’t he? (A: umhm) Had 20 million ballots. And finally, I can’t remember the details of that, but she won. (A: Okay) Didn’t she? You’d have to go back and look.

A: I think he was running against Phil Shea.

N: Shea. And then she became the (--) 

A: She became the compromise.

N: Right. Actually he was always grateful that she won in the hindsight, because he went on to run for County Commissioner, and he realized that he could never have been mayor at the same time. He wanted to be mayor because he thought it may be easier to run for County Commissioner. (A: Okay) Even though it would give them a little more of the you know, authority.

A: The name recognition.
N: Authority. It wasn’t the only reason, but it was also a reason to be, good reason to be Mayor. And he was always grateful in the end that he hadn’t become Mayor, because he realized he would never have been able. He would have either had to step down, or

A: Because of the time commitment of being there?


A: Okay. And was he interested in serving on the school committee by being Mayor (N: No) and having an impact on education.

N: Oh I don’t remember if he was or not. That part I don’t remember.

A: Okay. Tell us about the County Commission race.

N: Well the County Commissioner race was, there was sort of an outgrowth of all anti-war movement was this sort of reform movement of the county, in the county, because the county was just abysmally run, abysmally run. And I mean I think going through all of this as I look back, there was this whole sort of progressive aura at work in the state. And I think when Paul ran for the council, you know, he saw himself as bringing that progressive movement to Lowell. There were these sort of community activists. Father Drinan had been chosen through a caucus process. So there was all of that at work, which made politics seem very exciting. And I think Paul saw himself as being a product of all of that, even if it wasn’t exactly playing itself out here in the same way. And so when the county (--) But the Globe I think was doing lots of spotlight series on it. So the progressives in the state and in the county just sort of started focusing on county government, and decided that they needed a slate to make it work. That it was impossible to run against sort of the machines, and sort of old lying families that had been there forever. If you didn’t have, sort of have some sort of unity and decided on a caucus process, which was the kind of way people went in those days.

A: And describe that, because I’m not familiar with it.

N: Citizens came from all the, I think it was 52 cities and towns, and they were, I don’t know how they were, I don’t know, couldn’t tell you how they were designated anymore. But they came, and then different people came and made their presentation, and then the caucus decided who the slate would be. Now before, prior to that you didn’t just walk into the caucus and say, “We’ll I’m here.” Paul had really been out and around meeting with people all over Middlesex County, all over, and developing a following and/or you know, talking about the issues. And Paul never (--) You know there are a lot of, a lot of politicians who lead with their personalities. You know, they just go out and they’re (A: Gregarious) gregarious and likeable. And that comes first, then the issues come second. With Paul it was always the reverse. Actually the reverse, the issues were first. And his personality helped him over time, but wasn’t the first thing people were drawn to. And
but he was very persuasive and very thoughtful. So anyway that, that process worked well for him.

A: And the process that it was usually done was through the party system.

N: It was outside. Ah (--)

A: I mean how it was done before caucus came around? Was it done through the Democratic Party (N: Must have been) operation or something?

N: It must have been, yah. That must have been it.

A: Verses having it open to anyone that wanted to kind of come.

N: But then there (--). But the caucus didn’t preclude somebody being nominated by the party. (A: Right) So that the party could go, you know, or even the primary (--). The primary (--). Well then what happen was the caucus selected a slate, but you still had to win the primary.

A: Yah, yah.

N: So the caucus produced Tsongas, Ralph and [Cunnihan]. (A: Okay) And Tsongas was Lowell. Ralph was Lester Ralph, who was the Mayor of Somerville. [Cunnihan] was the Treasurer candidate from Concord. And that covered kind of the (A: Geographic road to Boston) Geographic, right. And it covered, and also it allowed them to pool their resources and run a campaign that got some coverage from the Globe. Lester Ralph had been seen as an unusual Mayor of Somerville, and he was a strong Mayor. Lester was a strong Mayor process.

A: Okay. Okay. Is he still around?

N: He’s around somewhere. He’s a minister. (A: Is he?) He was a minister. Yah.

A: How old would he be now? Was he much older than Paul during that time?

N: He looked older than he probably was. I’d say maybe ten years older.

A: Okay.

N: So he would be six, seventy something. And um, and so the caucus produced that slate. Now what Paul really wanted in life was to run for Congress. That’s just what he wanted to do, you know. He’d seen Brad Morse (--)

A: Even when he ran for council?
N: Yah, oh yah. Yah he did. I mean he did. I mean he had that ambition to be a Congressman. But he just knew he’d have to start slowly and learn as he went. And fine tune political skills, and refining issues. And so um (--) 

A: And you said he, he took a lot from Brad Morse’s kind of (--) 

N: That experience, between the Peace Corps and working for Brad Morse, and the sort of liberal progressive views of that kind of Republican, and then the passion of Bobby Kennedy. It all just really excited him very much. And that was really what people, a lot of, a lot of young people thought was like the ultimate career at that point. (A: Yah) You know, just the ultimate. And um, so anyway he ran for the County Commissioner, because he saw an opportunity really, that the county was just in dyer need of progressive leadership. There was a group, kind of a group consensus forming, a public consensus forming that something had to change. And then the caucus process that, which helped him politically. I mean he didn’t have to have a lot of money, and uh, because you didn’t. And then (--) and so he went into the caucus and he won it. But on that same day, that very same day that we were holding the caucus in Sudbury, Brad Morse now said he was leaving Congress to go work at the U.N., the very same day. And there’s Paul, and like he couldn’t, you know, he couldn’t go run for Congress then because he was committed, you know. (A: Sure. Sure) And he didn’t want to, you know, he knew that. 

A: Was he somewhat devastated when Brad made the announcement? 

N: Yah, it was like you know, life had dealt him a low blow, but I think there was a part of him and me that also knew he wasn’t ready. He just wasn’t ready. (A: Um) And so then of course you had this, the Democratic blood bath here in the primary. And John Kerry was the nominee, and Paul Cronin was, had been an aid to Brad Morse, was the Republican nominee. So they went off and had their campaign. And Paul worked like the devil. He walked through the entire, the entire county. (A: For that?) Yah, [unclear]. 

A: He didn’t, he didn’t get involved too much in John’s campaign? 

N: He couldn’t because he was running, doing his own campaign. (A: Yah, yah) And John [Martilla], who still helps John Kerry, created this sort of strategy of all this, the um, the slate piggy backing on all the activities of the different Democratic candidates. So when Kerry’s people would go out and leaflet, they’d take a Tsongas, Ralph and Cunnihan brochure, because we just didn’t have the personnel. (A: Yah) And that, we were [applicated] like I think in Fr. Drinan’s district, or where ever there was an election going on. So it helped us get the word out, because again you didn’t have the TV. I don’t, well I don’t know if we did any TV advertising. I’m sure we did a bit, but not much. He had none of the local channels. He had none of that. And so it was very, very, very much of a grassroots organization, when grassroots could work. And so Paul won, they won the primary, the plate won the primary, and then only Tsongas and Ralph won the general election.
A: Cunnihan didn’t?

N: Cunnihan didn’t win. And um (--) 

A: And so the Commission is with, you elected what? (N: Three) Three, including a Treasurer Commissioner, [unclear]?

N: No, then there was a treasurer.

A: Oh then there was a treasurer too.

N: I think his name was Brennan. (A: Okay) And then I think Denahy, Frank Denahy from Cambridge was the surviving County Commissioner, (A: Okay) who Paul actually befriended. And I think Mr. Denahy came to Paul’s funeral. So you know, Paul had a way of sort of bringing about change, without being too, too um, bringing people around. You know, creating a way for people who might not otherwise have gone that path to come along, or at least to like him in the process.

A: Yah, yah. What were some of the issues during his time on the county?

N: Well patronage is the big one, you know. You know, just kind of pairing down and (-)

A: [Unclear] guys.

N: And just getting (--) Oh I know the one thing they did is they closed all the training schools. (A: Okay) Those are schools for troublesome boys. (A: Okay) They closed. In fact that’s where the University School of Education is now.

A: Oh right up thee on Princeton Boulevard.

N: We have a picture at home of one of the classes of those boys. A little artwork somewhere that they had produced. But they closed those, because they were just awful places.

A: With ideas from the [unclear].

N: The only other issue, the only other issue, I think the other issue that really, the reason people were focusing on the county government was the courthouse was being built.

A: Right. It was over budget.

N: Over, over budget. It was going up there in Cambridge. There were all these issues around it. The Globe was focusing on. And I think that was really the signature issue. And so they saw through, [unclear] construction of it, and I think managed to bring it in you know, for some much more financial responsibility, and all of that. And then I think
they dealt with Patronage, and then closing the training schools. I don’t remember much else. It was that, is was the young man, David, oh God, McCarthy. Molly, do you know Molly McCarthy?

A: Yes, from the Whistler House?

N: David, her son David

A: Her son, okay.

N: Her son David helped on that campaign, and he worked for Paul briefly. (A: Oh okay) He actually lives in Stockbridge. He’s now the [President] banker for Rothchild. (A: Okay. Wow) And David would probably tell you a little bit more if you really want to know what the issues were, but yah. And then you know, a year and a half into it Paul Cronin had won. The Republican had one. So, and Watergate was happening. (A: Yah, yah) And Paul decided to run for Congress. I mean he knew if he didn’t get Paul Cronin then, he’s be in forever. So, so really he served full you know, he served with a lot of concentration for a year, and then started to campaign again. I mean he still did his job, but his mind was really elsewhere.

A: Yah, yah. So what, what did um, what was the campaign against Cronin all about? And did he work with Cronin? Was Cronin in Brad’s office when Paul was an intern?

N: Probably, yah. Probably.

A: What was Paul Cronin’s background?

N: I honestly don’t know. I think he mostly has been an aid to (A: To Brad?) Brad Morse, yah. Um, some of the issues were things like revealing your income taxes. There was that whole era of openness and being forthcoming (A: Sure). And with all of Watergate people were so suspicious of politicians (A: Yah) and all of that. The Vietnam War might have been an issue. (A: Okay) I think failure to pass the national park was probably an issue. (A: Really?) Yah.

A: Tell us your thoughts about that.

N: Just that the legislation had been filed by Brad Morse. (A: Right) And Paul Cronin I think was not, it was a Democratic House. It was not very successive in getting that kind of legislation through, as Brad Morse hadn’t been successful. So I think that that was somewhat of an issue. But I, they were, they were all pretty you know, fabricated issues. You know what I mean? It was kind of just building on the, around the Watergate, and let’s clean house, and let’s get the Republicans out of there, and bring in all these young people. So Paul had a lot of energy and a good base, because Fifth Congressional District.

A: And plus did the county match up with the (--)
N: Not completely, because Essex County is in it too, Andover, all of that, (A: Okay) but enough. And he had become known in Concord and the southern tiers where all of his activities as a commissioner, and running for office and was highly respected there. And that’s where the anti-war movement was very pronounced and strong. So he had that on his side. Dennis can tell you a better (--) We also had our first child in the middle of all that. So I just kind of went out and did, I did a lot of campaigning. I campaigned three or four days a week, but I couldn’t tell you what I talked about. I think it was more just meeting and greeting people, just kind of a lot of that.

A: Now did you (--) When you came, before you had your first daughter, did you work here in the city?

N: When I first came here right after Paul and I were married I was a foster place (--) I was a foster care worker in Catholic Charitable Bureau. (A: Okay) So I took pre-adoptive infants, infants that were born out of wedlock, and placed them in foster homes for supervision. They would be supervised for like a month to make sure they had no health issues. And then they’d be placed in adoptive homes. So I was in charge of all of that.

A: And where did you work out of Boston, or here?

N: At the Catholic Charitable Bureau right over on Lawrence Street. (A: Okay, where it is today) And I did that for nine months. (A: Yah) And then I went back to law school for a year. And then saw the writing on the wall that we were between children and pol (--) If we were going to have a family and be in politics, but I wasn’t going to be a lawyer for a while, and left law school and went to work as a, it was a new field just emerging as a paralegal in a big law firm in Boston. (A: Oh okay) So I commuted into Boston for about three years while Paul was County Commissioner and um, (A: Loke a councilor, or whatever) in the councilor. And then when he, his (--) The birth of Ashley coincided with his first meeting to run for Congress. The campaigns were very short in those days. So that was the end of February of the year he ran.

A: Really, and that was the first time he formally got, got a group together?

N: Got a group together.

A: And who were some of his supporters then?

N: Kay and Bernie Petruzziello. (A: Okay) [Unclear] Bill Lipchitz. And some of the people like Jean Rubenstein from Lexington.

A: She just passed away a couple of years ago, huh?

N: She just passed away, but she’d been, she’d been active in the county campaign and ran his office when he was a County Commissioner. So Jean, Theresa Theobold, Theresa
has also died. She was from Bedford. Paul made some invaluable contacts when he was running for county commissioner in the southern tier, because that is where no traditional Lowell Democrat could ever have any appeal. (A: Really?) No way. They just didn’t have the politics. You know, they didn’t have, that’s not what, they just didn’t have the passion for the same issues. So it was invaluable, actually invaluable.

A: Another issue during the council and that early 70’s period, the Charter Commission?

N: Yah.

A: Do you remember that?

N: The strong mayor. (A: Right, right) We needed a strong mayor.

A: Bobby Kennedy was really pushing for it.

N: Yah, and I forget how Paul felt about that.

A: Okay. All right. So Paul gets elected. (N: In Congress) Well tell us more about that campaign during that year. That would be ’74, right?

N: Yah. It was just a very intense campaign. Non-stop. What we didn’t, where Paul Cronin’s strong hold was Lawrence and Greater Lawrence, because he was from Andover. So we spent a lot of time in Lawrence getting to know Lawrence, and just being part of it. And I mean I can remember the first, the first thing I had to do right after Paul was elected was march in a parade in, the Saint Patrick’s Day parade in Lawrence. It was freezing cold and we had our dog that had a little green thing around his paw.

A: The things you do, right?

N: Oh God. So a lot of it was just focused on that area, because he had good base in Lowell, except that he was probably more liberal than the traditional Lowell Democrat. So that there was some appeal to (--) So that you know, he had to secure that base because people might go to Paul Cronin. I don’t even know what the final vote was, you know, how close it was. But the southern tier was really, he had just (--) Although the breakdown might have been more even, but he just had such a strong base down there, that it always helped tremendously. And then he had some wonderful allies at it turn out up in Lawrence, and people who were just very helpful.

A: Okay. Um, in ’72 you know, almost every Irish guy jumped in and like you said, had the blood bath. Did anybody run against Paul for the Democratic nomination in ’74?

N: I don’t think so. They must not have.

A: They must have all spent their money two years before huh?
N: No, nobody did. I don’t think anybody (--) No, no one did.

A: Really. Interesting.

N: Nobody did, unless it was some minor. I mean it must have been minor, because I don’t remember. It was always about, because people just, they were just so weary of incumbent. Incumbents just never were defeated in Congress. (A: Yah, yah) It was just you know, bias towards the incumbent. I’m trying to remember. I remember general election. I’m trying to think of primary night. I don’t even know what we did. (A: Yah) I mean it was such an innocent campaign. I remember one debate when Paul finally had to debate Paul Cronin. It was on some local channel. I don’t know what on earth it could have been. And, oh there was somebody else in the race. There was a third person, but um (--)

A: Well Roger Durkin I think was in.

N: No, that was the second year. Second. Roger Durkin ran against him in ’76.

A: Oh okay.

N: But the question, or ask Paul a question about some obscure issue, Paul had no idea what they were talking about and he ignored the question. He literally ignored the question, which you couldn’t do today. He used to literally turn like he didn’t hear it. But, so it was a very, it was such a different time. Such a different time.

A: Yah, the TV is making it so different right? So Paul gets elected, he goes to Congress. Um, well before I get away from that early 70’s period, who were some of the community leaders that you folks were interacting with. No political per se, but just business people and (--) 

N: Well that’s when Paul first met George Duncan for example, Mary Ellen. (A: Okay. Mary Ellen was so interesting. What happened when Paul decided to run for Congress, it was like, okay, who’s going to run my campaign? Because he’d had a wonderful woman named Judy Picket, .run, had run the um, (A: County?) county campaign. And she’s still I think in Littleton. And but she had gone back to law school and wasn’t interested, and he knew he really needed somebody you know, who had some great political skills, organizing skills. And he first thought of one of the O’Days. The O’Days used to be a big family in Lowell. (A: Sure) They’re not around anymore.

A: Right. Gail O’Day just passed away a couple of weeks ago. (N: Really?) Yah.

N: Yah. And um, he approached one of the brothers and couldn’t do it. I think he was a lawyer. I forget why he couldn’t do it. So then Paul remembered Dennis Cannon, who he had met at some um, Citizens who Participatory Politics thing, or something that was going on related to the war, (A: Okay) or just progressive politics. And he, Dennis himself had run for office while he was in law school.
A: Was he a local boy?

N: No, Dennis grew up in south of Boston, and had gone to Harvard and Harvard Law School. And it’s just, his mother though had been a state committeewoman. So politics was in the blood. And Dennis, was already as a student, already involved in everything and in college. So Paul thought of Dennis, and Dennis agreed to do it. And I don’t know why he agreed to do it, but he had the story about why he agreed to do it. But it turns out that Dennis had known Mary Ellen Fitzpatrick. (A: Oh really?) Because when Mary Ellen was in college she was also very involved as a college student, in all of the anti-war activities and all of that, because they were all going to school in Boston. So Dennis knew Mary Ellen. I think maybe Mary Ellen had something to do with Dennis feeling okay about coming to work for Paul. So Dennis moved in with us.


N: Nobody had any money. So Dennis came in (--) 

A: Where were you guys living at the time, Highland?

N: On Fairmount Street. And Dennis came in and lived with us. We were later joined by about four interns who came and lived with us, because nobody had any money, and these were interns that were out (--) 

Side A ends
Side B begins

N: …to live from, who came from an organization in Washington would send them out, and we had gone and asked for a few because we desperately needed the help. And so we had some of them living with us. And Dennis could tell you the name of that organization too. (A: Yah) And so the campaign was just very homegrown. The office was below Andover, the corner of Andover and Church Street. Well you know where the community policing station is now? (A: Yes) In near there, the Hells Angels lived overhead. It was a house. The Hells Angels lived overhead. They had little offices down below. Fred Faust had been a reporter for WLLH, and he came on as Press Secretary. Fred was like twenty-six years old. (A: Yah) And it was a very young campaign, very young campaign. I was, I was twenty-eight. Paul was thirty-three. (A: Okay) And um, which is very young, high on energy, low on money. And as we got more into it, finally Nick Rizzo came forward and offered to help. And that was the first time we ever had anybody who was willing to help raise money. And that, I don’t know how much in the end he really raised, but it seemed like a big deal to us to finally have somebody who knew how to raise money. In fact I came across a letter recently, cleaning up some stuff. And it was an appeal from Paul in that campaign saying, “My opponent is going to outspend me terribly and I have to right away raise $10,000.”

A: And now city council, you get to spend $25,000.
N: Right. And now it would be a million, you know, or five hundred, or whatever. And it just tells you. So that a lot of hard work went a long way into imagination. We had great, Fred Woods also. I forget how Fred got involved, but we mimicked, we mimicked some ads that Martilla had been doing for John Kerry in I think his first campaign, which were newsprint ads; big, big pieces of paper, a lot of white, newsprint, catchy, catchy things. And I think we used those in that campaign for the first time, because we used them again when Paul ran for the Senate. So it was just a lot of hard work, but the time was right. You know Paul’s timing was usually impeccable. Always, it just was. He just kind of knew, and he always had the issue, or the something that drew people’s attention. And people liked him and they got to know him. And he was very earnest, and very honest, and very bright, you know. (A: Yah) So um, it worked. Looking back I say, “Well how did it work?” I can’t really tell you, but from the inside I think those were the things that helped it.

A: Timing was key, but hard work as well. You know, Watergate came and he was able to do that. And County Commissioners were flubbing around in Cambridge, and that came up. And you know.

N: But he was always the right person for the right time, because, because he was truly progressive, and never one, never one to just kind of rehash old ideas ever. So there’s always a lot of imagination at what he thought and said instinctively, just instinctively. The thought of getting out there and just mouthing the same old platitudes would have just not even, never occurred to him. It wasn’t the way he was made, and so his ideas also tended to suit the times.

A: Yah. So back to um, who were some of the like business and community leaders?

N: Oh so I get back to Mary Ellen. So Mary Ellen I think introduced Paul to George. George was always somebody who was (A: George O’Meara?), George Duncan, (A: George Duncan) who was young then; (A: Yah) also quite young.

A: And he was working with the Union Bank back then right?

N: Union National Bank. So George I think played a role. But I think, I honestly don’t remember that there were many people out there in the (--) The Greek community was very supportive. (A: Yah) The Greek community was very supportive, and I think supportive financially as well. The Caragianis who are both since died, were always very helpful financially. (A: Yah) But I think it was very much a campaign of people that just sort of, not a lot of inside, not a lot of people from Lowell. You think of Dennis. (A: Right) You think of Fred. (A: Right) You think of Fred Woods. You think of all the young interns. Think of me. Bill Lipchitz, but Bill wasn’t as active in that campaign as he’d been in others, just because he had a job and a family, and all of that. It was never a lot of people from Lowell in terms of the day-to-day operation. Now someone like Kay, well Kay and Bernie were a great help. And there were people volunteering that you
know, were sort of, but they were not people you would necessarily recognize as a community leader.

A: Steeped in, steeped in politics, or (--) 

N: Or steeped in Lowell, or anything. They tended to, they probably were more (--) Gail Dunfey I think was helpful. He’s probably as close as she came. (A: Yah) On the other hand Paul had guarded their respect of like Dick Howe. So Dick you know, would be supportive in his way. And sort of the circle started to overlap, but they were not the people who were the energy of the campaign.

A: Right, right. With Mary Ellen was there some connection to some of the old time Democratic people through Sam Pollard and what have you?

N: There could have been. And you know, Paul knew well enough too, that he needed that part of, that I think he was probably very respectful, and (--) But I was still a newcomer to Lowell. So you know a lot of that wouldn’t have made much sense to me. (A: Right) When I came to Lowell, I came in ’69. I worked in Boston. I went to school in Boston. I really did not spend a lot of time in Lowell. (A: Yah, yah, yah.) And so I don’t, and I didn’t know anybody before I came. So I don’t have a great sense of all that. The sense I have is just of the people who were in the house all the time, and they tend to be more on the campaign leadership, as opposed to the people in the community who would be helping him. Um, and then we have just a slew of young (- -) I mean everybody was young. Politics was a young, young, it still is actually, very young, especially when you have a campaign that’s so based on volunteer activity, and just hard work. It’s going to be young. People who are older don’t have the time, or even inclination. (A: Right, right) Kay was, Kay was probably as old, the oldest person. I mean really, you know. I mean having children was unusual. And her kids were, probably her youngest was, they were probably five you know. They probably were ancient.

A: Um, speaking of George Duncan, how about Homer Bourgeois? Did Paul have a relationship with him at all?

N: I don’t remember one. I mean I’m sure there was respect there, but [intrigue].

A: Because Homer was active in a lot of politics back in the days..

N: Yah. I don’t, he was probably a Republican. (A: Yah, yah) He probably was a Republican, I mean, but I’m not sure. I couldn’t tell you.

A: Yah. Any stories you ever heard about him?

N: Homer? (A: Yah) Just that I think he you know, cast a long shadow. People kind of sat up straighter when he was around. I maybe met him a bit, but I could, I think he had (--) Yah, I couldn’t really even tell you truly what he was like.
A: Issues while Paul was, and we’re about to get into the main National Park one, and issues during his terms in Congress. The Vietnam War was kind of dwindling down.

N: Yah, reform. Reform was just such a big issue. That’s what they were all elected on. There were 75 new members of the House.

A: Really? After, oh after Watergate?

N: They all came in. That’s the Watergate class. And I’m astonished that some of them are still there, because they are. You know, but reform was just, they wanted to eliminate not patronage, but seniority. So that, because the way it is, the longer you’re there the, more power you have. So there was a big push to get rid of seniority. I think they had some success, no huge success. Some success. I remember that he was put on, he got put on the House Banking Committee much to his chagrin. Because he didn’t know a thing about banks, he couldn’t have cared less. And yet you know what, it’s probably the most important committee, because everything he campaigned on for president he learned sitting (--) It started him thinking about the financial picture of the things that Democrats don’t think about. The financial picture of the country, and the whole, the way the stock market functions, and the nature of the budget, and the impact of the budget on, on all of these thing, and just brought him into contact with the kind of, thinking about issues he would not have sought out on his own. So he was on the House Banking, and the House Interior Committee, which is what he needed desperately in order to get the legislation through.

A: When he was running for Congress, did he know about the National Park and the movement towards that?

N: Oh yes! Oh yah, yah, because that, it started with Brad Morse. It was an issue. I think it was (--). I don’t remember how it was used, but it was most definitely something he saw as very, very important.

A: Okay. And was he able to, during his first term, get on the Interior Committee?

N: I can’t remember. I can’t remember. I know that it was very important to him. Because I can remember him going to see Tip O’Neil about it.

A: Oh okay.

N: Which is what you had to do. (A: Yah) Going to see Tip.

A: Tip was the Speaker during that whole period right?

N: He became the Speaker. He was a Majority Leader, and then I think Carl Albert was forced out because of the scandal.
A: Oh okay. Right, right around ’74, ’75?

N: I think it was ’76. I think it was the second term. (A: Okay) And Paul went to see, because I can remember going to the events surrounding Tip’s being sworn in. And I don’t think that, it would not have been in the first term. It would have been the second term.

A: Okay. All right. Good. So what do you know about Paul’s work on the National Park while he was in Congress?

N: All I know was that it never stopped. It absolutely never stopped. You know I mean he just pursued anybody who could make a difference in getting that legislation through. It never stopped. (A: Okay) Never stopped. And I don’t know exactly who he had to do what to, but, or for. John [Sargerling] I think is still around. John [Sargerling] was on the committee and he might have been the Chair.

A: He was a Congressman?

N: Yah, from Ohio. And Paul just (--) Early on I think Paul developed this strategy in consultation with, he always looked at people you know, that had this kind of integrity about them intellectually, and but who were also affective. And I think he saw a lot of advice. And then based on all of that advice sort of crafted a policy and you know, strategy and just pursued it. And Dennis I’m sure could tell you exactly what the dominos were. (A: Okay) But I think essentially it was like that. You know, you get this one and you get, and he just worked it until, until it happened.

A: Okay. Great. And so you don’t remember any stories of any political horse trading or who he had to go have dinner with, or (--)  

N: He wouldn’t have done that.

A: No, he wouldn’t have?

N: No. No it was never like that. It was always, it was always on the substance of the thing. Yah. And he would just, I think he would get people that sort of, little moments of [unclear]. He was not shy about just kind of promoting whatever. He never has been, but just constantly talking about the serious things on his mind. So.

A: Um, tell me about some of the local people that were active in, local advocates for the Park, like Pat Mogan.

N: Well Pat Mogan wasn’t (--) I think he was just the intellectual source for the whole thing. (A: Okay) I mean it was his idea. And I think as it eventually evolved it’s not quite the way he envisioned it, (A: Right) but it was his, his idea. And Pat I think convinced Brad early on. Paul Cronin saw it as sort of something he had to do for Lowell, (A: Okay) without having the passion for it. (A: Okay) But I think Paul brought
the passion to it. But Paul always saw it as a means to an end. I mean he appreciated it in
and of itself, but he also saw it as a means to just sort of beginning to change the tide of
Lowell’s history. And so he appreciated for different, on all, on many levels rather than
just one. (A: Okay) Which is why I think it became, had it been the more narrow thing I
don’t know that it would have had the impact that it’s had in the long run.

A: Yah. What do you see the Park as having it’s maybe biggest legacy, or biggest
impact?

N: Well I think it’s (--) Well first of all I think it draws attention to the beauty, the
beauty of an old industrial city. I mean that’s the first thing you see. Then I think the
legacy, culturally and historically inherited its impact on people and the United States.
But I think (--) And the other thing that often goes unnoticed is that it’s the first class of
professionals that came to this city and started to change the way the city thinks about
itself. Because these people are highly educated, you know, have the certain goals in
mind that they have to pursue. They’re undeterred by, by other things. They just have
things they have to do, and those people aren’t going to go away. The University had
been here in the State College, but they had been disengaged. You know, they were on
the outskirts. You never saw them. I remember being here for I don’t know how many
years, and just never sensing the university here. So.

A: I think that was the case until about four years ago.

N: Right. But if (--) But the Park was engaged. It was in the heart of the city. And so I
think it just, it’s all of those things at once. And then it just started the rippled effect of
well, people started taking a look at the buildings around them and realized you know,
there is some great treasures there, and [you could sort of] deal with that. And um (--)

A: So would you say Paul had the idea of using the Park, not only for the physical
redevelopment of the city and make it look like a you know, nice historic town; you
know, to take down the old aluminum siding and all that, but also as a, as a social, have a
social function to begin to change the look of the city socially?

N: I don’t think he saw it that way at all. (A: No) I don’t think that part he ever even
thought about. (A: Okay) I think that that’s sort of the thing you realize over time, that it
just has brought all of these people who would have never otherwise have been here.
You know, you just bring the outside world into the city, and it’s been very important.
But they couldn’t have done it alone. But in the Park the same time the cultural
community was getting up and going. MRT was started virtually the same year.

A: Oh really? Yah.

N: Yah, virtually the same year. So that along with all of the other organizations have
grown around that, and the people that, that work in those communities, those worlds and
the audience they bring. All of that probably let to Middlesex Community College
getting located here in 1970, no, 1980, (A: Okay) because you had a restored mill over
there that they could go live in, and work in, and work in. And so another whole group of professionals that come in and out of the city everyday that bring a different kind of thinking. And so the Park sort of started that flood of things that people could never, I don’t think ever have thought about. Ever. So you have institutions, but you also have the people who, who make these institutions work, that are unlike anything the city has seen, unlike anything the city had seen.

A: Hm, great. Um, do you remember Paul’s reaction when the Park was finally authorized?

N: Oh yah. I have that picture somewhere of Jimmy Carter signing, signing the um (--) With Ted Kennedy, yah I’ve seen that.

A: Yah, yah, oh yah, yah. And I have got the pen too, somewhere. (A: Oh really? Yah) Yah, but um, oh yah, I mean he was just ecstatic, absolutely ecstatic.

A: Did he call you that day, or you know, (A: He might have) or I mean he must have known. He obviously knew it was going to happen before Carter signed the paper, but do you recall his (--)

N: He might have. I don’t think (--) I think I remember more the day yah, he went to the White House. (A: Ah huh) Vaguely, you know, like vaguely.

A: Yah, yah, you weren’t down there at that time?

N: I was down there. I probably just declined to go because of the children.

A: Yah, the kids. Yah.

N: Yah, you know, but (--)

A: Another thing calls you huh?.

N: I don’t usually go.

A: You’re meeting the president. Okay, that’s fine.

N: Well actually Katina had been born in ’77. That was (--) The bill was past in ’78, finally signed in ’78. And you know when you’re so young as we were when we were down there, you just don’t realize you know, that you don’t just run into presidents every day. That they’re just, I mean you’re in their world all the time. You don’t think of it as being any (--) When you’re thirty-two you don’t think of it as being anything special. If you’ve gotten there, if we’ve gotten there when we were fifty, we probably would have said, “Oh, this is really great, you know, meeting the president.” But you just didn’t. You thought, “I’m as good as they are.” It’s not the wisest way to function, but I think
that (--) And we had such a young family that the kids always came first. (A: Yah well) So they always came first. (A: That’s a good policy) So if it was, if it was supposed to meet the president, they came first.

A: You know, that’s more important than meeting Jimmy Carter.

N: So for whatever reason I probably couldn’t get away to do it.

A: Any other stories or opinions, or philosophy that you have about the National Park here in Lowell?

N: In terms of Paul?

A: In terms of Paul, in terms of yourself.

N: Yah, yah. No, just I, I think it’s done so much for old cities everywhere, you know, because now people look at all those old buildings. Instead of seeing things you want to tear down, there’s things you want to save. You just recognize their intrinsic beauty. And quite apart from the history, there’s probably only room for so many parks devoted to Industrial Revolution, (A: Sure, sure) but there’s lots of uses for all of those [unclear] old spaces. And a lot of (--) And I think in terms of immigrant culture too, more, it generates a lot more respect for just to what people contributed you know, to the making of this country.

A: Okay, great.

N: I mean the intriguing thing is Paul’s family never worked in those mills. (A: Yah) Never worked in them. They were always self-employed.

A: Yah. Did Paul’s father open up the cleaners when he was pretty young, or did his (--) 

N: Paul’s grandfather did.

A: Grandfather actually owned it. Okay.

N: Yah, Paul’s grandfather had been a tailor in Greece, and came, when he came over here I think just opened the tailor shop. And that’s how it began and evolved into a dry cleaning business.

A: Yah, yah.

N: But they weren’t great businessmen. (A: No?) No, they really weren’t. Their hearts weren’t in it. (A: Really, yah.) Well.

A: They made a living though?
N: They made a living, but not a great living, because they just, they just, their hearts weren’t in it.

A: Did Paul or the family ever tell you about the time they had a little store at the Church Street Plaza?

N: Yah. It went bankrupt. It was a source of great, great consternation to them, the family. They just couldn’t imagine it went bankrupt basically. They had to close it because it just was going to go (--) I don’t think they could manage two stores at once.

A: Oh yah.

N: And then what happened, Paul’s father (--) I mean you it’s like any solo enterprise, it all rides on the back of one person. (A: Yah) And then his father had is first heart attack when he was, Paul was in law school. (A: Oh) Paul had to leave law school for a couple of months and come run the store just to keep the family afloat, because they were so dependent on all that income.

A: Yah, yah, yah. And his father got better enough to take back the (--)

N: Well enough, but eventually sold it, because he knew he just couldn’t do it. Yah, he just couldn’t do it. But um (--)

A: Um, 1978, banner year, Paul’s election to the Senate.

N: And the National Park figured heavily in that. (A: Okay) Because it was seen as, and it was actually, a testament to Paul’s legislative ability (A: Yah) that he got that through. You know, that he was the first. And then you had Brad Morse and you had Paul Cronin, and now Paul finally was the one who managed to get it through. And um (- -)

A: Was that one of his signature (N: It was) things on the Senate?

N: Yah, he did an ad around it. (A: Did he? Yah) And he did, he did an ad around it, and he did a brochure around it. And yah. (A: Okay) The other issue Paul became familiar with while he was a Congressman, I think on the Interior Committee, was the whole issue of energy conservation. (A: Okay) And um, and that became something that he really, it was always a passion of his. And he had an ad built around that, with more use of the solar cell (A: Okay) and all that.

A: And Paul was also active in, on the Interior, saving a lot of the Alaskan Wild (--) 

N: Well that came after.

A: That was later on, okay.
N: What happened (--) So I remember the solar cell ad, and I remember the ad around the park. (A: Yah) I don’t remember what else. There was, there probably was another couple that I don’t remember.

A: Well the other thing that happened in ’78 was of course Wang coming to town. (N: Yah) Did Paul have a major role in helping to bring them here?

N: They came in ’78? Maybe to the extent (--) I don’t know if they had any financing package, or anything like that. He probably helped somehow encourage that, I mean, but I couldn’t tell you what it was. (A: Yah, yah) I couldn’t tell you what it was.

A: And also the LDFC.

N: Yah, that came after the National Park though I think. I’m not sure where it came. I know that what happened is (--) 

A: I thought the LDFC, wasn’t that started in ’75, and then the Lowell Plan in ’79?

N: Maybe it was. I couldn’t tell you. I know that Paul just really felt the business community had to get, and the bankers, bankers. This probably came out of the banking committee, (A: Okay) his experience with the bank committee. But just that bankers had to become, start investing in their communities more, and especially an old city like, like Lowell. And I’m sure that was the genesis for getting that moving. But, but I didn’t pay a lot of attention to it, (A: Okay) to the whole history of that. Jim Cook will know. George Duncan will know.

A: Yah, okay.

N: George will know that.

A: Any other thing about Wang? Any stories about An Wang?

N: Not, not (--) I remember more from once Paul left the Senate and went on the Wang Board.

A: Yah, later on. Yah. (N: Yah) Um, before we finish up I have to ask about Joseph Tully.

N: Oh yah, and when was Joe Tully? When was he [unclear]?

A: This is actually after ’78. He become city manager in ’79, but.

N: Yah, yah, yah, yah.

A: Tell us about Paul’s relationship, because I think it’s one of the most unique political relationships in the city (N: It is, it truly is) in the last half century.
N: It truly is.

A: And I give, I give Paul a lot of credit for figuring out that he needed to work with Joe, or whatever, however you want to call it.

N: Well, and Paul enjoyed him you know, because he was so completely and utterly different. They were just so completely and utterly different, and yet they kind of could work together for, maybe for different reasons, with different motivations and whatever. But they could kind of work together to get things done that they couldn’t do by themselves. And you know, Joe likes, Joe obviously liked to accomplish things, because it took a lot of energy. It took a lot of caring to do those things. They don’t just happen. (A: Right, right) So he obviously liked doing it. And they worked well together. And I mean virtually not a day would go by when Paul wouldn’t talk about something that they were working at. And I used to, I can remember saying to them, why on earth do you care so much, because it was every day. I mean he was on the [unclear].

[Someone knocks at the door. Tape turned off, then on again]

N: Um, I would say, “Why,” I can remember this, “Why do you care so much?” And I tell this story all the time. And he said, “I don’t ever want my children to apologize for the place they come from.”

A: Is that what Tully told you?

N: No, that’s what Paul told me.

A: Oh okay.

N: You could tell why he just had a passion. And the other reason he liked so much doing what he did, was that you know, he said, “You can pass a bill to save the Alaska lands, and never see it.” He never saw Alaska.

A: He never went to Alaska?

N: He never saw Alaska. But he said, “I can do stuff for Lowell and come back and see it.” And I think when you’re in the legislature there has to be something you can see, because some of it is so, most of it is so intangible. You know, a tax law that, it’s just so intangible, whereas this was very tangible, and he could see it. And Joe Tully I think, you know, just, it was just one of those things, one of those things. They just kind of enjoyed each other too. I think it was like glimpse into the (--)...
N: Yes. It was never something they had to work at. I mean occasionally things, you
know, there were, you know there might be some questions about you know, what Joe
was up to. Um, (--) 

A: Especially at the end, right?

N: Yah. There would be some questions about that, but you know, Paul just sort of
worked with the Joe he knew. And that’s really how he dealt with. He worked with the
person he knew and who could be very enlightened, and hard working, and cooperative,
and got things done. They could get things done. (A: Yah, yah) Had a lot of, Joe had a
lot of imagination. Probably they were both good strategists. And you just, you know, it
just was one of those things that worked. I mean in the end that’s what Paul liked.
Things that you know, people who just made things happen.

A: Yah, yah, yah. Well he surrounded himself with some, some hard working people.
(N: Yah) Like Jim Milinazzo, and Fred, and Peter, and (--) 

N: Right, people who just liked to get out there and get things done, and don’t have a lot
of ulterior motives, really. (A: Yah) Just the share joy of it. (A: Yah) Really, it’s just
the share joy of it. So.

A: Well any final thoughts and also maybe back to you, verses Paul? Anything you
know, accomplishments that you’ve done, and (--) 

N: Not really. I just think that you know, Paul was just really a very much a product of
his place. There must have been something in the air here that, that captured him. It was
really interesting at the Lowell Plan Meeting, I’m on the board now, and I went. And we
have new board members. One of them is George Behrakis’ son.

A: Yah, somebody was telling me. Maybe Peter was the one.

N: One of them is Jack Riley’s son. (A: Okay) And one of them is Jim Conway, but
there was somebody else. Oh Gil Campbell’s son. (A: Oh) And it’s so nice to see, and
they’re just the visible examples, you know, but I think there’s something in this
community that captures people. And I think it’s the size of it. And the kind of, just
whatever energy was captured in it’s making. It just kind of keeps getting transmitted
down, and just makes people enjoy kind of wrestling with it too, in doing things. Even
the college, even in the college you see it. People kind of (--) 

A: Yah, you got some great staff here with [unclear] and Molly.

N: Yah, people just enjoy working here. They, those are the ones who live here, but
there are people who come in and love working here.

A: I see.
N: So there’s something in the air here that you know, made Paul the person he is, gave him the license to go on and do all that he did. And yet he never left here, you know.

A: Right.

N: Well you look at Dick Donahue, (A: Yah) or people like that, it just, they have the world that they can go out and be part of, and yet they choose to stay here and make a difference. So it was before my time. You know, I don’t quite know what it was, because it was before my time, but kind of remarkable.

A: Something in the water.

N: Something in the water, yah.

A: Thank you very much Niki?

N: You’re welcome.

Interview ends